

# 2026 Apprenticeship Guide for Early Years Settings

How to use the Growth & Skills Levy and funded training for talent attraction, staff development and upskilling.





## About LMP Education

LMP Education is a nationally recognised, award-winning apprenticeship training provider. We deliver innovative solutions for staff development, upskilling, and recruitment. LMP Education is a market leader in apprenticeship training for early years settings and also works extensively with businesses of all sizes, local authorities, schools, MATs, councils and charities.

With a strong focus on workforce growth, LMP Education helps early years and nursery settings to train existing staff and attract new talent through high-quality apprenticeship programmes.

We are dedicated to inspiring ambition, creating inspirational learning journeys and delivering excellence in learning.

Our mission is to drive positive social change by providing access to education, training, and career development across the UK.

## Why Choose LMP

**We aim to ensure every early year setting uses their Growth and Skills Levy funds for effective and impactful learning and development.**

LMP Education delivers training to over 1000 organisations and we work with many nurseries of different sizes, schools and early years settings.

**We can support implementing your apprenticeship strategy and help create meaningful career pathways for your early years staff.**

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# The Benefits of Apprenticeships

Using early years apprenticeships can offer a wide range of benefits to employers, both practical and strategic. Here are some of the main benefits:

## 1 Develop a Skilled Workforce

- **Tailored training:** Apprenticeships allow employers to **train staff to meet their specific setting's needs** (curriculum approach, safeguarding policies, ethos, etc.).
- **Consistent quality:** Apprentices are trained to **your standards from the start**, helping to maintain consistency in early years care and education.

## 2 Cost-Effective Recruitment and Training

- **Government funding:** Large employers can use their **Growth and Skills Levy** funds and smaller employers often receive **95–100% government funding**.
- **Lower recruitment costs:** Apprenticeships reduce the need to hire externally for fully qualified staff later.
- **Wages:** Apprentices can be paid the **apprentice rate** while training, making it a cost-effective way to build staff capacity.

## 3 Improved Staff Retention and Loyalty

- Apprentices who are **trained and supported in-house** often feel more valued and are **more likely to stay** long-term.
- Developing staff from within creates **clear progression routes**, boosting morale and reducing turnover.

## 4 Increased Productivity and Motivation

- Apprentices bring **fresh ideas, enthusiasm and current knowledge** from their training.
- Existing staff who mentor apprentices often report **renewed motivation and professional pride**.

## 5 Support Workforce Development and Ofsted Priorities

- Having apprentices in the team demonstrates a **commitment to continuous professional development (CPD)**.
- A well-trained workforce contributes to **higher quality provision**, which supports better Ofsted outcomes.

## 6 Easier Succession Planning

- Apprenticeships create a **pipeline of qualified practitioners**, room leaders, and future managers.
- This helps employers plan for **growth and replacement** without sudden skill gaps.

# What are Apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are work-based training programmes that combine practical on-the-job experience with structured learning. They enable employees to gain new skills while working.

They are available across various industries, including education, and provide a cost-effective way for early years settings to develop their workforce.



## Key Features of Apprenticeships:

### Available to All Early Years Staff

Apprenticeship training is available to individuals aged 16 and above who seek to learn through practical experience while working; there is no upper age limit. It is suitable for existing staff looking to upskill or for new staff members joining the team.

### Can Support Career Development or Change

Young adults often pursue apprenticeships, but they are also ideal for people of any age who want to learn new skills or change careers.

### Earn While You Learn

Everyone on an apprenticeship training programme receives a wage while working in their role and undertaking structured training.

### Government-Funded

Apprenticeships are fully or partially funded by the Growth and Skills Levy, reducing training costs and early years budgets.

### Work-Based Learning

Training is tailored to the employee's role, making it highly relevant and applicable.

### Industry-Recognised Qualifications

Apprenticeships lead to nationally recognised credentials, including diplomas and degrees.

### Available at Different Levels

Ranging from Level 2 (entry-level) to Level 7 (equivalent to a master's degree).

