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Apprenticeships



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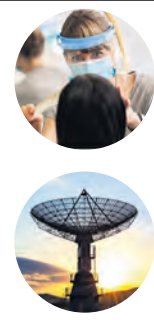
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Inside Apprenticeships

The number of people starting apprenticeships has dropped due to the pandemic, but many employers are keen to resume recruitment as soon as possible, and the theme for this year's national apprenticeship week (8-14 February) is "Build the Future". Our cover story looks at exciting career paths in renewable energy and we hear from apprentices in a wide range of jobs, from hospitality and hairdressing to space engineering. You can do an apprenticeship in almost any profession - there are 150,000 employers currently offering apprenticeships across more than 170 industries, so why not have a look at what's on offer?

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The Covid effect Apprenticeships hit hard, but well placed to recover

Apprenticeships have been cut back by the pandemic, but many are predicting they will play a key part in the post-Covid economic rebuild

Jenny Little

When the coronavirus sent Britain into lockdown last March, John Collings had to tell half of his staff to stay at home. The boss of Online Lubricants, a commercial oils supplier based in

Barking, Essex, furloughed 26 of his team, including two apprentices. "Business dropped considerably, but we were fortunate not to close completely," John says. "We encouraged our apprentices to keep training online with Harlow College, and we extended their apprenticeship period so they can complete their studies. After lockdown, we got everyone back to work who wanted to come back." Collings' business has always employed two apprentices at any given time and he believes in youth training. But, reluctantly, he could not increase his headcount in 2020, so held off hiring new apprentices last summer. He is not alone. Covid-19 has hit the jobs market hard and apprenticeships have suffered.



There were almost 743,000 people participating in apprenticeships in England in 2018/19, with almost 394,000 new starts that year. But reaction to the pandemic crisis was swift. Six out of 10 employers stopped all new apprenticeships when the coronavirus took hold, research in May from the Association of Employment and Learning Providers found. Apprenticeship starts for 2019/20 were down 18% on the year before, government data in December showed. And between March and July 2020, 1,033 people in England were withdrawn from apprenticeship programmes because they had been made redundant, according to figures obtained from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Small firms have found it particularly hard to retain apprentice numbers. Chinara Rustamova, the Federation of Small Businesses' senior policy adviser, explains: "The coronavirus negatively affected apprenticeships in small businesses, with many putting off plans to hire new staff. The government's recent initiatives on apprenticeship incentives and measures to aid the sharing of apprenticeship levy funds with small firms down supply chains mark an important step forward. That said, the incentives won't help SMEs struggling with cashflow here and now."

Last summer, the government announced incentive payments for employers hiring new apprentices between August last year and March 2021 - £2,000 for apprentices between 16 and 24 and £1,500 for those over the age of 25. But Lizzie Crowley, skills adviser for the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, warns this is not enough. "Anecdotally, we hear employers saying they need triple that amount," she says. Jennifer Coupland, chief executive of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATEd), insists there is reason for hope. "The number of people starting apprenticeships halved over the first national lockdown and we're still waiting to see the impact of the continuing restrictions," she says.

"The number of apprenticeship starts halved over the first lockdown and we're still waiting to see the impact"

Jennifer Coupland
CEO, IFATEd

▲ *The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has moved some assessments online in response to Covid* PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

"However, many employers plan to resume recruitment as soon as possible and want to use apprentices as a key part of their Covid-19 recovery plans. The institute has rolled out measures supporting more online learning and assessment, enabling apprentices to continue training and complete their apprenticeships despite the pandemic." Collings remains committed to investing in young talent, hiring 10 youngsters under the government's new Kickstart scheme, which offers six-month paid work placements to out-of-work people aged up to 24. He also hopes to welcome new apprentices as soon as the circumstances around Covid-19 improve. "Since the pandemic, two of our existing employees have started higher level apprenticeships to improve their leadership skills," he says. "And we're working with the Jo Richardson community school in Dagenham to find our new Kickstart recruits and hope to retain some of those trainees. It's good for the business and society. A belief in workplace training is hard-wired into me."



What are they? An apprenticeship is a chance to earn and learn. Those aged 16 or over are trained for work, combining hands-on experience while studying, gaining qualifications and, importantly, getting paid. There are apprenticeships for more than 1,500 roles, from graphic design and floristry to construction, accounting, and social care. There is no upper age limit for training.

Who pays for them? How businesses pay for apprentices depends on their size. Companies with payroll of more than £3m a year pay the apprenticeship levy, a tax of 0.5% of their pay bill. Firms below the levy threshold pay 5% of training costs directly to the training provider; the government covers the rest. Small employers with fewer than 50 members of staff have all costs paid if they hire 16 to 18-year-olds.

What educational levels are they equivalent to?

- Level 2 (Intermediate) - GCSE
- Level 3 (Advanced) - A-level
- Levels 4, 5, 6 & 7 (Higher) - foundation degree and above
- Levels 6 & 7 (Degree) - bachelor's or master's degree

How long do they take? A full-time apprenticeship involves working 30 hours a week, plus one day of study - at university, college, or online. Most apprenticeships will take between one and four years to complete, depending on the level of the apprenticeship, the student's abilities and the industry.

How much do they pay? Apprentices are entitled to the national minimum wage, which starts at £4.15 and rises to £8.72 an hour, depending on your age and year of apprenticeship. However, many employers offer more than the minimum.

By Jenny Little



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Funding

Investing in training is about to become easier

Employers can claim up to £2,000 for every apprentice - and reforms mean it will soon be simpler to get funding

Lucy Jolin

The Covid-19 pandemic has been brutal for many small businesses. But there is cause for optimism. A recent Goldman Sachs survey of 10,000 SMEs found that for every two businesses that had cut jobs, another had increased its number of employees. And 79% of entrepreneurs had identified new skills gaps which needed to be filled. Apprenticeships could play a big part in helping this recovery, and new measures are already in place. Under chancellor Rishi Sunak's

Plan for Jobs, employers who hire an apprentice between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2021 can claim a £2,000 incentive payment for any apprentices aged 16 to 24, and £1,500 for those aged 25 and over.

The employer can decide how best to spend the money, and it's in addition to any payments already made to support specific groups such as those leaving care, or those with disabilities. Young people taken on through the Kickstarter scheme could also progress on to apprenticeships.

Improvements to the apprenticeship funding model could also help. Since 2017, apprenticeships have been funded through the apprenticeship levy. Only employers with a pay bill of more than £3m have to pay the levy, and they pay 0.5% of their total pay bill.

That funding is available to all employers, not just the ones who pay the levy. In fact, just 2% of employers have to pay. But any funds that don't go towards supporting their apprentices

Employers who hire an apprentice aged 16-24 between 1 August 2020 and 31 March 2021 can claim £2,000

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



goes back into the pot. In fact, big employer contributions support around half of all apprenticeships.

This means that smaller employers can access apprenticeships for less. Employers with a total annual pay bill of less than £3m only pay 5% of the cost of their apprenticeship training: the government pays the rest.

There's a lot of money available: £2.5bn in 2020, which is double the amount of a decade ago. However, the system can be unwieldy. In

September, during a speech during his visit to further education college Exeter College in Devon, Boris Johnson announced that changes were coming.

"We will be expanding apprenticeships, reforming the system so that unspent funds can be used more easily to support apprenticeships - not just in big companies, but in the SMEs where there is so much potential for job creation," he said.

These reforms will include an online matching service, which will enable large businesses to identify small businesses to work with and support. The West Midlands Combined Authority, for example, has helped 1,300 apprentices to be supported by helping big players to transfer levy funds to small businesses in the area, which align with the area's priorities, including the automotive industry, digital and construction.

The Department for Education (DfE) says it's also now looking at improving flexibility around apprenticeships, making it easier for non-traditional labour market models, like the creative sector or the digital sector, to engage with them more easily.

"Training is seen as being the key for unlocking productivity," says a DfE spokesperson. "Apprenticeships are recognised as representing really good value for money, for the employer, for the apprentice and for the country as a whole."

'We will be reforming the system so that unspent funds can be used more easily to support apprenticeships'

Boris Johnson
Prime minister



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Employers

'It's proved to be a brilliant way of recruiting'

Small business bosses explain how taking on apprentices helped their companies succeed

Emma Sheppard

Small business owners may believe in the ethos behind apprenticeships, but many feel they lack the time, resources or knowhow to take on one themselves. Research by the Federation of Small Businesses found recruitment, time management and facilitating the 20% requirement for off-the-job training have been the biggest challenges for SMEs.

But taking on an apprentice can be an opportunity to address skills gaps, or diversify into a new area. And there are considerable cost-saving benefits: the government covers 95% of training costs and apprentices are paid a minimum of £4.15 an hour for their first year.

We spoke to three employers about the difference apprentices have made to their small business.

We've met rising demand

Charles Rickards and his wife Karina took over the south-west pottery company Cornishware in 2008, but it wasn't until 2019 - as they repatriated their production process back to the UK - that they started to take on apprentices.

The company produces more than 150,000 pieces a year, each of which is hand decorated and glazed, and has seen a 110% increase in sales in



▲ Claire Oliver, head of HR, Troup Bywaters + Anders

2020. Rickards has been able to meet such demand thanks, in part, to his five apprentices, and plans to recruit a further two or three in 2021. "The opportunity has appealed to artistic people who enjoy making things but don't want to be sat in a factory all day," he says.

Cornishware has worked with Yeovil College to find prospective candidates. They come from a range of backgrounds: some have come straight from college, others are looking for a career change - one even spent time in the anti-terrorism squad of the police force.

"It's proved to be a brilliant way of recruiting, rather than going out to the general jobs market," Rickards says. "It's allowed us to tap into a really good resource of people who want to learn. They're not coming here with any bad habits from similar industries. Personally it's also very satisfying to teach them a skill that they'll have for the rest of their lives."

He says the success of an apprenticeship really comes down to the effort that both parties put into it. "Like anything in life, be well prepared," he advises would-be apprentices. "Establish a good relationship with the training provider so they really understand the type of skills you need. And as an employer, you've got to put as much into it as you expect the employee to. If they think you're just trying to get some cheap labour, the relationship's never going to be a great one."

We've added new services

It is perhaps unsurprising that Katrina Cliffe took on an apprentice as her first employee, given that she started out as an apprentice herself. "I was 15 and had no idea what I wanted to do," she says. "I just knew I wanted to earn money. I ended up doing a business administration apprenticeship."

When her Huddersfield-based PR and marketing business, KC Communications, got off to a flying start in 2014, hiring an apprentice to handle less complicated tasks was the perfect solution. "It felt too soon to get someone experienced, and I had to consider cashflow," she says. "It worked really well. I probably doubled what I expected to turn over in that first year because I had an extra pair of hands."

