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Skills Funding
Agency

Business Update will inform you of our ‘products’ and services and their potential to make a positive impact upon your business.

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If you have any feedback, please email [Business Update](#).

1. A new service to manage your apprenticeships

Inform

Apprenticeships benefit employers and individuals, and by boosting the skills of the workforce they help to improve economic productivity.

The employer-led apprenticeship reforms are making apprenticeships even more valuable to employers by putting them in control of apprenticeships – they are choosing the skills, provider, candidate and delivery of the apprenticeship, to ensure it meets their needs.

In line with the government's apprenticeships reforms, we are developing a new service through which employers can plan, manage and pay for their apprenticeships.

We have invited some levy-paying employers to register their account on the service over coming weeks. We will work with these employers to continue testing and improving the service, before we invite all levy-paying employers to register by the end of February 2017.

To register, levy-paying employers will need:

- the Government Gateway login details for any PAYE schemes you want to include in your account - your payroll or finance team will have access to these
- details for each organisation that will be making an agreement with a training provider for apprenticeship training, including the Companies House or charity number (if you have one)

If your organisation is part of a group of [connected companies or charities](#), you will also need to think about how you want to structure your account to manage your apprenticeships.

Not a levy-paying employer?

If your annual pay bill is less than £3 million, you won't need to pay a levy contribution but you can still receive government support for 90% of your apprenticeship training and assessment costs.

The government is offering additional support to organisations with fewer than 50 workers by paying 100% of training and assessment costs for their apprentices aged between 16 and 18 and for those aged between 19 to 24 formerly in care or with a local authority education, health and care plan.

If you're a non-levy payer, you will continue to pay your provider(s) directly for training and assessment rather than through the service. You can, however, use the service to select a [framework](#) or [standard](#) for your apprenticeship training and [choose the training provider or providers](#) you want to deliver the training.

Find out more about the [apprenticeship funding reforms](#) on GOV.UK.

2. The apprenticeship funding rules: May 2017 – March 2018

Inform

Following feedback, version 1 of the apprenticeship funding rules have now been published. They set out the rules for apprenticeship funding, including evidence required to claim funding from us. They also include guidance which may be helpful for employers.

These rules cover the period May 2017 to March 2018. They are for use by training providers, employers and employer-providers delivering new apprenticeship starts from 1 May 2017.

If you are a levy-paying employer or an employer-provider: read the updated rules. They will help you plan how you could use your levy funds to pay for apprenticeships.

If you are a non-levy paying employer: the updated rules contain guidance that will help you plan your apprenticeship programme.

For further information, please visit the [Funding Rules](#) page on GOV.UK or contact the [service desk](#).

3. New apprenticeship standards approved for delivery

Inform

We now have 159 approved [apprenticeship standards](#) ready to use across a range of sectors including event management, financial services, digital industries and healthcare. More than 470 standards are either approved or in development.

Groups of employers (trailblazers) that want to create quality apprenticeships for their sector are developing new apprenticeship standards. You can find all the apprenticeships approved for development on the [apprenticeships standards section](#) on GOV.UK.

To contribute to the development of standards, please read the [guidance for trailblazers](#) and email the trailblazer contact shown on [GOV.UK](#).

4. Industry professionals to lead technical education panels

Inform

The Department for Education is seeking experienced industry professionals to help shape the future technical education system in England.

This is an opportunity for practising industry professionals or representatives of an industry through a recognised professional body or trade association. The DfE are looking for:

- panel members to develop the standards for specific technical occupations by determining the key skills, knowledge and behaviours that individuals should meet
- panel chairs to lead the overall panel for a technical route and facilitate the active participation of all panel members

The closing date for applications is 13 February 2017.

Find out more by visiting [GOV.UK](#).

5. Minimum wage rates change

Inform

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy National Living and Minimum Wage

campaign aims to make sure that employers and employees are aware that the rates will rise on 1 April 2017. This is a part of the government's commitment to making sure the economy works for all.

For apprentices, the rate changes from £3.40 per hour to £3.50 per hour from 1st April 2017.

By law, all workers must be paid at least £7.20 an hour if they are aged 25 and over, or the National Minimum Wage rate relevant to their age if they are younger.

Find out more about wage rates by visiting the [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates](#) page on GOV.UK.

6. National Apprenticeship Week 2017

Inform

Social mobility and the ladder of opportunity are the themes for this year's National Apprenticeship Week (#NAW2017) which is taking place 6 to 10 March. A host of big name employers are preparing to help us mark the week by hosting high profile events including JCB, Santander and Barclays.

We will not only be celebrating the successes of current apprentices, but we will also recognise people who started their career as an apprentice and have progressed to a senior position in the company.

We have created a media toolkit for employers which can be found on [GOV.UK](#) and we are asking people to use the hashtag #NAW2017 on Twitter. An [events map](#) is also live which allows employers, schools, colleges and training providers to tell us what they're planning during #NAW2017.

Find out more about [National Apprenticeship Week 2017](#) by visiting GOV.UK.

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