

# RCM Apprenticeship Guide



THE ROYAL  
COLLEGE OF  
MIDWIVES

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## Foreword

The RCM was the first trade union and professional body to publish a guide for its members on modern apprenticeships in 2011. At the time take-up of apprenticeships was relatively slow and the highest level available was equivalent to a Foundation Degree. Seven years later the picture is rapidly changing. Higher-level apprenticeships are now available in a number of occupations (although not midwifery) up to Masters level. The Apprenticeship Levy, a UK-wide tax, means that most healthcare employers are paying 0.5% of their annual pay bill towards the cost of training new or existing staff through Apprenticeships. The Scottish government has a target to increase the number of people starting Apprenticeships by 30,000 by 2020 and Wales to a minimum 100,000 apprentices. In England we have seen the creation of new Apprenticeship standards.

An answer to a recent Parliamentary Question revealed that while 110 people had started the level 3 Maternity and Paediatrics apprenticeship in 2016/7, there is little information about the number of people taking on the new Senior Healthcare Support Worker (Maternity) Apprenticeship. Encouragingly, a survey of maternity support workers carried out by the RCM in 2017 found that almost 70% of MSWs were aware of apprenticeship opportunities. Given these developments, it is timely that the RCM updates its guidance to members, which is why our *Apprenticeships in Maternity Services* Guide has been thoroughly revised. Nationally the RCM is involved in discussions to ensure that Apprenticeship programmes meet the needs of maternity services and deliver high-quality training. Locally members need to ensure they are engaged with discussions about how employers intend to use Apprenticeships and actively plan for their introduction, ensuring maternity gets a fair share of funding.

This Guide aims to provide clear and accessible advice about Apprenticeships and their implementation. The RCM believes that Apprenticeships, if implemented correctly, have an important role to play in developing the maternity workforce, particularly support roles. This though requires careful thought, planning, preparation and support.

**Gill Walton**  
Chief Executive Officer and General Secretary  
February, 2018

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## What this Guide aims to do

This Guide has the following aims:

- To provide RCM members with clear, up-to-date and accessible information, advice and guidance about Apprenticeships in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
- To explain why maternity services should consider introducing Apprenticeships to help develop their workforce
- To provide practical advice on how to implement and support Apprenticeship programmes
- To set out the issues associated with implementing Apprenticeship programmes

It is anticipated that the Guide will be of interest to:

- Heads and Directors of Midwifery
- Midwives
- Practice Educators
- Maternity Support Workers
- Training and Human Resource staff
- Education providers
- Commissioners of services and education progress

## What is an Apprenticeship?

- A growing number of people across the UK are becoming apprentices
- Apprenticeships are not just for support roles or younger people. They are available at degree and Masters levels in some occupations
- All UK employers, including healthcare ones, with pay bills over £3million a year are now paying 0.5% of their pay bill to the Government through an Apprenticeship Levy tax

When this Guide was first published in 2011, 457,000 people in England each year started an Apprenticeship programme. By 2016 that number had grown to 509,000 starts and is set to grow further as the Westminster Government has set a target of 3 million starts in England by 2020. 100,000 Apprenticeship opportunities are expected to be delivered in the NHS. The Governments of Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland all see Apprenticeships as the main means to up skill workers and improve productivity. All three countries plan for a growth in apprenticeships within their labour markets.

Apprenticeships are **no longer restricted to support worker roles**. While there is already an Apprenticeship route for Registered Nursing, as of writing, the process for creating an Apprenticeship Standard in Midwifery has not yet begun. Apprenticeship Standards in England must be employer-led, and the RCM will support those employers who decide to form a 'Trailblazer' to take this work forward.

Midwifery does not have the need for an 'Associate' role as we already have Maternity Support Workers. Some maternity services have begun to use Nursing Associates but the RCM supports the use of Maternity Support Workers in maternity support roles. However, Nursing Associates benefit from stronger provisions regarding their roles and pay-banding upon completion of their course. The RCM firmly believes Maternity Support Workers should be given the same assurances.

What, then, is an Apprenticeship? While there are different policy approaches in each of the four UK countries, the elements that characterise an Apprenticeship are the same:

1. Apprentices are employees who work, earn and learn.
2. They combine on-the-job training and experience, with off-the-job learning.
3. Apprentices can be new recruits or existing employees aged 16 years and above.
4. Most, but not all, Apprenticeships include a formal qualification and all learning is related to the skills, technical knowledge and practical experience required for the job.
5. They last for at least a year. The longest last for five years.

*"Apprenticeships can be an excellent way of attracting new talent, reskilling existing staff and tackling skills shortages" (NHS Employers)*

**Apprenticeships are more than just a qualification.** Their key distinguishing feature is that they are work-based - the majority of training takes place at work and is job-related. This is a familiar concept to midwives, and other healthcare professionals, whose education includes classroom teaching but also practice-based learning and assessment. **Apprenticeships are not just aimed at vocational education.** Across the economy as a whole there are now over 1,000 degree apprenticeships available including in policing, aerospace, teaching, the energy industry and telecoms.

## Who can complete Apprenticeships?

There are currently Apprenticeships covering over 1,200 jobs in the UK ranging from accountancy to engineering to finance to veterinary care.

There are 350 career options in the NHS. In theory all healthcare occupations could have an Apprenticeship linked to them. New Apprenticeships are being developed all the time, particularly in England (see the References section for a link to those that are available or are being developed in each country). Examples of healthcare related Apprenticeships include:

- Leadership and Management
- Registered Nurse
- Physician Associate
- Laboratory Scientist
- Dental Technician
- Healthcare Support Worker (Scotland)
- Maternity and Paediatrics (Wales)
- Data Analyst
- Senior Healthcare Support Worker
- Business Administrator
- Lead Adult Care Worker
- Horticulture and Landscape Operative

(The last one is a gardener!)

