CAREERS, INFORMATION ADVICE & GUIDANCE

Handbook for apprentices

SKERN SKILLS

Your apprenticeship & everyday life

About this handbook

This handbook has been designed to support you throughout your apprenticeship and help you make informed decisions about your future. It provides practical advice on finances, wellbeing, personal development and career progression, alongside useful resources, free training opportunities and guidance specific to your chosen sector. Our aim is to help you build confidence, explore opportunities and take the next steps towards achieving your personal and career goals.

Understanding your pay and finances

- **Know what you are paid.** — Check your contract, payslip, hours worked and tax or National Insurance deductions. Minimum wage rules depend on your age and apprenticeship year.
- **Make a simple budget.** — List what comes in each month and what must go out: transport, food, phone, rent and savings. Check what is left for other spending.
- **Avoid money problems building up.** — Ask for free, independent help early if bills, credit or debt are becoming difficult to manage.

How to open a bank account

- **Choose an account.** — Compare a current account, an under-18 account if relevant, or a basic account if a standard account is not suitable.
- **Check what you need.** — Banks usually ask for proof of identity and address; acceptable documents and age rules vary.
- **Apply and set up your wages.** — Apply online or in a branch; then give payroll your account details securely. Never share your PIN or online banking password.
- **Your rights at work**
- Check your contract for hours, holiday, absence and workplace expectations. You should receive a payslip and the correct legal pay. If something does not seem right, speak to your employer, your Skern Skills trainer or Acas for independent guidance.

Useful links

- MoneyHelper: opening a bank account
- MoneyHelper: free budget planner
- GOV.UK: minimum wage rates
- Acas: employment rights

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Free training to support everyday life

- Managing my money for young adults | Open University — Budgets, bank accounts, credit and everyday finances; free participation statement.
- Acas free e-learning — Employment rights, equality, bullying and workplace expectations; free self-paced learning.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Try a budget for your first or next full month of pay. If you are unsure about a payslip, ask someone to talk it through with you.

Looking after yourself

Wellbeing, communication and support

Your confidence, health and relationships are as important as your occupational skills. Asking for support early can make work and learning easier to manage. At Skern skills we have staff able to support you and guide you. Please reach out to your trainer for support and guidance if you need it.

Looking after your wellbeing

- **Notice the signs.** — Stress may affect sleep, concentration, motivation or how you feel at work. Take worries seriously rather than waiting for them to become overwhelming.
- **Keep healthy routines.** — Plan rest, regular food, exercise and time away from work or study. Speak up if deadlines or workloads are becoming unmanageable.
- **Ask for help.** — Talk to someone you trust, your trainer or your GP. For immediate danger call 999; for urgent mental health support use NHS 111 in England.

Communication skills that make a difference

- **Listen and check.** — Give people time to speak, ask questions and repeat back key actions to avoid misunderstandings.
- **Be clear and respectful.** — Choose an appropriate tone, avoid jargon and be professional in emails, Teams messages and face-to-face conversations.
- **Speak up with confidence.** — Ask for feedback, tell someone when you need help and give examples when explaining a concern or idea.
- **Manage disagreement.** — Stay calm, focus on facts and solutions, and know when to involve a manager or trusted adult.

Support with learning or personal circumstances

Tell your trainer if a disability, learning difference, health condition, caring responsibilities, travel difficulties or English and maths needs may affect your learning. Skern Skills can discuss appropriate support or signpost to specialist services. You can also raise concerns about bullying, discrimination or your safety using Skern Skills safeguarding reporting arrangements.

Useful links

- NHS Every Mind Matters: stress
- MoneyHelper: free debt advice
- Mental Health Support Network provided by Chasing the Stigma | Hub of hope
- Samaritans: talk to someone

Free training to build confidence

- Effective communication in the workplace | Open University — Listening, professional communication and workplace relationships.
- Digital skills: succeeding in a digital world | Open University — Everyday digital confidence, online safety and digital wellbeing.
- Prevent duty training | Home Office — Free government awareness training on radicalisation and safeguarding.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Choose one communication skill to practise this week. At your next review, discuss what changed and any support you would find useful.

Your choices after the apprenticeship

Planning your next career step

Completing an apprenticeship is one stage of your career, not the end. There are several good routes, and the right next move depends on your interests, experience, qualifications and circumstances.

Your options

- **Progress at work.** — Apply for greater responsibility, a specialist role, a promotion or a role with another employer.

- **Take a higher-level apprenticeship.** — Explore relevant Level 3, 4, 5, 6 or 7 apprenticeships. Check the job role, eligibility, entry requirements and vacancies.
- **Explore higher education.** — Compare university, college, foundation degree and other higher-education courses, including fees, funding, location and study commitments.
- **Develop a specialist skill.** — Short courses, industry licences, professional memberships and employer training may help you move sideways or upwards.

