

Key learnings from the Financial Services Responsible Apprenticeship Workshop

The context

On Monday 18th April 2016, Barclays in partnership with Business in the Community ran a series of workshops on apprenticeships for employers in the Financial Services sector. This aim of the event was to explore the opportunities that the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 is providing for employers in this sector to develop strong and responsible apprenticeship programmes. The Financial Services sector contributes 12% to the UK's GDP and employs 2.5 million people across the UK. It is also the sector which will pay the most Apprenticeship Levy, which is based on employers' UK wage bills.

The changes to the apprenticeship system are being implemented by the government in response to a continual decline in the number of training hours employees have received over the last two decades. There is also a need to safeguard the quality of apprenticeships to ensure they deliver 'substantial uplifting skills developed over a sustained amount of time'.

Apprentices bring significant benefits to an organisation, and within only a few months of joining they add an average of £214 profitability to their employers each week. For every £1 invested in apprenticeships, there is an estimated £28 return for the economy.

The training opportunities apprenticeships provide are available at all levels, from entry to Masters level, and can be used to bring fresh talent into the organisation and upskill existing employees. There are already over 50 new apprentice standards (courses of training for specific occupational areas) that are relevant to the Financial Services sector, and employers can also choose to develop new standards to cover areas where standards do not already exist.

Session 1: Selecting the right provider

There are a huge range of support and specialist training opportunities on offer from different training providers, and it's possible for employers to design highly customised training in partnership with their chosen providers. Employers can work with multiple providers, and providers can also source additional trainers on an employer's behalf to cover very niche requirements.

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Smaller employers and employers who only want to employ a few apprentices on a particular standard can form a training consortium with other local employers to share learning facilities and buy a certain number of classroom spaces, which can be more cost effective than purchasing training for a smaller group. This can be arranged by employers talking directly to other employers, or training providers can broker these arrangements on an employer's behalf.

Some providers can also offer training through a virtual learning environment, so cohorts based in different areas of the country can learn as a group.

To get started: Employers can use the government's [training provider search portal](#) to identify local training providers. Employers can then compare training offers to identify suitable providers.

Top tip: A good size for an apprenticeship cohort learning together is 8 – 30 apprentices to ensure each apprentice gets enough support with their learning and has a strong internal network.

Strong collaborative partnerships between employer and provider are key to a successful apprenticeship

Session 2: Standards and trailblazers

Hundreds of Standards in different occupational areas are currently being developed by groups of employers as part of the government's Trailblazer scheme, and there are currently 54 standards which are particularly relevant to the Financial Services sector.

Standards can be developed by groups of 10 employers within the same sector. Employers begin by developing a 2 to 3 page role description containing an outline of what the standard involves and what skills the apprentice will gain through the course of their training. They then submit this to BIS to be approved by the Minister. Once approved, the group then work on developing an assessment plan for the standard, then submit this for approval too. This process takes a minimum of 6 months.

To get started: It's useful to begin by looking at a structure chart of your organisation to map out which existing or planned roles relate to specific Standards to see where apprentices could be employed. If you can't find an existing standard for an area of your organisation that would benefit from having a strong talent pipeline, you can register your interest in joining a Trailblazer group with other employers who are interested in creating a similar standard.

Top tip: If you're part of a Trailblazer group of employers, it's very useful to appoint an independent chair for the group to keep discussions on track and resolve any issues.

Session 3: Fostering progression

Barclays' apprenticeship programmes have been designed to create an accessible entry point into the organisation facilitating a progressive talent pipeline through the different levels of apprenticeship training in several areas and specialisms. Higher Apprenticeships are available in Leadership and Management, Audit, Finance, HR and Relationship Management Higher Apprenticeships are accessible to existing colleagues and entry level foundation apprentices.

Barclays offer 4 different programmes: a 6 week Traineeship, a 12 to 18 month Foundation Apprenticeship, a 12 month Progression Apprenticeship and a 3 year Higher apprenticeship which includes studying for a

degree level qualification. Apprentices who complete the Higher apprenticeship can then apply for the Barclays' graduate programme.

Through their continued learning and development apprentices can become the future talent pipeline of your business. Growing in to the leaders and specialists of the future, fostering apprentice progression provides longevity and strong retention of your workforce and talent pool.

To get started: Think about which different entry points might be suitable for apprentices, and which roles one step ahead might be the natural progression for apprentices moving to the next level of apprenticeship.

Top tip: Give your apprentices the opportunity to spend time in different areas of the organisation through short placements, special projects and job shadowing, and encourage them to develop their informal internal networks. This way they will gain a range of experience and hear about upcoming opportunities which will enable them to access a wider variety of progression roles. Encourage strong line manager to apprentice relationships with regular developmental conversations. As your apprentice progresses these conversations will help identify their next progression steps and shape future career pathways.

Session 4: Building diversity and inclusion into your apprenticeship programme

Barclays are keen to attract a diverse range of talent to the organisation, so they have launched their Bolder Apprenticeship for apprentices over the age of 24, and their 'This is Me' campaign which has drawn together a network of over 700 colleagues with disabilities from across the organisation. Network members act as ambassadors for Barclays and offer an insight about what it's like to work at Barclays for prospective disabled candidates.

Through the This is Me campaign, Barclays have been able to increase their percentage of employees with disabilities from 1% to 7% over the last 12 months through both new hires and better internal reporting, and hope to increase this to 15% over the next 12 months. Through their Bolder scheme, Barclays have offered 140 one week work experience placements to applicants with an average age of 39, and have successfully recruited 58% of these applicants.

To get started: Start by exploring what the external perception of your workplace is, and whether this a barrier to candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds. It can take time so don't worry about starting small – the first Bolder cohort contained 12 people.

Top tip: Use your existing employees as ambassadors for the opportunity and consider what individual support they can provide to candidates – though the This is Me campaign, disabled applicants are offered a phone conversation with a member of the campaign network.

Next steps

- For practical advice and guidance on setting up a sustainable apprenticeship programme and for more information about the Levy, [read our resources on the Future Proof website](#).
- [Read more about how the Barclays' apprenticeship programme has been key to building a strong Early Careers programme.](#)