## Are Apprenticeships the only way to develop staff?

A concern about the growth of Apprenticeships and particularly the impact of the Levy (below) is that Apprenticeships may become the only route to access learning and development (British Chamber of Commerce, 2017). This would be a mistake. Apprenticeships are a valuable vehicle to develop new and existing staff, if implemented correctly, but staff need access to a range of learning experiences, some formal, some informal. Apprenticeships should form part of a wider organisational approach to learning that is flexible and responsive to service and staff need.

It should also be said that the rapid growth of Apprenticeship policy since 2016 in particular has still to be tested. It is not clear yet whether the aspirations of Government will be met (see box below).

### Storm clouds on the horizon?

The Apprenticeship system, particularly in England, is new and it is too early to tell whether the policy will deliver the improvement in skills and productivity the Government hopes for. Reports and studies have already begun to highlight actual and potential issues including that the Government has overemphasized the financial return to employers from investing in Apprenticeships (IFS, 2017), problems with quality and employer engagement (IPPR, 2017), that Apprenticeships do not reflect the skills that are most needed for the future (Nesta/Pearsons, 2017) and that employers find the system confusing (British Chamber of Commerce, 2017). In January 2018 The Times reported, "Tens of thousands of apprentices are receiving inadequate training as inspectors struggle to assess a deluge of businesses cashing in". In the same month The Financial Times reported that many employers were struggling to spend their levy due to a lack of standards in some occupations and providers. The number of new apprentices starting training at the end of 2017 fell by 61% according to the DfE.

## What happens when you finish an Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships are based on work and clear roles. Individuals such as maternity support workers, who successfully complete an Apprenticeship, have demonstrated their ability to perform the role. The expectation is that they will continue to work for that employer. The RCM opposes the use of Apprenticeships as a stop-gap measure to plug temporary staff shortages. Apprenticeships should be substantive roles that individuals are employed in, so long as they successfully complete the programme and are appropriately supported to do so.

## Apprenticeship Levy – the position of the Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

While the Apprenticeship Levy is a UK-wide tax, it has not from an employers' point of view, significantly affected the way Apprenticeships are commissioned, designed or delivered in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Skills policy is a devolved matter and each country's approach is described below. Digital accounts (used by employers based in England subject to the levy to purchase Apprenticeship training) are only being used in England. They are not available in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. While employers in each country with pay bills in excess of £3million will pay the levy, funding arrangements in the devolved administrations will continue to be centrally administered.

## What do education "levels" mean?

Formal qualifications, such as undergraduate degrees or Scottish Vocational Qualifications, in the UK are categorised according to their level of attainment and difficulty, starting at entry-level and ending at PhD level. The table below sets out the various levels, it shows other types of qualifications and the equivalent Apprenticeships.

Table: Education levels

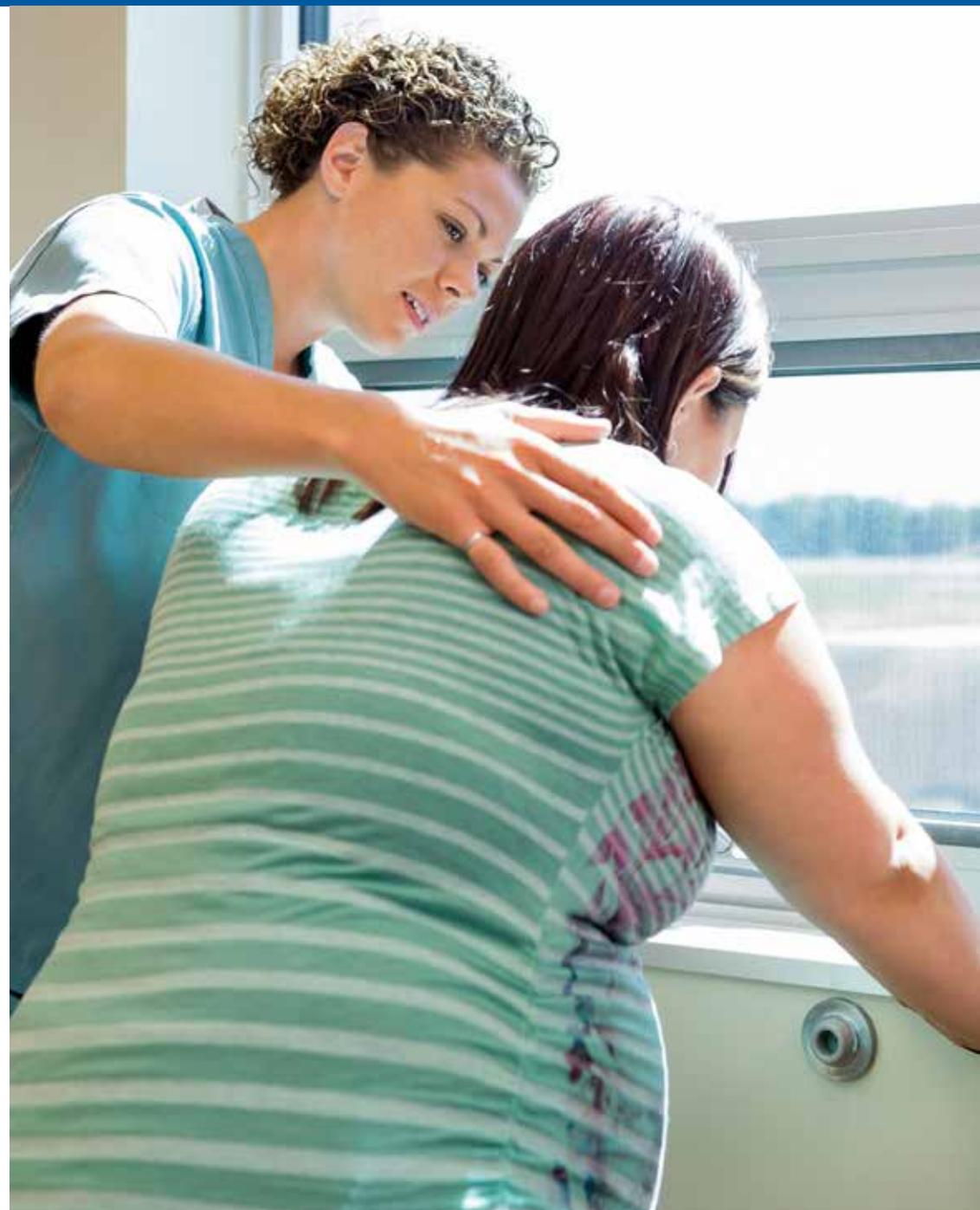
Level (England, Wales & NI)	Level (Scotland)	Equivalent Qualification	Apprenticeship (www.gov.uk descriptors) *
1	4	Five GCSEs grade D-G or 1,2,3 SVQ1	
2	5	Five GCSEs grade A*-C or 9,8,7,6,5,4 NVQ level 2 SVQ2	Intermediate (England)
3	6	Two A Levels NVQ level 3 SVQ3	Advanced (England)
4	7	Certificate of Higher Education NVQ level 4 SVQ4	Higher (England)
5	8	Diploma of Higher Education Foundation Degree	Higher (England)
6	9/10	Bachelor's degree Ordinary Degree (Scotland)	Degree (England)
7	11	Master's Degree	Degree (England)

\* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-and-degree-apprenticeships>

Across the four countries every Apprenticeship is set at an education level determined by judgments about the complexity of the role and the knowledge and skills required. These are usually, but not always, measured by the qualification needed. So for, example, in England the level 3 *Apprenticeship Standard for Senior Healthcare Support Workers*, which includes a maternity pathway, requires the person undertaking the Apprenticeship to complete a Level 3 Diploma and the standard is set at level 3. The standard below it at level 2 (Healthcare Support Worker) does not specify a qualification to complete and does not offer a maternity specific pathway. Note though that the maths and English (functional skills) requirements of Apprenticeships are often at a lower level than the overall Apprenticeship. In the level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker standard mentioned above the functional skills requirement is not set at level 3 but at level 2.<sup>1</sup>

**There is not a direct link between education levels and pay banding.** Jobs requiring level 3 qualifications may not necessarily be graded at Agenda for Change band 3. This is a matter of job evaluation. However, the RCM firmly believes that Apprentices who train and receive qualifications for particular roles should be employed in those roles and receive the appropriate remuneration. The RCM supports the pay banding of maternity support workers at Agenda for Change (AFC) Bands 2, 3 and 4, provided that job evaluation principles are adhered to. (For more detail about apprenticeship pay and banding, see page 22.)

<sup>1</sup> Further details about education levels and qualifications can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>



## The Case for Employing Apprentices

Apprenticeships can be a cost effective means of developing new and existing employees. They are attractive to staff because they provide the opportunity to 'earn and learn'. They are also attractive to employers as the evidence to date suggests they create a loyal and committed workforce.

In Scotland for example over 90% of apprentices remain in the role they trained in six months after finishing their Apprenticeship. Over eight in ten employers in England felt Apprenticeships led to a more motivated and satisfied workforce.

### Why employ apprentices?

*NHS Employers* list the following benefits of employing apprentices:

- Recruitment and retention of staff
- Helps employ more young people
- Help develop the existing and ageing workforce
- Helps reshape the workforce so it is more representative of local communities

As already mentioned Apprenticeships in maternity currently are focused on MSW roles. Surveys of the RCM's MSW membership across the UK shows that the majority would like the opportunity to access more training. Findings also suggest that the development of the role can be inconsistent. The use of Apprenticeships presents an opportunity to invest in MSWs, including existing staff and help ensure the provision of a consistent level of knowledge and skills. They also provide a progression pathway from entry-level and beyond (see discussion on Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland below).

### I'm a MSW – why should I consider becoming an apprentice?

There are lots of reasons. Apprenticeships provide the opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills needed to perform support worker roles and offer a career development pathway. They also give an opportunity to improve your numeracy and literacy skills if needed. Maths and English are needed if you would like to apply to midwifery degrees. While you are training, you are also earning a salary and receiving holidays and other benefits. When completed the Apprenticeship is a nationally recognised and transferrable qualification.

## What challenges are there for maternity services?

Across the UK the key issues for maternity services are: gaining access to funding, ensuring Apprenticeship programmes are available and deliver quality training and workforce planning. These issues are perhaps most acute in England, where the Apprenticeship reforms are most extensive. In contrast Scotland's Apprenticeship policy is evolved rather than rapidly changed. It is also important that Apprentices are appropriately paid and employed – following the terms and conditions set out in Agenda for Change.

Research commissioned by the RCM in 2017 found that MSWs often face organisational barriers that stopped them accessing formal training. The main barriers cited were costs, a lack of learning opportunities, and caring/family, and work commitments which means many MSWs feel that they don't have enough time left for learning. While the bulk of Apprenticeship development takes place in the workplace, apprentices are still required to learn and need to be supported by their employer.

### Collaboration

Maternity services are increasingly working together. In England Local Maternity Systems have been created as part of the maternity transformation programme. These create a number of opportunities to improve development and deployment of MSW roles, including:

- Ensuring consistent job descriptions and fair grading and pay
- Identifying how roles can be enhanced
- Identifying common training needs
- Collectively commissioning and monitoring Apprenticeship and other training
- Collectively seeking to recruit from local communities including under represented groups

### Funding

Most healthcare employers in the UK will pay into the Apprenticeship Levy. It is then up to individual employers how that is spent and recouped. In England where employers have direct control over their levy funds (via their digital account) some trusts have adopted a pro rata approach to the levy, ensuring each department receives its 'fair share' to spend. Whatever approach is taken **it is essential that maternity services are part of the discussion about allocation and lead the application** (selection of standard, planning of delivery, appointment of training organisation, recruitment of apprentices and so on) in the service.

Wherever they are located maternity services need to consider the training needs of their support staff and ensure they have fair access to their employer's spend on Apprenticeship training. Apprenticeships will require support locally from mentors and other staff and be paid a salary. This needs to be financially supported.