# Understanding the Growth and Skills Levy

Apprenticeships are funded via the Growth and Skills Levy. Many early years settings face challenges in understanding the levy and apprenticeship funding complexities.

## What Is It?

The Growth and Skills Levy is a new version of the previously used Apprenticeship Levy. The aim of the new levy is to provide a more flexible offer to employers and learners. The Growth and Skills levy claims to help people learn new, relevant high-quality skills at work and fuel innovation in businesses across the country.

Key facts:

- Requires large employers with a wage bill over £3 million to contribute 0.5% of their total payroll.
- Funds collected are allocated for apprenticeship training.
- The levy is paid into a central digital apprenticeship service (DAS) account that employers can access.
- Funding is available for new and existing employees age 16+ (no upper age limit).
- Training must be delivered by an approved training provider, such as LMP Education.
- Growth and Skills Levy funds expire after 24 months and then they are returned to the government.

## LMP Education Levy Support Team

LMP Education has a team of Growth and Skills Levy experts who can provide advice and guidance in getting the best out of the levy.

We can help with integrating apprenticeships into the early years settings overall staff development and talent acquisition strategies.

Apprenticeships can be used to develop talent as part of a People and Talent Strategy and also for Continued Professional Development.

## Did you know?

**£156million** of unused levy funds were returned to the government last year.

Some early years leaders are unaware of the Growth and Skills Levy or available funds.



## Growth and Skills Levy: The Facts

### When is the Growth and Skills Levy payable?

All eligible employers pay the 0.5% Growth and Skills Levy at the end of every month. This is collected automatically by HMRC through the employer's PAYE system.

### Who can use the Growth and Skills Levy?

The Growth and Skills Levy can only be used for early years settings in England, as the legislation differs across the devolved nations. This is why levy-funded apprenticeships must work at least 50% of their time within England. The amount of levy available is directly linked to the proportion of employees living in England.

### What can the Levy be spent on?

The Growth and Skills Levy can only be spent on apprenticeship training and assessments. The levy funds can be used to upskill existing staff and train new apprentices.

While the levy cannot cover staff wages, it's a fantastic way to enhance professional development and benefit your workforce. Use your trust's levy funds to empower your team and create new growth opportunities!

## Recent Levy Reforms

### Key Differences: Growth and Skills Levy vs. Apprenticeship Levy

- 1. Flexibility & Scope:** the new levy allows employers to fund shorter, targeted "modular" training courses to fill specific skill gaps, whereas the old levy was largely restricted to full, long-term apprenticeships.
- 2. Training Options:** the Growth & Skills Levy introduces "apprenticeship units" (30–140 hours), which allow for faster upskilling compared to the minimum 12-month requirement of the old system.
- 3. Fund Expiry:** funds will now expire in 12 months instead of the previous 24-month period, requiring faster utilisation.
- 4. Level 7 Restrictions:** from April 2026, levy funds cannot be used to fund new apprenticeships at Level 7 (master's level) for individuals aged 22 and over.
- 5. Foundation Apprenticeships:** the new system introduces foundation apprenticeships designed to help younger workers start their careers.
- 6. Co-investment:** the government's co-investment rate for training costs (when levy funds run out) changes to 25%, aiming to encourage more direct investment from businesses.

# Who Can Do an Apprenticeship in an Early Years Setting?

Apprenticeships are not just for new recruits—existing early years staff can also enrol in apprenticeship training to upskill in their current roles. Common roles include:

## Early Years

Gain a license to practice and support young children in nurseries and early years settings.

## Safeguarding

Become a safeguarding support officer within an early years setting.

## Business Operations Administration

Enhance organisational and people management skills.

## Finance

Grow your finance team with the latest AAT qualifications.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for an apprenticeship, you need to hold a GCSE C/4 or equivalent in maths and English.

For level 3 apprenticeships and above, where these are not held Functional Skills Level 2 (maths and English) can be embedded into the programme.

For level 2 apprenticeships, a lower threshold applies, more information available on request from LMP Education.

Anyone in England aged 16 years old and above, whether employed, unemployed or leaving school can do an apprenticeship.

There is no upper age limit to do an apprenticeship.

