



# Apprentice Handbook

TRAINING SERVICES



Raising Standards. Protecting Homeowners

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## About us

We are the leading warranty and insurance provider for new homes in the UK. Our core purpose is to build confidence in the construction quality of new homes by assessing, inspecting and directly insuring new homes registered with us. We use our unrivalled expertise, data and training services to support our registered customers to improve the construction quality of new homes and provide protection for the homeowners who purchase them.

Our training team has been successfully supporting the home-building sector for over 25 years, delivering technical training and qualifications to a broad range of professionals. This training is at the heart of our core purpose. We deliver around 13,500 delegate training days each year using our portfolio of more than 30 technical courses. We also offer a range of NVQs and a suite of free webinars. We are an approved provider of apprenticeships and are committed to using our expertise, knowledge and experience to support the development of the next generation of house builders.

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### Training is at the heart of our core purpose

Our training team has

**25<sup>+</sup>** years

of supporting the  
home-building sector

**13,500**

delegate training days  
delivered each year

**30+**

technical  
training courses



## What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is a paid job with an accompanying skills development programme. It allows you to gain technical knowledge and real practical experience through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal 'off-the-job' training and the opportunity to practise and embed new skills in a real work context. So, not only will you gain valuable experience you will also be learning and studying and earning money at the same time.

Apprenticeships have been designed by employers to meet their needs for a particular sector or job role. Each apprenticeship defines the skills, knowledge, behaviours and formal qualifications that you need to acquire in order to become competent in your chosen field, and to be awarded the status of fully qualified apprentice.

Apprenticeships are nationally recognised as a fantastic pathway into the career of your choice and we now offer apprenticeships in some key construction related areas. The range of apprenticeships we offer can be found on our website at **[www.nhbc.co.uk/apprentices](http://www.nhbc.co.uk/apprentices)**

This handbook has lots of useful information that will help you to get the most out of your apprenticeship. If you need help with any aspect of your course or other things that are happening in your working life, your NHBC tutor/assessor is your first point of contact. They will be able to help you with most things and if they don't know the answer, they will know someone who does. Don't worry, just ask.

## What levels of apprenticeship are available?

There are three levels of apprenticeships available for those aged 16 and over.

### **Intermediate Apprenticeships (equivalent to five good GCSE passes)**

Intermediate Apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 2 (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Standard. If you achieve an Intermediate Apprenticeship you may be able to progress onto an Advanced Apprenticeship.

To start an Intermediate Apprenticeship, you should ideally have 5 GCSEs (grade E/grade 2 or above).

### **Advanced Apprenticeships (equivalent to two A Level passes)**

Advanced Apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 3 (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Standard. If you achieve an Advanced Apprenticeship you may be able to progress onto a Higher Apprenticeship.

To start an Advanced Apprenticeship, you should ideally have five good GCSEs (grade C/grade 4 or above) or have completed an Intermediate Apprenticeship.

### **Higher and Degree Apprenticeships**

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships involve the development and assessment of skills and knowledge at Level 4 or above (relevant to the occupational sector or job role), and as defined by the Standard. If you achieve a Higher Apprenticeship at Level 4 or 5 you may be able to progress to a university degree or a Degree Apprenticeship as these are also becoming widely available in most sectors.

To start a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship, you should ideally have a relevant Level 3 vocational qualification or three good A Levels or have completed a relevant Level 3 Apprenticeship.

## How long is an apprenticeship?

The minimum length of an apprenticeship is 12 months, but some can last two, three or four years. This will depend on the Standard being followed, the level of apprenticeship, the specific occupational area/sector and the prior skill levels of the apprentice.

Once you start your apprenticeship you will be taken through an induction programme which will guide you through your training and the contents of your apprenticeship, including the studying of any formal qualifications. We will help and advise you throughout your apprenticeship. Please do not hesitate to ask questions if there is anything you are unsure about.