A five-step careers check

1. **Reflect:** — What work do you enjoy? Which skills and behaviours are you strongest in?
2. **Research:** — Use independent career profiles to compare tasks, conditions, pay and typical entry routes.
3. **Compare:** — Explore at least two options, including any outside your current employer or training provider.
4. **Take action:** — Update your CV, collect examples of achievement, practise interviews and speak to people doing the job.
5. **Review:** — Agree a realistic next step at your progress review and revisit it as your interests change.

Useful links

- National Careers Service: explore careers
- National Careers Service: skills assessment
- Find an apprenticeship: current vacancies
- UCAS: choosing a higher-education course

Free training for your next career step

- Succeed in the workplace | Open University — CVs, applications, interviews and planning your next move; free digital badge.
- National Careers Service: free training — Explore courses and check age, location and funding requirements.
- Free Courses for Jobs | GOV.UK — Potential funded Level 3 study for eligible adults aged 19+; check access alongside your apprenticeship.
- *These are examples of additional learning, not automatic funded entitlements. Ask your trainer whether an activity is suitable and may count towards your apprenticeship training plan.*

YOUR NEXT STEP

Write down two roles you might enjoy in 2–3 years. Identify one skill, experience or qualification you would need for each.

Sector guide

Catering & Hospitality

Hospitality offers careers in hotels, restaurants, food and beverage, accommodation, events and guest experience. You can become a specialist or move into supervising and managing teams.

Possible career pathways

GET STARTED	BUILD EXPERIENCE	PROGRESS FURTHER
Food service assistant	Chef de partie	Head chef
Commis chef	Senior waiter / team leader	Restaurant or hotel manager
Reception / guest services	Front office supervisor	Operations / events manager

Skills that help you progress

- **Customer experience.** — Handling requests, complaints, quality and professional service.
- **Operations and safety.** — Food safety, hygiene, stock control, planning and working at pace.
- **Leading others.** — Coaching colleagues, handling rotas and giving constructive feedback.
- **Commercial awareness.** — Understanding costs, sales, waste and the guest experience.

What could you do next?

- **Take on responsibility.** — Ask to lead a shift, train a colleague or improve a service process.
- **Explore further study.** — Look at hospitality supervision or management apprenticeships, professional development and relevant college or university courses.
- **Try a specialism.** — Consider kitchens, front of house, events, hotels, revenue or guest services before deciding what suits you.

Explore careers and opportunities

- National Careers Service: compare hospitality roles
- Institute of Hospitality: management qualifications
- Find an apprenticeship: hospitality vacancies

Free hospitality training

- Food allergy and intolerance | Food Standards Agency — Free allergen-awareness e-learning, with a CPD certificate after passing the tests.
- Meat Education Programme | AHDB — Free online theory modules and certificates for chefs and food-service learners.
- Welcoming LGBTQIA+ Customers | VisitEngland — Free self-paced inclusive customer service training and completion certificate.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

Which do you enjoy most: people, food, events or running a business? What shift or project could help you test that interest?

Leadership, management & business

Leadership and management skills are relevant to every sector. Business administration and customer service can be the starting point for careers in operations, people management, coordination and specialist business functions.

Possible career pathways

GET STARTED	BUILD EXPERIENCE	PROGRESS FURTHER
Administrator Customer service adviser Business support assistant	Senior administrator Customer service team leader Project coordinator	Department / operations manager Customer service manager Business or project manager

Skills that help you progress

- **Communication.** — Listening, presenting, handling difficult conversations and influencing people.
- **Organisation.** — Managing diaries, deadlines, data, meetings and improvement projects.
- **Leadership.** — Coaching others, working inclusively, solving problems and making decisions.
- **Digital and commercial skills.** — Using systems and data effectively while understanding service standards and budgets.

What could you do next?

- **Broaden your responsibilities.** — Volunteer for a project, lead a small improvement or coach a colleague.
- **Progress in learning.** — Compare relevant management, operations, project or professional apprenticeships and college/university study.
- **Build specialist knowledge.** — Explore HR, finance, sales, customer experience, data or operations if those areas interest you.

Explore careers and opportunities

- National Careers Service: business and management roles
- Chartered Management Institute: management development
- Institute of Customer Service: professional development

Free business and leadership training

- Acas free e-learning — Managing people, conflict, equality and workplace practice.
- Leadership and followership | Open University — Leadership styles, challenges and developing others; free digital badge.
- Working in groups and teams | Open University — Team roles, collaboration and handling conflict; free participation statement.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

What responsibility would you like to take on next, and what evidence could you collect to show you are ready?

Education & early years

Working in early years helps children learn, develop and thrive. Careers may involve direct practice, specialist support, team leadership, training or management.

Possible career pathways

GET STARTED	BUILD EXPERIENCE	PROGRESS FURTHER
Early years assistant	Level 3 educator	Deputy / nursery manager
Level 2 practitioner	Room leader	Early years lead practitioner
	Senior practitioner	Early years teacher*

* Teaching roles have separate qualification and training requirements; they are not automatic progression from a Level 3 apprenticeship.

