



A guide to funded Learning & Development

Davies Learning Solutions is an approved Training Provider with a strong track record across major brands, small-medium enterprises, councils and not-for-profit organisations.

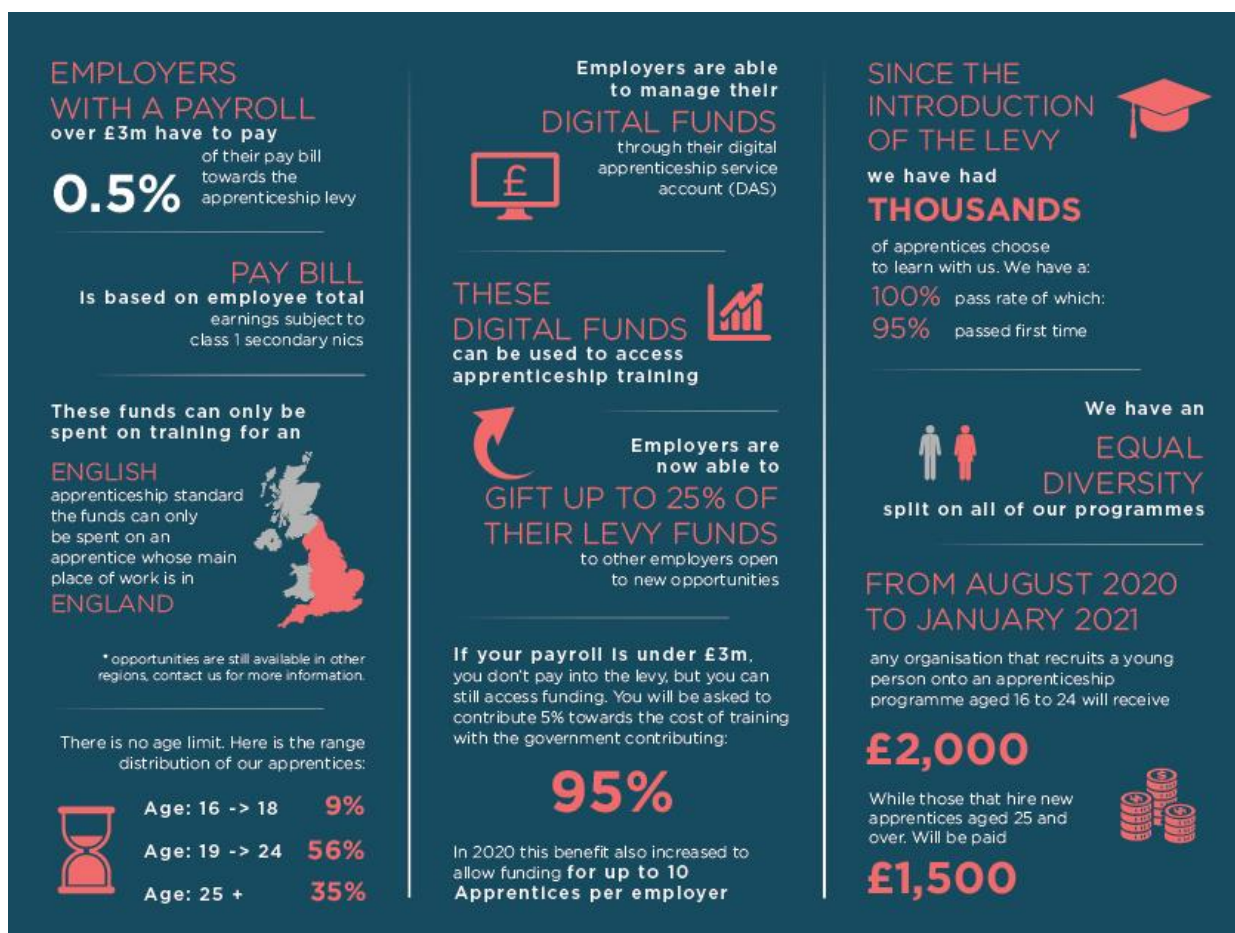
Foreword

When you hear the word "apprenticeship" what does that mean to you? Many people associate this with young people in entry level job roles, manual trade positions and non-academic study. Whilst there is nothing wrong with any of these, an apprenticeship can be used to **access funding to train and qualify by anybody of any age** in programmes equivalent to up to degree level, at any point in their career, providing no prior learning of the same type/level has been previously completed. It is now perfectly possible to become a fully qualified solicitor without ever going to university.

