

Mencap wants people with a learning disability to have the opportunity to experience the benefits that paid employment can bring, and apprenticeships are an important pathway for making this vision a reality.

Apprenticeships can be well suited to people with a learning disability as they combine practical training on the job with study. An apprentice normally works alongside experienced staff in a company or organisation to gain job-specific skills. The apprentices we have supported are proof of how well this programme can work for people with a learning disability - some of them have even achieved a distinction!

Whilst some organisations use the term “supported apprenticeship”, it is important to note that people with a learning disability and/or those with additional needs use the same apprenticeship frameworks and standards as all other apprentices. The only difference is that training organisations may be able to get extra funding to support someone with additional needs, and they may have more flexibility in the English and maths requirements. More information about the support outlined in this document is available in the DfE guidelines for apprenticeship delivery.

Supporting an apprentice with a learning disability

People with a learning disability may require additional support to complete their apprenticeship. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have set out policies and additional funding to support employers and providers in making apprenticeships more accessible to people with a learning disability.

1. Flexibilities in relation to the maths and English requirements of an apprenticeship

To meet the Gateway criteria for the End Point Assessment, a Level 2 Intermediate apprentice normally needs to hold or achieve Level 1 Functional Skills English and maths, as well as study towards and take assessments at Level 2 (they do not need to pass Level 2, unless their specific apprenticeship requires it). Whilst every effort should be made to enable apprentices to achieve the regular minimum maths and English requirements, there is some flexibility for those who might not be able to meet those requirements.

People with learning difficulties and disabilities who are able to meet the occupational standard of their apprenticeship but will struggle to achieve the regular English and maths minimum requirements, may be able to complete Entry Level 3 Functional Skills instead.

This option can be considered on an individual, case-by-case basis where all of the following conditions have been satisfied:

- The apprentice has either an existing or previously issued Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan, a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA).
- The provider holds or has conducted an evidenced assessment demonstrating that even with support, reasonable adjustments and stepping stone qualifications, the apprentice cannot achieve English or maths to the minimum level due to their learning difficulty or disability.
- The employer and provider must reasonably expect that the apprentice will be able to successfully achieve all other aspects of the apprenticeship requirements, become occupationally competent and achieve Entry Level 3 in the adjusted subject(s) before the end of their apprenticeship.
- There are no industry-specific minimum requirements.

The ESFA will fund Functional Skills English or maths at Level 1 or below if an initial assessment shows the apprentice needs to study a lower level.

2. Part-time apprenticeships

Another possible adjustment for an apprentice with a learning disability, or other disability, is to complete the apprenticeship part-time.

If the apprentice works fewer than 30 hours a week, the provider simply extends the minimum duration of the apprenticeship (pro rata) to take account of this (see below). This extended duration must be agreed by the apprentice, the employer and the provider, and the provider must record the expected duration on the Individual learning record (ILR).

If part-time working is agreed, the provider must:

- record the agreed average number of hours each week
- give evidence that shows why this working pattern is needed
- extend the minimum duration using the following formula: $12 \times 30 / \text{average weekly hours} = \text{new minimum duration in months}$.

3. Funding for apprentices with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

There are a range of different funding streams available to employers and apprenticeship providers to support people with a learning disability. Apprentices with SEN are eligible for the same funding for the core costs of their training as all other apprentices. Employers and apprenticeship providers may also be able to access the additional funds outlined below to support someone with a learning disability.

3.1 Learning Support Funding

Learning Support Funding (LSF1) is paid at a rate of £150 per month to help providers make reasonable adjustments for an individual's learning needs as part of their apprenticeship. LSF1 is provided via the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). To access LSF1 the provider must:

- carry out an assessment to identify what support the apprentice needs;
- deliver support and review the apprentice's progress/continuing needs;

- record and gather appropriate evidence to show that support has been given and relevant outcomes are recorded;
- report in the ILR that the apprentice has a learning support need and what that support need is.

3.2 Excess Learning Support

If the cost of support exceeds the fixed monthly rate of £150, an apprenticeship provider can claim additional funding (up to £19,000 per apprentice) from the ESFA using [the Earnings Adjustment Statement \(EAS\)](#). The EAS can also be used to claim learning support funds when it is only required for one month and would not normally be paid due to timing issues. The EAS is submitted via the 'Submit Learner Data' portal in line with the normal ILR Data Return schedule.

If the cost of providing additional support exceeds £19,000, the provider can apply for Exceptional Learning Support from the ESFA, which is reviewed on an individual basis. This includes:

- learners aged 19 and over with an identified learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD) without an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan
- all age apprentices that have an identified LDD and are with or without an EHC plan
- advanced loans-funded learners with an identified LDD without an EHC plan (as part of the advanced learner loans bursary fund).

3.3 Additional funding for young apprentices with an EHC plan

Additional payments of £1000 are available for providers and employers with apprentices aged 19-24 who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan or were previously in care.

Employers can, but are not obliged to, donate their £1000 to the training provider.

3.4 Access to Work

Access to Work is a discretionary government (DWP) scheme that helps pay for workplace adjustments, such as a job coach. It can also help with extra employment costs that result from a person's disability. This can include a workplace assessment, Mental Health Support Service assistance or a contribution towards specialist aids or equipment that might be required in the workplace. Access to Work covers adjustments made in addition to an employer's reasonable adjustments obligations as part of the Equality Act 2010.

For further information, please [see Fact sheet 6](#).

3.5 Extra support for small employers (relevant to learning disability)

The government recently changed the way it is supporting smaller employers to take on apprentices. If an employer employs less than 50 people, the government will fund 100% of apprenticeship training costs, up to the maximum value of the funding band for the apprenticeship, and waive the employer contribution. To be eligible, on the first day of their apprenticeship the apprentice must be:

- between 16 and 18 years old (or 15 years old if the apprentice's 16th birthday is between the last
- Friday of June and 31 August); or
- between 19 and 24 years old and have an EHC plan provided by their local authority.

Before any apprenticeship starts, the employer must have evidence that the apprentice and the employer are eligible for waiving the employer contribution. The employer must provide evidence that they employed an average of 49 or fewer employees in the 365 days before the apprentice was recruited, and must give this to the main apprenticeship provider to keep in the evidence pack.

Relevant documents

- [ESFA Apprenticeship funding rules and guidance for employers \(Aug 2023 to July 2024\)](#).
- [Apprenticeship technical funding guidance](#).
- [Specification for the individualised learner record for 2023 to 2024](#).

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