Skills that help you progress

- **Child development.** — Observing learning, planning activities and reflecting on children's needs.
- **Safeguarding and inclusion.** — Keeping children safe and supporting different abilities and backgrounds.
- **Partnership working.** — Communicating sensitively with families and colleagues.
- **Leadership and reflection.** — Supporting team practice and using feedback to improve children's experiences.

What could you do next?

- **Build your experience.** — Seek opportunities across age groups, inclusion and supporting room routines.
- **Check qualifications carefully.** — For roles counted in staff:child ratios, verify that your qualification is approved as full and relevant by the Department for Education.
- **Explore further routes.** — Consider Level 3 practice, lead practitioner, management, special educational needs, teaching or relevant higher education, checking entry criteria first.

Explore careers and opportunities

- DfE: early years career progression
- GOV.UK: check an early years qualification
- GOV.UK: early years progression map

Free early years training

- Early years child development | Department for Education — Eight self-paced modules; a certificate for each module completed.
- Early years SEND CPD | DfE / Dingley's Promise — Funded inclusive-practice courses for early years practitioners; completion certificate.
- Early years safeguarding | Department for Education — Free online safeguarding learning for early years educators; check employer and DSL requirements.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

Which age group, setting or specialist area would you like to work in, and which qualification or experience would be required?

Farming & agriculture

Agriculture includes livestock, crops, machinery, farm operations, food production and land management. Experience, safe working and new technology can open many different career routes.

Possible career pathways

GET STARTED	BUILD EXPERIENCE	PROGRESS FURTHER
General farm worker Livestock / crop assistant	Livestock unit technician Machinery / unit specialist Senior farm worker	Assistant farm manager Farm manager Agricultural business specialist

Skills that help you progress

- **Animal and crop care.** — Health, welfare, husbandry, nutrition and production standards relevant to your role.
- **Machinery and safety.** — Safe handling, maintenance, risk awareness and relevant certificates or training.
- **Technology and data.** — Using farm records, precision tools and performance information to make decisions.
- **Business and environment.** — Understanding costs, sustainability, biosecurity and planning.

What could you do next?

- **Progress through apprenticeships.** — Investigate Level 3 Livestock Unit Technician or other specialist routes and Level 4 Assistant Farm Manager where suitable.
- **Consider specialist careers.** — Agricultural engineering, farm technology, agronomy, advisory work, animal welfare or environmental management.
- **Compare study choices.** — Explore agriculture, land management and agribusiness higher education, professional training or relevant technical certificates.

Explore careers and opportunities

- Lantra: land-based career profiles
- TIAH: careers in farming and growing
- National Careers Service: farmer job profile

Free agriculture training

- Farm health and safety | Lantra — Farm risks including vehicles, livestock and working at height; attendance certificate.

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- Non-technical skills in farming | Lantra — Situation awareness, decision-making and safe task management.
- Managing health on farms | Lantra — Health hazards on farms; free training and attendance certificate.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

Would you prefer livestock, crops, machinery, technology or farm management? What experience could help you explore that route?

Outdoor education

Outdoor learning develops technical competence, confidence and leadership. Roles range from delivering activities to programme design, youth development, education and centre management.

Possible career pathways

GET STARTED	BUILD EXPERIENCE	PROGRESS FURTHER
Trainee / assistant instructor	Senior instructor	Programme coordinator
Outdoor activity instructor	Specialist activity leader	Centre manager
	Outdoor learning specialist	Outdoor education lead

Skills that help you progress

- **Safe leadership.** — Risk assessment, judgement, group care and emergency procedures.
- **Teaching and inclusion.** — Adapting activities, giving feedback and creating a supportive learning environment.
- **Technical competence.** — Building experience and keeping activity-specific awards current where required.
- **Professional practice.** — Recording experience, reflective learning, safeguarding and first aid appropriate to the role.

What could you do next?

- **Build a logbook.** — Record groups, environments, activities, reflection and leadership experience.
- **Explore qualifications.** — Compare National Governing Body pathways for your chosen activities; entry requirements and age limits vary.

Explore careers and opportunities

- National Careers Service: outdoor activities instructor
- Mountain Training: walking and leadership awards

- Institute for Outdoor Learning: professional development

Free outdoor learning resources

- Ecology and ecosystems | Open University — Free five-hour introductory environmental course; participation statement.
- Mapzone learning | Ordnance Survey — Free interactive map-reading activities and quizzes; learning resources, not a qualification.
- First aid learning | British Red Cross — Free online first-aid skills; not an accredited outdoor or workplace first-aid award.

Important: introductory learning does not replace mandatory activity-specific awards, first-aid qualifications or employer-led safety training. Links and eligibility checked November 2026.

DISCUSSION PROMPT

Which environments or activities interest you most? Identify the experience, qualifications and safeguarding/first aid requirements for the next role.