You must have lived in the UK for 3+ years minimum and a valid form of UK ID

You can hold a higher-level qualification, such as an A Level or a degree, but you must not have prior learning within the apprenticeship's area of study.

# Upskill and Develop Your Staff Using Apprenticeships

By using apprenticeships strategically, early years settings can develop their workforce, fill skills gaps, and create a sustainable pathway for career growth—all while making the most of available funding!



Early Years Educator



Early Years Practitioner



Early Years Senior Leader



Business Administration



Finance Assistant



Safeguarding



# Recruiting an **Apprentice**



**At LMP Education, we're passionate about helping you build a strong, dynamic early years team. That's why we offer a free recruitment service to help you bring talented new apprentices on board.**

We can help you advertise and fill a range of exciting apprentice roles, including:

- Early Years Lead Practitioner
- Early Years Practitioner
- Early Years Educator
- Early Years Senior Leader
- Business Administrator
- Safeguarding Support Officer



## Testimonial

"LMP Education assists us with recruitment by advertising the post, shortlisting, and referencing requests and interview invites. They are always willing to help in any way. I am confident I can rely on them to direct queries or concerns we may have to the right person"

*– Suzanne Caffery, Operational Manager, Oasis Academy Clarksfield*

## Apprentice Wages

We recommend reviewing your early years setting budget to afford the National Apprenticeship Wage of £8 per hour (from April 2026) for the first 12 months and ensuring that they are employed to cover the duration of their apprenticeship. After a year, the apprentices will be entitled to the minimum wage for their age.

## Incentive Payments

You could receive a £3,000 incentive payment from the government when recruiting:

- Apprentices aged 16–18
- Apprentices under 25 with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)



# Learner Testimonials

“I had been volunteering as a scout leader and I loved working with the children. I wanted to pursue a career working with young children, and this apprenticeship provided the perfect opportunity to work and learn.

I have gained so much hands-on experience within a primary school setting. Every day is different and has different challenges, but I love supporting the children’s learning and development. I find it very rewarding to watch them grow and develop.

The support from LMP education has been amazing. I have been supported every step of the way by my LMP tutor and love working in this school. I am happy that I have been offered a full-time permanent role. I couldn’t recommend the Early Years Educator apprenticeship route more highly!”

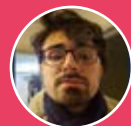


– **Sophie, Early Years Educator, Braywich Court School**

“I chose to do an apprenticeship as an Early Years Educator as I wanted to explore a career within the childcare sector. This programme has allowed me to learn whilst being a part of a working early years environment.

The best thing about my role is the people and watching the achievements of the children and knowing that I have had a positive impact on them.

The most important skill that I have learnt is confidence. I feel a lot more confident with the children and discussing their needs with parents. The next step in my career is to gain a QTS and become a teacher.”



– **Dylan, Early Years Educator, Puddleducks Nursery**

“I have always wanted to work with young children and so when I saw the apprenticeship advertised, I was really interested in learning about childcare in more detail whilst also working.

I love seeing the children learn and develop each day using the skills I have taught them or supported them with. I have learnt about the different milestones for child development and this has helped me determine whether a child is where they should be and how I can support them.

After I complete my apprenticeship, I would like to further my knowledge and skills and use them to maybe go on and do a higher level of training.”



– **Sophie, Early Years Educator, Little Scallywags Day Nursery**

# FREE LMP Assisted Recruitment Service

***Are you ready to welcome a new apprentice? Let’s Make It Happen — Together!***

If you have an apprentice vacancy and would like to take advantage of the LMP free recruitment service, simply follow the easy steps below.