She now employs a team of six, but still regularly hires apprentices. She's found creating a formalised induction plan and allocating a



▲ Top: Karina and Charles Rickards, owners of pottery firm Cornishware. Below: KC Communication boss, Katrina Cliffe

PHOTOGRAPH: GARETH IWAN JONES

member of staff to provide support has worked well, as has putting thought into finding the right candidate. "It's not just giving a young person a job. They've got to be the right fit, especially if you're a small company," she says.

Where a lot of small businesses fail, she adds, is where they "expect apprentices to just be able to hit the ground running. You're setting them up to fail if you do that."

While on-the-job training is important, Cliffe has found the skills and knowledge of new technology that apprentices bring from college have been invaluable. Cliffe has even added new services to the company's portfolio as a consequence. "For me, it's very much a two-way street in terms of what they can bring back to the business," she adds.

And while she admits it can be hard for a small business to think about bringing someone on who will need looking after, she does say "it's absolutely worth it".

We've closed our skills gap

Eight years after launching its apprenticeship scheme, the engineering partnership Troup Bywaters + Anders won the SME Employer of the Year category at the 2020 National Apprenticeship Awards.

The firm takes on 10 apprentices each year across its eight offices, covering a range of standards including building services, project management, HR, digital marketing and accounts.

It's a move that has shifted the company's culture dramatically for the better, Claire Oliver, head of HR, says. "Apprentices bring new energy to the business, a new way of thinking, particularly when they're so technologically advanced. And it's allowed our more senior engineers to be able to develop their management skills."

Building a steady succession of apprentices has also created a pipeline of future leaders that have

'It's not just about giving a young person a job. They've got to be the right fit, especially if you're a small company'

Katrina Cliffe
KC Communications



been moulded by the firm. Almost all (80%) of the firm's current partners started off as apprentices or young recruits themselves, showing that "there's a real proven model of career progression for people if they want it", Oliver says.

That's something that many in the engineering industry have struggled with, after a decline in funded training opportunities after the 2008 recession. "There were senior engineers and junior engineers, but there was a real skills gap in the middle," she adds.

Her advice to an SME thinking about taking on an apprentice would be to start slow, build a strong relationship with the right training provider (which doesn't have to be local, given distance learning options) and make sure the potential apprentice understands the commitment they're making. Then, once they're with the business, make them feel welcome.

"Our apprentices aren't treated differently to any other employee," she adds. "They get the same benefits, the same biannual pay increases, the same equipment. The only difference is there's a higher level of support around them to help them succeed professionally, academically and personally."

Renewables

The wind is at the back of green jobs

With the government committing £12bn to kickstart a green industrial revolution, joining the sector could be a smart career move

Emma Sheppard

If somebody had told Mark Dyer a year ago that heat pumps would be leading the BBC News at Ten, he's not sure he would have believed them. But the recent publication of the government's 10-point plan to reach net zero by 2050 has shone unprecedented light on the renewable energy sectors. "Last year, around 27,000 heat pumps were installed in residential homes. The government has just announced that they want 600,000 homes by 2028," says Dyer, the deputy managing director of Daikin, one of the leading heat pump manufacturers in the UK. Key to meeting that demand will be an expansion of the firm's apprenticeship programme, he adds. "As the market expands, I will certainly want to recruit more."

Accelerating the installation of energy-efficient heat pumps is just one of the proposals included in the government's strategy for a £12bn green industrial revolution. There are also plans to expand the capacity of nuclear, hydrogen and wind power solutions. The measures are expected to create up to 250,000 jobs, although the Local Government Association (LGA) estimates direct jobs in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy will rise to more than 1.18m by 2050.

Many of those jobs are expected to benefit young people in the north of England, Midlands, Scotland and Wales. In the north-east, for example, the LGA believes that more than 25,000 jobs could be created in low-carbon electricity, with planning permission for projects such as the Dogger Bank wind farm in the North Sea already granted.

Experts say the government's announcement has provided some certainty for those in this sector. "In the past, we've had a lot of inconsistent policy and that's made it more difficult for businesses to plan," says Jess Ralston, an analyst at the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU). "We're going to need these technologies to reach net zero, so we need to develop a workforce to deliver it."

The quadrupling of offshore wind capacity is expected to support 60,000 jobs alone. Celia Anderson, people and skills director of the Offshore Wind Sector Deal, says the industry has committed to recruiting 2.5% of its employed workforce as apprentices. "And we will need to increase that substantially in the future. We've got some very big projects ahead of us," she says. "There is a vast array of jobs in this industry - we need people across HR, marketing, sales, business admin, as well as in the technician and engineering roles," she adds. "Higher-level digital skills such as robotics, data analytics, programming and cybersecurity are also only going to become more important."

The push to decarbonise transport is also creating new career paths, particularly around the creation of battery manufacturing facilities, known as gigabyte factories, says Prof David Greenwood, chief executive of the Warwick Manufacturing Group at the University of Warwick. "This creates a need for new skills in sectors that haven't existed before. What these companies need are people who are ready for work the moment they walk in the door. An apprenticeship gives a good mix of the fundamental training and understanding that's required, plus real world experience. "That's why we've been working so hard with UKBIC [UK Battery Industrialisation Centre] to develop apprenticeships to train a cohort of people to staff these facilities when they're ready to open."

The £130m UKBIC in Coventry works to provide the missing link between promising battery technology and successful mass production. Damian Pearce, UKBIC's HR director, says: "I think the growth of apprenticeships in this area will be a very attractive proposition for young people. The prospect of joining an organisation that is at the early stages of this new green industrial revolution really seems to resonate with people. It's a smart career move."

'We're going to need these technologies to reach net zero, so we need to develop a workforce that is ready to deliver it'

Jess Ralston
ECIU



Explainer What is net zero and why must we reach it by 2050?

Net zero means achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed by the atmosphere. Reaching this target by 2050 will help limit worldwide temperature increases to 1.5c - as agreed by governments in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The UK government was one of the first to make this goal legally binding in 2019, a move which experts say has contributed to a growing number of countries and companies around the world committing to net zero targets.

How will net zero be achieved by 2050?

Net zero will be reached by two different routes: reducing existing emissions and removing or offsetting the remainder. It will require significant investment in the green economy - in wind, solar, hydrogen, carbon capture, electric vehicles and more. The government has outlined plans for £12bn of investment to fund its vision for a new green industrial revolution.

What impact will this have on jobs for young people?

Job creation in the green economy will happen all over the country, but particularly in regions such as the north of England, Midlands, Scotland and Wales.

The low-carbon and renewable energy sector already employs 225,000 people. It is estimated the number of people working in green jobs by 2030 will be 1-2 million.

A growing industry

3,000

Number of apprentices the Offshore Wind Industry Council has said the sector will take on by 2030.

32%

Share of the renewable energy sector workforce already made up of women, according to IRENA.

The Offshore Wind Industry Council has announced it will hire at least 3,000 new apprentices by the end of the decade.

A retrofit army of almost half a million new builders, electricians and plumbers will be needed to make existing homes and business premises more sustainable.

A career with a greater purpose

A 2018 government survey found almost two thirds of young people are interested in pursuing a career in the green economy. In addition, a report last year from KPMG found attitudes towards oil and gas among younger generations are already posing challenges for recruitment in the fossil fuels sector.

Increased diversity

Renewables could support a drive for a more diverse workforce in the future energy sector. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), women currently hold about a third (32%) of the world's renewable energy jobs. **Emma Sheppard**

Experience 'Everyone I spoke to said the same thing: oil is dead, renewables are the future'

Braidon Nurse, wind turbine technician apprentice with SSE Renewables, explains how he secured his role - and the long-term appeal of working in the green energy sector

Interview by Emma Sheppard

People always ask what it's like being at the top of a 100-metre-high wind turbine. It does make your legs go a bit funny when you look over the top. But before I started as a wind turbine technician apprentice with SSE Renewables last year, I was more worried about being sick on the two-hour boat journey you have to take to reach the Greater Gabbard offshore wind farm, 12 miles off the coast of Suffolk.

I grew up locally and did well in my science GCSEs before opting to take a level 3 BTEC diploma course in maintenance engineering at East Coast College in



Brandon Nurse, 19, is in the second year of his apprenticeship working on the Greater Gabbard offshore wind farm
PHOTOGRAPHS: ANDY DONOHUE AND GETTY

Comment Heather Hayes



'We like the diversity of thought apprentices have. They bring a fresh perspective to the work'

Deploying solar power at a commercial scale is such a young industry that we've always had a big intake of relatively young people. It's tough to find employees with a 20- or 30-year-long career in this sector - there just isn't an abundance of that sort of experience. We're an industry that's constantly evolving, and that means there are new and exciting career paths being created all of the time.

Lightsource bp has been developing solar projects since 2010. We've built three-gigawatt (GW) of solar capacity across the world (enough to power around 1m homes), with about another 16GW of solar projects in various stages of development. We employ 500 people across 14 different countries and are expanding fast as demand for renewable energy grows.

In the UK, we have historically taken on apprentices within the operations, maintenance and engineering side of the business. Apprenticeships last for 18 months and are typically field based, with apprentices driving from site to site, shadowing experienced engineers and learning about performing maintenance tasks across our solar farms. That practical experience complements the technical knowledge they learn in the classroom, as well as providing solar specific training and skills.

In 2021, we're expanding that apprenticeship programme across the business, bringing young talent into teams such as business development, HR and communications. We like the diversity of thought that apprentices have. They bring a fresh perspective to the way we work. There's also an

'The younger generations are much more used to thinking and talking about renewables as a key priority for the future'

element of reverse mentoring, as their digital skills in particular rub off on others.

When apprentices in operations use mobile technology to help them on a job, for example, alongside engineers who only really ever use their phones to make calls, it can really accelerate the evolution of skills among the whole workforce and identify new opportunities for improved efficiencies.

We're open to a wide range of educational backgrounds when recruiting candidates, but definitely look for an interest in sustainability. We don't have to look very hard for it - the younger generations are much more used to thinking and talking about renewables as a key priority for the future.

We want our apprentices to have an entrepreneurial spirit, and be agile thinkers who can adapt fast to changing technology. These are also our future customers and the fact that we can access their insights is of incredible value to us as an organisation.

The future of renewable energy really lies in the hands of today's apprentices. As employers, we have an amazing opportunity to nurture this next generation of motivated, sustainability-minded leaders who will meet the world's growing demand for renewable technology. They are likely to move across verticals - whether wind, solar or hydrogen - and being open-minded about collaboration across the sector will only help us to achieve the goals we're all working towards. Apprenticeships are an investment in an individual's future, but they're also an investment in the renewable sector's future too.