## What can I do after I complete my apprenticeship?

There are many and varied routes to pursue in the construction and home building industries. Site Supervisor Level 4 will give you a wide ranging understanding of a number of areas. You may feel that the direct route is for you, as an Assistant Site Manager and all the way to the top as a Site Manager, Project Manager and then Area Manager. Or, perhaps you might want to move into a civil engineering supervisory role, or consider more commercial projects like offices and retail spaces. You may feel that surveying, estimating and tender and procurement are more of interest to you - Quantity Surveyors are valued across the sector. For more information on the kind of careers available across the industry, have a look at [www.goconstruct.org](http://www.goconstruct.org) or [www.housebuildingcareers.org.uk](http://www.housebuildingcareers.org.uk) to read about cross employer projects featuring the pathways and views of real people, and how they progressed their own careers.

## What is in an Apprenticeship Standard?

New Apprenticeship Standards are being phased in to replace existing Apprenticeship Frameworks. The current list of Apprenticeship Standards available for each sector or job role can be found on the government website here:

**[www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards)**

Each Apprenticeship Standard defines the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for that particular job role or occupation, and each Standard is accompanied by an Assessment Plan, which details how you will be assessed against the Standard.

Your employer will be required to release you from work in order to receive off-the-job training. This could be the requirement to attend training in the form of a day release or block release, or it could be training that takes place at your place of work but away from the immediate requirements and pressures of your normal job role. We will advise you and your employer about the off-the-job attendance requirements for your chosen apprenticeship.

Apprenticeship Standards can be quite different from each other. For example, some specify the achievement of mandatory qualifications, whilst others do not require the achievement of formal qualifications. We will advise you on the requirements for your particular apprenticeship.

However, all Standards will contain the following:

### **1. Skills and competencies**

The Standard will define the range of skills and competencies that you need to practice and acquire in order to do the job to a specified standard. These skills are largely acquired and practised in the workplace and we will allocate a tutor/assessor, who has the relevant industry experience and background, to carry out formal or informal assessment of your skills and provide you with feedback.

### **2. Knowledge and understanding**

The Standard will define the knowledge and understanding that you will need to acquire and apply in order to carry out your role effectively and become occupationally competent.

### **3. Behaviours**

The Standard will define the behaviours that you will need to demonstrate in order to become occupationally competent. This may include behaviours such as good attendance and punctuality, good communication, problem solving or customer service skills etc.

### **4. Maths and English**

Virtually all Standards require you to achieve qualifications in English and Maths prior to the end of your apprenticeship.

If you don't have prior qualifications in English and Maths at Level 2 (e.g. GCSEs at grade C/grade 4 or above) you will need to study these subjects as part of your apprenticeship and this will normally be Functional Skills qualifications.

English and Maths Functional Skills are practical, applied literacy and numeracy qualifications, relevant to both young people and adult learners. They will help you to develop and apply important skills such as communication, analytical and presentational skills.

Functional Skills are assessed by examination and normally require you to attend training as required for the level of understanding needed. You will receive a diagnostics test at the beginning of the apprenticeship and a plan agreed to achieve within your individual requirements.

## **5. End Point Assessment**

Each Standard has a detailed Assessment Plan that sets out how you will be assessed against each of the elements of your apprenticeship.

Some Standards may require the achievement of formal and recognised qualifications as part of the Standard. Other Standards may require you to pass formal skills and knowledge assessments at certain points in the apprenticeship before you can move on to the next stage - these are known as Gateway Assessments.

The range and type of assessment methods vary significantly between Standards, but all Standards will contain an End Point Assessment. This is an assessment that takes place at the end of the apprenticeship and is designed to assess you against all elements of the apprenticeship; skills, knowledge and behaviours. The End Point Assessment is carried out by an independent End Point Assessment organisation, and it will typically be spread out over a number of days.

You will need to pass the End Point Assessment in order to become a fully qualified apprentice.

The assessment methods used to assess you throughout and/or at the end of your apprenticeship could be one or more of the following:

- portfolio/log-book
- observations
- presentations
- assignments
- written or online knowledge tests
- practical test/assessments
- projects
- interview/viva/professional discussion.

## What is expected of you?

Making sure you fully understand your commitment and obligations under the rules of the apprenticeship programme is especially important. This may be your first experience of the workplace and/or learning or you may be consolidating years of experience through a recognised apprenticeship. As a responsible apprentice you will need to be able to demonstrate that you are committed to your apprenticeship programme and that you are prepared to play an active part in your development.

You will be expected to act and behave in a professional manner at all times, both at work and whilst participating in the programme, which includes a commitment to full attendance, punctuality and responsible and respectful behaviour.

