

Cash boost to create new flexible approach to apprenticeships

Sectors including the creative, agriculture and construction industries can now bid for a share of a £7 million fund to support the creation of new flexible apprenticeships, unlocking more opportunities for people to develop the skills they need to get good jobs.

Apprenticeships are at least 12 months long, so some sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as digital, adult social care, transport and manufacturing have found it challenging to benefit from the high-quality opportunities available.

The fund will establish a small number of agencies that will set up new flexi-job apprenticeships so an apprentice can work across a range of projects and with different employers to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be occupationally competent.

For example, this would enable an apprentice working in film, TV or theatre to work on different productions during their apprenticeship, or an apprentice in construction to fulfil several contracts to complete their apprenticeship – such as working on a home refurbishment or a project for an office block. Meanwhile, someone working in adult social care could undertake care placements with a range of employers – including home care via a care agency, and in nursing home or hospice settings.

Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills Gillian Keegan said:

We want to build an apprenticeship system that enables everyone to get the experience and knowledge they require to get the job they want, while ensuring employers have a diverse talent pipeline to meet their skills needs.

Our flexi-job apprenticeships will unleash exciting new opportunities in sectors such as the creative industries and construction where employment is increasingly flexible and project-based, while also helping larger organisations to grow starts in their supply chains, levelling up chances for people to build the life they want.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

I'm thrilled that apprentices and employers in freelance industries such as film and TV can start to benefit from our new flexi-job apprenticeship scheme as part of our Plan for Jobs.

Together, we're creating exciting new opportunities for apprentices

and employers – harnessing the skill and talent of today for the jobs of tomorrow.

The announcement comes ahead of the start later this month of the ScreenSkills pilot for apprenticeships in the film and TV industry, with Netflix and WarnerMedia. Supported by a £100,000 investment from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, this pioneering programme has been designed to help better facilitate and boost apprenticeships in the UK's booming screen industries.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

It's hugely exciting that Government is working with some of the world's leading content producers, as well providing funding to make apprenticeships more flexible. Together, these steps mean many more young people from all backgrounds will have the chance to get a start in the UK's world-class film and TV industry.

ScreenSkills will host an induction event later this week where 20 apprentices from across the country will meet for the first time before their industry placements begin in September. Through their apprenticeships, they will get hands on experience as members of the production crew on the sets of big budget films, high-end TV shows and documentaries from Netflix and WarnerMedia. By undertaking multiple placements over 13 months, the apprentices will gain a breadth of experience which will serve as a solid foundation for their future freelance careers in the sector.

Seetha Kumar, ScreenSkills CEO, said:

As our diverse group of fantastic new apprentices start their induction later this week, we welcome this announcement which could unlock much needed apprenticeship opportunities for freelance talent and enable social mobility in key areas of skills needs for both our fast-growing sector and the wider creative industries.

Apprenticeships are playing a vital role in ensuring people have the skills they need to get the jobs they want. The flexi-job apprenticeship fund launched today will extend this offer further, giving apprentices access to even more careers as we build back better from the pandemic.

The response to a consultation the Government launched in April 2021 has also been published today, which highlights strong support for the introduction of flexible apprenticeships as well as wider flexibilities in apprenticeships.

Jocelyne Underwood, Manchester International Festival, said:

In the creative sector there is a huge will to do apprenticeships

but very little experience. This fund should spur the market on as a catalyst.

Kath Geraghty, Workforce Development Manager, Royal National Theatre, said:

Flexi-job apprenticeships will enable a wider range of employers in the sector to take on apprentices, broaden the experience of each apprentice, and prepare them to work in a sector where freelancing and project-based work are the norm.

Richard Turner, St Martin's Group and Network Rail (responding in capacity as Chair of SMG), said:

As well as the challenges of making apprenticeships work within the gig-economy, flexi-job apprenticeships will also encourage new starts amongst SMEs and help tackle labour shortfalls. There is also potential in flexi-job apprenticeships being deployed for emerging, niche, or highly specialised skills, including data and digital.

Lord Puttman, film producer and educator said:

Our creative industries are a key driver of GDP and highly skilled jobs, a role that's become ever more important in the wake of the pandemic. The launch of these flexible apprenticeships, which take account of the specific employment patterns of the creative sectors, is hugely welcome. This will help ensure that a new generation of young people have the chance to seize the opportunities presented by a decade of spectacular growth.

The first apprenticeships organised through flexi-job apprenticeship agencies are expected to start in early 2022.

Flexi-job apprenticeships are just one of several improvements the Government is making this year to support employers to offer more apprenticeship opportunities, so more people can get on the path to a great career. These include increased cash incentives for employers hiring new apprentices, and making it easier for employers to spend unused funds – so that smaller businesses in their supply chain or region can benefit from the productivity and skills apprentices can bring to their business.

These improvements build on the reforms set out in the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#), which will ensure employers are at the heart of plans to make sure more people have the skills they need to progress and secure a great career.

Notes to editors:

- The fund will make £7 million available in England across 2021-22 and 2022-23. Organisations can apply for funding between £100,000 and £1 million to set up new flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- It may also support existing good quality apprenticeship training agencies (ATAs) to diversify as flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- The £7 million flexi-job apprenticeship fund will be a competed grant process and applicants will also have to apply to join the register of flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- Applicants must meet a robust set of criteria as well as being able to provide details of how they will meet the needs of their chosen sector or region, and ensure apprentices and placement employers receive a high-quality apprenticeship experience.