Heather Hayes is the global HR director for Lightsource bp. She was speaking to Emma Sheppard

Apprenticeships at AstraZeneca



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Hospitality Cheers, to the UK's third-biggest sector

Despite the hardships of 2020, a hospitality apprenticeship still offers a rewarding career and job opportunities

Ellen Manning

Of all the sectors in the UK, hospitality has perhaps been hit the hardest by the coronavirus pandemic, with repeated lockdowns and tier restrictions preventing restaurants, bars, hotels and cafes from trading. Recognised by many as a challenging career to embark on, hospitality runs the risk of becoming less appealing after the trials and tribulations of 2020. But apprenticeships remain a way of

starting out in what is a competitive industry, with the opportunity to undertake training at a range of levels and in a multitude of roles, from bartenders and front of house staff to chefs and managers.

"The big thing about apprenticeships is they give a broad education in their role," says Jill Whittaker, managing director at HIT Training, a specialist training provider for the UK's hospitality industry. "Apprentices are not stuck on a production line in a kitchen doing just one job - their experience is varied." HIT offers training and apprenticeships from basic short courses to full apprenticeships starting at intermediate level 2 hospitality team member up to level 7 senior leader - the equivalent of a master's degree, delivered in association with Arden University.

It's also important to recognise that the industry is about more than serving food and drink. "It's more convenient to talk about hospitality, the third-biggest sector in the UK, as

▼ Hospitality apprenticeships can be taken all the way to level 7 senior leader - equivalent to a master's

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



'Hospitality employers say they are forever having their really good staff poached because of their skills'

Jill Whittaker
HIT Training

if it's just this raft of unskilled people who wander in, pull a pint and then go home." The reality is far from that, says Whittaker, with hospitality developing a whole range of skilled workers. "Hospitality employers say they are forever having their really good staff poached by retail companies or other companies because of their skills."

For Julie Crump, chief operations officer at bespoke wedding catering business Caviar & Chips, whose owners also opened a pub in

Kenilworth, Warwickshire, a week before the first lockdown in 2020, apprenticeships are vital in training the next generation of the hospitality industry. The company works with University College Birmingham to offer a front of house placement and a kitchen placement in the wedding business, and will also be running apprenticeships at its pub, The Virgins & Castle, in partnership with Warwickshire county council. Like Whittaker, she thinks hospitality is often under-estimated. "It's not just about putting food on a plate and taking it to a table. We want to make sure people have a start and see it as a career."

Last year proved difficult, she admits, with apprentices' trial shifts having to be postponed every time the business was forced to close, but she hopes the torrid time won't put people off a career in hospitality. "It's an exciting and innovative industry to work in and there's different concepts coming out all the time." To help encourage people, Crump says they are trying to change the idea that hospitality is a "hard and horrible place to work", by making sure staff don't work endless hours with no breaks, get fed and watered on shift and get rotas in advance so they can plan their time. "It's about trying to be a better employer so people can be the best of themselves and be happy at work. We're not saying there won't be hard days and hard times, but it should be about having a positive career and bettering yourself."

Experience 'An apprenticeship offered me the opportunity to earn a living and secure a future'

Karl Svendsen turned his back on a law degree to train as a barista. Now, he's a store manager and looking to take on the next career challenge

Ellen Manning

When Karl Svendsen became a father in 2019, he decided providing financially for his new family took priority. That meant the difficult decision to leave university where he was studying for a law degree and instead embark on an apprenticeship as a barista with Caffè Nero through HIT Training, a training and apprenticeship provider for the hospitality and catering industry. "An apprenticeship offered me the perfect opportunity to earn a living, kickstart my career and secure a comfortable future for me and my family," said Svendsen, from Liverpool. "Initially, having little experience working as a barista

created a steep learning curve for me as I started my apprenticeship. By putting my ego aside and asking for help, I was put on to a six-week learning plan to help me develop my knowledge, skill set and behaviours." That resulted in a promotion to shift leader, allowing him to expand his skills even further.

Svendsen faced an obstacle to his apprenticeship journey when he and his partner separated, leading to him moving temporarily to Manchester. Despite the move, he and his area manager worked together to make sure he could complete an apprenticeship as he "sofa surfed" and adjusted to his new life. Despite the stumbling block, Svendsen finished his apprenticeship in full, achieving a distinction. He was given the opportunity to advance from shift leader to store manager in just 15 months as part of a hospitality supervisor apprenticeship, enabling him to take the next step in his career.

"By taking on the role of store manager in one of the Liverpool stores, I was immediately able to make positive changes," he said. "My apprenticeship gave me the tools I needed to launch an investigation into the store's



▲ Karl Svendsen was an apprentice barista with Caffè Nero before becoming a store manager

discrepancies with stock taking. I then confidently delivered training to staff to prevent this issue from happening in future and within three months, the missing margin was brought back within the target percentage." On top of that, he took responsibility for writing rotas to ensure hours were fairly distributed, as well as leading on inventory management and recruitment for his store and two others in the area. Svendsen reflects: "My

apprenticeship pushed me outside my comfort zone, encouraging me to go head first into situations that I felt less comfortable or capable of tackling otherwise. The training has encouraged me to take more time to reflect on my own learning and how I communicate with my team. This has culminated in more confidence to take on greater challenges and motivates me to look for opportunities where I'd previously have doubted myself."

Hairdressing

How to make the cut in a much-loved industry

Apprentices keep hair salons ticking over - and learn skills that often lead to owning a business

Ellen Manning

They were some of the people we missed most during the lockdowns of 2020, with many of us realising just how much skill our hairdressers have when we were faced with trying to do their job. Yet hairdressing is often overlooked as a career path. Apprenticeships are a common entry into the industry, bringing benefits of on-the-job training for apprentices and appeal for employers in the form of government incentives.

Matthew Curtis, founder of

Matthew Curtis Hair Design, started as an apprentice himself and has worked around the world as a session stylist - styling models, celebrities and actors on catwalks, photoshoots, film sets and events - as well as opening three salons in London, Stratford-upon-Avon and Chipping Camden. "Apprentices are the backbone of the business," he says. "They help the salon run effectively and they learn their craft while they do it." Similarly Jane Nixon, owner of Hair Eden in Worsley, Manchester, started her career as an apprentice and takes on at least two apprentices every year. "I want someone who understands what it is like to work in a busy salon, and not only knows how to do hair, but to manage their time and their clients," she says. For Anthea Mitchell, owner of Hair Professional in Maidstone, apprentices quickly learn that hairdressing comes with plenty of technical demands. "Hairdressing has become more complex in terms of the skills you



▼ During the pandemic, hairdressing skills have become more appreciated
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



Salon owner and former apprentice Jane Nixon

have to have. It's really technical in addition to soft people skills." There's no denying 2020 presented difficulties - both for the businesses and their apprentices. "Every time we had to close it created a bottleneck," says Nixon. "Rather than business being steady throughout the year, we had months where we couldn't work then months of working six days a week." Their apprentices were still able to work towards their qualifications, says Nixon, but she is not convinced they progressed at the same speed. Coronavirus restrictions also made it

difficult for apprentices to practise. "We usually hold training nights when the apprentices would train at the same time," says Curtis. "We had to stagger that through the day instead." Despite the difficulties, those with a career in hairdressing are more than happy with their choice. But they admit it is still overlooked by many as a career. "There still needs to be work done to encourage people into it," says Curtis, who goes into private schools to talk about the benefits of apprenticeships. Nixon says things are changing but admits they could still improve. "I know lots of parents who are actively encouraging their kids to try a career like hairdressing, whereas 15 years ago it felt like everyone was being pushed to go to uni. It's a creative job, and clever kids are pushed into 'clever' career paths even if they are creative people. I used to say I was 'just a hairdresser' but now I hold my head up and say it. I've learned so many skills from marketing to accounting and I don't think I'd have gained the same skills through study." For Mitchell, the stability that it brings is as valuable an asset as any. "So many people spent lockdown wondering whether they would have a job to go back to and what was happening to their industry. I didn't feel like that at all. It's not the sexiest, most glamorous or best-paid work, but it's stable and there's a lot to be said for that these days."

Degrees

Higher-level study, but no uni fees - yes please

Degree apprenticeships offer the chance to earn money while studying all the way up to a master's

Emma Sheppard

Starting as a receptionist at Munday + Cramer in 2017 after finishing her A-levels, 21-year-old Georgia Dear couldn't have predicted that she'd be training to become a chartered building surveyor less than a year later. But when her managers at the architectural, building surveying and property management firm

offered her the chance to study for a degree apprenticeship, she jumped at it. "It was too good an opportunity to turn down," she says. "I can learn something at university and then a month later it'll crop up at work, or vice versa. I think doing a degree apprenticeship puts you ahead of people who study full time. You've got that work experience already." Degree apprenticeships were introduced by the government in 2015 to address the acute skills shortages the UK faces in key industries, such as chartered surveying, aerospace engineering, and nuclear energy. That's expanded significantly since - recent figures estimate there are now more than 7,000 programmes on offer by at least 100 universities in England. Apprentices spend 20% of the week studying towards a full bachelor's or master's degree (a level 6 or 7 qualification), and the rest of the time in paid work. The average starting salary in 2019 was £17,800, and all course fees are picked up by the government and employer. At Northumbria University, Joe Hedley, assistant director of sales and business development, says there are programmes designed for people entering a profession - in nursing, the police, law and architecture, for example - as well as those for current employees looking to upskill; MBAs, digital marketing, and chartered manager degree apprenticeships have proved particularly popular. Universities

▼ Apprentice chartered building surveyor Georgia Dear splits her time between work and university



'I can learn something at university and then a month later it'll crop up at work, or vice versa. You've got that experience'

