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Education & Skills  
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## 1. National Apprenticeship Week 2017 – get involved

### Action

The [10th National Apprenticeship Week](#) will bring together employers and apprentices from across England to celebrate the success of apprenticeships over the last decade and will seek to encourage even more people to choose apprenticeships as a fast-track to a great career and more businesses to choose apprenticeships to boost their productivity. Taking place from 6 to 10 March, National Apprenticeship Week will celebrate apprenticeships, across all industries, and all levels, with the theme 'ladder of opportunity'.

There is still time to get involved:

- download a [toolkit](#) with lots of event, PR and social media ideas– there are two different versions depending on whether you are an employer or a school, college or training provider
- share images of your current and ex-apprentices - tagging @Apprenticeships and using the hashtags #NAW2017 and #Madebyapprentices on Twitter and getingofar on Instagram - a [template](#) is available

for you to download and use

- visit our [LinkedIn showcase page](#) to share what you are doing during the week
- Share your events on the [online events map](#)
- show your support by putting our 10th annual [National Apprenticeship Week logo](#) on your email signature, website and social media platforms
- our [digital cheat sheet](#) has many more ways you can support NAW2017
- as well as sharing your photos on social media, email [theweek@sfa.bis.gov.uk](mailto:theweek@sfa.bis.gov.uk) and we can share on [Flickr](#)

Find out more about NAW 2017 on [GOV.UK](#).

## 2. National Apprenticeship Awards 2017

### Inform

The search is on to find England's top apprenticeship employers and apprentices and to recognise those individuals who have made a significant contribution to apprenticeships.

Now in its 14th year, the National Apprenticeship Awards 2017 opens for entries on 15 March.

As previously there will be a range of regional and national employer categories, and the very best employer category entries will also have the additional bonus of featuring in the prestigious annual Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list.

There will also be regional and national awards for intermediate, advanced and higher or degree apprentices.

The Apprenticeship Champion of the Year is open to individuals who go above and beyond to champion apprenticeships. This category is open to apprentices and those who have made a significant contribution to apprenticeships, such as those working in schools or providing careers guidance.

The National Apprenticeship Awards are the top accolade for all the hard work put into excelling and playing a leading part in apprenticeships. The awards have a high profile and so can raise public awareness of your commitment through national, regional and sector media channels, including radio and television coverage.

[Apply online for the awards](#). Employer and apprentice guidance documents are available to download from the [awards application site](#).

## 3. Get In Go Far campaign

### Inform

Recent research has revealed that SMEs are predicted to recruit 202,000 new apprentices in the next 12 months and that SMEs are keen to hire apprentices for both their enthusiasm as well as the business benefits. As a result of these findings, the Government Get In Go Far campaign is launching a new wave of activity to encourage more SMEs to realise the benefit of apprenticeships.

The new wave of the campaign features four SMEs who describe the benefits of apprenticeships to their organisations. This is in advance of a new “STEP” funding offer non-Levy-paying SMEs can access from 1st May 2017 – which will include:

- support: the government pays 90% of an SME’s training and assessment costs for the lifetime of the apprenticeship, any age, any level (up to funding band maximum)
- teen grant: an extra £1,000 grant will be paid to any SME who takes on a 16 to 18 year old, or a 19 to 24 year old that has previously been in care
- entrepreneur offer: businesses with under 50 staff will also see 100% of training and assessment costs paid for if they recruit an apprentice aged 16 to 18
- provision for additional support: for SMEs who take on those with additional learning needs further support is also available

To find out more about the campaign, visit the [Get In.Go Far website](#).

## 4. Minimum wage rates change

### Remind

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 [GOV.UK](#).

## 5. Apprenticeship Funding Rules

### Inform

Following the publication of the [Apprenticeship Funding and Performance Management Rules 2017 to 2018](#) some employers have raised concerns about approaches providers have made to them. Some providers are proposing incentives by offering to refund payments or to fund ineligible costs. Examples include:

- re-funds of the employer co-investment
- employers as subcontractors where some of the costs are ineligible
- negotiating higher prices so that non-English apprentices could be funded free of charge

Payments of this kind from providers to employers are prohibited. We will be updating the funding rules to explicitly forbid such practices and will publish the updated rules later this month.

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