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University of
Kent

Line Manager Information

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INTRODUCTION

Line managers are crucial to the success and development of apprentices. This guide offers various tips, hints, and considerations for different stages of the apprenticeship journey, specifically for line managers. You can use it as a comprehensive resource or navigate to specific topics of interest in the table of contents.

The term 'line manager' is used throughout for consistency, though other titles like supervisor, team leader, section leader, or reporting manager may be used in different industries. This guide is aimed at those primarily responsible for overseeing the daily work of an apprentice.

OVERVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship combines work with training and assessment, allowing apprentices to acquire transferable skills and knowledge in a specific field. Apprentices have employment contracts that last long enough to complete their apprenticeship, ideally leading to long-term employment. While apprenticeships are often seen as entry-level or trade-based, they have evolved significantly. Changes in funding, minimum requirements, and the development of occupation-focused standards have improved their quality. Apprenticeships are now available at various levels, from school leavers to individuals of any age looking to advance or change their careers.

Levels of Apprenticeships:

- **Intermediate (Level 2):** Equivalent to GCSE
- **Advanced (Level 3):** Equivalent to A level
- **Higher (Levels 4, 5, 6, 7):** Equivalent to Foundation degree and above
- **Degree (Levels 6, 7):** Equivalent to Bachelor's or Master's degree

APPRENTICESHIP REQUIREMENTS

1. OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

Employers select approved training providers to deliver formal off-the-job training, which must constitute at least 6 hours per week of the apprentice's time. Additional training may be required for subjects like English and maths. The employer and training provider decide how this training is delivered. On-the-job training, provided by the employer, allows apprentices to practice new skills in the workplace. Apprentices should be supported by a line manager or mentor. More details on off-the-job training can be found on gov.uk or our website.

2. END-POINT ASSESSMENT

After completing their training, apprentices undergo an independent assessment known as the end-point assessment. This assessment verifies their competence in their occupation. Apprentices must meet all the requirements of the apprenticeship standard, including the end-point assessment, to complete their apprenticeship.

Full apprenticeship requirements for apprentices can be found here:

- [Programme Expectations Framework for Apprentices](#)
- [Portfolio Guidance](#)

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD LINE MANAGEMENT FOR APPRENTICES

Line managers are vital to apprentices' success and progress. Apprentices may have varying levels of workplace experience. Line managers' duties include supporting apprentices in developing the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed to complete their apprenticeship and become competent workforce members.

THE ROLE OF APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORS AND THEIR PARTNERSHIP WITH LINE MANAGERS

Apprenticeship Advisors are a key point of contact throughout the apprenticeship and play a vital role in supporting both the apprentice and their line manager. They work closely with employers and training providers to ensure the apprentice is progressing as expected and receiving the support they need.

Every 8 to 12 weeks, Apprenticeship Advisors meet with apprentices to review their progress. Line managers are invited to these progress reviews and are encouraged to attend. These meetings are an opportunity to align workplace learning with the apprenticeship curriculum, celebrate achievements, and plan the next steps in the apprentice's development.

By working in partnership, Apprenticeship Advisors and line managers can ensure that apprentices gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to successfully complete their programme and thrive in their roles.

POSITIVE EXPERIENCES FOR OUR APPRENTICES OCCUR WHEN LINE MANAGERS:

- Assign work related to training
- Show interest and engagement in training
- Involve apprentices in skill-strengthening tasks
- Consider apprentices' needs for success
- Provide both positive and constructive feedback

NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES FOR OUR APPRENTICES OCCUR WHEN LINE MANAGERS:

- Show disinterest in training
- Provide only negative feedback
- Prioritise work over training
- Are unaware of the apprentice's commitments

IDEAL LINE MANAGER QUALITIES FOR AN APPRENTICE

- Experienced and competent in the apprentice's field
- Good communicators who can guide, coach, and listen to apprentices
- Committed to the wellbeing of their direct reports and fostering open, trusting relationships
- Value learning, development, and progression in the workplace
- Ensure team members understand the apprentice's role and expectations
- Confident in managing performance, including addressing under-performance

Line managers should receive training on conducting one-to-one meetings, coaching for success, and managing discipline, capability, and grievance procedures. Companies should have procedures to support these issues.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR LINE MANAGERS:

- New apprentices straight out of education may need clear direction and support to understand workplace expectations.
- Apprentices may be experiencing many firsts, such as work phone calls, emails, and meetings. Help them prepare and build confidence.
- Networking opportunities are beneficial for all apprentices but may require assistance to achieve.
- Older, more experienced apprentices may still need guidance on workplace expectations.
- Familiarise yourself with the apprenticeship standard, which outlines the knowledge, skills, and behaviours covered in training.
- Ensure the apprentice has an apprenticeship agreement and a suitable employment contract. Check with HR for any specific employment arrangements.
- At the start of the apprenticeship, all parties (employer, training provider, and apprentice) must sign a Training Plan and Apprenticeship Agreement outlining responsibilities and training details. Ensure you have a copy if you are not the signing representative.