Georgia Dear
Munday + Cramer

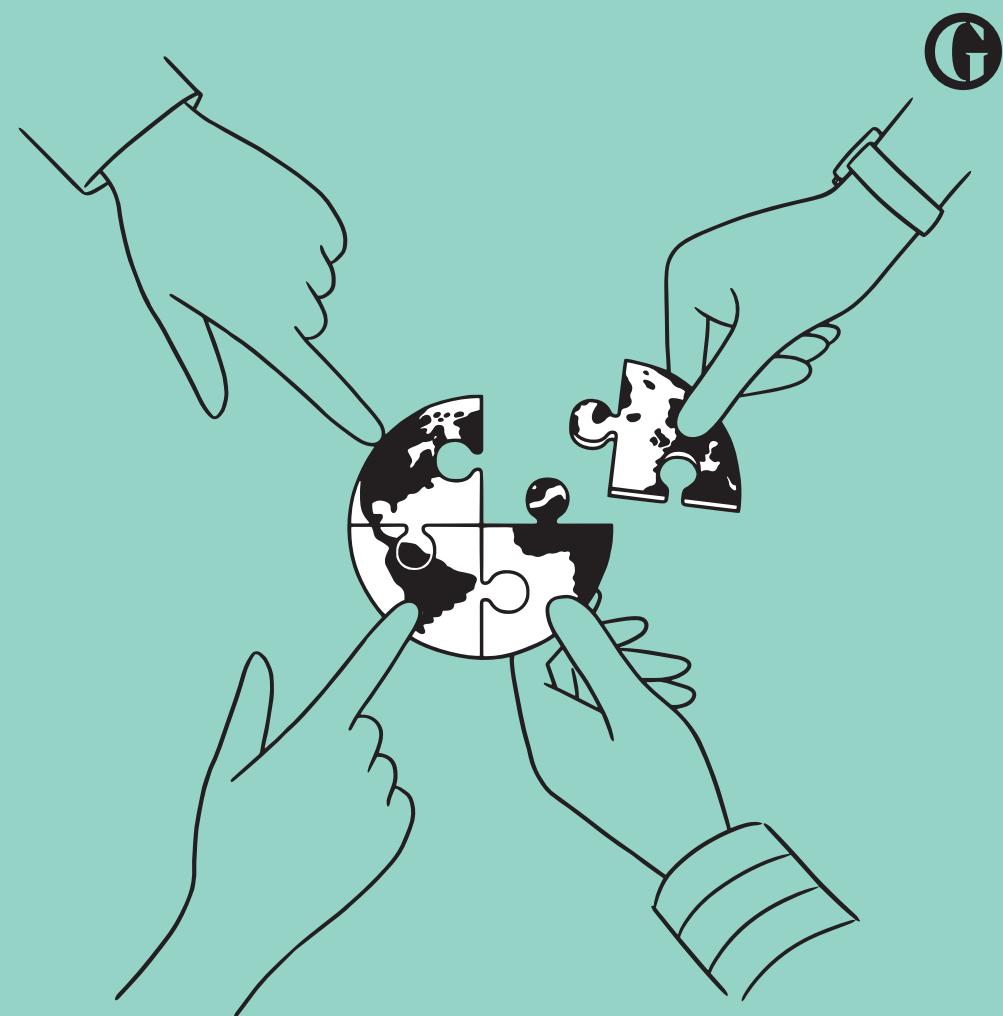
work with employers to design programmes that address the industry's needs. "That back and forth with the employers is hugely important," Hedley says. "There's a lot of flexibility to shape [the course] in the vision that they want." Degree apprenticeships can also help increase the diversity within an organisation. That was the impetus behind the development of the professional economist apprenticeship at the University of Kent, where professor of economics

Alastair Bailey worked closely with the civil service's Government Economic Service (GES) to create the course. "They realised they drew their applicants from a very narrow range of universities and a narrow band of society," Bailey says. "Here was a chance to do something different, rebalance GES and to bring those wider insights into policy." There were 90 students on the course when it first launched last year. Many are with the civil service, but others work for organisations such as the Bank of England and Civil Aviation Authority. The course is the equivalent of an economics degree but Bailey says the structure of the curriculum has been changed. "We provide theory alongside practical analytical skills in the first year, so apprentices become really useful members of their team within a couple of months." Teale Cunningham is currently working as an apprentice within the economics team at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. He's been involved with writing briefings, going to meetings with ministers, assessing the economic impact of new policies, and more. "It's a completely different learning experience to [doing just a degree at university], I think it's superior actually," he says. "When you do a university degree you don't learn a lot of practical skills that employers are really after. And my friends are certainly jealous I won't end up in £40,000 worth of debt."

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Disability What can be done to make training more inclusive?

While apprentices with additional needs are being hired in greater numbers, more support is needed in workplaces

Lucy Jolin

When Callum Fullam, 18, was accepted as a mechanics apprentice by a well-known car dealership, he was delighted. But it wasn't long before he realised that he was being treated very differently from his fellow apprentices. "I had to clean the workshop or do filing, while they were allowed to do the work they were hired to do," he says.

The job started to affect his health: Fullam has a condition called tarsal coalition. "The bones in my feet didn't separate properly before I was born," he explains. "Walking and standing causes a lot of pain and discomfort. It was such a manly atmosphere, I didn't feel I could talk about how much I was struggling."

He resigned after a year. "I was pretty depressed," he remembers. "It had a huge effect on my mental and my physical health."

Fullam is not alone. In 2018/19, 12.3% of all apprenticeship starts declared a learning difficulty or disability, up from 7.7% in 2011/12. But a recent report from training company Cognassist found that 15% of learners who drop out of their apprenticeship do so because their needs aren't being identified and they're not getting the right support.

So what needs to be done? Mark Capper, head of development in the Lifestyles & Work team at Mencap, a charity supporting people with learning disabilities, believes that apprenticeships should be

"There's a whole host of people who don't have an EHCP and for whom flexibility is essential if they are going to succeed"

Mark Capper
Mencap

more flexible. Since 2017, some apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities have been exempt from the minimum standards of maths and English, which apprenticeships normally require. "That's a great step in the right direction," says Capper. "But there's a whole host of people who don't have an EHCP [education, health and care plan] and for whom flexibility is essential if they are to succeed."

Finding the right training provider who understands any adjustments to learning is crucial - but also difficult. "We approached three providers and as soon as they heard our apprentice had special educational needs, they weren't interested," says Roy Candlin, contracts manager at Ground Control. "Luckily, our fourth is fantastic. Our apprentice, who has autism, is now fully qualified and working for us full-time."

To help people with disabilities into work, training providers can claim financial help to support learners with a disability, while providers and employers recruiting an apprentice aged 19 to 24 with an EHCP are eligible for a one-off incentive payment of £1,000.

If your company has fewer than 50 employees, the government will pay the entire cost of training an apprentice who is under 18 or aged 19-24 with an EHCP. The Disability Confident badge identifies employers who have signed up to the government's Disability Confident scheme to recruit and retain more disabled people.

In September, Fullam accepted a new apprenticeship in business administration at Youth Engagement Slough, which organises free activities for young people - and he is loving it.

"Everyone here is supportive," he says. "I can say if I'm having a bad day. It's very different from my last place. So if you've got a disability and you're thinking about applying for an apprenticeship, I say go for it."

▲ In 2018/19, 12.3% of all apprenticeship starts declared a learning difficulty or disability
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Comment
Rabia Lemahieu



Employers must make adjustments for people with disabilities, but the benefits run both ways

Over the last year, we have come to realise that work arrangements can be made more flexible. We've put a spotlight on how we can make work more inclusive for disabled people, and those with health conditions on a long-term basis.

Having a health condition is a part of everyone's life. Perhaps you have diabetes, or anxiety. Perhaps, as you get older, you start to experience problems with your hearing, or sight, or you are diagnosed with cancer, or Parkinson's. Any of us could become disabled, through an accident or through illness, at any time. So it makes sense that apprenticeships should be accessible to anyone with a health condition or impairment, as they should be accessible to everyone. We are people too. We are no different to anyone else.

But aside from the fact that it's just the right thing to do, ensuring that your apprenticeship is open to the widest possible pool of talent can be hugely beneficial for your organisation. Numerous employers have told me that they are all the richer for ensuring their apprenticeships are open to disabled people.

Many of us have particular skills, which we have developed to cope with our impairment or health condition. We are creative. We are problem-solvers. And we are also your customers! If you are selling a service or a product to us, our input is vital. We can help you improve it and make it more accessible. It makes no sense to exclude a large section of your community.

Of course, having the right support in place is key. Luckily, that is easily done. Employers must make reasonable adjustments: that's the law. In many cases, these adjustments are easy to implement.

So, for example, you might allow an apprentice to work from home if their health condition is particularly painful that day. If your apprentice finds it uncomfortable to have their desk in a brightly lit or noisy area you can change where they sit. If your apprentice is concerned about travelling on a crowded bus in rush hour, you can allow them to come at a different time. Technology, too, is making many jobs more accessible.

All you need to do to work out what those adjustments should be is to talk to your apprentice. Ask them what they need! We are very good at managing our conditions and we're more than happy to tell you what works for us. There is also plenty of support available, both from organisations such as Disability Rights UK and those focused on particular impairments, such as Mencap or the Thomas Pocklington Trust.

Apprenticeships are a fantastic opportunity for employers to access this incredible group of people and enable them to contribute their many different skills and talents to the workplace. They are a wonderful way in for those who find that the traditional pathways to employment - A-levels and university - don't fit their skill set. And they are now available in so many sectors, from law to engineering to computing. So whether you are an employer considering taking on a disabled apprentice, or you are wondering whether an apprenticeship would be the right thing for you personally, take the next step. Don't be afraid of perceived barriers: they can be overcome.

Rabia Lemahieu is the disability and skills manager at Disability Rights UK. She was speaking to Lucy Jolin

'Ensuring that your apprenticeship is open to the widest possible pool of talent can be hugely beneficial for your organisation'

Diversity

Taking a creative approach to new hires in adland

Ogilvy's apprenticeship scheme - The Pipe - aims to bring young creatives into the industry from diverse backgrounds

Heidi Scrimgeour

Global advertising agency Ogilvy launched an apprenticeship scheme in 2016 that aims to celebrate and champion diversity, and provide more employment routes into the creative industries. Open to all, regardless of background or qualifications, The Pipe is a two-year programme based in Ogilvy's London headquarters. Apprentices who are taken on - known internally as Pipers - gain experience in a range of specialities, including advertising and customer engagement, design, social, PR and behaviour change. They work on client briefs while also studying towards a level 3 qualification, which is equivalent to two A-Levels.

The scheme has seen Ogilvy welcome poets, skaters, sculptors, jewellery designers, shelf stackers, artists and DJs through its doors. Key to its message is appealing to those who think the creative industries are difficult to get into unless you know someone on the inside or have certain qualifications. "We launched The Pipe in 2016 very purposefully to open up the creative craft to a more diverse pool of potential emerging talent, and many of our Pipers are now fully fledged creatives in a number of different roles within the agency," says Helen Matthews, chief people officer at Ogilvy UK.

"Our aim has always been for at least 50% of our intake to be from underrepresented backgrounds, and we've been working closely this year with Uptree and Brixton Finishing School to ensure we cast our net as widely as possible."

The Pipe was the route to a creative career for Natalie Nahr, now a social content creative with Ogilvy and vice-chair of Ogilvy Roots, a network set up to champion greater ethnic and cultural diversity within the agency. Nahr is from Ghana

and was motivated to apply to the Ogilvy scheme when she graduated in 2018, after her father mentioned that David Ogilvy didn't embark on a creative career until his 30s.

"My time on The Pipe didn't just confirm that I wanted to work in the advertising and marketing world, it actually helped me to define who I am as a creative," she says.

