

News story: New leader board to celebrate top apprenticeship employers

Top employers who are helping to lead the 'apprenticeship revolution', get more people into skilled jobs and boost British business will be celebrated through a new leader board and quality mark, Education Secretary Damian Hinds announced today.

To mark National Apprenticeship Week (4 -8 March), an annual celebration of the transformative effect high-quality apprenticeships can have on people's lives, the Education Secretary announced plans to create:

- A new leader board of top apprenticeship employers – the new rankings will be independently judged and published annually and are expected to rate the Top 100 large apprentice employers as well as the top 50 SMEs; and
- A new quality mark for apprenticeships – developed in partnership with Community Interest Company 'Investors in People' to shine a light on high-quality apprentice employers.

The new leader board will recognise and promote outstanding apprentice employers, encourage employers to improve the quality of their apprentice offer, and help potential apprentices and parents to easily identify opportunities with high performing employers. The quality mark will be a symbol for accredited employers to display and will serve as an assurance of excellence.

The government overhauled the apprenticeship system almost two years ago – working closely with leading businesses to design new high-quality apprenticeship opportunities known as 'standards' so apprentices gain the skills that employers need to that will help them land great jobs or progress in their careers.

Apprenticeships are now longer, higher-quality, with more off-the-job training and a more rigorous assessment at the end. There are now more than 400 apprenticeship standards available in everything from accountancy, fashion and law to teaching, nursing and plumbing.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

We've transformed apprenticeships in this country. But that wouldn't have been possible without the employers who have been at the forefront of developing new high- quality apprenticeship opportunities that provide great training, and the employers who have embraced the huge benefits apprenticeships are bringing to their workplaces.

This National Apprenticeship Week, I want to celebrate their contribution – giving thousands of people of all ages and

backgrounds the opportunity to learn new skills and secure an exciting career.

Almost 164,000 people started on one of the new higher quality apprenticeship standards in 2017/18, a more than six-fold increase on the previous year.

New analysis by the Department for Education has further underlined the importance employers are placing on apprenticeships after it showed that the top ten employers from the government's Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN) employ a total of 47,000 apprentices; with an additional 100,000 apprenticeship opportunities in the pipeline. The AAN is a national network of around 500 employers across the country including Lloyds Banking Group, Gatwick Airport and Nissan.

Jason Holt CBE, Chairman of the AAN said:

It's absolutely crucial that we continue to connect more employers with apprenticeships. Apprenticeship Ambassador Network members have seen the huge benefits of apprenticeships for employers and individuals. Our advocacy role does have a definite impact on take-up with employers.

National Apprenticeship Week runs from 4 to 8 March 2019 and aims to highlight the benefits of apprenticeships to employers, individuals, local communities and the wider economy. The 'Blaze a Trail' themed week will see a range of activities and events being hosted across the country to celebrate apprenticeships.

In January, the Department for Education launched its new campaign 'Fire it Up' to help challenge outdated perceptions of apprenticeships and raise awareness of the huge variety of apprenticeship options available for people of all ages and backgrounds.

The new campaign includes national TV and social media adverts, [and a new website](#) that provides helpful advice and information as well as access to thousands of apprenticeship opportunities across the country.

In April 2017 the government introduced the apprenticeship levy to create long term sustainable funding for apprenticeships. The levy is giving employers a real opportunity to invest in high-quality training, helping to grow their business and get the skilled workforce they need to thrive and succeed. Only around 2% of all employers in England pay the levy, but this investment has supported almost 50 per cent of all new apprenticeship starts in 2017/18.

Currently, levy-paying employers can transfer up to 10% of their annual apprenticeship funds to other employers if they choose. From April this will increase 25% to provide even greater flexibility for businesses to spend their funds, and so they can support smaller employers in their supply chain to provide high-quality apprenticeship training.

The government is transforming technical education so there are range of high- quality choices on offer post-16. This includes working with industry to create more high-quality apprenticeships opportunities for people of all ages, and introducing new T Levels from 2020 – the technical equivalent to A Levels –so that young people learn the skills and get the experience needed to land a great job in a skilled profession, go onto a higher level apprenticeship or university.