



Labour Standards: Apprenticeship and Graduate Approach and Summary 2024

Document owner: Group HR Director

At Mears, we see apprenticeships and graduate trainees a vital part of our Talent Management strategy whether it is to recruit, develop and retain talent by providing accessible entrant pathways into a career with Mears and or giving individuals the chance to earn while they learn.

These pathways underpin part of Mears' philosophy; we are committed to developing the next generation of our workforce to the very highest standards. Investing in apprenticeships, apprentices and graduates creates a pool of future employees who are trained to work in the Mears way.

By offering local people a first step on the career ladder or developing their career with Mears, we demonstrate our commitment to improving neighbourhoods and creating opportunities for local people.

In recent years we have expanded our early careers offering to include not only apprenticeships but also offering T- Level work experience and graduate roles. We provide a wide range of routes that include trades, health & social care, customer service, business administration, project management and leadership and management.

Summary update 2024

Mears currently employs 360 apprentices across the Group and has recruited a further 127 as part of the 2025 apprentice intake. Additionally, we had one Graduate Management Trainee who completed their programme in 2024, and we are looking to recruit a further graduate in 2025.

63 employees also accessed a diverse range of apprenticeship programmes in 2024 to help them to develop their skills, knowledge, and behaviours necessary to their job roles or support future career aspirations, allowing them to continue their professional development throughout their employment.

Mears is determined to ensure that all our employees are treated fairly, with dignity, respect and feel included. Reasonable adjustments are made to ensure that our employees are fully supported throughout their programme.

All our programmes aim for our employees to achieve the relevant knowledge, skills, behaviours and experience required to make them successful in their chosen career path. Employees are paid in line with either the National Living Wage guidelines, the National minimum wage, or greater.

All apprentices are given a Chromebook to enable them to complete their college assignments, carry out research, and utilities the college online facilities, we also provide a starter tool kit for our trade apprentices.

In 2024 Mears partnered with HSBC who delivered a series of financial support workshops to all our apprentices in support of ensuring apprentices had financial wellbeing support. This is in addition to the benefits that all employees are given in Mears which includes Employee Assistance Programme support and a wellbeing hub to support Mental Health and Wellbeing. Our apprentices are also offered the opportunity to pursue other qualifications and build knowledge and skills whilst they are on programme, these courses include topics such as mental health, carbon awareness, safeguarding, compensation, digital skills etc.

Our apprentices are supported by our workplace mentors who assist them to achieve their aspirations and apprenticeship goals. It is recognised that our mentors are key to the success of the apprenticeship programme; they not only support the apprentices to develop new skills and knowledge, but they also offer a range of pastoral care to help with the transition into a working environment and will offer support and guidance to aid their wellbeing. In 2024 236 Mentors have

received specific mentor training so that they gain a better understanding of the stages of the apprenticeship journey and to enhance their coaching and mentoring skills. Mears has also worked on ensuring that our apprentices and graduates receive appropriate pastoral support throughout their programme through the Early Careers Manager and our Employee Representative Team .

Our Deputy Employee Director, Liam Wilkinson aids the pastoral support by completing regular check-ins both virtually and through on-site visits, supporting the Apprentice Ambassador team in advertising our schemes to provide insight into our programmes.

Retained apprentices and graduates: employment succession

During 2024, 100% of our apprentices who completed their apprenticeship successfully moved into full time employment within Mears.

During 2024, 100% of our graduates who completed their trainee scheme, successfully moved into full time employment within Mears.

Training linked to employment outcomes

All Mears' training and work experience placements are linked to employment outcomes. Mears' Prerecruitment Programme has been developed to actively target hard-to- reach and socially excluded groups such as NEETs, long-term unemployed, single parents, those in care/ care leavers and ex-military personnel, to help with the transition into employment. Working in partnership with job centres, clients, local schools, charities and employability organisations Mears' teams are taking active role in attending events, hosting sessions to attract and recruit candidates to our programmes, recognising this provides more accessible routes for potential applications. These sessions were targeted in our areas of business, which are in socially deprived areas, aligned to areas of business.

The support Mears has provided to students on T levels has led to a number of these individuals successfully moving on to one of our apprenticeship programmes.