### Reporting illnesses and absences

If it is a training day, you must ring or get a message to us before 8.30am on your first day of sickness. You must also inform your employer. If it is a work day then you need to inform your employer under their usual procedures. You must try to give some details of how long your illness will last. Failure to phone in may result in a loss of money for that day.

If you are absent for up to five days you must provide a self-certification note to your employer and to us. However, if you are off for a period of more than seven days (including weekends) you must provide a medical certificate. If you have a period of four weeks sickness, you may be suspended from the programme for up to six months but can re-apply to be reinstated on the programme after you are deemed fit to return to work. Any apprentice who has a period of four weeks of consecutive working days of unauthorised absence is terminated from the programme.

### Punctuality

If you are consistently late without good reason your employer may deduct money from your wages. This may also lead to disciplinary procedures being taken against you. Persistent lateness on training days may result in your employer being informed and you being subject to our apprentice disciplinary process.

### Keeping appointments

Your NHBC tutor/assessor will need to carry out progress reviews with you and your employer at least every 12 weeks. They will also need to carry out a number of assessments and observations in the workplace during the length of your apprenticeship programme. These workplace visits will

be arranged and agreed in advance. If you have to change a scheduled appointment then you need to give your tutor/assessor as much notice as possible. If you do not attend or are not present for scheduled appointments then we may charge your employer for missed appointments. Continually missed appointments may result in disciplinary action being taken or you being withdrawn from the apprenticeship programme.

Depending on your apprenticeship programme and your prior qualifications, you may also need to attend training on additional days to complete your Functional Skills qualifications as part of your apprenticeship. Failure to attend these days may also result in us charging your employer for costs incurred, and persistent failure to attend may result in disciplinary action being taken or you being withdrawn from the apprenticeship programme.

## What can you expect from NHBC?

Our aim is to ensure you have all the information and support necessary for you to successfully complete your apprenticeship with us. The key person will be your NHBC tutor/assessor, who will guide you through the programme from start to finish. Your tutor/assessor will carry out assessments in the workplace and set you targets through formal progress reviews. They will act as the link between your employer and us and will be your first point of contact if you have any questions, issues or concerns. In some cases, the responsibilities of workplace assessment and carrying out progress reviews will be split between two people.



Other key people may include NHBC teaching and support staff and a workplace mentor allocated to you by your employer.

At each stage of your apprenticeship you can expect the following from us:

### **Prior to the start of the apprenticeship**

- advice and guidance on the right apprenticeship for you, and support in helping you to secure an apprenticeship with a suitable employer
- an initial assessment in Maths and English to ensure you are on the right level of apprenticeship and to identify any numeracy or literacy needs
- the identification of any additional support requirements for those apprentices with disabilities and/or learning difficulties
- issue of a contract and/or a Commitment Statement, signed by all parties, which sets out the roles and responsibilities on all sides for the apprenticeship programme.

### **At the start of the apprenticeship**

- an induction into the apprenticeship programme, which will include induction into any NHBC based courses
- the issue of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) & Commitment Statement that sets out the requirements of the apprenticeship, including a training and assessment plan which identifies the time spent at work in 'on-the-job' training and time spent away from work in off-the-job training.

### **During the apprenticeship**

- you can expect to experience a high-quality apprenticeship training programme, taking into account your needs and those of your employer and delivered by a professional and highly competent delivery and assessment team with relevant vocational expertise
- regular progress reviews (at least every 12 weeks) to review your progress at work and with us and to set targets for the next period. The progress review will also monitor and respond to any concerns and issues you may have in respect of health and safety, equality and diversity, and safeguarding. See the relevant sections in this handbook for more information

- regular assessment of your knowledge and skills, based on industry standards. Assessment can take one or more of the following forms:
  - observation: direct observation of you performing a task to required standards in the workplace
  - portfolio: a portfolio containing evidence of tasks completed, consisting of job write-ups, photos, witness statements etc. These will be assessed against the relevant standards
  - questioning: knowledge and understanding may be assessed via on-the-job or off-the-job questioning by the assessor or by written questions and answers
  - assignments and exams: you may also be required to produce assignments or to sit internally or externally set exams in order to demonstrate knowledge and understanding. These are the most common assessment methodologies for qualifications and functional skills
- we will routinely ask for feedback on our programmes and content, making sure they're as good as they can be and relevant to the industry. We will also ask for volunteers to stand as "student representatives", agreeing with their groups issues to raise and discuss at a national forum several times a year, held at our head office.

