

3

Maximising impact: Practical tips for harnessing apprenticeship benefits

The apprenticeship experience is incredibly varied depending on: the size and industry of the employer, how established the CR&S practice is within the organisation and the support and resources available for new or existing apprentices.

Ensuring employers can create inclusive cultures of belonging is critical to the impact an apprentices can make. This becomes particularly significant when considering social mobility, because the participants are likely to bring a unique set of qualities and life experiences that may differ from the majority.

As more employers begin to offer the standard, it's important to learn from those with the most impactful and inclusive apprenticeship offerings.

A summary of these tips can be found below. For further expert guidance from innovators leading the practice in inclusive workplace cultures, please find the inclusive practice toolkit pages on the [ICRS website](#).

The six opportunities are:

- 01** Recruitment tactics to ensure candidates come from diverse backgrounds and different lived experiences
- 02** Recognising unintentionally exclusionary interview processes and creating workarounds appropriate for CR&S candidates
- 03** Onboarding procedures that build support systems and set apprentices up for success
- 04** Supplemental learning and development offerings to fill experience gaps
- 05** Providing opportunities for community and psychological safety building at work
- 06** Offering paths to informal coaching and mentoring



BLOCKERS



EMPLOYER TIPS



POSITIVE EXAMPLES

01 Recruitment

02 Inclusive interviews

03 Onboarding for success

04 Learning & development

05 Community building

06 Informal mentoring and coaching

- **Low awareness of CR&S careers in schools**, early career mentoring and job centres
- Ideal candidates **not likely to be present on LinkedIn** or other professional job sites
- **Businesses not connected to community-based charities** or organisations who provide candidate introductions

- Existing **interview process usually tests for experience and expertise** requiring examples given
- Apprentice candidates can be **left waiting weeks or months** to hear back from large employers and may miss out on the opportunity due to needing to secure income
- Interview activities that are academic by nature, **not specific to skillset** required for role

- One-size-fits-all onboarding procedure usually **assumes new hires have had some prior work experience** and introduction to how work 'works'
- **Single-apprentice hires will feel isolated** if not introduced to other colleagues to intentionally form a support network from day one
- Missed opportunities to **understand an apprentice's unique needs** in terms of family life, outside commitments, neurodivergencies, etc.

- Apprentices new to office work often struggle to have impact early, as first they need to **learn the basics of work life**
- Smaller organisations might not have available staff or resource to support those necessary learning moments, resulting in **knocked confidence and delayed self-sufficiency**
- Until their basic needs are met, apprentices may **struggle to take part in other L&D programmes** or similar opportunities

- **Apprentices describe their experience as 'lonely'** especially those who work remotely, are the only apprentice in their workplace, are the only person with their background, or had to relocate to take on the apprenticeship
- **Solo apprentices have far lower experience** scores in the research as compared to others who are a part of a larger cohort or apprentice community
- **Lacking a sense of belonging blocks** psychological safety and therefore the **apprentice from being able to have impact** as their best self at work

- Despite having supportive teams, apprentices don't feel comfortable, or feel a burden to **ask the many questions that they have**
- Apprentices **without a mentor or learning coach score much lower** in their experience than those with dedicated support
- If a full-time role after apprenticeship is unclear or unavailable, having a mentor is critical to help **define transferable skills and strategise for career moves** beyond the apprenticeship

- **Include CR&S awareness building** during any community outreach programming or charity work
- **Target schools and lower-income areas** when promoting job fairs
- Choose an apprenticeship training partner who are **established within local communities** and can get the word out

- Reach out to apprentice training partners or employers listed in this report who have gone through a successful interview phase to provide examples of how they **supported candidates throughout the process**
- Review application systems to ensure apprentice **applicants aren't being rejected**
- Reframe the criteria from experience to focus on potential, interests and passion for CR&S topics
- Know what you'll ask the apprentice to take part in, to **look for specific qualities** needed for the role

- **Build in time to thoroughly explain** the overall market, operations and team functions for extra context
- Have normally **'unspoken' cultural expectations written on paper** and provided to the apprentice
- **Provide budget** for them to have coffee/lunch with a network of folks to get them started e.g. manager, safeguarding person, small group of peers to ask questions
- Have a **standard yet confidential 'users manual'** meeting with the apprentice to review how to best work with the apprentice and **understand any specific needs** they may have

- If not provided internally, **offer additional skills coaching** through third parties on office basics if/when needed
- Assign an 'AMA' (ask me anything) buddy to help apprentice **navigate unknowns**