Yet still some stigma to apprenticeships can prevail with graduates, middle and senior managers – attaching some stigma to the 'a' word – which is a real pity and something for us all to tackle and change in order to make the funding truly work for organisations and individual careers alike.

Understanding the levy fund

The Levy fund is very useful to fund your workforce development strategy to develop existing staff right through to level 7 programmes, equivalent to degree level.



If you don't already know about the Apprenticeship Levy, it was first introduced in 2017. Essentially, it is a HMRC tax placed on businesses with a payroll of over £3million per annum. Organisations that sit within this category will pay 0.5% of their total pay bill into their Levy pot every month. These funds may only be drawn down by a registered approved apprenticeship training provider (such as Davies Learning Solutions). It is a great way to fund training and qualifications in technical skills and leadership that result in professional qualifications.

Some organisations accumulate Levy pots so large that they physically cannot spend the whole amount within the two-year timeframe given by HMRC. The unused funds are redistributed to smaller organisations who don't who don't pay into the Levy and to access this, the government asks for a maximum of a small 5% contribution from these smaller employers.

There are over 700 Apprenticeship standards available for organisations to choose from, resulting in a range of qualifications associated with different professional bodies. These opportunities are open to existing staff, not just new starters.

Quality & Communication

At Davies Learning Solutions, our first time pass rate for apprenticeships is an average of 94% with 60% achieving Distinctions. We know this is due to the detailed suitability checks that we complete with every apprentice before they begin study, and due to the ongoing support and one-to-one coaching that they receive regularly throughout their programme both from our own coaches and their supportive line managers at work.

So with all this in mind, it can be confusing when individuals feel “insulted” at being offered the opportunity of an apprenticeship. The associated stigma felt, albeit incorrectly, can be quite profound and something employers and training providers need to work together to change. This can be approached in a number of ways to communicate the benefits of apprenticeships and change any negative opinions and prejudices about them.

Communication methods can include sharing success stories of previous apprentices, particularly those who have achieved qualifications and promotions. At Davies Learning Solutions we often interview apprentices and publish their success stories on our LinkedIn page and website to inspire others, as well as celebrate with award nominations and highlights during National Apprenticeship Week.

Employers who build apprenticeships into career progression journeys, graduate schemes and/or align them with internal mentoring schemes are successfully making their apprenticeships more appealing. Some employers also hold assessment and selection centres to determine which staff will receive a place on an apprenticeship programme;

thereby applying the scarcity influence principle and increasing competitiveness, desirability and prestige of a place on an apprenticeship programme.

And apprenticeships are becoming scarcer. In lockdown across all industries there have been 58,160 apprenticeship starts reported to between 23 March and 31 July 2020, fewer than the 107,750 reported for this period at this point last year, a decrease of 46.0 per cent.

What is the impact upon skills and employability of such a decrease in training and qualifications? Coupled with restrictions on university education during the pandemic and concerns about funding and debt, it is important that we consider apprenticeships as a wholly viable alternative route to higher education without prejudice.

Three questions that can assist your organisation to review its use of apprenticeship levy funding in 2021 are:

1. How do we currently use the levy fund (in whole, part or not at all) and how can we increase its usage?
2. How does using apprenticeships add value to our organisation? (capability, staff attraction/retention, sales, client benefits)
3. How do we show and communicate it is successful?

By integrating the apprenticeship levy into your people and talent strategy for 2021 there is a unique opportunity to continue to progress skills and development even when budgets are tight.

Less than 3% of our apprentices have opted to take a 'break in learning' due to Covid-19, although the sector average is closer to 19%. By offering virtual classroom delivery and video coaching our learning programmes are now delivered entirely remotely, providing a totally safe environment in which to continue learning.