## Supply and quality

In England a significant challenge in the short term will be finding sufficient education providers locally able to deliver standards. The quality of provision, following the Richard Review on Apprenticeships in 2012, is yet to be fully tested and concerns have already been raised about this and value for money (see IPPR, 2017). This is not just a problem for maternity services looking to invest in Apprenticeships. A related concern is that there are still many roles that have not had an Apprenticeship designed for them. As the emphasis on Apprenticeships grows across the UK, there is a risk that these roles may lose out in training.

The RCM's *Learning and Development Standards* for MSWs provides advice on the factors to take into account to quality assure training. Skills for Health have also recently published a guide on quality and apprenticeships.

### Unionlearn's Charter for Apprenticeships

Unionlearn have set out some general principles that should guide the delivery of apprenticeships so that they are fair to employees. Apprentices should:

1. Have progression opportunities
2. Be fairly paid and have equivalent terms and conditions to other staff
3. Receive high-quality training
4. Have union representatives involved in planning, organisation and support
5. Be accessible and achievable to all
6. Work in a healthy and safe environment
7. Not be used for job substitution or temporary labour in order to reduce costs

## Workforce planning

Apprenticeships are a means to an end. That end is to train staff to deliver the services that mothers, babies and their families need. Effective workforce planning, based on service need is essential. This means asking the following questions:

- Given local demand (for example birth rates), workforce challenges (such as an ageing workforce or high turnover) and national policy what workforce is needed to deliver safe and effective care? Methodologies such as Birthrate Plus can assist.
- Following from workforce planning and appraisals - what training needs do staff have?
- Is an Apprenticeship the appropriate way of meeting these needs (assuming a programme is available)? This should involve a review of existing standards.
- Is there an Apprenticeship provider locally with a track record of delivering quality training that is DFE regulated, who understands maternity and is willing to work in partnership?
- What funds are available to pay for the training for apprentices but also their employment and support including workplace learning?
- Will apprentices be drawn from the existing workforce or will they be new recruits or both?
- How will Apprentices be employed and paid?
- What tasks and duties will they perform and what delegation and supervision issues are there?

In addressing these issues it is essential that services adopt a partnership approach, involving RCM workplace representatives and Union Learning Representatives. Working together produces the best outcomes. The RCM can help, for example, to explain what Apprentices are and perhaps challenge misconceptions about them. Services might wish to create a group to design, deliver and monitor their approach to Apprenticeships as a means of staff development.



## Apprenticeships in England

This section describes the new system for designing, funding and delivering Apprenticeships in England, which commenced in spring 2017. **Please note the Apprenticeship Levy is applied in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland but not the employer digital account or Funding Bands.**

### Key features of Apprenticeships in England

Apprentices must be employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week. If that is not possible (perhaps for child care reasons) employment must be for more than 16 hours a week.

- Available to anyone over 16 years old<sup>2</sup>
- Last a minimum of 12 months
- They Replace Apprenticeship Frameworks with 'Standards'
- Learning is relevant to the occupation and includes English and maths
- There is an End Point Assessment to assess whether apprentices have successfully completed the Apprenticeship
- 20 per cent of time must be spent on off-the-job training, for example through attending a college or undertaking e-learning. This can take place on a weekly basis or through block release or through education providers delivering training at the workplace
- Since May 2017 employers with a pay bill in excess of £3 million a year contribute 0.5% of their pay bill to the apprenticeship levy. They can access their levy, through a digital account, to pay for apprenticeship training. Smaller employers will be required to contribute 10% of the cost of Apprenticeships
- The Government publishes Funding Bands for each Apprenticeship

### Background

Following concerns about a fall in formal training in England and the quality and take-up of Apprenticeships the government appointed Doug Richard to review Apprenticeship provision. The subsequent *Richard Review* (2012) highlighted the importance of:

- Employer involvement in designing Apprenticeships
- Formal and off-site learning

<sup>2</sup> DBS checks can be obtained from the age of 16. Some young people may need support with completing the application, particularly if they lack the relevant documentation (which, for example, care leavers might).

Two significant policy changes have occurred as a result of the Review – the introduction of the **Apprenticeship Levy** and **Trailblazer** groups of employers, backed by a Government commitment to increase Apprenticeship starts to 3 million. The Review also led to a move, which began in 2014, to replace in England Apprenticeship Frameworks with Standards. Frameworks will be phased out over time. There are a number of differences between the two. Frameworks for instance required the Apprenticeship to include a formal qualification such as a NVQ and to teach apprentices about their employment rights and responsibilities. These no longer apply. Commonalities remain, such as need for apprentices to be proficient in numeracy and literacy, although detailed requirements have changed. Annex 1 sets out in detail the differences.

In March 2018 the Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt announced the government would begin professionalising MSWs by developing a defined role and national competency framework, with a voluntary register. The RCM warmly welcomed this recognition of the importance of MSWs and the commitment to invest in their training.

## Designing Apprenticeship Standards (Trailblazer)

One of the key recommendations of the *Richard Review* was the importance of Apprenticeships being linked to actual jobs and, in his opinion, the need for employers to take a much bigger role in their design. As a result Apprenticeships are now designed by employer-led Trailblazer groups, which comprise a minimum of ten employers in an industry who have identified a role requiring Apprenticeship training. Expressions of interest are submitted and if approved<sup>3</sup> a Trailblazer group is established to design the relevant standard using guidance provided by the Institute of Apprenticeships.

In the NHS Health Education England (HEE) and Skills for Health support trusts who wish to design Standards. Professional bodies, including the RCM are actively involved, although the College cannot initiate the development of an Apprenticeship Standard, as it is not a maternity services employer. Skills for Health produce guidance for employers wishing to develop an Apprenticeship standard in healthcare (see References).

<sup>3</sup> The main reason why applications are not approved is that the proposal is too similar to a standard that already exists or is being planned.

## Standards for maternity services

Standards for healthcare professions have only begun to be developed in the last few years. Currently the two Standards most maternity services are likely to use are:

- Level 2 Healthcare Support Worker
- Level 3 Senior Healthcare Support Worker

These are explained in more detail below. Other standards such as the level 3 Business Administrator or level 3 Learning Development Practitioner may also be of interest to ward clerks and administration staff in maternity services.