Nahr works full-time for Ogilvy and has a clear sense of where she sees her career going. "Previously if someone asked where I wanted to be in a few years' time I'd have given an answer focused on improving myself as a creative and my actual craft, but over the past year, I have realised that my purpose is more aligned with giving other people the opportunity to be creative," she says.

"Although I enjoy the process of creating, empowering other people to do the same is very satisfying to me. I hope to be able to impact a wide range of people to execute their own ideas as creatives."

To help lower the barriers to entry, Ogilvy passes some of the apprenticeship levy back to The Pipe apprentices. "In effect, we're giving them a startup bonus so they can pay a month's rent or cover travel costs, making the apprenticeship scheme as inclusive as possible and setting participants up for success," says Matthews.

"Natalie is a brilliant example of a young apprentice who has made her own luck and success, grabbing every opportunity she can," she adds. "Especially at time when so many opportunities for young people have closed or been postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic, it's important to combat the misconception that the creative industries are closed unless you know someone on the inside, and vital at a societal level to ensure that creative industry apprenticeship schemes continue."

'Our aim has always been for at least 50% of our intake to be from underrepresented backgrounds'

Helen Matthews
Ogilvy UK

▼ Ogilvy UK's chief people officer Helen Matthews says taking on apprentices has expanded the talent pool



Social media and marketing

'As an industry, we're creating many new opportunities for on-the-job experience'

A new apprenticeship training provider aims to make the marketing sector more inclusive

Heidi Scrimgeour

The UK's creative industries have a diversity problem. About 11% of jobs in the creative economy are filled by BAME workers, according to the Department for Culture, Media and

Sport. However, when the Creative Industries Federation weighted the employment statistics according to where jobs are based - for example, nearly 32% of all creative jobs are in London where 40% of the workforce is BAME - it found, more than 17.8% of the UK creative industries should be BAME if they were to reflect the population at large.

Apprenticeships play an important part in redressing the balance. Recruitment and training consultancy The Industry Club has partnered with specialist apprenticeship provider The Opportunity Group to tackle the fact that young people

from diverse backgrounds are underrepresented in the UK's creative communications industry.

The result is Marketing Debuts, a recruiter and a training provider tailored to the marketing industries. It has created two 13-month apprenticeship pathways in creative project management and social media and community management aimed at young people from diverse backgrounds. Major names in advertising - including Adam & Eve DDB - have already signed up to offer paid (at least £18,000 a year) apprenticeships, and the scheme is open to any creative agency or brand. "The UK's creative economy is

dramatically non-diverse, it's still a 'who-you-know' game dominated by white, middle class people," says Blaise Grimes-Viort, a social media and online community consultant who delivers training for Marketing Debuts apprentices.

"For an industry that's trying to engage with every socioeconomic group in the UK, it's completely nonsensical that the people who are crafting the messaging are not representative of those groups. And it's no good taking the position that people who want to follow a career in the advertising and marketing industry will find us, if there isn't a clear pathway defined."

Despite the lack of diversity, Grimes-Viort says there is "a great deal of effort" from within the industry to change things, resulting in many new opportunities for young people to pursue creative careers. Nonetheless, he acknowledges that accessing those opportunities might mean blazing a trail.

"When you look at the 'about us' page of the average advertising agency you're likely to see a 'white

BAME apprentices

Overcoming a wall of disadvantages

While progress is being made, more needs to be done to ensure apprenticeship schemes benefit all communities

Jenny Little

Hiring apprentices boosts productivity, cultivates talent and builds a diverse workforce. But, despite diversity and inclusion being the watchwords of good business, the proportion of apprentices from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities remains low. Why does this gap in opportunity persist?

"If you look at apprenticeship applications, people from BAME backgrounds are applying, but not getting through," says Jeremy Crook, chief executive of charity the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG). "It's less a lack of awareness of apprenticeships than how employers recruit. Word of mouth recruitment is common, which puts BAME applicants at a disadvantage."

Of all apprenticeship starts in 2019/20, 13.3% were BAME, figures from the Department for Education show. While this represents a significant increase over the past

10 years, critics point out BAME groups represent roughly a third of the student population across primary and secondary education in England. And the youngest fall the furthest behind. BAME apprentices in the 16- to 18-year-old group made up just 7.8% of new apprentice starts in 2018/19, down from 8.6% the year before, according to research of official data by further education publisher FE Week.

Sandra Kerr, race equality director for charity Business in the Community, says: "Apprenticeships are meant to be a door into a new career, but all too often it's slammed shut for BAME communities. Even well-intentioned employers can seem disconnected from what inclusion and diversity means in reality."

In 2017, Business in the Community launched a Best Employers for Race list, but for the two years it ran, the list comprised fewer than 100 companies. Since, the charity has created a Race at Work charter, which sets out five actions for organisations to address racial inequality, including having a senior sponsor for race, tracking and publishing ethnicity data, and taking action to support ethnic minority career progression. Kerr says: "An employer which doesn't invest in diversity and inclusion - from apprenticeships to the boardroom - is failing to invest in itself. Who can afford to do that anymore?"

But while some employers are making progress, various initiatives

▼ Of all apprenticeship starts in 2019/20, 13.3% were BAME

PHOTOGRAPH: STOCKS



'Even well-intentioned employers can seem disconnected from what inclusion and diversity means in reality'

Sandra Kerr
Business in the Community

to increase BAME apprentices have faltered. The 5 Cities Project, which saw the National Apprenticeship Service work with businesses to boost take-up of apprenticeships among under-represented groups, was wound up last year.

Crook believes educating recruiters is vital, as well as encouraging further education colleges to challenge employers who use unfair hiring practices. He points to an employers' toolkit BTEG recently developed with the Greater London Authority to help companies in growth sectors adopt more inclusive recruitment methods. He warns: "The government has to work more with employers or we'll remain stuck at the current BAME participation rate."

wall' of faces, which can feel very unwelcoming to anyone from a non-white background," he says. "Even if you consider applying, there's that sense of 'will I be alone?' to think about. We're trying to dismantle those walls because a lack of diversity is not conducive to innovation, but nothing can change unless people participate, and that might mean being the first candidate from a diverse background to join a team. That isn't easy, but there are many wholehearted efforts across the industry to ensure you won't be the first - and you certainly won't be the last."

For 24-year-old Ayesha Fatima, Marketing Debuts opened the door to a dream job in the creative industries after years of knock-backs. At the beginning of this year, she was the first apprentice to embark on an apprenticeship with digital marketing agency Wilderness via the Marketing Debuts programme.

"I knew I wanted to work in social media when I left school but I couldn't afford to go to university and it's impossible to get a creative

communications job or even an internship without industry experience, so I moved between jobs a lot," she says.

"During the pandemic I realised how far behind I was in my career journey as a result, so I started looking at entry-level and assistant roles, thinking they might be easier to get into, but despite applying for 20-30 jobs a week I hardly had any responses. When I was offered the apprenticeship with Wilderness I felt so grateful that my opportunity had come at last."

For anyone keen on a creative industries career, Grimes-Viort recommends seeking out apprenticeship opportunities as Fatima has done. "As an industry, we're creating many new opportunities for valuable on-the-job experience and training," he says. "And despite diversity being underrepresented, this is a welcoming environment for people keen to participate and learn the fundamentals of a career in advertising and marketing. But don't be shy - you don't win if you don't play."



► Digital marketing apprentice Ayesha Fatima: When I was offered the role with Wilderness I felt my opportunity had come at last

Working from home Ditch the pyjamas, embrace easy wins

Career coach Andrew Sewell shares five tips for staying productive in a less-than-ideal working environment

Andrew Sewell

These are strange times to be an apprentice. If you're one of the lucky ones who've escaped redundancy (and 12% haven't - according to Sutton Trust research from October last year), there's a good chance you're working from home right now. How do you stay productive in this environment? As a homeworker myself, I've learned what strategies actually work. Best of all, these five self-management skills will serve

you well for the rest of your career, whether we return to the office regularly or not.

Set boundaries

Interruptions are the enemy of work, so it's vital to establish boundaries and let your parents/guardians/siblings know you need time to focus. Ask them (in the nicest way possible) not to interrupt you. It's easier if you have your own room, but if you're in a share situation, headphones can help. You could also negotiate times when you really need the room to concentrate on something - with the promise you'll return the favour.

Manage yourself

This isn't just about avoiding obvious distractions like your phone. It's about taking stock and planning for the day ahead.

Each night, spend five minutes thinking about the next day. Ask yourself what three things you



▲ Stay focused and treat yourself to some mood-boosting endorphins with a deep-breathing exercise

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

need to accomplish - one hard, one medium, and one easy. At the end of that day, review how you did. Make a note of what you achieved and reward yourself. Is there anything you could do differently tomorrow? At the end of the week, email your manager with a summary of the things you achieved. It doesn't need to be long - just a few bullet points.

Write a list (and just do it)

On days when you don't feel like getting out of bed, resist the

temptation to work in your pyjamas; you won't be in the right frame of mind. Instead, create a to-do list of super simple tasks. Have a shower. Eat breakfast. Send one email. Just ticking them off your list will generate a feeling of momentum. One of the most important things you can learn in life is that you don't need to feel motivated to start doing things. Often it's action that inspires motivation, not the other way around.

Don't overdo it

When you're keen to make a good impression, there can be a tendency to overdo it, and suddenly your work-life balance is out of whack. That's why it's important to set time for rest. Include short breaks in your day, a proper lunch hour and some time outdoors, and speak to your manager if your workload is preventing you from taking breaks. Also, have a regular finishing time and a treat lined up for the evening. That'll give you something to look forward to.

Get physical

If you've been sitting and staring at a screen all day, the best way to switch off is to do something physical like jogging around the park or a few minutes of jumping jacks. The rush of endorphins will calm you and help you stay positive. If you can't move around, deep breathing will also provide those mood-boosting endorphins.

My first job What I wished I'd known back then ...

Two former apprentices review their first steps on their careers ladders and reveal what they would have done differently

Ekansh Sharma and Georgia Terry

Ekansh Sharma, 23

Former digital and technology solutions degree apprentice at Accenture

I received an offer for my first choice university, but decided that higher education wasn't the right path. It was a risk, but almost four years on I can say it's one that paid off.

I applied for my degree apprenticeship through the Accenture website. A telephone interview, and then a half-day

assessment centre where we had to develop a technology solution and pitch it, followed by an online application. If I could go back and give myself some advice it would be to spend more time developing commercial awareness, because you should be able to show an understanding of not just the role, but the company and industry itself in the application process.

I didn't expect to be working on

'Knowing how to juggle time demands before starting my apprenticeship would have spared me some stress'

Georgia Terry
Former apprentice

▼ Finding time to study while also working in your first proper job can be stressful

PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY; DAN WILTON



real projects straight away, but I was taught coding skills and went on to help build a software platform for a client within a month of joining. This gave me a sense of pride and made me feel like a valued member of the team with my own responsibilities.

