

County Durham  
**Apprenticeship**  
Programme

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## The Principle

There is a national trend of rising youth unemployment and this is compounded in many communities where high levels of economic and social deprivation result in fewer opportunities for young people to access employment. In May 2011, the Government launched its approach to tackling the issue. The Supporting Youth Employment paper sets out five priorities, one of which focuses on the need for an increase in apprenticeship opportunities.

Tackling employability, deprivation and regenerating our communities, alongside wealth generation is a high priority for the County. A fundamental component of achieving our ambitions of sustainable places where people want to live, work, invest and visit, is enabling our young unemployed residents to become competitive, job ready and successful.

Apprenticeships offer work-based training programmes designed and developed around the needs of employers, whilst also providing individuals with a nationally recognised qualification. The value of apprenticeships has been recognised at a national level and by Government as an alternative way of skilling individuals for future employment opportunities within the labour market at whatever geographic level.

## The Programme

The County Durham Apprenticeship Programme will aim to create at least 125 additional apprenticeship opportunities for unemployed individuals who live in County Durham and are between 16-24 years of age.

The Programme will predominantly focus on creating additional opportunities within the private sector, especially SMEs with less than 50 staff.



## The Offer to Employers

- A wage subsidy allowance of £2500 (maximum - based upon a 37 hour week) at the National Minimum Wage (apprentice rate) of £2.60 per hour for apprentices under 19 or 19+ and in the first year of their apprenticeship. (For individuals who are 19+ years of age, it will be the responsibility of the employer to pay the additional wage in the second year of the apprenticeship period - see National Minimum Wage rates overleaf).
- The length of the employment will be for a minimum of 2 years.
- The wage subsidy will be paid for the first 3 months of each year of employment, assuming that the individual remains in employment for the full 2 years.
- The employer's commitment will be to pay the remaining 18 months salary and allow day release for the apprentice to attend college or the designated training provider.
- All potential apprentices referred to employers will have undertaken a pre-employment training course (2 weeks) prior to a work-trial and/or employment.
- Potential apprentices can undertake a 'work trial' with employers prior to the commencement of the apprenticeship contract.
- The apprenticeship must be a minimum of 30 hours per week.
- The employer can claim a management fee of up to £350 to cover administration costs associated with the employment of the apprentice.
- The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) will provide 100% of training costs for 16-18 years olds and 50% for the 19-24 year old cohort.
- Clients' referral mechanism will be flexible with no restrictions.
- Wage subsidies will be paid quarterly to employers upon the production of relevant proof of expenditure and attendance.
- Employers will have access to a Business Advice Fund which will provide the opportunity of up to 5 hours of consultancy support (free of charge) to assist in the recruitment, training and ongoing employment of individuals.

For more information contact the Employability Team

03000 262009 [john.tindale@durham.gov.uk](mailto:john.tindale@durham.gov.uk)



## Useful links

[www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk](http://www.jobseekers.direct.gov.uk)  
[www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk)  
[www.coalfields-regen.org.uk](http://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk)

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## National Minimum Wage

There are different levels of NMW, depending on age and whether the employment is on apprenticeship basis. The current scales (from 1 October 2011) are:

- £6.08 - aged 21+
- £4.98 - the 18-20 rate
- £3.68 - the 16-17 rate for workers above school leaving age but under 18
- £2.60 - the apprentice rate, for apprentices under 19 or 19+ and in the first year of their apprenticeship.



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