While a Degree Apprenticeship for Nursing (lasting four years) became available at the end of 2017, Skills for Health and HEE are still assessing the demand for a Maternity Degree Apprenticeship. It will be up to NHS Trusts to choose whether to come together as a Midwifery Trailblazer. **The RCM does not believe that there is the need or requirement for a midwifery equivalent of the Nursing Associate** which at time of writing is being developed into an Apprenticeship standard.

Skills for Health's *Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online* website contains up to date information on what standards are available ('approved for delivery') or under development. <https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/standards/>

## What elements are there in an Apprenticeship Standard?

There is no longer a requirement to include a formal **qualification** when employers design an Apprenticeship Standard. Decisions to include one or not will depend on judgements about whether a qualification is needed for the job (for example for regulatory reasons) or whether the apprentice will be at a disadvantage not having one. While the Senior Healthcare Support Worker standard (level 3) does include a formal qualification – the level 3 Diploma in Maternity and Paediatric Support, the level 2 standard does not.

Apprentices will need to achieve levels of proficiency in **maths and English** as follows:

- At level 1 (equivalent to grades D to G at GCSE) for Level 2 Apprenticeships
- At level 2 (A\* to C at GCSE) for Level 3 Apprenticeships and above

Through learning and work Apprentices will gain experience in the knowledge, skills and attitudes covered by the Standard. The box below summarises the requirements of the Senior Healthcare Support Worker standard, which includes a maternity pathway<sup>4</sup>.

## Apprenticeship standard for Senior Healthcare Support Worker (maternity pathway)

Level 3. Duration: 18 to 24 months

Apprentices must have or work to level 2 maths and English prior to taking the end point assessment

Apprentices must meet the 15 standards of the Care Certificate

Apprentices must complete a Level 3 diploma in Maternity and Paediatric Support

Core pathway (completed by all):

- Health and well being
- Duty of care and candour, safeguarding, equality and diversity
- Person centred care, treatment and support
- Communication
- Personal, people and quality improvement
- Health, safety and security

Maternity pathway:

- Assist with clinical tasks (e.g. parenting skills, recognition of deterioration, obtaining and testing venous and capillary blood samples and other specimens and supporting women with general personal hygiene)
- Assist with caring for baby (includes physiological measurements and supporting parents to meet the hygiene and nutrition needs of babies)
- Support mother and birthing partner

The level 2 *Healthcare Support Worker Standard* makes no direct reference to maternity but the areas covered by the Standard are applicable to many support roles in maternity services. Staff who complete the Apprenticeship for example are expected to be able to monitor people's conditions (for example

<sup>4</sup> Other pathways are: adult nursing support, theatre support. Mental health support, children and young people support and AHP-therapy support.

checking blood pressure, weight and temperature), helping with personal hygiene and non clinical tasks such as making beds and cleaning equipment. The specific skills covered in the standard are:

- Communications
- Health intervention
- Person centred care and support
- Dementia, cognitive issues and mental health
- Basic life support
- Physiological measurements
- Personal and people development
- Health, safety and security
- Duty of care
- Safeguarding
- Infection prevention and control
- Moving and handling
- Equality and diversity

The Standard, while not specifying the need for a qualification, does note - "*during the first part of this apprenticeship you will be supported to achieve the Care Certificate, which forms part of your induction and covers the fundamental skills needed to provide quality care*".

## Moving ahead in your Midwifery career with Apprenticeships

New Apprenticeship standards give everyone an opportunity to upskill and midwives are no exception. An Associate Project Manager Apprenticeship could help you with the skills to undertake a quality improvement project. Team Leader/Supervisor could help to progress from Agenda for Change Band 6 to 7, and the Operations/Departmental Manager from Band 7 to 8. Take a look at the Standards at <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

## What is End Point Assessment (EPA)?

EPA has two objectives:

- To assess whether an apprentice is fully capable to carry out the job they have been trained to do
- To see whether they can apply their learning in the 'real world'

Apprentices only receive their certificate following a successful EPA. If the Apprenticeship includes a formal qualification, passing that qualification will not of itself be sufficient to complete the Apprenticeship.

There is a range of ways that an apprentice may be assessed:

- Practical assessment
- Interview
- Project
- Written or multiple test questions
- Presentation

At least two assessment methods must be used and apprentices are assessed by pass, merit or distinction. The important point to note is that EPA focuses on the whole role, rather than specific tasks. The EPA is subject to an independent external quality assurance process.

## Paying for Apprenticeships

All UK employers with pay bills larger than £3 million – which includes most NHS trusts and independent hospitals – have been required since 1 May 2017 to contribute 0.5% of their entire pay bill to an apprenticeship fund. In England they can access their funds, via a digital account system. The Government adds a 10% top up to each employer's contribution. These funds can only be used to pay for Apprenticeship training delivered by approved training providers, which include universities, colleges and independent education providers. Any funds not spent will expire after 24-months<sup>5</sup>.

Employers with pay bills below £3million are not subject to the levy. Those wishing to train their staff through Apprenticeships will be subsidised and required to pay just 10% of the total cost, education providers draw down the remaining costs from Government. A programme whose full cost is £3000 will, for example, cost a non-levy paying employer, like a GP practice, £300.

The funding costs cover: the cost of training and end point assessment only.

The Government publishes a series of **Apprenticeship Funding Bands** and assigns individual Apprenticeships to a Band. It is up to employers to select a training provider (who must be Government approved) and within the Bands range, negotiate a price for the training. This can be less than the maximum of the Band or more if they wish to pay the 'top up'. Payment for the training is either through the levy, if that applies, or through direct payment if a smaller employer. Details of where to find the latest Apprenticeship Funding Bands are included in the References section.

<sup>5</sup> At the time of writing the Government will pay additional funds to employers and employees between 16-18 years old, as well as people aged 19-24 who have been in care or have an Education and Health Care Plan. Additional funding is also available for providers in disadvantaged areas.