- 1. Get in Touch:** Share your job description and requirements with the LMP Recruitment Team at [apprenticeships@lmpeducation.org](mailto:apprenticeships@lmpeducation.org).
- 2. Advertise Your Role:** Once approved, your vacancy will be advertised on the Find My Apprenticeship (Gov.uk) website, as well as other platforms like Indeed and Bamboo HR — reaching a wide pool of potential candidates.
- 3. Screening & Application:** LMP Education will carefully screen applicants for eligibility and invite suitable candidates to complete an application form.
- 4. Candidate Selection:** You’ll receive candidate bios, CVs, and completed applications to review. Once you’ve had a look, you can shortlist the candidates you’d like to interview.
- 5. Interview Coordination:** Round one interviews will take place at your early years setting. We’ll work closely with you to arrange dates and times, ensuring a seamless process.
- 6. Appointing Your Apprentice:** Once you’ve found the perfect match, let us know! We’ll guide you and your new apprentice through the onboarding process, making sure everything is set up for success.
- 7. Ongoing Support & Success:** Your apprentice starts their role, and their apprenticeship enrolment is finalised. From there, the LMP Education Team will be with you every step of the way, providing ongoing support until your apprentice successfully completes their programme.

***We’re here to make the process as simple and rewarding as possible — so you can focus on nurturing new talent and strengthening your early years team.***

# How Is Apprenticeship Training Delivered?

**LMP Education delivers apprenticeship training in compliance with government funding rules and Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework guidelines.**

Our blended learning approach is individualised to the needs of the learner and early years setting which allows us to provide a degree of flexibility in our apprenticeships. LMP's tutors will create a plan to ensure that the training requirement is met in a way that will have a positive impact on the learner and employer.

Delivery is predominantly remote and consists of regular one-to-one sessions once every 4 weeks (usually lasting 1 hour), webinars and workshops (which are recorded for ease), various assignments and assessments, observations, and formal reviews every 8 to 12 weeks with employer, apprentice and tutor. Where observations are required, these can be done on-site.

Off-the-job training will be needed for all our apprenticeships. Learners do not need to take time out of the workplace to attend college for training, meaning more quality time spent at the early years setting.

Learners and line managers will be given access to BUD. This is where learners' work is uploaded, evidenced, marked, and tracked.



## What to Expect from LMP Education

- High quality training
- Industry-relevant curriculum content
- Commitment to excellence and quality assurance
- Expert support from experienced tutors
- Focus on personal and professional development
- Safe, inclusive and supportive environment
- Engaging and flexible learning platform

# What is Off-the-Job Training?

Off-the-job training is an essential part of every apprenticeship, designed to help apprentices and existing staff members develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need to succeed — all during their normal working hours. This valuable training enhances both the learner's development and the overall impact they make in the workplace.

According to the government funding rules for apprenticeships it is required for apprentices who work over 30 hours a week to spend 20% of their time or 6 hours per week doing off the job training.

**Off-the-job training is directly relevant to the apprenticeship and can take many forms, including:**

- Individual study time for reflection and growth
- Apprenticeship tutor sessions and webinars
- Group learning opportunities (like inset days)
- Shadowing experienced colleagues
- Mentoring from line managers
- 1:1 performance reviews and feedback
- Collaborative planning and resource preparation with class teachers, SENCo or external professionals
- Attending meetings and briefings

At LMP, the supportive tutors will work closely with you to create a personalised training plan that meets all requirements — while delivering meaningful benefits to both your team and the wider early years community.

## What doesn't count as off-the-job training?

- Training unrelated to the apprenticeship standard
- Progress reviews or on-programme assessments
- Training outside normal working hours



## See off-the-job training as an opportunity!

With the right support, off-the-job training becomes a powerful tool for growth-enhancing skills, boosting confidence, and driving success. We're here to make the process as simple and beneficial as possible, so your apprentices and existing staff members can thrive and your early years setting can continue to flourish.

# Empowering Growth, Enriching Lives



## LMP Values

With a strong focus on education and social impact, we work together to create sustainable opportunities that empower individuals and communities.

LMP Education is a team industry professionals committed to fostering learning, personal development and career success. Every day, we push the boundaries to enhance opportunities for our learners, placing them at the core of everything we do.

We enrich lives by equipping individuals with valuable skills, building confidence, and creating pathways to fulfilling careers. Our core values drive our mission and shape the impact we make:



### Be Inspiring

Motivate and empower others to reach their full potential.



### Take Action

Proactively create opportunities and drive meaningful change.



### Have Compassion

Support and uplift those around us with empathy and care.