Being a line manager for an apprentice is rewarding and can enhance your management skills. Use this opportunity to invest in someone's future career path.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AS A LINE MANAGER?

When you are responsible for recruiting or managing an apprentice, there are several steps to ensure effective management and support. This section offers suggestions for actions to consider at different stages of the apprenticeship. You can also add your own notes and actions if needed.

*If you are involved in the recruitment process, additional information from gov.uk may be helpful

- Guidance on hiring an apprentice
- Supporting individuals in choosing the right apprenticeship, including considerations for designing and developing an apprenticeship program, matching candidates, and providing ongoing support.

PREPARING – BEFORE THE APPRENTICESHIP STARTS

For a new apprentice:

- Before the apprentice begins, consider sending a starter pack or arranging a call to outline what to expect on their first day. This might include:
 - A list of items to bring (notebook, pens, ID, etc.)
 - Arrival time and who to ask for
 - Dress code
 - Lunch arrangements/options
 - Directions for public transport or parking
 - Planning an induction and onboarding program, including any additional elements specific to the apprentice
- Address any questions or concerns about their contract, such as payment and working hours.
- Encourage the apprentice to share any support needs or reasonable adjustments they may require.
- Participate in the 'sign up or start' process with the apprentice and training provider, where the

Training Plan is drawn up and agreed upon. Use this opportunity to gather all necessary information about the program, reviews, and contacts for queries.

For an existing team member starting an apprenticeship:

- Review the apprenticeship standard with the staff member.
- Discuss how work plans can be adjusted to allow time for off-the-job learning.
- Participate in the 'sign up or start' process with the apprentice and training provider, where the Training plan is drawn up and agreed upon. Gather all necessary information about the program, reviews, and contacts for queries.

INDUCTION & EARLY DAYS – SUPPORTING A GOOD START

For a new apprentice:

- Introduce the apprentice to team members and explain their roles and the function of relevant teams. An organisational chart may be helpful.
- Arrange one-to-one meetings with key team members to help the apprentice understand their role within the organisation.
- Discuss company policies openly to ensure understanding, rather than just asking them to read them.
- Explain day-to-day duties and workplace expectations, such as mobile phone use, appropriate language, and timekeeping.
- Actively participate in induction activities arranged by the training provider.
- Schedule regular one-to-one meetings to assess performance, agree on tasks, and share feedback.
- Set clear objectives for the apprentice to help them understand their role and guide their development.
- Consider assigning a buddy or mentor to the apprentice for informal support.
- Provide firm guidance when necessary, but also acknowledge when the apprentice is doing well.

For an existing team member starting an apprenticeship:

- Identify any work commitments that conflict with apprenticeship training and support necessary adjustments.
- Actively participate in induction activities arranged by the training provider.
- Add clear objectives related to the apprenticeship program to existing performance objectives.
- Consider additional one-to-ones or informal catch-ups following training sessions.
- Discuss any concerns about balancing work and study commitments and ask what support they need.

ONGOING & MONITORING – DURING THE APPRENTICESHIP

For all apprentices:

- Consider various approaches based on the business type, organisation size, and apprentice needs, such as:

- Weekly catch-ups to provide proactive support
- Assigning a workplace buddy or mentor
- Facilitating contact with other apprentices
- Scheduling regular updates with the training provider to review progress, challenges, and support measures
- Work with the apprentice to review progress, update objectives, and plan work activities.
- Understand the training provider's curriculum and find ways to complement it within the workplace.
- Encourage the apprentice to try new approaches and be open to change.
- Identify and encourage networking opportunities.
- Schedule formal appraisals and assist the apprentice with self-appraisals.
- Identify areas where the apprentice may struggle and provide additional support or training.
- Maintain regular contact with any centralized function managing training provider relationships.