## Traineeships and Internships

Traineeships are different to Apprenticeships. They are opportunities to provide young people (they are available to anyone aged 16 to 24 year old) with work experience and employability skills, along with, for those who need it, support with English and Mathematics. They can help people prepare for Apprenticeships and may be particularly helpful for people who may need additional support into employment. (Please see details of the See Potential campaign in the Reference section).

Internships can be a great way to be introduced to the world of work. A good internship should be properly structured and offer a genuine chance to learn new skills and get experience. Interns should be treated with the same respect as any other member of staff, not seen as a 'dogsbody'. In the vast majority of cases, internships should be paid. Interns are also entitled to a contract of employment, sensible working hours and a reference at the end of the internship. (For more information about Internships, see the References and Further Reading Section).

## Inclusive Apprenticeships

The Government is committed to closing the employment gap for disabled people and has set an ambitious target to support one million people with disabilities into work. The NHS is the single largest employer in the UK. The RCM's *Equalities Essentials* publication states –

*Investing in a diverse NHS workforce allows the NHS to deliver more inclusive services and improve care for service users... Diversity is about recognising and valuing differences in its broadest sense. Inclusion is about an individual's experience within the workplace and the extent to which they feel valued and included.*

There are a number of routes that employers, including the NHS, can support people with disabilities (and others) into work such as through internships. It is recognised that people with intellectual disabilities while very able to work, may find the functional skills requirements of apprenticeships challenging, acting as a barrier to their employment.

Inclusive Apprenticeships are at the time of writing being piloted in the NHS in England. They follow the requirements of all other standards with the exception of functional skills which are set at a lower level.

## Are training costs the only costs associated with Apprenticeships?

No. As apprentices are also employees the cost of training them will also include their earnings and any additional support provided such as mentor costs. As employees, apprentices will be making a contribution to the organisation as they learn through the tasks they perform. The Government has claimed that there is an economic return of between £26–£28 for every £1 invested in apprentices, however in January 2017 the independent *Institute of Fiscal Studies* described these figures as a "cavalier" use of statistics and argued they "widely overstated the case". NHS Employers note that "Short-term additional support will deliver long term benefits and help staff feel valued and committed to the organisation".

A financial return on investment should not, in healthcare settings, be the primary reason to invest in staff training. The point for maternity services to bear in mind is that apprentices will bring a cost beyond their training. This may well be offset by other benefits including improved case, but needs to be considered when planning.

### Finding training providers

To access levy funding education bodies have to apply to join a register of approved Apprenticeship providers. There have been some concerns raised about the rigor of the selection process used. It is hoped that maternity services will have already built relationships with local education institutions and that these can be built upon to deliver apprentices.

The government has set up a web resource to allow employers to find education institutions who are able to deliver Apprenticeship training, called *Find Apprenticeship Training* <https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk/Apprenticeship/Search>

Anyone can look at the site and search for providers (remember for maternity support workers to search for 'Senior Healthcare Support Worker' or 'Healthcare Support Worker').

The site will list nearby providers and provide summary details of their programmes and some outcome measures such as student satisfaction and completion rates.

## Employing apprentices

Apprentices must have a contract of employment, including a **learning agreement** (describing the learning programme) and **apprenticeship agreement** (which sets out employment rights including hours of work and holidays). The RCM strongly believes that apprentices should be employed on permanent rather than fixed term contracts.

The NHS Staff Council has published guidance about the employment and pay of apprentices.

Apprenticeships for job roles within the scope of the Agenda for Change agreement should be employed on contracts incorporating the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook.

The NHS *Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook* Annex 21 (previously Annex U) sets out the options for the pay and banding of trainees. The RCM believes that this system should also be applied to the pay and banding of apprentices.

See:

<http://www.nhsemployers.org/~media/Employers/Documents/Pay%20and%20reward/Apprenticeships%20in%20the%20NHS%20-%20NHS%20Staff%20Council%20guidance.pdf>

## Apprenticeships in Scotland

The Scottish Government supports the growth in Modern Apprenticeships (MA), setting a target of 30,000 new starts each year by 2020. Currently 25,000 people start a MA each year.

They have also stated that they wish to see an increase in Graduate and Foundation Apprenticeships. Foundation Apprenticeships are aimed at young people studying at school to provide them with work experience and practical learning. Scotland is also developing Graduate Level Apprenticeships (up to Masters Levels). Commencing in 2018 they will initially focus on ICT/Digital, Civil Engineering and Engineering.

In total there are 80 MA frameworks in Scotland, including healthcare. They are designed in partnership between industry and sector skills councils (Skills for Health in the case of healthcare MAs).

MAs have the following features:

- Combines employment with learning
- Available to new and existing staff from age 16 years (there is no upper age limit)
- Includes a formal qualification
- Comprises work-based learning and assessment by qualified assessors
- 20% of learning should be off-the-job
- Training costs are subsidized and employers do not pay NICs for MAs under the age of 25

### Modern Apprenticeships in NHS Scotland

*NHS Scotland* supports MAs in hospitals, care homes and community settings. There are currently five MAs available: Dental Nursing, Healthcare Support, Occupational Health and Safety, Occupational Health and Safety Practice and Pharmacy Services, along with a Foundation Apprenticeship. As discussed below the MA in Healthcare Support has two levels. Taken together they create a potential pathway into NHS employment and career progression opportunities for people in maternity support roles.

### NHS Scotland – progressing through apprenticeships

The apprenticeship structure in Scotland creates the possibility for maternity services in Boards to create an entry and progression pathway for maternity support roles as follows:

Foundation Apprenticeship – an opportunity for young people (16–18 years old) to experience care careers including in maternity and a relevant qualification and practice skills. Young people interested in a career in maternity could be recruited following the completion of their Apprenticeship.

Entry-level maternity care support roles complete the SCQF level 6 providing them with the fundamental skills and behaviours they need to support services and families.

More experienced maternity care support workers, who have completed the level 6, undertake the level 7 focusing on specific competences to support midwives and families.

### Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) in Social Services and Healthcare

These are new frameworks designed for pupils in S5 and S6 (16 years old and above), which will take two years to complete. Apprentices will spend part of their week at school and college and part in a health or social care workplace. MAs completing the FA will be awarded a Foundation Apprenticeship (Group Award) in Social Services and Healthcare at SCQF Level 6). Candidates will also gain practice work experience in a care setting.

### Scottish Modern Apprenticeships in Healthcare Support

These MAs are aimed at clinical and non-clinical support roles. There are two levels available (based on qualifications):

- SCQF level 6/SVQ level 2
- SCQF level 7/SVQ level 3

Candidates are expected to have completed the level 6 before progressing to the level 7. MAs should have the following:

- A contract of employment
- A Training Agreement
- A Training Plan

There is a list of approved providers for the formal elements of the Healthcare Support MA (see References for details).

MAs workplace learning is expected to be delivered by mentors and managers, and where necessary, specialists in the field. The **assessment** of MAs will be carried out by qualified SVQ assessors who maybe in-house or provided by an external training organisation.

**The SCQF level 6 framework** is designed for both clinical and non-clinical staff and commences with mandatory units that all apprentices complete (Communications, Health and Safety and Developing Own Knowledge and Practice). Those apprentices who have not previously completed the core values within the SCQF level 4 for Healthcare Support Workers do so (this includes numeracy). Clinical support workers then complete three clinical units. These units are selected from a list of 39 options, including:

- Obtaining and testing capillary blood samples
- Basic life support
- Prepare individuals for healthcare activities
- Assist practitioner to deliver healthcare activities
- Move and position individuals
- Undertake routine clinical measurements
- Personal hygiene
- Contribute to effectiveness of teams

It is recommended that the MA takes between 12 and 18 months to complete and that 20% of that time is spent on off the job training.

**The SCQF level 7 framework** is structure in the same way as the level 6 with all support workers completing three mandatory units comprising:

- Promoting Effective Communication in a Healthcare Setting
- Maintain Health and Security Practices within a Health Setting
- Develop Your Practice through Reflection and Learning

Apprentices also complete the minimum SCQF level 5 Core Values if they have not already. Following the common modules apprentices follow either a clinical or non-clinical pathway and select five options from over 100 possibilities. These include a number of specific maternity units including:

- Care for newborn baby when birth parents are unable
- Support professional advice to help parents take care of their newborn babies
- Assess the health and well being of babies during the postnatal period

- Assess the health and wellbeing of women
- Implement individualized care plans
- Operate equipment for the care of babies

It is recommended the level 7 MA takes between 18 and 24 months to complete with 20% of learning off the job.



Image: Crown ©

Source: [www.freshthinking.uhmb.nhs.uk](http://www.freshthinking.uhmb.nhs.uk)

## Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland

Key features of Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are:

- Open to new and existing employees aged 16 years and above
- Combines learning (including essential skills) and work experience
- 'Usually' spend four days a week with the employer and one with the training provider
- Available at level 2 and 3 although a pilot programme is developing Apprenticeships from levels 4 to 8
- Funding available for training costs from the Department for the Economy
- Apprenticeship frameworks have been developed by industry and sector skills councils
- They are based on qualifications

At the time of writing the Department for the Economy is considering arrangements for employers to access funding and apprenticeships in light of the Levy, following a consultation with employers.

There are two specifically relevant frameworks for health and social care support roles:

- Health and social care Level 2 framework
- Health and social care Level 3 framework

The **Health and social care Level 2 framework** comprises the following elements for clinical staff:

- A level 2 Diploma or Certificate in Clinical Healthcare support
- A Pearsons BTEC or EDI Level 2 Certificate for Working in the Health Sector

In addition there is a mandatory essential skills element comprising numeracy, communications and ICT (all at level 1), along with the requirement for apprentices to receive an induction that includes their Employment Rights and Responsibilities (ERR). The onus is on the education provider to assure quality.

The **Health and social care Level 3 framework** has a similar structure to the level 2 but is rooted in Level 3 qualifications in healthcare support and working. Essential skills proficiency must be at level 2 and again apprentices should have ERRs knowledge.

## Apprenticeships in Wales

There are 150 Apprenticeship routes in Wales, their key features are:

- Open to anyone over 16 years old
- Apprentices work and learn
- Learning includes essential Skills Wales elements (communications, numeracy and ICT) as well as a technical qualification
- There are three levels of Apprenticeships in Wales: Foundation, Apprenticeship and Higher Apprenticeship
- Learning takes place on the job and at a college or other learning provider
- They normally last between two and three years
- Includes qualifications related to job knowledge

Welsh healthcare apprenticeship framework development is led by Skills for Health. Frameworks must comply with the Specification of Apprenticeships Standards in Wales (Welsh Government, 2016), which sets out the minimum requirements. This Guidance removed the need for frameworks to include Employment Rights and Responsibilities.

The **Health (Maternity and Paediatric Support)** level 3 is available in Wales. This is a Foundation Apprenticeship. More general Healthcare Support Services frameworks are available at levels 2 and 3.

The Maternity and Paediatric Support framework has the following features:

- Requires completion of the Level 3 Diploma in Maternity and Paediatric Support
- Expected to be completed in 18-months
- Is applicable to staff working in hospital and community settings
- Has no specific entry qualifications

The Apprenticeship requires a total of 549 hours of learning with 173 of these (around 30%) off-the-job. Work based learning will be linked to the requirements of the Level 3 Diploma in Maternity and Paediatric Support and delivered through a range of methods including individual and group learning, coaching, mentoring, e-learning and feedback and assessment. The programme contains the following mandatory units:

- Promote communications
- Engage in personal development
- Promote equality and inclusion
- Principles for implementing duty of care

- Health and safety
- Handling information
- The role of health and social care workers
- Infection control and prevention
- Causes and spread of infection
- Communication, numeracy and ICT (to level 2 proficiency)



## Delegation Issues

Currently Apprenticeships apply to maternity support worker (MSW) roles. As such the training will be linked to existing roles within services, which should already be supported by appropriate decisions about delegation of tasks.

Midwives are responsible for delegation of tasks and ensuring MSWs have appropriate supervision and support to guarantee safe care. Delegation of tasks must not effect the provision of holistic care or reduce the quality of care.

