



AT THE HEART OF EDUCATION



# **PREPARING FOR THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY**

Is it time to re-think your offer?



## IT'S TIME TO RETHINK YOUR TRAINING OFFER

On 6th of April 2017 the new levy system will come into being and all UK employers with a pay bill of more than £3million PA will be required to pay a 0.5% levy. The collection will be through a monthly payment to HMRC (for organisations with seasonal employees there will be in-year adjustments). The system will be a standard one and it will impact all employers across the public and private sectors that are on or above the £3 million pound threshold. This includes Colleges, Local Authorities, Health Boards and any large public sector employers.

The treasury expects to raise £3 billion pounds per annum through this levy and around £2.5 billion will be available for training in England. The remainder will be available in Scotland, Wales and NI who will have their own mechanisms for disbursement. This is likely to have a knock on impact on the budgets of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and in the longer terms on their policies in terms of apprenticeship delivery.



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## **WHAT WILL THE CHANGES MEAN TO PROVIDERS?**

**T**his represents a fundamental shift in the relationship between employers and publically funded training. Employers large and small are now expected to make a contribution towards the cost of apprenticeship training and they will be contracting directly with their chosen training providers. Their expectations around both the price they pay and the quality of provision they are paying for is going to change, as they become involved in the procurement of the training for their candidates.

From January 2017 Employers will be able to open negotiations with training organisations who are on the officially approved register of apprenticeship training providers in preparation for the system coming into operation in April 2017. The aim of this new list is to make it simpler for employers to find and contract directly with training providers.

Large and small employers will have access to a digital training account which they will use to commission training from their provider of choice. The model will be one of

co-investment for small non-contributing employers they will make a contribution to their account and in return they will be able to access additional funds to pay towards training. The current pilot model is that for every £1 a company invests in their training account they will be able to access £2 in return. A cap will be in place for each framework – the only additional payments that will remain in the system currently are the £471 funding for both the English and Maths components in terms of functional skills.

There are currently between 900 and 950 training providers in the apprenticeship training space in England. The government expects the new arrangement will mean that the number of providers will stay the same but that there will be a dramatic reduction in sub-contracting and that there will be some displacement as some larger employers will decide to become training providers in their own right and come on to the approved register of apprenticeship training providers.

Employers who come onto list will be inspected by Ofsted as will all providers delivering up to QCF Level 3. Those delivering higher level apprenticeships will be inspected by the relevant quality agency.

If you want to stay in or enter the apprenticeship market it is time to re-think your training offer to employers and the way that you support apprenticeships.

## HOW ARE FRAMEWORKS CHANGING?

**T**he changes in funding are just one part of what is a major reform of apprenticeships and apprenticeship delivery. The nature of an apprenticeship is changing too in terms of both its design, anticipated delivery methodology and the assessment strategy.

A new independent body, the Institute for Apprenticeships, led by employers, to regulate the quality of apprenticeships will oversee the new system and the maintenance of standards. An independent Chair will lead a small Board made up primarily of employers and business leaders to ensure employers continue to drive up apprenticeship quality to the highest level. All of the approved standards and those in progress are available on a publically facing website. The Institute of Apprenticeships will be launched in April 2017.

The new frameworks are required to contain the minimum English and Maths requirements and any digital skills required along with the relevant occupational competencies.

For all standards, the amount of off-the-job training mandated is a minimum of 20% or equivalent. The expectation is that all apprentices will benefit from genuine training away from their day-to-day job, but this does not necessarily need to take place away from the employer's premises.

The expectation will be that providers can support learners online at all times and where practical support the delivery of the off-the-job element online too.

## HOW IS ASSESSMENT CHANGING?

**Q**ualifications will play a much more minor role in the new system. It is envisioned that learners will complete a one to four year programme with the bulk of assessment being delivered through an end-point assessment (EPA).

The Government has introduced a requirement that all apprenticeships must contain an end-point assessment (EPA) which is a holistic assessment of the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) that have been learnt throughout the apprenticeship. This is to make sure that apprentices meet the rigorous standard set by employers and are fully competent in the relevant occupation. It will give employers confidence that completing an apprenticeship means an individual is fully job-ready. It will also mean that all apprentices following the same standard are assessed consistently, regardless of where they are undertaking their apprenticeship or who they are doing it with.