- Offer to **host or sponsor CR&S apprentice meet-ups** by providing space and light refreshments to foster connection
- Create an employee working group for those who are interested in CR&S topics in the workplace to **connect apprentices into like-minded individuals** even though they may vary in seniority and discipline
- **Provide budget** for the apprentice to ask colleagues to coffee or lunch to build relationships

- **Appoint someone outside of the apprentice's direct team** or line management as a mentor e.g. someone on the people team or someone from a similar background who has been at the company for a while
- If an internal mentor or coach is not available, **enlisting support from outside the company is just as valuable**

A large law firm engaged charities they had pre-existing relationships with to advertise apprenticeship role and help build awareness about the industry. The firm avoided LinkedIn, actively posted on notgoingtouni.co.uk. They also worked with their apprentice training partner to advise on language in job write up. Lastly, reviewed CVs manually as current systems would have rejected candidates.

A small company looking to onboard a CR&S apprentice for the first time recruited employees who had experience with apprenticeships to help co-create the programme and manually reviewed all CVs as their system would have rejected candidates.

A multinational logistics enterprise delays any personal project work to be assigned to apprentices until they have completed a rotation through key teams, which can take 6-9 months. This provides the apprentice with a full understanding of how business operates, so they can declare interest in where they'd like to work.

A training partner provides an additional 'academy' to all apprentices, upskilling them in basic office know-how. They also appoint 'learning coaches' as another point of contact to ask questions to.

An apprentice training partner hosts 'connect days' for all apprentices to come together on a regular basis, resulting in apprentices forming a WhatsApp chat to stay connected and support each other.

An infrastructure contractor had their apprentice shadow another senior manager so she was exposed to the responsibility for a senior sustainability manager, from profit & loss to risk assessments. She was also developing a relationship with that senior manager to help her understand the possibilities of leadership and what was required to get there professionally.

1 | Recruitment

Why is inclusive recruitment important to a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Social mobility is at the heart of the CR&S apprenticeship standard, providing opportunities to individuals who otherwise would not have a chance to establish a career in the sector. The ideal candidate likely won't be found in the usual recruitment hotspots, providing a challenge to employers to re-think their standard recruitment practices.



What are some inclusive recruitment blockers?

- Low awareness of CR&S careers in schools, early career mentoring and job centres.
- Ideal candidates not likely to be present on LinkedIn or other professional job sites.
- Businesses not connected to community-based charities or organisations who provide candidate introductions.



What to avoid

"I heard about the CR&S apprenticeship but I had no idea what it meant or how to find out more information about the sector."

APPRENTICE, MID-SIZE ENTERPRISE

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



DR. PADMINI IYER,
HEAD OF RESEARCH AND
ADVOCACY MAKING THE LEAP
makingtheleap.org.uk

Dr Padmini Iyer is a social researcher with over 12 years of experience, Padmini's current work focuses on synthesising evidence on best practice to promote social mobility through employment, and partnering with employers on bespoke social mobility and DEI research.

What are three top-tips for employers to ensure they are providing an inclusive recruitment:

- 01 Target your recruitment** by using the Social Mobility Commission's Data Explorer Tool to focus on social mobility 'cold spots', and/or by using the Commission's Employer Toolkit to support positive action for candidates from less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds (LSEBs) during the recruitment process.
- 02 Partner with charities or groups** that work with communities facing specific socio-economic disadvantages, such as school leavers, care leavers, prison leavers, or refugee and asylum seekers, to focus your recruitment efforts on these groups.
- 03 Help candidates to shine** through your recruitment process. Candidates from less advantaged groups may be less familiar with job applications and interviews in your sector, so you can level the playing field by being transparent. Tell candidates how many application stages there are, what is expected of them, and likely timings of each stage. You can even share your interview questions beforehand, to give all candidates an equal chance to prepare.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.

2 | Application

Why is an inclusive application process important to a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Most existing application processes are a mix of manual and automated systems that identify appropriate candidates against a pre-determined set of criteria. Given the varied backgrounds of apprentices, and in some cases lack of professional experience, the best fit apprentices won't be compatible with most organisations' application systems and will need a workaround for apprentice candidates.



What are some application blockers?

- Existing interview process usually tests for experience and expertise requiring examples.
- Candidates can be left waiting weeks or months to hear back from large employers and may need to forfeit the opportunity due to requiring secure income.
- Interview activities that are academic by nature, not specific to skillset required for role.



What to avoid

"I didn't feel I could showcase my abilities really well because of how the questions were framed on the written application. I wish I could have spoken to someone first."