The RCM's (2014) *Position Statement on Maternity Support Workers* states that the introduction of support workers 'should be within a clear framework which defines their role, responsibility and arrangements for supervision' (page 1).

The RCM's publication *The Role and Responsibilities of MSWs* sets out the tasks and duties that MSWs can and cannot perform across the maternity pathway, as well as further guidance on supervision and delegation. This should be followed when considering the tasks an apprentice will be expected to perform.

## Conclusion

In the past Apprenticeships may have been seen as a means of developing jobs in areas like engineering and construction. The idea that an Apprenticeship is about a manual trade has not been true for a long time. Apprenticeships now exist in professions as diverse as accounting, teaching, law and healthcare.

They start for school children thinking about entering employment (Foundation Apprenticeships in Scotland) right up to Masters level (and beyond in Northern Ireland). There is no upper age limit on who can be an apprentice.

In healthcare at present most apprentices are in support roles but this will change. The Levy and skills policy in each UK nation is placing a greater and greater emphasis on the importance of Apprenticeships as **the** means to train staff in the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need for their work. Whether this aspiration is met and the funding allocated delivers the expected returns remains to be seen. What is clear is that it is vital that maternity services locally engage with Apprenticeships and ensure they have access to resources to support the development of their staff to meet the needs of service. The RCM is here to help.

Apprenticeships have a long history in Britain, dating back to at least the twelfth century. Then, as now, they were designed to provide people with the experience, knowledge and skills they needed to carry out a trade, craft or profession competently. Maternity services need staff at all levels with the right knowledge, skills, experience and attitudes to deliver high-quality and safe care to women and their babies. Apprenticeships have an important and growing role to play in delivering this.

## Annex 1: The difference between Apprenticeship Standards and Frameworks (England only)

When this Guide was first published in 2011 all Apprenticeships in England were Frameworks but these are now being replaced.

The table on the page over, based on information from *Skills for Health*, illustrates the different elements of each.



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Source: [www.freshthinking.uhmb.nhs.uk](http://www.freshthinking.uhmb.nhs.uk)

Apprenticeship Framework	Apprenticeship Standard
Written by sector skills councils such as Skills for Health or Skills for Care, informed by employers	Written by employers and informed by sector skills councils
Lengthy content	Short concise, 3-page document
Issued and managed by sector skills councils	Managed by employers
Qualification-based	Can include qualifications if employers through Trailblazer groups judge qualifications are essential for job or if they would be disadvantaged in the job market without a qualification
Had to include learning about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employee Rights and Responsibilities</li> <li>Personal Learning and Thinking Skills</li> </ul>	Does not apply
Mathematics and English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required if not achieved prior to commencing the Apprenticeship</li> <li>A Level 2 Apprenticeship required level 1 math's and English</li> <li>A level 3 or above Apprenticeship required level 2 English and math's</li> </ul>	Mathematics and English <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required if not achieved prior to commencing the Apprenticeship</li> <li>For a level 2 Apprenticeship must achieve level 1 math's and English and take the test for level 2</li> <li>For level 3 and above must achieve level 2 English and math's</li> </ul>
Does not apply	End Point Assessment (EPA) Passing a formal qualification (if required) will not be sufficient to complete an Apprenticeship. Apprentices undertake a holistic assessment of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have learnt throughout the Apprenticeship. Externally Validated
Does not apply	Apprentices are graded according to their performance during the EPA

## References and further reading

### RCM Guidance

Roles and Responsibilities of MSWs - <https://www.rcm.org.uk/learning-and-career/learning-support/msw-roles-and-responsibilities>

RCM Position statement on Maternity Support Workers - [http://www.rcm.org.uk/sites/default/files/Maternity%20Support%20Workers%20B\\_3.pdf](http://www.rcm.org.uk/sites/default/files/Maternity%20Support%20Workers%20B_3.pdf)

### Other UK and England Guidance

UK Government information and guidance - <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships>

See Potential - <https://seepotential.campaign.gov.uk/>

NHS Employers - <http://www.nhsemployers.org/apprenticeships>

Find a training provider - <https://findapprenticeshiptraining.sfa.bis.gov.uk/Apprenticeship/Search>

IPPR (July 2017) *Another Lost Decade? Building a skills system for the economy of the 2030s* - <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/skills-2030-another-lost-decade>

Skills for Health (2017), *Quality Principles for NHS Apprenticeships* - <https://www.nsahealth.org.uk/apprenticeships/quality-principles-for-nhs-apprenticeships>

Healthcare standards online - <https://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/>

Skills for Health's Guide for Trailblazers in healthcare - <http://haso.skillsforhealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/2017.08.16-Trailblazer-Guide-FV.pdf>

TUC Accessible Apprenticeships: A TUC guide for trade union activists on bargaining for accessible Apprenticeships for disabled people - <https://www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/accessible-apprenticeships>

TUC Guide to Internships - <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-guidance/internships>

The Complete Guide to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships - [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/607531/COMPLETE-GUIDE-TO-APPRENTICESHIPS-201718.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/607531/COMPLETE-GUIDE-TO-APPRENTICESHIPS-201718.pdf)

## Information about Scottish Modern Apprenticeships

Skills Development Scotland -

<http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/our-products/modern-apprenticeships/>

Details of Apprenticeship Frameworks including Healthcare - <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/>

NHS Scotland Careers - <http://www.careers.nhs.scot/apprenticeships/>

NHS Education Scotland Healthcare Support Workers, a site dedicated to support role learning and development - <http://www.supportworkercentral.nes.scot.nhs.uk/>

## Information about Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland

NI Business (general information) -

<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/apprenticeships-delivering-work-based-training-and-qualifications-employees>

Details of Apprenticeship Frameworks - <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/apprenticeships>

## Information about Apprenticeships in Wales

Welsh Government -

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/skillsandtraining/apprenticeships/?lang=en>

## RCM contact for apprenticeships

[education@rcm.org.uk](mailto:education@rcm.org.uk)



[www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)