The performance of all candidates will now be graded and there will be at least one level above a pass to recognize exceptional performance. For example, pass and distinction or pass, merit and distinction. A pass grade in any apprenticeship must demonstrate full competency against the standard that has been set.

The EPA needs to be conducted by an organisation that is on the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations. The employer will select the assessing organisation from

this register and this will keep the delivery of the standard and the final assessment of the candidate's performance separate. The employer will pay for the final EPA from their digital account and this is likely to be a significant component of the cost of the new system.



Employers and training providers will need to be confident in a trainee's ability to pass the EPA before presenting them for the final assessments. This means that tracking and the monitoring of a candidate's performance will become critical over the training period of the apprenticeship.

# WHY BLENDED LEARNING

**Y**ou are going to find that in order to stay in this market you will need to have a reliable online platform that can both deliver knowledge and skills, as well as track a learner's performance against the competency framework. It will no longer be sufficient just to offer the e-Portfolio which has been the traditional learner management and delivery tool for the apprenticeship sector.

A blended learning approach will give your learners a richer learner experience and allow you to make efficiencies in delivering to and supporting learners throughout their apprenticeship. By moving activities online, your apprentices will have more time with their employers, increasing on-the-job training and allowing more time for learners to practice what they have learnt.

Today's learners see their educational futures built around technology. Devices such as smartphones and tablets have become ever-present in day to day life, with learners eager to incorporate these tools into their learning with the expectation of being able to access their learning materials whenever and wherever and this will allow them to have a more personalised learning experience. There is a lot of support available for you around understanding the new expectations of learners and for supporting the development of digital literacy.

Using a learning platform reduces costs and time and gives you the flexibility to offer a rolling programme of study. Typically, students and apprentices would have trained and taken assessments within the training centres, now more can be achieved in the workplace.

A blended approach allows you to carefully monitor an apprentice's progress and gives you quick and instant access to your learner's progress through progress reports; assessments, practice tests and activities that can quickly be analysed and assessed, enabling you to continuously monitor and improve learning outcomes.

Through using an integrated system you will generate increased retention & completion rates. The ability to easily monitor the progress of the apprentices will lead to increased retention rates, by using simple analytics you will be able to track which students are completing their work on time. Those that need additional support can be easily identified and an appropriate intervention can be taken in a timely manner.

There is a lot of support available for organisations thinking about the changing expectations of learners and in supporting the development of digital literacy. Jisc provides

some useful support for developing an organisation's strategy and capacity to deliver digitally. These and other guides will help you understand the benefits of blended learning for your organisation, your staff and your learners.

While there is an enormous range of open educational resources available in most subject areas. You will need a platform that allows you to develop your own content while positioning the best available open educational resources, useful copyright cleared resources from YouTube and the internet, alongside any paid for content you wish to position on your system to support your learners.

Alongside the growing number of specialist digital learning content providers, there are emerging a number of content collaboration partnerships creating content for blended learning, an active example of this is Heart of Worcestershire College. The Education and Training Federation provides a number of useful case studies to support you in your blended learning journey.



# WHICH DELIVERY PLATFORM

**E**mployers will look for suppliers that can deliver content through engaging collaborative online environments that offer them reliable reports on their candidates' progress and provide them with a space where they too can tailor content for their learners in partnership with the training provider.

The nature of funding, reporting and the collaboration required to deliver work-based learning is changing dramatically and needs some new approaches that move

past the traditional e-Portfolio or institutionally based virtual learning environment.

New standards, a new funding landscape, new employer and learner expectations, a new regulatory and assessment environment require fresh thinking and new approaches to blending learning – with the right partner your organisation could support your current customers more effectively and grow and expand your training business.

