

[News story: All employers in England to have better access to buy high quality apprenticeships](#)

Every apprenticeship employer in England will soon have access to the [full benefits](#) of the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) award winning [apprenticeship service](#). With the first employers and providers commencing their use from Summer 2019.

Currently, only apprenticeship [levy-paying](#) employers – those with an annual total pay bill of over £3m – or those in receipt of a transfer of apprenticeship funds – are able to use the full benefits that the apprenticeship service brings.

Whilst all other employers (those who do not pay the levy) have had access to some of the functions, such as [find an apprenticeship](#), the ESFA is opening up the apprenticeship service to employers of all size, regardless of whether they pay the levy or not. This will provide employers with the choice over how they want to control the use of apprenticeships and make them work for their business.

Over the course of the next year, all employers will be able to control how they pay for their apprenticeship training, and assess and recruit their apprentices. They will also have access to a larger pool of training providers to deliver more relevant training for them.

Eileen Milner, ESFA Chief Executive said:

Moving non-levy employers onto the apprenticeship service will give small and medium sized businesses a greater choice of quality training providers, and the opportunity to have more control over apprenticeship training decisions for their business.

Employers understand the needs of their sector and know better than anyone about how best to use their apprenticeship funding.

By working with smaller employers, the ESFA will get insight into the skills needs of a wider range of businesses which will help us to remove barriers employers have when recruiting an apprentice.

Dominique Unsworth BEM, SME Ambassador, said:

Moving the significant numbers of employers that do not pay the

levy onto the service will bring greater opportunities for employer choice; it will empower more companies – especially small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) – to connect with apprenticeships, to make more informed choices around the quality of the apprenticeship marketplace.

It's vital that we make it as simple as possible for SMEs to engage with high quality providers. As the chief executive of a small organisation myself, I am already seeing real benefits and I want others to do so as well.

To give employers and training providers time to prepare to take full advantage of the move to the apprenticeship service and ensure stability in the marketplace, the ESFA will introduce this change over a transition period, more details of which we will share shortly.

During the transition period, the ESFA will invite non-levy employers to the apprenticeship service for user testing. The ESFA will test the service with a selection of employers and partnered providers through an Expressions of Interest (EOI) phase.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Mark Dawe said:

This is a critical and welcome advance in the reform of apprenticeships. By releasing all employers and providers from the previous contracting system, the government is enabling employers to exercise genuine choice over the apprenticeships that they wish to offer and any registered provider needed to support the training.

It will lead to increased workforce productivity among SMEs and make a real difference to social mobility with more apprenticeship opportunities available to young people across the country.

Information for providers

During the transition period, more details will be released shortly, the ESFA will continue to run contracts with providers who have won provision through ESFA procurements for apprenticeship starts with non-levy employers.

The contracts will provide stability and access to training in the marketplace to ensure a gradual and managed transition to the apprenticeship service. This will give the ESFA time to create the right service functionality to meet employer needs.

Moving employers who don't pay the levy onto the apprenticeship service will give them access to training providers who have successfully entered the [Register of apprenticeship training providers](#), not just those who were successful in previous procurements.

The ESFA will begin a staged communication process with the sector through GOV.UK and in [ESFA Update](#), this will detail the full transitional arrangements.

Apprenticeship Service

- the service won the [Digital Public Service Innovation of the Year award](#) at the 2018 Digital Leader Awards
- the service has enabled over 17,000 levy-paying employers to take control of their apprenticeships and make better decisions for their organisation
- the find an apprenticeship function on the apprenticeship service, has received 57 million visits – 2.6 million citizens have created an account and more than 6 million candidate applications have been submitted
- employer ease of use and satisfaction scores have consistently been positive since launch. The find an apprenticeship function has processed nearly 6 million transactions since its launch in 2016, and when surveyed, gained a user satisfaction rate of 90%.

Through the apprenticeship service employers can:

- manage their apprenticeship funding
- select a suitable [apprenticeship standard or framework](#) and an [end point assessment organisation](#)
- advertise an apprenticeship and select a suitable provider to deliver their apprenticeship training
- give real-time feedback on the quality of training provision they receive
- have control over the amount of apprenticeship funding paid to their training provider on their behalf, so there is better intelligence to maximise their apprenticeship training spend
- provide government with apprenticeship demand data to ensure an valuable apprenticeship market place.