TOWARDS THE END – REACHING APPRENTICESHIP COMPLETION

For all apprentices:

- Request an overview of the end-point assessment (EPA) from the training provider or EPA organisation early in the apprenticeship.
- Understand the requirements for the final assessments (Gateway) and agree to 'sign off' when the apprentice is ready.
- Help the apprentice prepare for EPA activities, such as practicing presentations.
- Explore post-apprenticeship opportunities within the wider network if the apprentice is not staying in your team.
- Celebrate the apprentice's achievements within the team.
- Support the apprentice in case of resits or retakes.
- Provide advice on next steps, including new responsibilities, career planning, CPD opportunities, or internal application processes.

MANAGING APPRENTICE PERFORMANCE

Managing an apprentice's performance involves ensuring their work aligns with team and business goals, as well as the apprenticeship standard. Effective performance management helps apprentices understand:

- The business's objectives
- Their role in achieving these goals
- The skills and knowledge required
- Performance standards
- Development opportunities
- Their progress in learning and work objectives
- How to address performance issues

Good performance management fosters communication, trust, and personal development. Signs of an

engaged apprentice include pride in their job, loyalty, going the extra mile, and seeking to apply new learning.

Set realistic but challenging objectives through discussions with the apprentice. Regular informal meetings, formal interim reviews, and annual appraisals are key elements of the performance development cycle. Address any concerns promptly and explore solutions to help the apprentice continue. If under-performance persists despite support, follow your organisation's disciplinary procedure.

APPRENTICESHIP MENTAL HEALTH

Approaching and talking to a team member who may be experiencing mental health issues can be challenging, and it might seem easier to avoid the topic. However, addressing concerns early on can prevent them from escalating. If a line manager suspects an apprentice is dealing with mental health issues, they should take the initiative to arrange a private meeting as soon as possible. The conversation should be positive and supportive. Managers should be aware of the additional support the organisation can offer to staff experiencing mental health issues and how to direct them to these resources. Additional support services might include:

- Mental health champions or advocates within the organisation
- Occupational Health or the Employee Assistance Programme funded by the organization
- Other national or local support, such as:
 - NHS Every Mind Matters
 - Mind – providing support and advice for those facing mental health problems
 - Samaritans – available 24/7 for support, call 116 123 for free

Managers should also consider discussing the situation with the training provider, who may offer additional support to the apprentice. If an apprentice is struggling with conditions like anxiety, depression, or low mood, they can access the free Access to Work Mental Health Support Service for Apprentices, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions. This service is available to apprentices who are attending or signed off sick and have a mental health condition affecting their apprenticeship. The service offers:

- Emotional wellbeing advice and guidance for nine months
- Coping strategies to help focus on the apprenticeship
- A support plan to stay on track
- Advice on workplace adjustments
- Guidance for employers on how to support apprentices with mental health conditions

Applications are subject to approval by Access to Work advisers. For more information, apprentices can contact:

- Email: apprentices@remploy.co.uk
- Tel: 0300 456 8210

As the training provider we also offer support from apprenticeships including:

- Urgent mental health support (call 01227 823158)
- Contact our Mental Health Advisors who can help with Issues such as stress, anxiety and depression
- 24hr support on the phone or through text and email through our partner Spectrum Life - mental health support - Student support - University of Kent

SUPPORT FOR LINE MANAGERS

If you need advice and support, consider reaching out to your colleagues, line manager, or HR or Learning & Development team. The training provider can also assist with any aspect related to the apprentice and their training program. For instance, if an apprentice discloses a learning difficulty or personal barrier, with their permission, you can discuss this with the training provider, who may offer ideas, solutions, or resources.

Your continuous professional development is crucial. Ensure you feel confident in your knowledge and skills to support the apprentice effectively. Identify any training needs you might have and discuss them with your line manager. Remember to be kind to yourself; being a line manager doesn't mean you have to know everything. There may be others in your team or organisation with more expertise in certain areas. Help your apprentice understand who else might be better suited to advise on specific queries.

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

There is plenty of useful information available about apprenticeships. Here are a few relevant links:

- Learning and Work Institute's toolkit for employers to make their apprenticeship programs more accessible and inclusive. The toolkit includes practical information, support, and case studies. Find it at: employer-toolkit.org.uk.
- Apprentice Support Guide – provides information on the range of support available to apprentices during their apprenticeship. See apprenticeships.gov.uk.
- Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) – works with employers and employees to improve workplace relationships.
- Employer Information on Funding – <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/employer/how-much-is-it-going-to-cost>.



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