### At the end of the apprenticeship

- for those following an Apprenticeship Standard, an End Point Assessment will be carried out by an independent End Point Assessment organisation
- certification of any qualifications achieved, including any End Point Assessment, and the issue of the apprenticeship completion certificate
- further advice and guidance on your options for further progression, e.g. progressing on to the next level of apprenticeship if available and suitable.

## What can you expect from your employer?

In taking on and supporting an apprentice there are certain obligations that an employer needs to commit to.

### Employment and working hours

- you must be paid a wage that is at least the national minimum wage for apprentices, which is dependent on age, set by government and reviewed annually. The current minimum wage for apprentices can be found under [www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates)

- your rate of pay may exceed this, at the discretion of your employer, and will take into account your abilities, age, skills and experience, and the market rate for the job concerned. Many employers choose to pay significantly above the apprentice minimum wage in order to secure and retain the best apprentices
- you should work a minimum of 30 hours per week up to a maximum of 40 hours per week and must be paid both for the hours you spend working and for those that you spend formally studying with NHBC away from the workplace
- all apprentices must have a contract of employment and receive a pay slip, or other evidence of payment
- you must be given at least two full days off per week. If working on a Sunday is a requirement, and you are under 18, then your employer must obtain parental consent
- you are entitled to paid holidays from your first day of employment. The minimum statutory entitlement is currently 28 days per year, including bank holidays. Where possible, holidays should not be taken during agreed training periods or days as this may delay your progress towards your qualifications. Holiday pay will be accrued in accordance with the terms of your employment contract
- your employer should allow you to join a recognised trade union if you so wish. The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) offers free, confidential and impartial advice on all employment rights issues.

### **Induction**

Your employer must provide you with a full workplace induction, covering subjects such as health and safety, fire procedures, sickness, holidays and complaints.

### **Mentoring**

Providing you with a mentor is optional for your employer, but if you are allocated a workplace mentor, there are many positive benefits. The mentor can act as a role model and lets you see, first-hand, the level you should be aspiring to.

### **Providing learning opportunities and supporting skills development**

To demonstrate competency in the workplace, which is a core component of your training programme, you may be required to collect evidence to demonstrate that you are competent in a range of different activities and skills. As part of the apprenticeship recruitment process, we will advise

your employer on the range of tasks and activities that you will need to undertake in order to develop your skills, and check that the employer has the range and scope of work available to evidence this.

Your allocated tutor/assessor will discuss and agree the best way of providing this evidence to achieve the national standards. This will involve identifying naturally occurring opportunities to practise and demonstrate skills in the workplace or organising activities specifically to demonstrate particular skills. The tutor/assessor will work with your employer to help them to deliver the training required and to create the opportunities necessary for you to develop your skills and achieve your apprenticeship.

Much of the training will take place within the workplace itself. This will typically involve you developing your skills through observing others perform activities, practising such activities yourself and learning from your peers and more senior colleagues. The more learning opportunities that you can access, the greater the range of skills you are likely to acquire, which will be of benefit to your apprenticeship.

Your employer is required to release you to attend the progress reviews that are carried out by your tutor/assessor, and (wherever possible) your employer, work supervisor or mentor should be present at these reviews to support your progress and to identify and discuss any areas of concern or of good practice and to be involved in the setting of targets.

### **Release for NHBC attendance**

You may be required to attend NHBC training or other off-the-job training in order to gain certain skills and undertake certain assessments. Your employer is obliged to release you on the agreed days or times for this and to count this time as part of your normal weekly paid hours.

Some employers will allow you time at work to complete your assignments, job write-ups or portfolio building activities, although they are not obliged to do this.

## **Health and safety**

All employers should take all the necessary steps to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of anyone participating in an apprenticeship is of the same standard as that required in relation to any of its employees under current relevant health and safety legislation in Great Britain

You are entitled to the same protection under the law as any employee, but you also have a legal duty to obey safety rules at your work placement and whilst with NHBC.

