



RIGHTS RESPECT REWARDS

UNISON'S POCKET GUIDE
FOR APPRENTICES



WE HAVE GOT YOUR BACK

Starting an Apprenticeship is a great way of getting going at work. You can learn the ropes, continue to study and earn the whole time.

This UNISON pocket guide takes you through the key issues to look out for when you become an apprentice.

We put it together using our experience of getting a better deal for our 1.3 million members in the NHS, local councils and across the public sector – including hundreds of apprentices just like you.

We hope it helps you get the most out of your Apprenticeship.

SHOP AROUND

"Shop around for the right Apprenticeship the way you would if you were going to uni. There are many really good schemes out there and you can find one perfectly suited to you and your ambitions"

Mohamed, NHS apprentice



Mohamed Hussein used to think Apprenticeships were restricted to specialist trades. But when he began exploring his options, he discovered there were high-quality programmes run by prestigious employers in a wide range of different sectors.

He applied for several Apprenticeships, but he decided on the NHS after a great experience on a two-week pre-Apprenticeship scheme in the health service that combined employability skills with inspiring talks from current staff.

After finishing his Level 3 Business Administration Apprenticeship, Mohamed has progressed to a Level 4 programme with Health Education North Central and East London, where he is part of the workforce development team.

www.unison.co.uk/apprenticeships



GET IT IN WRITING



**Having a contract means your
employer is treating you with respect**

You should have a contract of employment that covers the whole of your Apprenticeship. By spelling out things like your rate of pay, the holiday you are entitled to and your organisation's arrangements for sick leave, your contract helps prevent your new employer from taking advantage.

As an apprentice, you are entitled to the exact same terms and conditions as anyone else who is an employee where you work.

Your contract will often also include your job description and the requirements of the role; arrangements for your training, including time to study; details of complaint/grievance procedures; and your notice period.

EARN AND LEARN

UNISON campaigned long and hard to make your pay part of the National Minimum Wage (NMW).

So if you are between 16 and 18 years old (or 19 and in the first year of your Apprenticeship), you must be paid at least £3.40 an hour. Otherwise, you must be paid the NMW for your age.

And we haven't stopped there: we are continuing to campaign for further increases in apprentice pay.

Many of the best employers pay more than the National Minimum Wage for Apprentices – sometimes a lot more



START RIGHT

After his A Levels, Craig Elvin took an Access to Apprenticeship course at his local hospital in King's Lynn and then he moved on to an Apprenticeship.

Now he works full-time in the medical equipment library, and is also the UNISON young members' officer at the hospital, helping new apprentices when they start.

For more about UNISON's young members network:

[www.unison.org.uk/about/
what-we-do/fairness-
equality/young-members/](http://www.unison.org.uk/about/what-we-do/fairness-equality/young-members/)

www.unison.co.uk/apprenticeships

"I chose my Apprenticeship because learning while you work was something that appealed to me"
Craig, 21, former NHS apprentice





QUALITY TRAINING FOR YOU



Your Apprenticeship should include a programme of high-quality training that gives you the time you need to complete the study component of your course in college, your workplace learning centre or at home.

If you think the level of study is either too high or too low given your existing skills levels, talk to your UNISON rep or your manager so they can sort out something better for you.

**Making sure you get quality training
at the right level will work better for
you and for your employer**

www.unison.co.uk/apprenticeships

Women make up 83% of apprentices
in health and social care and only
21% in IT: let's change that together!

NO BARRIERS

UNISON campaigns to make sure employers open up their Apprenticeships to everyone, including women, people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, LGBT people and people with disabilities.

We reject old-fashioned stereotypes about who does what at work. We know that women can thrive as paramedics, police staff and IT professionals, and that men can be brilliant at caring jobs in schools or hospitals.

We also press employers to use recruitment strategies that reach the widest audience and encourage applications from under-represented groups. And we urge managers and recruitment staff to take part in equality and diversity training.

www.unison.co.uk/apprenticeships

GAIN NEW SKILLS

Dominique McIntosh is much more self-confident as a result of her Level 3 Business Administration Apprenticeship at UNISON Centre.

She particularly enjoyed having the chance to work towards a valuable qualification at the same time as accessing on-the-job training, and she has appreciated how the union really enhanced her experience throughout the 18-month programme, she says.

As a result of the programme, Dominique has completed qualifications, gained new skills and built strong working relationships – all of which will stand her in good stead as she moves on.

“After being an apprentice for the past 18 months, I have become much more confident. I have delivered many presentations to a number of different target audiences and have been able to communicate with various people”

Dominique, former UNISON Centre apprentice



HELP & SUPPORT

When you start work, you should be able to get help and advice from a trusted and experienced co-worker who isn't your line manager.

Your mentor is someone you can talk to in confidence about any issues at work

Why not your line manager?
Because one day, the advice you might be looking for could be *about* your line manager.

UNISON trains workplace mentors so that they can:

- offer support and advice on work issues outside the line management chain
- help with all aspects of the study component of your programme
- work with you and your line manager to quickly resolve any problems that might arise.

STAY SAFE

It's essential to get to grips with health and safety when you start your Apprenticeship so you can avoid accident and injury: young men aged 16–25 are 40 per cent more likely to be injured at work than men aged 45–54.

Did your induction include health and safety training? If not, talk to your UNISON health and safety rep

Sometime in your first few days, you should be briefed about all the health and safety issues relevant to your new workplace, usually by your UNISON health and safety rep.

UNISON specifically trains health and safety reps so they can follow up on management's actions (or lack of action) on health, safety and environmental issues in the workplace.

And they really make a difference: workplaces with union safety reps and joint union-management safety committees have fewer than half the major injuries than those without.

JOIN UNISON FOR £10

When you join UNISON, you get access to the advice and support of Britain's biggest public service union. That makes it much easier to nip any problems in the bud and helps you get the most out of your Apprenticeship.

**Joining UNISON only costs £10 a year
while you are an apprentice**

Our workplace reps are fully trained to help with any kind of work issues – and while you might be facing them for the first time, your rep has probably come across them many times before and will know the best way to sort things out.

As well as the support of your UNISON team, you get access to:

- our helpline that is open until midnight every weekday (and to 4pm on Saturdays)
- legal help with work-related issues for you and your family
- money-management tips and debt advice.



FIND OUT MORE

- Contact your UNISON representative in your workplace.
- Get in touch with your UNISON Regional Office (find out which one at **www.unison.org.uk/regions/**) or call UNISONdirect on **0800 0857 857**.

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