

The Care Provider's Guide to Apprenticeships and Diplomas

How to develop your workforce,
reduce training costs and
build future leaders



Develop
your workforce



Reduce
training costs



Build
future leaders

**Quality
of Care**

Helping Care Providers Succeed

The Care Provider's Guide to Apprenticeships and Diplomas

*How to Develop Your Workforce,
Reduce Training Costs and Build
Future leaders*

Copyright ©2026 Quality of care Ltd. All rights reserved.

You have permission to print copies for your own personal use.

It is not permitted to pass this to any third parties.

Inquiries regarding permission for use of the material contained in this guide should be addressed to:

Quality of Care

www.qualityofcare.co.uk

Why More Care Providers Are Investing in Apprenticeships and Diplomas

The adult social care sector has never faced greater workforce challenges.

Rising employment costs, increasing wage pressures, recruitment difficulties, staff turnover and growing expectations from regulators and commissioners are placing significant pressure on providers of all sizes.

At the same time, the demand for high-quality care continues to grow.

For many providers, the question is no longer whether they need to invest in workforce development – it is how they can do so in a way that delivers real value for their organisation, their staff and the people they support.

That is why more care providers are turning to apprenticeships and diplomas.

More Than Just Qualifications

Many people still think apprenticeships are simply qualifications for young people entering the workplace.

The reality is very different.

Modern apprenticeships and diplomas are practical workforce development programmes that help providers recruit, develop and retain skilled staff while creating clear progression pathways from front-line care roles through to leadership and management positions.

Whether you are supporting a new Care Worker, developing a Senior Care Worker, or preparing a future Registered Manager, there is a programme designed to help employees build the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to succeed.

A Cost-Effective Way to Develop Your Workforce

Training budgets are under increasing pressure, making it more important than ever to invest wisely.

In many cases, 95% of apprenticeship training costs are funded, making apprenticeships one of the most cost-effective ways to develop staff.

In addition, elements of the programme covers training that employers would otherwise need to purchase separately, including some mandatory training requirements.

This means providers can often reduce duplication, maximise training budgets and gain significantly greater value from their workforce development investment.

Simply put, apprenticeships don't just help develop staff – they can help save money too.

Improving Staff Retention

Recruiting good staff is difficult. Replacing them is often even more expensive.

When employees feel supported, valued and invested in, they are more likely to stay with an organisation and build a long-term career.

Apprenticeships and diplomas demonstrate a commitment to staff development and create clear opportunities for progression.

For many providers, this leads to improved morale, increased loyalty and better staff retention.

Creating Future Leaders

One of the biggest risks facing many care organisations is the lack of a clear succession plan.

If you lost a key person, do you have anyone in your organisation who could step up into the role? Who is developing the skills needed to become a Team Leader, Deputy Manager or Registered Manager?

Apprenticeships and diplomas help providers identify and develop future leaders from within their existing workforce.

By creating structured development pathways, organisations can build leadership capacity, strengthen succession planning and reduce reliance on external recruitment.

Supporting Better Outcomes

Ultimately, investing in your workforce is an investment in the quality of care you provide.

Staff who are knowledgeable, confident and well supported are better equipped to deliver safe, effective and person-centred care.

They are more likely to understand best practice, communicate effectively, support individuals appropriately and contribute positively to your organisation's culture.

For providers, this can lead to improved outcomes for the people they support, greater consistency across teams and stronger organisational performance.

A Development Pathway for Every Stage of a Care Career

Quality of Care offers a range of programmes designed to support staff at every stage of their career journey:

Level 2 Apprenticeship in Adult Care: Ideal for new starters and care staff developing essential care knowledge and skills.

Level 3 Apprenticeship in Adult Care: Suitable for experienced care staff progressing towards Senior Care Worker and Team Leader responsibilities.

Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care: Designed for practitioners who want to develop advanced knowledge of care principles, safeguarding and person-centred practice.

Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management: Focused on developing leadership abilities, operational management and strategic decision-making skills for those moving into, or already holding, senior roles.

Investing in Your Greatest Asset

Your people are your greatest asset.

By investing in apprenticeships and diplomas, you are investing in the future of your workforce, your organisation and the quality of care you provide.

The following guide answers the questions care providers ask most frequently about apprenticeships, diplomas, funding, training commitments and workforce development.

We hope it helps you understand the opportunities available and how these programmes could support your organisation's goals.

To your success

Chris Briggs

CEO Quality of Care

1. Which programmes are available?

Quality of Care can support care providers with a range of adult care apprenticeship and diploma programmes, including:

- Level 2 Apprenticeship in Care
- Level 3 Apprenticeship in Adult Care
- Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care
- Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management

Together, these programmes provide a progression pathway from frontline care roles through to senior care, leadership and management positions.

2. Who are the programmes suitable for?

The programmes may be suitable for:

- New starters entering adult social care
- Existing care staff who need a recognised qualification
- Care workers ready to progress into senior roles
- Experienced practitioners wanting to develop advanced knowledge
- Team leaders, deputy managers and managers
- Staff being developed as future leaders within the organisation

The right programme will depend on the employee's current role, experience, responsibilities and future development needs.