I stayed on at Accenture after completing my apprenticeship, and I'm now a global project management officer for an engineering client, managing around 45 small projects. Because I was given hands-on experience right from the start, I have confidence in my role that I may not have had otherwise. Without my apprenticeship, my career would not be progressing at the same rate as it currently is.



Ekansh Sharma: 'I didn't expect to be working on real projects straight away'

Georgia Terry, 21

Former digital marketing apprentice at the Retail Motor Industry Federation

My apprenticeship was my first ever office job, and ahead of starting I worried about a lot. I thought I might just be there to make tea or photocopy. As it turned out, I had my own responsibilities like running social media accounts and creating content. I was helping to make decisions, and I felt like a valuable part of the team. If I'd known it would be this way before I started I might not have been so nervous.

As great as it was to be given real responsibility, working full-time while studying for my qualifications was hard work - at times it felt very overwhelming. Some days I would have to complete coursework on my lunch hour, and when that wasn't possible it only added extra time pressure. Knowing how to juggle these different demands before starting my apprenticeship would have spared me some stress, I'm sure.

That being said, these unexpected challenges helped me develop beyond anything I was expecting. An apprenticeship is there to train you to become qualified. But I also grew in confidence, I became better organised and managed my time more effectively. I didn't expect my apprenticeship to be as rewarding for my personal growth as it turned out to be.



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Apprenticeships

Engineering

If you're looking for a career that could really take off, look to space

A new course – the space engineering technician apprenticeship – offers the chance to join an expanding industry

Jenny Little

For young people eager to launch into the world of work, career horizons are expanding to infinity and beyond. The next generation of space engineers began training last month through a new apprenticeship scheme.

The space engineering technician apprenticeship is the first to be recognised by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and is the result of a collaboration between the University of Leicester, the UK Space Agency and aerospace giant Airbus. The apprenticeship aims to provide young recruits with space-specific technical skills, including spacecraft manufacturing and design, testing and satellite integration. More than 50 apprentices will have started their training by the end of 2021, with plans to ramp up recruitment.

“Space presents very particular challenges rarely seen elsewhere,” explains Dr Nigel Bannister, associate professor of physics and astronomy at the University of Leicester. “You need to thermal vacuum test components, for example, placing them in a chamber and pumping out the air to subject them to conditions similar to those in space. Even soldering has to be done to an exceptionally high standard so that something of very high value can be confidently launched into space where there is zero chance of correcting a problem later.”

The UK space sector is expanding, with 30,000 more jobs expected to be created in the field over the next decade. The industry struggles with a skills gap and retraining technicians from other disciplines can take months, hence the decision to create the government and

industry-backed apprenticeship – which has the support of BAE Systems, Thales Alenia Space UK, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and many smaller industry players.

Roy Haworth, head of digital design process and implementation at Airbus and chairman of the space apprenticeship trailblazer group that devised the new scheme, says: “This is a level 4 apprenticeship and we’re looking to recruit people straight from school, though there’s no upper age limit. At Airbus, our apprentices complete their training over three years with the first year full-time at college. Then, they spend two years on day release completing more advanced technical skills at college, while the rest of their time is spent in all parts of the business doing real jobs under supervision.”

The space industry is not just involved in the design and manufacture of spacecraft and the items and infrastructure that make them work. It also fuels services and products that rely on space-based data, much of it provided by satellites. Kathie Bowden, lead for skills and careers at the UK Space Agency, adds: “There are jobs for all sorts of people in the space sector fulfilling all sorts of roles. Previously, these opportunities were few and far between at apprentice level, but this scheme will really open things up.”

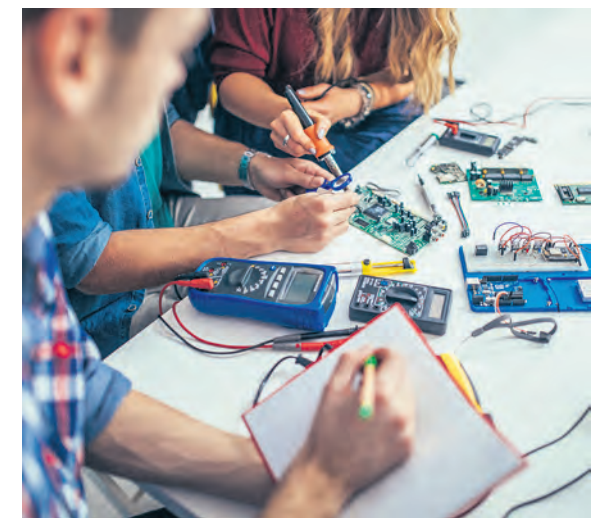
Haworth adds: “This apprenticeship is a non-degree-based route into the industry for those who might well have struggled to gain entry to these jobs before. People imagine everyone needs a master’s degree in astrophysics to work in the space sector. You don’t and this scheme shows that.”

Previously, in the space sector apprenticeships were few and far between, but this scheme will really open things up

Kathie Bowden
UK Space Agency



▲ The UK space sector is expected to create about 30,000 jobs in a variety of roles over the next decade
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



Explainer Careers in the space sector

What is a space engineer?
There are a number of engineering roles in the space sector. Engineers may be involved in the design and assembly of spacecraft or robotic systems, such as the Mars rover. Software engineers write code, while electrical engineers design and test durable systems that can function in space and do not require maintenance or upgrade. Whether it is ensuring components can withstand the vibrations experienced during launch or that a circuit board still functions in an airless environment, space engineers are trained to create hardware and systems that can operate in the hostile environment of space.

How big is the UK space industry?
Britain’s space sector is experiencing huge growth, currently employing around 42,000 people and predicted to create a further 30,000 jobs over the next decade. It generates an income of £14.8bn and supports £300bn more of economic activity through the

use of satellite services. The Space Growth Partnership, made up from industry figures, academics and representatives from government, is aiming to increase the UK’s share of the global space market – currently valued at £190bn – to 10% by 2030, when it is estimated it will be worth £400bn. Boris Johnson has even committed to launching a space rocket from Scotland by 2022.

Is it all about outer space?
By its nature, the UK space industry looks beyond Earth’s confines, but satellite services also prop up infrastructure on the ground. Satellite data keeps your mobile phone, satnav and home energy network functioning. It is used in defence, by the emergency services and by financial services, allowing companies to regulate exchanges on the stock market. But it also informs the farming industry, monitors climate change and aids flood response. In the not-so-distant future, it is likely to be instrumental in the development of driverless cars.

Jenny Little



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A different path

When the Covid pandemic hit, plans changed ...

Faced with the prospect of uni life in lockdown, these four school-leavers decided to pivot to apprenticeship schemes. So, how's it going?

Lucie Grace

Daniel Samuels

School leavers apprenticeship with Ernst & Young

You know when they say: 'It's not rocket science?' Well I was studying rocket science quite literally, at the University of Manchester, when the pandemic started. As a first-year I was living in halls back in March and suddenly we were given two weeks to get our stuff and get out. I wasn't really enjoying university, and the pandemic put things into perspective: life's too short! Then, this August, I realised I can't go back to university - paying £9,000 a year for Zoom calls is mad. I decided to look into doing a school leaver apprenticeship with Ernst & Young, a company I've always aimed to work for. As a uni graduate I might not have stood out to them, but as a year 13 graduate I stand out. I was involved in loads of extra curricular projects and my CV looks

'In August, I realised I can't go back to university - paying £9,000 a year for Zoom calls is mad'

Daniel Samuels
Ernst & Young



strong. I'm interested in trading and cryptocurrency so I spoke about that in my interview with EY. The manager interviewing me asked where I see myself in the future and I told her: EY board of directors. I'm going straight to the top.

Samuel Foxwell

Level 3 apprenticeship with Pinnacle Housing Association

I was going to Middlesex University to do a business course, but then I thought: "Is this what I really want to be doing?" University is not the same this year as people are just locked in their rooms. With an apprenticeship I'd be getting paid and learning workplace skills at the same time, so it seemed like the way to go. Now I'm actually working in housing, I have customer service skills that I can take into future jobs. I'm training to become an income officer, helping people manage their rent and I'm on the phone all day, it's great. I'm starting my CIH (Chartered Institute of Housing) qualification next year. It's an 18-month course that I'll get one day a week off my job to complete. Our office is only allowed eight people in at any time - but they accommodated me every day when I first started so I was in the office five days a week, with the support I needed. They've been brilliant, to be honest, giving me everything that I needed. I couldn't have made a better decision. I can see the future and I'm working towards something, so it's all good.

Yasin Usman

Degree apprenticeship in digital and technology solutions with Vodaphone

I confirmed a place at Queen Mary University of London to be close to my family during Covid-19. Grades are crucial to getting into uni, so when I heard that the A-level exams were cancelled I started looking into degree apprenticeships, which seemed like a great option. I decided to go into IT because there are lots of jobs in the field. My apprenticeship is run by Blackpool & Fylde College and accredited by Lancaster University, so I'll graduate from there. I've been working from home since I started, which has been great, as it cuts out the commute and I can use the hours productively. I am missing the human interaction, however, many of my colleagues are all over Europe, so we'd be working



▲ With university life disrupted by the coronavirus, many prospective students have reviewed their options
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

'I thought a degree apprenticeship would be a lot more valuable than going to uni, especially at this current time'

Megan Lightfoot
Tom Willowby Ltd



online even if I was in the office. I work in a team called Network as a Platform within network architecture, focusing on new technologies, so the experience I'll gain from this role will be invaluable.

Megan Lightfoot

Degree apprenticeship in quantity surveying with Tom Willowby Ltd.

I'd originally planned to go to Northumbria Uni, where I'd applied for a quantity surveying degree, but when I heard that A-level grades would be based on mocks I thought I should have a back-up plan. I started to look into apprenticeships and I found one at Tom Willowby Ltd. They hadn't advertised when I applied, I just emailed them on the off chance and they offered me an interview. I thought it would be a lot more valuable than going to uni, especially at this current time. I don't think I would have enjoyed university this year. My friends at uni say it's hard doing courses online, while I can work in the office or on site as construction is a key-worker industry. I'm starting my degree apprenticeship next September, but until then the company has taken me on in an admin role. It'll take me five years to finish the course, but I have no regrets; I'll have a job and a degree, so it's the best of both worlds.

Unusual careers Polish up your skills learning on the job

You can become an apprentice in almost any sector - we take a look at 10 lesser-known roles ...

Ellen Manning

While some careers spring to mind immediately when it comes to apprenticeships, what about the less common opportunities out there? From chocolate-making to tattoos, an apprenticeship can be the way into a career that you may never have considered - let alone via on-the-job training. Some are government-led, while others are championed by key companies in a bid to close a skills gap in a niche sector.