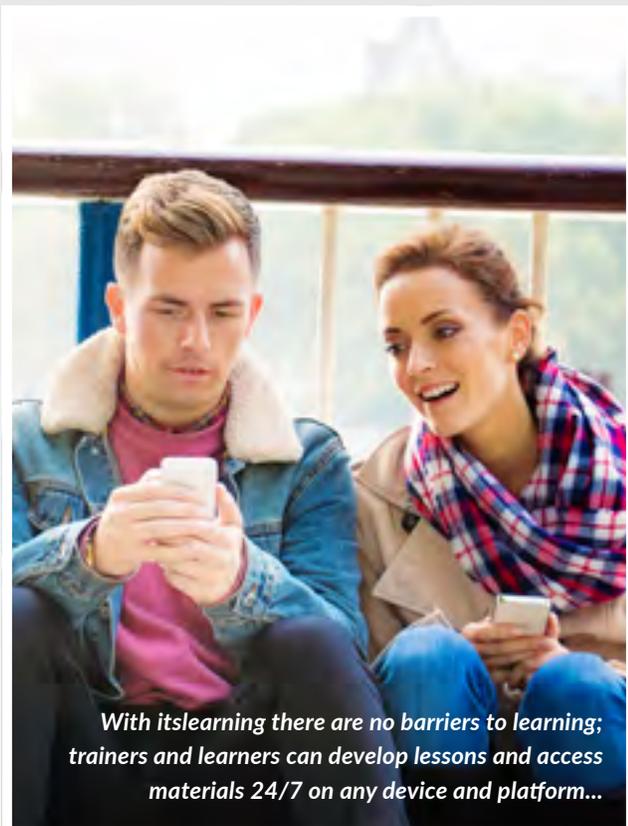
## ASK YOURSELF...

- 1** Can your current platform formatively assess learners in a range of ways and provide a prediction with a high degree of confidence when a candidate is ready to attempt and succeed in the End Point Assessment?
- 2** Could your current platform play a significant part in delivering both the knowledge and understanding required across the apprenticeship and be part of the 20% of the off the job training that is specified in the new frameworks ?
- 3** Does your platform have a modern interface that is customisable and easy for learners, tutors and employers to access and use and does it generate the appropriate reports for all of the stakeholders on the learners' progress?
- 4** If you won the account for a large corporate who needs 15 frameworks delivered, as an organisation you can deliver 5 of the apprenticeship frameworks, so you need to subcontract the delivery of the other 10 to alternative providers. Could your online platform allow multiple providers/users to submit, monitor work, progress and provide the management to deliver an account like this in its entirety?
- 5** Have you reviewed the cost of hosting and maintaining an internal system against working with a cloud solution partner that allows you to focus on delivering training and meeting the needs of learners and employers?
- 6** Are you confident that your current platform allows learners to learn and develop a broad range of digital literacy skills as they work with your platform as increasingly many of the standards will contain a digital literacy component as standard?

**ITSLARNING CAN!**

## A TRUSTED PARTNER

The itslearning Platform has developed over seventeen years into the most successful and largest cloud based learning platform solution in Europe and the UK with a user base of 7 million active users. The platform offers the complete solution for course design, delivery, progress monitoring and reporting and assessment to support the delivery of the new apprenticeship frameworks and any online training and development.



**T**he platform is designed around a blended learning philosophy and is supported by a dedicated team of trainers and account managers to allow you to focus on supporting your learners and their employers. The system is a cloud based and needs no local installation or infrastructure.

With itslearning there are no barriers to learning; trainers and learners can develop lessons and access materials 24/7 on any device and platform, while the itslearning library – enables an organisation to keep a repository of high quality content (files, links, assignments, tests) that can be shared with tutors and trainers to reduce duplication of work, improve standards by supporting internal and external verification, and opens up a suite of collaboration tools for all of the stakeholders. Employers can access the system directly to track and monitor their learners' progress and offer support alongside the training provider.

itslearning enables this all to be done online, at home or with their employer. This frees up training rooms, trainers and reduces assessor visits and printing costs while supporting more effective and efficient delivery. While integrating seamlessly with any other management information systems, learner management systems, Office365 and other education technology.

### REFERENCES:

The Education & Training Foundation

<http://goo.gl/Hb0o8Y>

The Future of Apprenticeships in England

<https://goo.gl/RRzzeq>

Apprenticeship levy: how it will work

<https://goo.gl/pi7o7L>

Apprenticeship standards

<https://goo.gl/1s2t6H>

Register of apprentice assessment organisations

<https://goo.gl/mulOmZ>

Developing students' digital literacy

<https://goo.gl/Rajzfq>

Developing digital literacies

<https://goo.gl/Es6EnS>

Blended Learning Consortium

<http://blc-fe.org/>

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## About itslearning

itslearning is Europe's largest provider of cloud-based learning platforms, used by millions of trainers, learners and administration staff around the world. We provide much more than just a product; we create an integrated digital learning environment that enables training to be delivered whenever and wherever you need it.

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