APPRENTICE, SME

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



FELICITY HALSTED,
FOUNDER OF GOODWORK
www.goodwork.org.uk

Felicity is the Founder of GoodWork, a non-profit supporting businesses to reimagine early careers and create more inclusive and accessible entry-level jobs. Felicity's insights on the challenges faced by young people seeking employment and the practical steps for employers building D&I practices has named her a LinkedIn Top Voice for Social Impact.

What are three top-tips for employers to ensure they are providing an inclusive application process:

- 01 Seek potential, not accomplishments:** Increased social mobility requires a total rethink of how you articulate what you're looking for and the processes you use. Socioeconomic background impacts on educational attainment, therefore use structured, competency-based interviews that permit candidates to use experiences from their personal lives to demonstrate key skills.
- 02 Be clear and considerate on process:** These should be proportionate to the length of contract and seniority of the role, minimising the number of steps involved and ensuring candidates are given a clear idea of how long the process will take, what each stage is assessing and why it matters in advance.
- 03 Value their time:** If candidates are required to attend in person, reimburse travel costs and consider whether your dress code might be exclusionary. If your process is more extensive, consider paying candidates a basic hourly rate for their time.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.

3 | Onboarding

Why is inclusive onboarding important to a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Employers must not underestimate the gap apprentices experience when stepping into corporate life from school or other work experience. Onboarding is a critical first step for apprentices to feel supported on their learning journey, build psychological safety with an initial network of colleagues, and gain critical knowledge about the industry they are entering. Done poorly, ineffective onboarding can have lasting negative impact on the apprentice and line manager.



What are some inclusive onboarding blockers?

- 'One size fits all' onboarding procedure usually assumes new hires to have had some prior work experience and introduction to how work 'works'.
- Solo-apprentice hires will feel isolated if not introduced to other colleagues to intentionally form a support network from day one.
- Missed opportunities to understand an apprentice's unique needs in terms of family life, outside commitments, neurodivergencies, etc.



What to avoid

"They just kept talking about a 'fast paced environment' but not about how the CR&S team fits into the business or who I could ask questions to. It was really intimidating."

APPRENTICE, MID-SIZED ENTERPRISE

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



FELICITY HALSTED,
FOUNDER OF GOODWORK
www.goodwork.org.uk

Felicity is the Founder of GoodWork, a non-profit supporting businesses to reimagine early careers and create more inclusive and accessible entry-level jobs. Felicity's insights on the challenges faced by young people seeking employment and the practical steps for employers building D&I has named her a LinkedIn Top Voice for Social Impact.

What are three top-tips for employers to ensure they are providing an inclusive onboarding process:

- 01 Onboarding begins before the apprentice does:** Teams need to be fully prepped with inclusive apprenticeship training that discusses privilege and how to create a strong culture for new teammates, with a strong focus on building psychological safety.
- 02 Assume no prior knowledge:** The apprentice may not have worked in a corporate environment before, nor have anyone in their family who has. It's better to provide too much information and not have it be needed.
- 03 Set clear expectations on behaviours in the workplace:** Write down the 'unspoken rules' that can be confusing to those not used to working culture and are harder for neurodivergent people to pick up on. Give a clear definition of what good looks like.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.

4 | Learning & Development

How should an L&D program be curated to support a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Apprentices new to corporate life require a basic education on things like office etiquette, professional writing, and personal brand building in order to have impact and a positive experience within the first year of their apprenticeship. Lack of support leads to some apprentices feeling a lack of motivation and discouraged by their lack of progress within the role, which can prevent value being gained by both apprentices and employers.



What are some inclusive L&D blockers??

- Apprentices new to office work often struggle to have impact early, as first they need to learn the basics of work life.
- Smaller organisations might not have available staff or resource to support those necessary learning moments, resulting in knocked confidence and delayed self-sufficiency.
- Until their basic needs are met, apprentices may struggle to take on other L&D opportunities.



What to avoid

“I could really do with a longer onboarding before the course work started just so I got to grips more with working than the studying.”

APPRENTICE, LARGE MULTINATIONAL

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



PINKY GHADIALI,
FOUNDER, NETWOMEN
www.netwomen.co

Pinky is an award-winning transformational career and business coach. She founded Netwomen in 2020 to drive orgs to increase profits by elevating and retaining underrepresented groups through customised skills development training, specialising in new hires.