3. What is the difference between each Level?

Level 2 Apprenticeship in Care

Ideal for new starters or existing staff who need to develop essential care skills and knowledge.

Level 3 Apprenticeship in Adult Care

Suitable for care staff who are ready to take on more responsibility, including those progressing towards senior care or team leader roles.

Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care

Supports experienced practitioners to develop advanced knowledge of care principles, safeguarding and person-centred practice.

Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management

Designed for those moving into, or already holding, senior roles. It focuses on leadership, operational management and strategic decision-making.

4. Are apprenticeships funded?

In many cases, yes.

For eligible apprenticeships in England, employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy usually contribute **5% of the training and assessment cost**, with the government funding the remaining **95%**, up to the funding band maximum, and **100% funding for learners aged 16-18**.

Levy-paying employers can usually use funds in their apprenticeship service account. ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

5. How can apprenticeships save providers money on mandatory training?

Apprenticeships can help reduce training costs because elements of the programme cover knowledge and skills that overlap with training employers would otherwise need to pay for separately.

This includes areas linked to care practice, safeguarding, person-centred care, communication, duty of care, health and safety, infection prevention, equality and dignity, depending on the programme and delivery model.

This helps reduce duplication, lowers training costs and gives staff a recognised development pathway at the same time.

Mandatory Training Covered

- Safeguarding & Protection
- Communication
- GDPR/ Handling Information
- Equality & Inclusion
- Health & Safety

Mandatory = £225 (approx.) savings to the employer.

Potential Optional Training Covered

- Infection Control

- Moving & Handling
- Dementia Awareness

Optional = £145 (approx.) savings to the employer.

Additional optional units could be counted towards the apprentices mandatory training requirements, dependent on work setting.

Employers of course remain responsible for ensuring staff complete the training required by their organisation, regulator, commissioners and policies.

6. How long does the training take?

The length of the programme depends on the level, the learner's role, prior experience, prior learning and the qualification being undertaken.

As a guide:

- Level 2 Apprenticeship: **(8–15 months]**
- Level 3 Apprenticeship: **(8–18 months]**
- Level 4 Diploma: **[12-24 months]**
- Level 5 Diploma: **[12-24 months]**

Before enrolment, Quality of Care will discuss the learner's role, experience and development needs to identify the most appropriate programme and expected timescale.

7. How much time will staff spend in training?

Apprentices must complete off-the-job training during their normal working hours. This training helps them gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for their apprenticeship.

Training can include classroom learning, online learning, mentoring, shadowing, practical training, assignments, projects and work-based learning. (Apprenticeships)

The exact schedule will be agreed between the employer, learner and training provider. For example, training may be arranged as regular sessions, online learning, workplace activities or a blended approach.

Generally, our delivery model is 1 x 6hr training day per week for the duration of the apprenticeship with bi-monthly progress reviews.

The aim is to make the training manageable for both the employer and the learner, while still meeting apprenticeship requirements.

8. Where will the training take place?

Location will be discussed and agreed during the planning stage, it can either be at your own venue or ours, or a suitable alternative.

Training takes place through a blend of:

- Classroom or group sessions
- Online learning
- Workplace learning
- Assessor visits
- Mentoring and practical activities
- Sessions at agreed training locations, such as SARCP offices where applicable

Quality of Care will explain the delivery model before enrolment, so employers know what to expect.

9. Can existing staff undertake an apprenticeship?

Yes.

Apprenticeships are not only for new recruits. Existing staff can undertake an apprenticeship if the programme is appropriate for their role and will help them develop significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

This can be particularly useful where staff need a recognised qualification for their current role, future progression or promotion.

10. Do apprentices have to be young or new to care?

No.

Apprenticeships can be suitable for employees aged 16 and over, including adults already working in the sector.

An apprentice can be a new starter or an existing employee, as long as the programme is appropriate for their role and development needs.

11. Do all apprentices have to complete Functional Skills?

No, not always.

A common misconception is that every apprentice must complete Functional Skills. Whether Functional Skills are required will depend on the learner's existing qualifications and eligibility.

Quality of Care will review this with each learner before enrolment and explain what applies.

If aged 19 or above, then the apprentice does not need to complete the functional skills unless they wish to (for example – they may want to do them if they intend to go further with their studies).

12. What happens if a learner already has experience or qualifications?

Prior experience and qualifications will be reviewed before enrolment.

If the learner already has relevant knowledge, skills or qualifications, this may affect the content, duration or training plan. The aim is to make sure the programme adds value and supports meaningful development rather than duplicating learning the person has already completed.

13. What support will apprentices receive?

Apprentices will receive structured training and support throughout the programme.

