

## Trailblazer Q & A

### What is a Trailblazer?

A Trailblazer is a group of employers developing apprenticeships standards specific to job roles in their sector.

The standards they create will either be completely new (i.e. for job roles that have never had an apprenticeship programme before) or will gradually replace existing apprenticeships frameworks for job roles.

### What do you mean by ‘frameworks’ and ‘standards’?

Both frameworks, and the new standards, are written definitions of the learning requirements for apprenticeship programmes. They are developed to ensure that all apprenticeship programmes are delivered and measured consistently.

In order to ensure that apprenticeships are employer led, frameworks are gradually being replaced by apprenticeships standards which are developed by groups of employers.

### What’s special about the new apprenticeships standards?

The overall objective of the new apprenticeships standards is to ensure that apprenticeships are truly employer led.

Standards are therefore designed by employers (Trailblazer groups) to meet their needs, the needs of their sector and the economy more widely.

Guidance around the development of the standards specifies that they need to be short, easy to understand documents that describe the **knowledge, skills and behaviours** required to undertake a specific occupation well, and to operate confidently within a sector.

The new standards focus on how an apprentice should demonstrate mastery of an occupation, and meet professional registration requirements in sectors where this exists (for example, in engineering, science and accountancy).

The approved standard therefore is a concisely written document that outlines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required of the apprentice and the job they need to be able to do by the time they have completed their apprenticeship.

### How are Trailblazer groups formed?

A minimum of ten employers including small employers, put in an expression of interest to develop a standard for a specific job role to the government’s Business Innovation and Skills Department (BIS) through a monthly submission cycle.

Successful applications will need to meet the criteria set out in [Future of Apprenticeships in England- Guidance for Trailblazers](#) to ensure that the occupation is suitable for the development of an apprenticeship standard, and that the proposed employer group is representative of the relevant sector or sectors.

### What does each Trailblazer group do?

Each Trailblazer uses the criteria set out in [Future of Apprenticeships in England- Guidance for Trailblazers](#) to develop their draft standard

Once standard has been drafted and consulted upon, they will then formally submit to BIS for approval. Once approved, the new apprenticeships standard will be published.

The Trailblazer will then develop their assessment plan which will set out:

- What will be assessed
- How the apprentice will be assessed at the end of their apprenticeship to judge competency
- Indicate who will carry out the assessment and who will make the final judgement of competency and grading which will need to be independent of the employer and training provider.

The assessment plan will then be submitted to BIS for approval. Once approved it will be published with a funding cap (i.e. the maximum amount of funding that will be available from the government for this apprenticeship), and the standard becomes approved for delivery.

### **What do all standards have in common?**

To ensure every standard is of high quality there are seven criteria that all apprenticeship standards must meet which are:

1. Be short and concise
2. Set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed in an occupation, so that, on completion, the apprentice is able to competently carry out the role in any size of employer across any relevant sectors
3. Have the support of employers including smaller businesses
4. Be sufficiently stretching so that it will require at least a year of training (before the end point assessment) with off the job training accounting for at least 20% of the apprenticeship
5. Align to professional registration where it exists
6. Contain minimum English and maths requirements and any digital skills required
7. Only include mandatory qualifications under certain circumstances.

### **How are Trailblazers relevant for my business?**

The new apprenticeships standards are designed by employers to meet needs of employers in that sector. Therefore in the future the apprenticeships programmes your apprentices are learning on should be precisely geared towards achieving the skills your business needs for that job role.

Once an apprentice completes an apprenticeship based on a new standard, the objective is that they will be a fully competent and productive employee in that job role.

As the new Trailblazer standards come online employers can choose to start their apprentices on apprenticeships based on the new standards. If these aren't available yet, employers can still start an apprentice on an existing framework apprenticeship. There will be a period of crossover whilst the new standards come online, however eventually all frameworks will be switched off.

If you're interested to know the status of standards in development and approved for job roles in your sector, see the [Apprenticeship standards ready for delivery](#) and the [occupations approved](#) for development of an apprenticeships standard.

### **What is the apprenticeship levy?**

The apprenticeship levy will be charged on larger employers as part of the Government's initiative to fund three million new apprenticeships by 2020. If achieved, this will be a 35% increase compared to the previous five years. The objective is to drive increased productivity

which will ultimately lead to increased profitability for businesses and increased wages in the long term.

Aiming to also increase the quality of apprenticeships in England, the Government is putting control of funding in the hands of employers. It is hoped that the levy will raise around £3 billion for the Exchequer to spend on boosting the quantity and quality of apprenticeships.

HMRC published draft legislation on 4 February 2016 introducing the levy, which will have effect on and after 6 April 2017.

The levy will be set at 0.5% of an employer's paybill with an annual allowance of £15,000 to offset against their levy payment (paid in vouchers). Once in effect, the levy will only be payable on paybills in excess of £3 million per year, which is estimated to catch only 2% of employers.

From April 2017, employers will be able to access funding for training through the new online portal service, Digital Apprenticeships Services, regardless of whether they have contributed to the levy. Employers can use the portal to 'shop' for apprenticeships, find accredited training providers and pay for training with their digital vouchers.

Employers obliged to pay the levy will be able to draw down more funding than they have contributed through Government top-ups. Funding not used within two years will expire and be made available for other employers.

Smaller employers will be able to access the funding without paying the levy. The government will pay 90% of the cost of the standard and the employer will be required to pay 10%.

How Do I Find Out More?

Follow the attached link for more information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-guidance-for-trailblazers>