What are three top-tips for employers to to provide an inclusive L&D program:

- 01 Aspiring leaders need to be treated as leaders:** High-potential apprentices should be given access to executive-style programs/experiences showcasing what leadership looks like and what is required to get there. Exposure to leaders and how they operate demystifies the journey and sets personal ambition.
- 02 Provide authentic leadership opportunities:** Teach skills necessary for a successful corporate career such as public speaking, establishing gravitas and personal brand that amplify their own lived experience. E.g. becoming a role model with community outreach programs, speaking to schools or communities about their experience.
- 03 Learning and Development should grow with the individual:** Continual development is a career-long partnership, tailored to the individual needs. Organisations can help establish long-term career goals with their apprentice (beyond an annual review) to set a learning agenda that might start quite basic, but aims to support them on every step of their professional growth journey.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.

5 | Community & Belonging

Why must an apprentice feel community and belonging for a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Especially in smaller firms, apprentices are more likely to be the only person in the workforce with their background and/or lived experience. This can be extremely isolating, and detract from their ability to feel comfortable to learn, contribute and grow. Employers can create community around their apprentice and develop a culture of belonging so that differences are seen and celebrated as positives.



What are some community blockers?

- Apprentices describe their experience as lonely especially: remote workers, solo-apprentices, are the only person with their background, or had to relocate.
- Solo apprentices had far lower experience scores in the research as compared to others who are a part of a larger cohort or apprentice community.
- Lacking a sense of belonging blocks psychological safety and therefore blocks the apprentice from maximum impact.



What to avoid

"I told my boss I was on holiday for a week as I didn't feel comfortable saying I was actually observing Ramadan."

APPRENTICE, LARGE MULTINATIONAL

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



BETH WARMAN (THEY/SHE)
BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT LEARNING
COACH, RHG CONSULT LTD

www.rhgconsult.co.uk

Beth leads the CR&S programme at RHG and is dedicated to educating individuals (previously working as a Lecturer in Universities) and preparing them for work in a constantly changing world and field of CR&S. Beth is committed to promoting equity and inclusivity to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

What are three top-tips for employers to provide community and belonging:

- 01 Meet the whole person:** Run exercises like 'this is me' to unveil activities, interests and outside-of-work commitments, then make introductions to others on the team over common interests.
- 02 Leverage ERG groups or company-led activities:** Support apprentices to build relationships to other team members beyond the daily roles and responsibilities.
- 03 Provide connection to other apprentices:** Connections are powerful even outside of your organisation. Offer to host apprentice community meet ups in your office space or sponsor the refreshments tab at a venue for them to meet at.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.

6 | Informal Coaching

Why is offering informal coaching important to a successful CR&S apprenticeship?

Apprentices who have access to a skills coach/mentor as part of their training partners offering feel hugely more supported than those who do not, experience less anxiety and stumbling blocks in their day-to-day work. This is critical for apprentices who are the only apprentice at their place of work or don't have a cohort to help them navigate the unknown.



What are some coaching blockers?

- Despite having supportive teams, apprentices don't feel comfortable, or feel a burden, to ask many questions.
- Apprentices without a mentor or learning coach score much lower in their experience than those with dedicated support.
- If a full-time role after apprenticeship is unclear or unavailable, a mentor is critical for defining transferable skills/strategise career moves beyond the apprenticeship.



What to avoid

"I am always the silent person on calls and overthink every little thing I say, it takes me an hour to write a few lines of an email because I am always so unsure."

APPRENTICE, MID-SIZE ENTERPRISE

Industry expert tips from The Warrior Group Network



MARCIA ORE,
FOUNDER, MARCIA ORE CONSULTANCY
marciaoreconsultancy.com

Marcia spent 30 years as a police officer before transitioning to a DEI specialist, trainer and coach. Her deep experience within institutions and lived experience as a Black gay mother of two has shaped her unique approach to helping organisations.

What are three top-tips for employers to ensure they are providing an inclusive:

01 Coaching starts at onboarding and should consider health and wellbeing:

Managers can create a safe environment for sensitive conversations to establish coaching requirements. For example: assessing factors like visible and non-visible disabilities, responsibilities outside work that may impact physical and mental availability like caring for a loved one.

02 Create a safe environment for development: Learning and self-discovery requires room to fail and removal of fear of judgement, coaches must consider how to create structure for this within the specific work environment.

03 Coaching should have real-time application: Managers should be aligned with coaching goals to ensure apprentice has the opportunity to try out new skills on day to day work.

Get in touch with Karla@warriorgrp.com to connect to the best inclusive practice experts for your needs.