

Apprenticeship Standards

Business Administration and Customer Service

New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employers in England. The Institute for Apprenticeships are overseeing the process and have set guidelines which the Trailblazer groups must follow. The key elements are listed below:

Occupation

The standard must describe a unique, defined occupation. The Institute for Apprenticeships reject standards where overlap is too great.

KSBs

The standard details the high level of **knowledge, skills and behaviours** the apprentice will have by the end of their apprenticeship.

12 months

Standards must contain significant learning and take at least 12 months to complete.

Short documents

Standards are 3 pages (unless core and options), assessment plans are about 15 pages. Both documents must be font size 12.

Language

Easy to understand for all audiences. No jargon or abbreviations.

English and Maths

Apprentices who have not yet achieved English and Maths will be required to do so as part of their apprenticeship.

Qualifications

Only included for degree standards or for professional registration/license to practice or if evidence apprentices need one to progress in the sector.

Off the job

Apprenticeships are primarily work-based but at least 20% must be off-the-job learning.

End Point Assessment

Assesses and grades the apprentice holistically and independently against the whole of the standard.

In England the government committed to 3 million new apprentices by 2020. For those organisations in the public sector in England that have 250 or more employees there is also a specific expectation that 2.3% of the workforce will be apprentices. This equates to in the region of 28,000 apprentices in the NHS every year. The numbers are set to rise incrementally between now and then.

Business Administration at Level 3

Amongst the most popular of the Apprenticeship frameworks used in the health sector were Business Administration at levels 2 and 3.

A new standard for Business Administrator has been approved at level 3. When it is withdrawn, the new standard will be a direct replacement for the level 3 Business Administration framework. You can download the full standard and keep up to speed with the progress of the development [here](#).

What about Level 2?

OCCUPATION

The standard must describe a unique, defined occupation. The Institute for Apprenticeships reject standards where overlap is too great

Under the rules relating to occupation, the Institute for Apprenticeships sees 'Business Administrator' at Level 3 as 'the occupation' and any 'administrative assistant' type role below that as 'on route to' the full occupation. They will not therefore approve the development of a standard at level 2 because the occupation is not standalone, requiring sufficient stretch and a minimum of 12 months learning. Read the full report [here](#). This is disappointing for employers in health who have used the level 2 Business Administration framework in large numbers,

both to provide training and development for administrative roles but also to provide an entry point into the sector from which people progress into a range of clinical and non-clinical roles.

The health sector and NHS in particular will continue to employ people in administrative support type roles and employers will be looking to see which apprenticeship standard might be adapted for these employees. The most obvious is possibly the Customer Services Practitioner standard.

Customer Service Practitioner

The Customer Service Practitioner Standard is a versatile option that employers are encouraged to consider. Some employers have previously expressed concerns that the level 2 Customer Services apprenticeship framework was too light touch and did not produce the rounded workers that employers are looking for. However, now that standards are being introduced it is possible to address this. You can download the full standard and assessment plan [here](#) but the infographic below sets out the key outcomes from the Customer Service Practitioner standard.

Customer Service Practitioner

Occupation

You provide high quality customer service including dealing with orders, payments, offering advice, guidance and support, meet-and-greet, sales, fixing problems, after care, service recovery or gaining insight through measuring customer satisfaction. Working in any sector, you may be people's first point of contact.

Level 2

12 months

Funding Band 6

KSBs

Knowledge: knowing your customers, understanding your organisation, meeting regulations and legislation, systems and resources, your roles and responsibility, customer experience, product and service knowledge

Skills: interpersonal skills, communication, influencing skills, personal organisation, dealing with customer conflict and challenge

Behaviours: developing self, being open to feedback, teamworking, equality - treating customers as individuals, presentation - dress code, professional language and "right first time"

Qualifications

No on-programme qualification specified. Employers can decide how to prepare apprentices so that they will be able to achieve end-point assessment.

English and maths

Apprentices who have not yet achieved English and Maths will be required to do so as part of their apprenticeship.

Registration

On completion the apprentice will be eligible to join the Institute of Customer Service.

Because there is no mandated component qualification within this apprenticeship standard, employers are free to decide how on-programme learning will be delivered. This is excellent news for healthcare employers because, so long as all the customer service skills, knowledge and behaviours are included in the learning the broader training can be tailored locally.

A large proportion of Band 2 or equivalent administrative roles in health are people-facing. This can be either with patients, their families and carers or colleagues with whom they work. Customer service skills are therefore vital. And, as you can see from the lists above and the outline content of the standard, there is a natural overlap between the skills, knowledge and behaviours employers expect workers in the health sector and those that they will develop as Customer Service Practitioner apprentices.

How to apply the Customer Service Practitioner standard in health

As we've said, there is no mandatory qualification in this standard. As an employer, you therefore need to decide what is included in the learning experience that your apprentices are going to have and agree this with your apprenticeship training provider. The whole point of the new standards is that employers are empowered to make sure that apprentices finish their apprenticeship "job-ready."

Within the learning and training experience, you will need to bring together the different aspects that you need for the role, including any additional specific training in administrative functions over and above the

elements already listed in the infographic. This will enable the apprentice to become proficient at customer service whilst also working effectively in a level 2 administrative role.

Planning the apprenticeship programme

In simple terms:

- End point assessment will test the apprentice's generic customer service skills
- On-programme training will develop and check generic customer service skills, how they relate to the specific role the individual is working in and how that individual fits within the employing organisation and wider healthcare environment.

There are many different roles that you may choose to use the Customer Practitioner standard with. Below is a brief outline of how you may tailor it locally. There are 2 key areas for you to consider:

1. Generic customer service: The skills, knowledge and behaviours exactly as outlined in the Customer Service Practitioner standard.
2. Specific job-related: The knowledge, skills and behaviours that relate to the level 2 administrative role that the apprentice is carrying out in health. Here are some examples, just to get you thinking. You will be able to create your own real-life examples.
 - computer systems and local protocols for displaying information in different types of documents and correspondence
 - planning and organising meetings
 - arranging travel
 - stock control
 - how to use the local telephone and appointment booking systems
 - handling patient information including learning to use bespoke software to log, store or report on patient records and other information
 - booking in patients or escorting and signposting them to services

The way the skills and knowledge are packaged together will depend on the apprentice's role and what they can readily learn as part of their normal duties e.g. office support activities such as photocopying or using an office scanner and those that require more in-depth learning that can be acquired as part of their 'off the job' learning.

Sorting out the training

Organisations that provide training for apprenticeships must be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. There are 3 types of provider status 'main providers' 'employer providers' and 'supporting providers'. You can read an explanation of what each of these can and cannot do [here](#).

Some employers will run the entire on-programme training and assessment themselves, only relying on other organisations once the apprentice is ready for 'end point assessment'.

Other employers will want to buy in training. There are a range of different ways in which you can do this:

- buy an off the shelf programmes
- work with a local college, awarding organisation or other education and training provider to develop a bespoke package
- use a mix and match model combining in-house, off the shelf and bespoke training

Wherever possible you will want to consider how to integrate the customer service and job-related elements along with the values that are an important part of working in the health sector in the training so that they can be taught and assessed in an integrated way.

This will help the apprentices to recognise that all elements are key to their roles and have a direct impact on the way they work.

Please note that there are restrictions around what the levy can and cannot be used for in relation to training and assessment so you must always check the guidance, which is available here.

Keeping yourself informed

As new standards are being developed all the time, please keep an eye on the [Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online](#) website where you can view what's available, including searching by occupation, level or sector. You can also [sign up](#) for the newsletter and receive short weekly updates.