Chocolatier

Yes, you can do an apprenticeship in what many might see as the perfect career. Major chocolate companies including Nestlé, Mars and Cadbury offer chocolatier apprenticeships, giving those wanting to build a career around their love of the good stuff the chance to learn everything from how to make chocolate to how to temper it and make various chocolate-focused products. The opportunities are broad and appealing. Nestle apprentice Katie Lloyd, 22, found herself helping to develop a new Quality Street within weeks of starting and went on to help produce several new chocolate bars.

Greenkeeper

Unlike any office-based or industrial apprenticeships, it's possible to spend your days on the golf course - as an apprentice greenkeeper. Responsible for the maintenance, care and overall appearance of a golf course and making sure it's a

▼ A shortage of skilled diamond setters in the UK means jewellers are keen to take on apprentices

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



'You're getting money and experience while you're learning. It's a real advantage and I now have a permanent role'

Charlie Moore
Former apprentice

great experience for golfers, duties include: removing early morning dew and debris from the greens, raking bunkers, moving tee markers and cutting new holes on greens. Then there's weed control, turf treatments, and maintaining things such as water features. Perhaps not quite as relaxing as a round of golf.

Diamond setter

If you've ever dreamed of being the person who sets precious diamonds into jewellery, an apprenticeship

could open the door for you. You'll learn how to set stones into different pieces of jewellery using tools, machinery and specialist equipment. The National Association of Jewellers offers advice on how to look for apprenticeships in the jewellery world on its website. In 2017 jeweller Jessica Poole said she had taken on her first apprentice diamond setter with the assistance of the Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust, partly in response to a shortage of skilled diamond setters in the UK.

Fish husbandry

A fish husbandry apprenticeship involves working on fish farms, rivers and reservoirs. You'll learn all about caring for fish and looking after their habitat. Once qualified, you'll be able to work on a fisheries site or for the Environment Agency. Last year, Sparsholt College in Hampshire announced that its apprentice Charlie Moore was the first person in the UK to complete the fish husbandry and fisheries management apprenticeship. He said: "You're getting money and experience while you're learning. It's a head start, a real advantage and I now have a permanent role as assistant project manager."

Power station maintenance

Engineering apprenticeships aren't unusual - but one that's specifically about working in power stations is slightly less common. As well as other areas, many energy companies now offer apprenticeships that teach all the skills needed to maintain various types of power plants in the UK. They include companies such as EDF, whose engineering maintenance apprenticeship scheme is a four-year programme involving two years at the National College for Nuclear, delivered through Bridgwater and Taunton College, Somerset. In EDF's own words, "the doors will open" at the end of the apprenticeship, giving people the opportunity to progress up the career ladder.

Tattooist

How do you become a tattoo artist? You might be surprised to find that an apprenticeship is one way in. Often local-registered tattooists will take on aspiring tattoo artists, offering the chance to learn on the job from someone already skilled in the field. Birmingham-based Inky Needles Tattoos reminds wannabe tattooists that the right apprenticeship won't just teach tattooing, but also other skills, such as sterilisation, proper cleaning and business management, as well as needle

making, prepping, making stencils and other aspects of the tattoo business. It advises that tattooists are looking for someone with enthusiasm and a "love for the art".

Horse groom

Horse-lovers can embark on a career as a groom thanks to an apprenticeship. There are several options available on the government website and apprenticeships can be taken in various stables, from showjumping to racing and equine centres. Duties for roles include: general

stable duties; mucking out; riding out and "going racing"; as well as the obvious elements of day-to-day care of horses and preparing them for competition or riding. An apprenticeship offers the chance to progress up the ladder in the horse world, and eventually become a professional groom.

Master brewer

Perhaps the perfect career option for beer-lovers, an apprenticeship is one route to becoming a brewer. Brewing apprenticeships last between 12-18 months, during which time you'll get paid to work in a brewery. There are various levels of brewing apprenticeships, from level 2 training up to level 4, which would give a foundation-degree-level qualification. An apprenticeship in this area, whether in a small microbrewery or large multinational company, could involve a range of duties from the hands-on, day-to-day tasks of working in a brewery such as cleaning to beer launches or - you'll like this - tastings.

Brewing apprentice

12-18

Time in months it takes to undertake a brewing apprenticeship - during which time you'll work in a brewery



▲ Becoming an apprentice tattoo artist could be the start of a creative career
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Glass-blowing

The ancient technique of glass-blowing involves inflating glass into a bubble then shaping it into objects, such as containers or drinking vessels, to be used in various sectors from manufacturing to jewellery. One route to learning the skill, though uncommon, is to complete an apprenticeship with a seasoned, professional glassblower. They include learning skills such as how to make different types of glass and how to decorate it using engraving, etching, sand or grit-blasting. Apparently a career in glass-blowing - and an apprenticeship by default - is well suited to people who aren't afraid of working with hot and potentially dangerous materials.

Funeral director

Not an obvious career choice at all, but one that could have a huge impact on many people's lives. Becoming a funeral director can start with an apprenticeship, with Co-op including opportunities within its Funeralcare division in its apprenticeship offering. Its apprentice programmes in funeral care are open to everyone, from school-leavers to those looking to retrain, with the opportunity to work up to funeral director. Unsurprisingly, key qualities are empathy and commitment, as well as good organisational skills. The apprenticeship involves on-the-job training as well as learning across a number of modules.



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Legal practice Expanding the talent pool of an elite profession

For those looking to build a career in law, an apprenticeship offers an alternative route in

Lucy Jolin

Annie-May Dyson, currently in her fourth year of the level 7 solicitor apprenticeship at Blacks Solicitors in Leeds, didn't go to private school or university. Her parents didn't go to university, either. Right now, she's a rarity in a profession where a fifth attend a private school (three times the UK national average), and more than half have parents with a degree.

The solicitor apprenticeship has now been available for five years - has it helped to make the legal profession more accessible? That was certainly its aim, says Victoria Roper, interim chair of the Law Society's education and training committee. "It was hoped that having an apprenticeship route would make it easier for some people who for whatever reason found it difficult to go down the traditional route."

That chimes with Dyson's experience. "I was uncertain about the costs of university, and having to live away from home," she says. "Plus, I wanted to enter the world of work and get a qualification - I was keen to continue to progress on the academic side and go beyond what I'd already achieved. I was very lucky that my progress tutor at college introduced me to the degree apprenticeship route."

But it's hard to tell how effective it's been, says Roper, as there is very little data available on equality and diversity indicators for the 500 people currently on the apprenticeship. "I suspect there has been some improvement, but we can't point to any kind of definitive data to back that up. I do think there's potential for the number of apprenticeships to increase and thereby to further that equality and diversity objective. There is a way to go, and a lot of people are just starting to get to grips with how best to collate and use the data. But generally, there is quite a lot of enthusiasm from firms who want

to do this, and enthusiasm for the principle of apprenticeships."

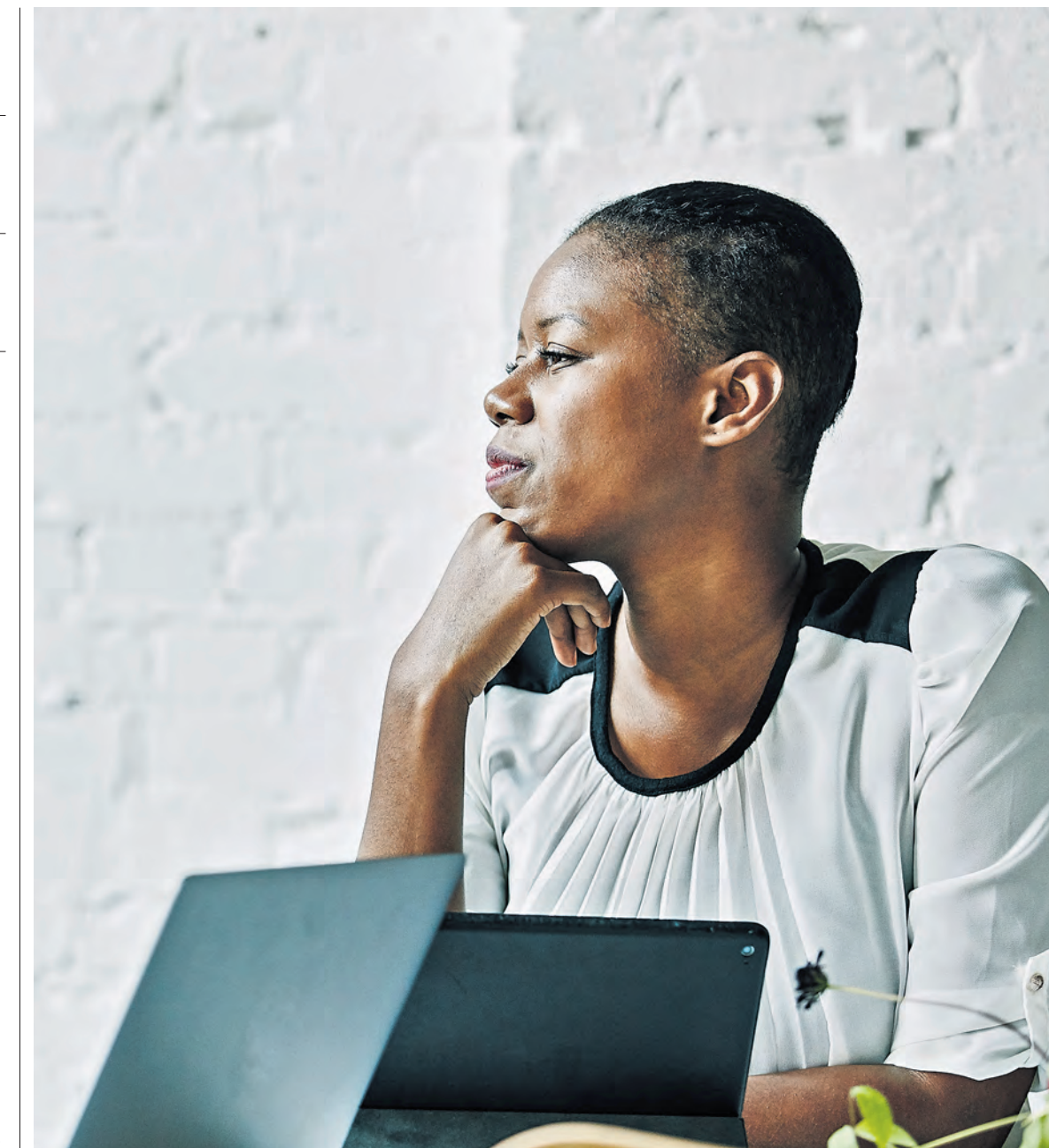
Firms are certainly starting to realise how important the apprenticeship can be to attract talent from under-represented backgrounds. At Browne Jacobson LLP, which currently has three apprentice solicitors, legal apprenticeships are a key part of a diversity and equality programme, which resulted in the firm rising from 82nd in the Social Mobility Employer Index in 2019 to fifth in 2020.