### Ensure Equality

Champion fairness, inclusion and diversity in all we do.

LMP Education delivers apprenticeships, short courses, CPD, adult education and employability support programmes.

## The Impact of Apprenticeships

86%

of employers agree or strongly agree that apprentices have made a positive impact on their organisation

91%

of learners said that they felt supported during their apprenticeship

100%

of learners said they feel or know how to stay safe

94%

of learners agree that their apprenticeship is developing them in the workplace

89%

of employers agree their apprentice is developing the needed skills to support their business

88%

of learners said they are enjoying their apprenticeship

# LMP Education Added Values

## Mental Health:

LMP Education ensures mental health is at the forefront of what we do and we work to ensure that all our employees and people we work with can share their feelings and mental health struggles in a safe environment and they can receive the right support and advice.

With each apprentice, we make sure that we maintain an open line of communication, calling them at least once a month to check in on their mental well-being, seeing how they're feeling and if they're enjoying their apprenticeship. They will also have monthly meetings with their individual tutor who will always check in with them.

## Safeguarding:

Safeguarding is a top priority at LMP Education, we believe that:

- The safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults should always be of paramount importance, whatever the circumstances.
- Everyone in a role that is working with children, young people and vulnerable adults has a moral and legal responsibility to safeguard them.
- Special care is needed when dealing with children, young people and vulnerable adults whose age, inexperience or physical state makes them particularly vulnerable to abuse.

We offer a one-day safeguarding course to ensure that members of staff at your establishment have access to the correct accreditation required for their role. The course is run by an expert facilitator who specialises in safeguarding. Upon completion, attendees will have a better understanding of how to proactively identify and handle concerns about a child's welfare.

# Corporate Social Responsibility

At LMP, we believe that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has the power to create lasting positive change — benefiting early years setting, communities, and the environment alike.

We're passionate about turning ideas into action and specialise in crafting tailored CSR opportunities that deliver real, measurable impact. Whether you want to enhance your early year's outreach or strengthen community connections, we're here to help every step of the way.

Together, we can bring impactful initiatives to life, such as:

- Sponsoring an Early Years Educator Apprentice to support classroom learning
- Providing Food Hampers to families in need during festive seasons
- Partnering with Businesses to deliver inspiring career workshops for young people
- Organising Holiday and Residential camps for enrichment and exploration
- Supporting Alternative Education Programmes to help every child and young person thrive

***By working together, we can make a meaningful difference — empowering individuals, uplifting communities, and shaping a brighter future.***



# LMP Accreditations and Awards

## Rate My Apprenticeship Awards

LMP Education won the award for 'Best Training Provider in the UK' at the Rate My Apprenticeship Awards. This award is for training providers who go above and beyond in their delivery of apprenticeship qualifications and is based solely on reviews from learners.



## Ofsted

Being rated 'Ofsted Good' is something we are incredibly proud of and showed recognition of everything we do right as a training provider at LMP Education.

Ofsted's report quoted this:

**"LMP has successfully maintained the good quality of education for apprentices. Learners appreciate the high level of support and care they receive from their experienced LMP tutors."**



## Leaders In Safeguarding

LMP Education achieved 'Leaders in Safeguarding Gold' which is a huge achievement showing how effective and robust our safeguarding arrangements are.

It is awarded to organisations in recognition of their provision, practice and commitment to keeping children, young people and vulnerable adults safe so we are incredibly proud.



## Investors In People Platinum Award

Achieving 'Investors in People Platinum' reflects the incredible culture, commitment and people at LMP. Only 7% of organisation reach this standard and this reflects the energy, authenticity and dedication of staff.

The Directors of Investors in People commented "LMP consistently aims to develop and innovate its work and teams. LMP is a fine company that understands the value of people and the importance in learning."

# Get in touch

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If you're interested in recruiting an apprentice, placing an existing team member on an apprenticeship programme, or simply want to learn more about the benefits of apprenticeships, we'd love to hear from you!



## CONTACT INFORMATION

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**LMP Education**  
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**Book a discovery call  
to find out more**