Protective clothing and safety equipment must be used at all times where specified. If you need special protective equipment, or safety equipment is necessary, then your employer must provide it to you free of charge.

You also have a duty of care to your employer and other employees in the workplace. This applies also when participating in training days with us.

If you have an accident you must report it to your workplace supervisor and make sure it is recorded in the accident book. Any accident, however minor, must also be reported to your tutor/assessor immediately.

## Equality and diversity

Your employer must comply with current equality legislation and not discriminate under the 'protected characteristics' of sex, disability, marital status, race (including national or ethnic origins), sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, religion or belief, age, pregnancy/maternity and ex-offenders with a spent crime.

All employers are required to have a policy/complaints procedure for harassment.

## Safeguarding and prevent

Safeguarding you both at work and whilst with us is important to us, as are British values. British values are defined as:

- rule of law
- individual liberty
- mutual respect and tolerance of those from other backgrounds, religions, beliefs
- democracy
- compliance with the Equality Act and those protected by it.

Safeguarding means:

- the promotion of your health and development
- ensuring your safety and care
- ensuring you are offered the best life chances
- protection from abuse and neglect
- prevention of bullying and harassment
- prevention against exposure to terrorism and extremist views.

The term 'safeguarding' embraces both child and vulnerable adult protection and preventative approaches to keep you safe. Safeguarding encompasses your health and safety, welfare and wellbeing. The prevention against exposure to terrorism and extremist views applies to all, regardless of age or background.

We will monitor and respond as appropriate to any safeguarding concerns raised or brought to our attention by either you, your employer or a third party.

Our safeguarding & prevent support guide can be found on our website: **[www.nhbc.co.uk/safeguarding](http://www.nhbc.co.uk/safeguarding)**

If you have any concerns about your safety, wellbeing or rights then please contact your NHBC tutor/assessor or

#### **NHBC's Designated Senior Safeguarding Lead, Geoff Mann**

Call: **07733 014772** or email: **[gmann@nhbc.co.uk](mailto:gmann@nhbc.co.uk)**

If you have concerns about someone's safety or about their involvement in extremism or terrorist actions, or if you are particularly concerned that someone might leave the country to travel to a conflict zone, you should contact:

#### **NHBC's Designated Senior Prevent Lead, Geoff Mann**

Call: **07733 014772** or email: **[gmann@nhbc.co.uk](mailto:gmann@nhbc.co.uk)**

A free support service is available for apprentices who are feeling low, upset and struggling to keep up with their apprenticeship. It is completely confidential and run by fully trained professionals with expertise in mental health. For further information, please email **[apprentices@remploy.co.uk](mailto:apprentices@remploy.co.uk)** or visit **[www.remploy.co.uk](http://www.remploy.co.uk)** or call **0300 456 8210**

## **Complaints and issues**

If you have a complaint or wish to raise a concern with us then you should speak with your tutor/assessor in the first instance who will do their best to deal with the issue or they will refer it on to their manager for follow up. If you are still not satisfied then you can follow our complaints procedure which can be found on our website.

**[www.nhbc.co.uk/complaintsprocedure](http://www.nhbc.co.uk/complaintsprocedure)**

You can also contact the Apprenticeship helpline on **0800 015 0400** or email at: **[nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk](mailto:nationalhelpdesk@apprenticeships.gov.uk)**

# Summary and further information

We hope that you have found this guide helpful and we wish you every success in your apprenticeship.

As an NHBC apprentice you will be registered on our database as a student at NHBC and as such you will have full access to our online resources.

Your NHBC account will give you access to several resources including:

- our Learning Assistant platform
- exams and assessment
- regular reviews on progress
- appeals and complaints procedure
- English and maths learning resources
- careers help and guidance
- discussion forums with other students
- further information on health and safety, wellbeing, equality and diversity and safeguarding
- links to online resources.

Note: We will only retain your data whilst as a student with us and for the requirements of awarding organisations.

Our privacy policy can be accessed here

**[www.nhbc.co.uk/legal/privacypolicy/](http://www.nhbc.co.uk/legal/privacypolicy/)**

Call: **01908 746380**

Email: **[training@nhbc.co.uk](mailto:training@nhbc.co.uk)**

Web: **[www.nhbc.co.uk/apprentices](http://www.nhbc.co.uk/apprentices)**

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