"It makes sense to make sure that we fish in and attract the largest, deepest, broadest pool of talent that we can possibly get," says Tom Lyas, recruitment manager. "We also have so many questions from clients as to what we're doing to increase diversity. It's the right thing to do, but being more diverse will also make you more attractive to the clients that you work with, because you need to represent them. I say: 'Be brave and don't stick to tradition.' For me, the training contract is a dying thing."

Tom Moyes, training partner at Leeds-based Blacks Solicitors - one of the first firms to hire a solicitor apprentice, and which currently has six apprentices on the pathway - was also keen to get new blood in through the apprenticeship. It makes good business sense, he points out. "My thinking was that there are going to be talented people who aren't going to go through

"There is quite a lot of enthusiasm from firms for the principle of apprenticeships"

Victoria Roper
The Law Society



▲ The solicitor apprenticeship was launched with the aim of making the profession more accessible

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

university and therefore get this opportunity, because of the fees. The fact that they are thinking about this at 18 means they are smart individuals. Our main driver was to get a competitive advantage over firms who weren't ahead of the curve, by getting some great talent. And because of the apprenticeship levy, it made financial sense."

It's also possible to build flexibility into the pathway. At Browne Jacobson, apprentices started the paralegal apprentice route and were then given the option to change to the solicitor route after a year. "We recognised that a full-on six-year apprenticeship might be a bit much without them getting to know us, and us getting to know them," says Claire Stripp, head of talent and knowledge. "That flexibility enables apprentices to find out what branch of the law is for them."

Lyas agrees. "Even those who go to university to study law don't necessarily want to be a solicitor, they just want to study law. They're not necessarily fully versed in the world of opportunity out there for them. If you work in a law firm for a year and then decide you want to be a solicitor, that's an absolute gift for us. The last thing you want is a group of people you have significantly invested in dropping out because they realise it's not for them."

It might have been slow to start,

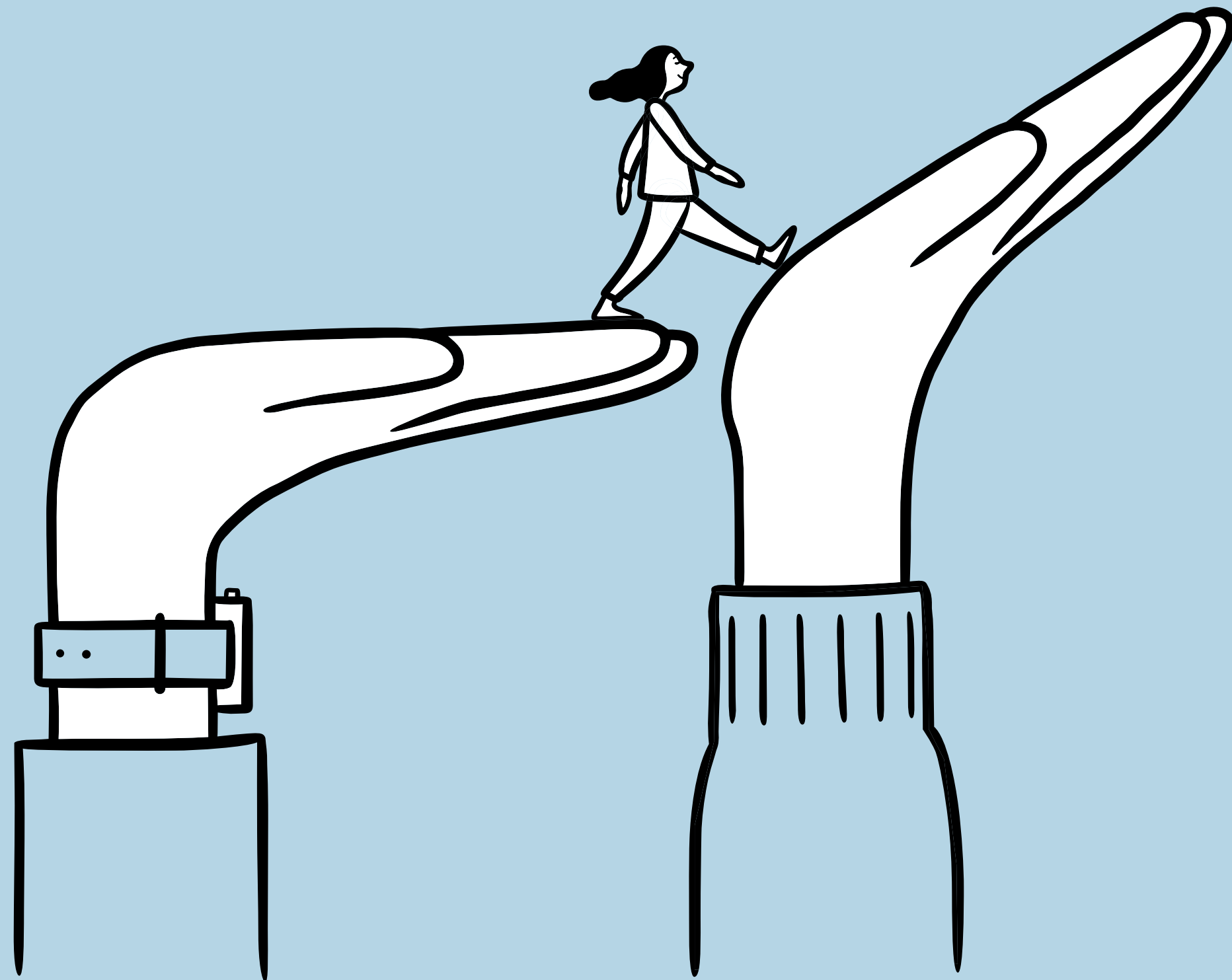
"There are talented people who aren't going to go through university and get this opportunity"

Tom Moyes
Blacks Solicitors



but Dyson believes that over the next few years, more and more firms will recognise the benefit of this alternative route into the law. "I think it's going to take off," she says. "Having the practical side is so helpful in understanding the academic concepts, and on the flip side, the knowledge you get from the study helps you understand your tasks in the workplace better. An apprenticeship is such a valuable alternative for anyone who has the same concerns I had."

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▼ In the UK, more than 150,000 employers offer apprenticeships across more than 170 industries
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



'An apprenticeship may improve career prospects - one in five companies have a former apprentice at board level'

Scott Bullock
Newcastle College

sometimes even school-leavers as young as 16. Contrary to popular opinion, it's also possible for apprentices to earn good money before their peers who stay in education - I've known teenage tech apprentices move on to a salary of £40,000 by the age of 21."

Apprenticeships are suitable for all ages

Did you know that there's no upper age limit for an apprentice? Anyone over the age of 16 can take on an apprenticeship, so you're literally never too old. In fact, older apprentices bring lots of benefits to employers, from transferable skills and relevant industry knowledge to important personal qualities like maturity and reliability.

Apprentices don't just make the tea

It's a widely held belief that apprentices spend their days making the tea and opening the post. "In fact, you'll be given real work to do and you'll be making a real difference to the business you're working in," says Scott Bullock, principal of Newcastle College University Centre. "Degree apprenticeships, in particular, offer the opportunity to go into a business at a much higher level"

Apprenticeships are good for your career prospects

After completing an apprenticeship, 85% of apprentices stay in employment, with two-thirds (64%) remaining with the same employer, according to a government survey. "There's a chance you won't even need to look for a job when your apprenticeship ends," adds Bullock. "Apprentices who gain a level 2 apprenticeship are also more likely to be employed in a related occupation than those who achieve level 2 classroom-based study, and doing an apprenticeship may even greatly improve your chances of promotion within that company, since one in five companies have a former apprentice at board level."

You can do an apprenticeship in almost any profession

Think apprenticeships are just for mechanics and hairdressers? Those days are long gone. Nowadays, apprenticeships are offered in almost every industry, from business and media to science and technology. In the UK, more than 150,000 employers currently offer apprenticeships across more than 170 industries, according to UCAS.

Hailing on-the-job training Eight things you probably never knew about apprenticeships ...

We asked school-leavers, academics and business leaders to share their apprenticeship insights

Heidi Scrimgeour

You can get a degree as an apprentice

Apprenticeships are offered at different educational levels, so the qualification you could achieve depends on the apprenticeship you go for.

"Apprentices on higher and degree apprenticeship programmes achieve the same recognised degree and master's qualifications as those who follow the traditional university route," says Barry Rickhuss, marketing and business development officer of digital and lifelong learning at The University of Kent.

"This, coupled with the years of industry hands-on experience that apprentices gain, makes higher and degree apprenticeships a fantastic

route for people of any age and in any industry, which I passionately champion to employers, employees, parents and school children alike."

Apprenticeships aren't just for school-leavers

It's true; they're not just for those leaving school or looking for their first career opportunity - apprenticeships are suitable for people already in the workplace and those looking to re-skill, regardless of experience or education.

"Apprenticeships are a powerful driver for greater social mobility and they make so much sense in

a world where 85% of the jobs people are doing today won't exist in 2030," says Euan Blair (yes, Tony Blair's son), co-founder and CEO of apprenticeships firm Multiverse, formerly known as WhiteHat.

The pay has improved

"I was shocked at how little apprentices were paid," says blogger and social media consultant Emma Shilton. "I did my NVQ in business admin during my gap year in 2002 and was only on £75 a week."

Shilton accepted the wage because she was gaining valuable experience in an office environment alongside her qualification, but, happily, things have since improved for apprentices. There are different rates of pay depending on your age, but apprentices are paid at least national minimum wage and are entitled to at least 20 days' paid holiday per year, plus bank holidays.

"I didn't know that you can do an apprenticeship as part of a job, and be paid more than the minimum apprenticeship wage too," says Laura Jenkins. "Having discovered that, I'm now doing an apprenticeship in digital marketing."

'I didn't know that you can do an apprenticeship and be paid more than the minimum apprenticeship wage'

Laura Jenkins
Apprentice

'Higher and degree apprenticeship programmes achieve the same recognised qualifications as a degree or master's'

Barry Rickhuss
University of Kent

Employers like apprenticeships

Apprenticeships offer significant benefits to employers, too. "Employers can claim national insurance and receive payments from the government as part of setting up apprenticeships within a company," says Carlene Jackson, CEO of tech company Cloud9 Insight, an award-winning provider of training and apprenticeship programmes.

"Companies such as Deloitte, IBM and Rolls Royce have all used apprenticeships to entice young people into their organisations -



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