With unemployment increasing to almost 5% and expected to reach nearer to 10% in 2021, skills and career support is of critical importance to our economic recovery from the global pandemic. The future prosperity of the country depends not only on the number of people in work but how productive and effective they are at work.

According to Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson in his January 2021 'Skills for Jobs' whitepaper, apprenticeships "have been transformed from a second-rate option to a prestigious choice with excellent outcomes".

The UK has been renowned for centuries for producing graduates, but more recent statistics show we have been less effective at helping young people attain the technical skills that employers really want. A study by the Department of Education in 2018 revealed that only 4% of young people achieve a qualification at higher technical level by the age of 25; compared to the 33% who get a degree or above but still only 66% of graduates are in high skilled employment.

With economic pressures tightening corporate L&D budgets, more and more employers are looking to use their levy pot more effectively and work to change any stigma and perceptions held by their staff that an 'apprenticeship' is too low level or that they wouldn't be eligible due to prior study.

In fact, the apprenticeship levy can be used to fund senior leadership MBA's, professional qualifications (CIPD, CMI, CIMA etc.) and tackle gaps in skills and knowledge to meet the individual and organisational goals. Technical professional qualifications have continued to be achieved throughout the lockdown restrictions in the UK, with live virtual classroom sessions being delivered, access to digital content and resources as well as video coaching proving popular.

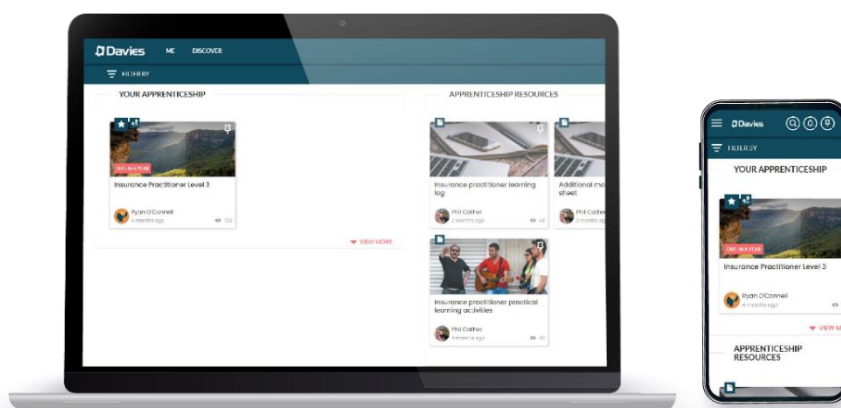
One apprentice who is studying for his Chartered exams at the age of 43 using the apprenticeship levy explained:

"I have a 17 year old daughter and a 14 year old son who are studying as well, so during lockdown we are all working from home and studying together. All of my apprenticeship experience has been delivered remotely and has all gone very smoothly. My coach has been a very caring and encouraging guide throughout. It is good to remember apprenticeships are designed for anyone of any age who wants to progress."

In addition to creating opportunities for all ages, apprenticeship providers are working hard to create equal opportunities for women and ethnic minority groups. Diversity and Inclusion policy and strategy has risen to the fore in organisations during recent years and many are now looking to implementation and action.

A Digital Learning Experience

All of our programmes are delivered remotely, using virtual classrooms, video coaching and our online learning platform powered by Thrive. This offers a personalised learning experience identifying the types of content being interacted with by a Learner and offer up suggestions for further stretch and challenge.



About Davies Learning Solutions

Davies takes pride in offering Learning Solutions that help our clients to get the very best from their people, that are relevant in a digital world and that are always focused on the learner and their experience.

We offer a range of solutions, including funded apprenticeships and qualifications; as well as commercial, bespoke programmes and digital content.

You can find out more here: www.davies-group.com/learning

Contact Carolyn.Blunt@davies-group.com for more information on any aspect of Learning & Development your organisation needs. We are happy to advise and signpost without obligation.

Useful Links

- Transferring apprenticeship funds to employer:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/transferring-apprenticeship-service-funds>
- Set up/sign in to the digital apprenticeship service account:
<https://accounts.manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk/service/index>
- How to register and use the apprenticeship service as an employer:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/manage-apprenticeship-funds>
- Apprenticeship funding rules for employers:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules-for-employers>