This includes:

- Teaching sessions
- Workplace learning activities
- Assessor support
- Progress reviews
- Mentoring
- Assignment guidance
- Preparation for assessment
- Support with Functional Skills, where required

14. What support does the employer need to provide?

Employers need to support the apprentice by:

- Allowing time for training during working hours
- Providing opportunities to apply learning in the workplace
- Supporting workplace evidence collection
- Participating in progress reviews
- Providing supervision, mentoring or guidance where appropriate
- Helping the learner access relevant workplace experiences

This employer support is vital because apprenticeships are work-based programmes.

15. Will the employer need to provide a mentor?

In most cases, it is helpful for the learner to have a workplace mentor, supervisor or manager who can support them during the programme. This does not need to be complicated, but it helps the apprentice apply their learning in practice and gather evidence from their day-to-day role.

16. What are the benefits for employers?

The programmes can help employers:

- Develop skilled and confident care staff
- Improve quality and consistency of care
- Reduce staff turnover
- Increase loyalty and engagement
- Support succession planning
- Prepare staff for senior roles
- Reduce training costs
- Build a positive learning culture
- Improve the organisation's reputation as an employer

17. What are the benefits for staff?

Staff can benefit from:

- A recognised qualification
- Greater confidence in their role
- Improved knowledge and skills
- Career progression opportunities
- Support while learning
- The ability to learn while continuing to work
- A clearer pathway into senior or leadership roles

18. Can apprenticeships help with recruitment and retention?

Yes.

Apprenticeships can support recruitment by giving new starters a structured development pathway from the beginning of their employment.

They can also support retention by showing staff that the organisation is investing in their future. This can improve loyalty, motivation and career progression.

19. Can these programmes help develop future managers?

Yes.

The Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care and Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management are particularly useful for developing experienced practitioners, senior care staff, team leaders, deputy managers and managers.

The Level 5 Diploma focuses on leadership, operational management and strategic decision-making, making it especially relevant for those moving into or already holding senior roles.

20. What is involved in the Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care?

The Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care supports practitioners to develop more advanced knowledge of care principles, safeguarding and person-centred practice.

It is suitable for experienced care staff who want to deepen their professional knowledge and take on greater responsibility.

21. What is involved in the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management?

The Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management focuses on developing leadership abilities, operational management and strategic decision-making skills.

It is suitable for people moving into, or already working in, senior roles such as team leader, deputy manager, service manager or registered manager.

22. Are the qualifications recognised?

Yes.

The programmes lead to recognised qualifications or apprenticeship outcomes relevant to adult social care.

Quality of Care work with the awarding body iCQ (ICanQualify) to manage the apprenticeship to deliver:

- Adult Care Worker Standard
- Lead Adult Care Worker Standard
- iCQ Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care
- iCQ Level 5 Diploma in Leadership and Management in Care

Quality of Care is also working with Pass Functional Skills learning platform to achieve their functional skills.

23. How are learners assessed?

Assessment will depend on the programme. It includes:

- Observations
- Professional discussions
- Written assignments
- Workplace evidence
- Reflective accounts
- Manager or witness statements
- Portfolio evidence
- End-point assessment, where applicable for apprenticeships

Quality of Care will explain the assessment requirements before the learner starts.

24. What is End-Point Assessment?

For apprenticeships, End-Point Assessment is the final assessment stage that confirms the apprentice has developed the required knowledge, skills and behaviours for the apprenticeship standard.

On completion of their learning journey, your apprentice will complete an end-point assessment (EPA). The EPA comprises of a Situational Judgement Test and a Professional Discussion. iCQ will provide an Assessor who will complete the EPA with your apprentice. iCQ also provides the iLearner system for the management of apprenticeships.

25. What happens if the apprentice leaves employment?

If an apprentice leaves employment, the training provider should be informed as soon as possible. The next steps will depend on the circumstances, how much of the programme has been completed and whether the learner moves to another eligible employer.

26. Can we enrol more than one member of staff?

Yes.

Care providers can register interest for one learner or for multiple members of staff.

Quality of Care can discuss your workforce needs and help identify which staff may be suitable for Level 2, Level 3, Level 4 or Level 5.

27. Can the programme be tailored to our organisation?

The apprenticeship framework requires mandatory knowledge, skills and behaviours, but delivery can be planned around the needs of the employer and learner.

Quality of Care will discuss your organisation, staff roles and development priorities before confirming the most appropriate training plan.

28. Is there a minimum number of learners needed?

There are no minimum number of learners needed.

Please register your interest whether you have one member of staff or several. Quality of Care will discuss your needs and confirm the available options.

29. When can staff start?

Start dates may depend on the programme, learner numbers and delivery arrangements. Once you register your interest, Quality of Care will contact you to discuss upcoming start dates and availability.

30. What information do we need to provide when registering interest?

Providers will be asked for:

- Name
- Job title

- Organisation
- Email address
- Telephone number
- Number of staff they may wish to discuss
- Which programme they are interested in
- Any questions or specific workforce needs

31. What happens after we register interest?

After you register your interest, Quality of Care will contact you directly to discuss:

- Your organisation's training needs
- Which staff may be suitable
- The most appropriate programme level
- Funding and employer contribution
- Delivery arrangements
- Functional Skills requirements
- Start dates and next steps