

# Five myths about apprenticeships

FIS Skills and Training Lead George Swann, dispels five myths to help contractors overcome some of the perceived hurdles to taking on apprentices...

Throughout 2021, the number of FIS members reporting that they were experiencing recruitment difficulties increased until it became as much of a concern as material shortages. However, despite this, many finishes and interiors employers are still reluctant to take on an apprentice, this is often due to misconceptions about what taking on an apprentice involves.

This is reflected in the number of apprenticeship starts for the sector in 2020-21, which shows 90 dryliners and 470 plasterer apprenticeship enrolments in England, 88 interior systems (which includes drylining) and 70 plasterers in Scotland and 9 interior system and 51 plasterers in Wales, compared with 3,620 for bricklaying and 8,610 for carpentry (according to data from the Education and Skills Funding Agency).

With [National Apprenticeship Week](#) taking place between 7-13 February 2022, now is a good time to look at some of the common myths surrounding apprenticeships and see if there is any truth behind them.

## 1. I'm too busy to take on an apprentice

We know that employers are busier than ever and that investing precious time in taking on an apprentice may not be the highest priority. However, this is a very short-term outlook. By investing in new talent, over time your organisation will build a team that will provide more capacity and it will pay dividends in the future.

Planning your apprenticeship recruitment and onboarding campaign and training coaches and mentors to look after the apprentices (including having a training provider ready to go) in advance, will save time. FIS provide a full guide on the

steps you need to take for a free of charge smooth and streamlined recruitment campaign [here](#).

To make the recruiting and training activities less time consuming, draw on your team to come together, this includes planning and execution. Use the recruitment and training experience to develop your team's skills instead of feeling like you have to do it all yourself.

The English Apprenticeships are a variety of lengths as are those in Scotland and Wales the Interior Systems Installer apprenticeship, which includes options for drylining or partitions and ceiling takes up to two years to complete.

The plasterer apprenticeship which includes options for solid or fibrous takes up to three years to complete. Once trained, and to some extent as the apprentice progresses through the programme, they will steadily become an effective member of your team and will be a great asset to and support for other new apprentices.

## 2. It's too complicated

The process of taking on an apprentice can seem complicated at first, especially if it's the organisations first time. There are so many different acronyms, funding bodies, and qualifications, and this varies in each Devolved Nation. No wonder many finishes, and interiors employers get disheartened and only go part way through the process.

The process is definitely not step by step, there is a lot of things that can be done concurrently and with a little bit of clear guidance the process can actually be quite straightforward:

- Develop a job description and job advert.
- Create the new recruit's contract of employment.
- Find a training provider or partner to help plan and recruit, there are a number of free of charge advertising sites including, [FIS JobSpot](#), [Recruit an Apprentice](#) and [TalentView](#).

- Prepare the team and manager of the new recruit(s) to make sure they are aware of their responsibilities of managing, coaching and mentoring them effectively.

### 3. There's not enough training provision in my area

Finishes and interiors training provision is spread across the UK, so it could well be the case that your nearest training centre is not as local as desired. Does this mean you shouldn't take on an apprentice? Absolutely not. Here is what you should do if there isn't training provision in your area:

- **Contact FIS.** We have a network of Approved Training Provider members and can direct you to the organisation most suitable for your needs. We also keep a up to date list of all Training Providers registered to deliver apprenticeship training.
- **Consider block release.** This means instead of your apprentice attending training once a week, they attend for week-long blocks instead, still receiving the training they need, but in a different way. This often makes the apprentice more employable when they return to site.
- **Tell the CITB.** Without industry feedback, [CITB Apprenticeships \(Hire, Become & Redundancies\)](#) cannot effectively work with finishes and interior employers to support and grow the training provision.
- **Consider the Flexi-job apprenticeship option.**

FIS is here to help, and we will be happy to talk you through every aspect of employing an apprentice.

### 4. It costs too much

With the cost of materials and labour increasing and cashflow tightening, it is understandable that contractors may not want to take on extra costs by recruiting an apprentice. However, it is worth bearing in mind apprentices perform productive work while completing their training and there are savings to be gained from lower recruitment costs, lower salaries and savings on National Insurance, compared to trying to recruit experienced workers. Apprentices also become highly skilled even before they finish their training.

According to the ESFA, there are nine key benefits that employers have identified for recruiting, training and retaining apprentices. This included employers confirming that 25 per cent of their customers are willing to pay more for products from a business that employs apprentices, and 74 per cent of employers say that apprentices improved products or service quality. Plus, 78 per cent say that apprentices improved productivity.

It's important to be able to work out how much an apprentice would cost your business every year. The core costs of employing an apprentice are made up of hourly wage, yearly National Insurance contributions and pension

contributions, training costs and providing appropriate PPE, tools and equipment.

There are a variety of funding options open to employers of apprentices. These include the ongoing government apprenticeship incentive payment (£3,000) for recruiting a new apprentice and the apprenticeship grants of up to £11,500 available through CITB.

### 5. They always leave

Employers often say that there is no point investing time, money and effort into recruiting and training an apprentice if they are going to leave or be poached at the end of the apprenticeship. According to the UK Government's [apprenticeship achievement statistics](#), 64 per cent of apprentices complete their apprenticeship, with 65.7 per cent being retained by their employer after their apprenticeship ends. This may seem a disappointing stat, however there will never be a 100 per cent retention rate with every employee.

Whilst apprentices are free to go where they wish once they have completed their apprenticeship, there are proactive steps you can do to ensure they stay in the sector. Investing in apprentices by giving them a good workplace experience will mitigate them wanting to leave while creating a talent pipeline for the sector.