BUILDING OUR SKILLS

MAKING FENESTRATION, GLASS AND GLAZING A CAREER OF CHOICE

An employer's guide to apprenticeships in the Fenestration, Glass and Glazing industry 2026

Presented by Samantha Tinker - Operations Director at GFTS Ltd (Glass and Fenestration Training Solutions)

Introduction

This guide is designed to give employers in the Fenestration, Glass and Glazing industry an initial oversight of apprenticeships following updates to the system effective from August 2026.

It covers the basics of what an apprenticeship is, and is not, how it works, what it costs, and an employer's obligations and responsibilities within the scheme.

It is presented by Samantha Tinker of GFTS Ltd, a Building Our Skills partner. Sam and her colleagues are experts in their field, facilitating over 75% of the industry specific apprenticeships that go through each year.

Her direct contact details for further information, guidance and advice are included at the back of the presentation.

What is an apprenticeship?

An Apprenticeships is a unique training pathway that combines practical work with classroom sessions and study time, allowing apprentices to “earn while they learn”.

An apprenticeship is a real job where individuals gain valuable skills and knowledge related to their specific job role, supporting them with core skills that will support them throughout their career.

Having apprentices will benefit your business by helping you to develop a ‘hone-grown’ skilled workforce, increase productivity, support higher staff retention rates, and enable cost effective recruitment.

What is required of you as an employer if you want to take on an apprentice?

Keep in mind that taking on an apprentice is an investment and you will want to make sure it is the right thing for you, and that you can meet your obligations within the programme to help realise that investment.

We can talk you through the process in detail, but to help you consider if taking on an apprentice is right for you here are some of the things you need to be sure that you can provide:

- ✓ Workplace mentors - someone older than the apprentice to aid skills development and workplace behaviours as they enter the working environment for the first time.
- ✓ You will need to ensure you have relevant employment contracts and insurance policies in place.

What is required of you as an employer…

- You will need to guarantee that the apprentice is given sufficient time away from the core role on a weekly basis to fulfil their off the job training requirements
- You will need to have a standard PAYE system in place to pay the apprentice as an employee.
- You will need to make sure you are paying the apprentice the correct wage https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates .
- You will need to allow time to complete the apprentice's diary with them throughout the apprenticeship program, this is a legal requirement of the Apprenticeship.

What’s required of you as an employer…

- ✓ When enrolling an apprentice, you will need to make sure that you can meet all requirements within the apprenticeship standard (which we can go through with you) and apprenticeship assessment, along with any additional requirements i.e. facilities for the apprenticeship assessment to take place, additional staff to help simulate a task, opportunities to complete all elements within their working environment.
- ✓ You will be required to participate in the apprentices' reviews. Our admin team will write up a review every 10 weeks, based off the progress they’ve made, using assessor's visits sheets/trackers.
- ✓ Following this one of our team member’s will then call/email you and the apprentice to discuss feedback which will then be inputted into the review for our records.

Funding for an apprentice

In May 2017 the funding model for apprenticeships changed with funding split into two processes:

- Levy paying employers (those with an annual wage bill over £3m)
- Non-levy employers (SMEs with an annual wage bill less than £3m)

There are now new updates to the model

- Non-levy employers can obtain 100% fully funded apprenticeships for 16-24 years olds from 01/08/2026 and must pay a 5% employer contribution for apprentices age 25+
- If the apprenticeship fee negotiated is in excess of the funding band agreed by government, you as the employer are liable for the difference between this and the maximum funding band.
- This applies to both levy paying and non-levy employers

Funding for Levy Payers

Employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3 million contribute to the UK Apprenticeship Levy. If this applies to your business, you pay 0.5% of your monthly payroll into a dedicated levy pot, which can then be reinvested into training and developing your workforce through apprenticeships.

Please note that levy funding solely covers the training and assessment costs of the apprenticeship, it cannot be used for wages or wider employment costs.

How Funding Works via the Levy:

Fully Covered Training: For levy-paying employers, the cost of the apprenticeship is typically covered in full by your digital levy pot, up to the maximum government funding band. This is managed and accessed directly through your Apprenticeship Service Account.

Levy Top-Ups (Co-investment): If your levy pot is ever fully allocated or temporarily runs out of funds, you will switch to a co-investment model. In this scenario, you will only pay 25% (from 01/08/26) of the remaining monthly training cost, and the government will cover the other 75%.

Funding for Levy Payers

- **Available Cash Incentives**
- **Age 16–18 Incentive:** Levy-paying employers are also eligible to receive a £1,000 grant per learner if taking on an apprentice aged 16–18.*
- Where applicable, these grants are paid in stages throughout the apprenticeship to assist with the costs of employing your learner. Please note that if an apprentice withdraws from the program early, any remaining grant payments will be forfeited.

- **Disclaimer: GFTS Ltd is not responsible for verifying or managing specific employment timeframes or payroll system requirements for grant eligibility. Ensuring compliance with these criteria is the sole responsibility of the employer.*

Funding for non-Levy payers

GFTS Ltd holds a co-funding contract with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), enabling us to offer these apprenticeships to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). We will work alongside you to draw down this government funding to support your business.

Please note that government funding *solely* covers the training and assessment costs of the apprenticeship, it does not contribute toward the apprentice's wages, which remain the employer's responsibility.

Available Incentives:

- **Age 16–18 Incentive:** Employers will receive a £1,000 grant per learner.*
- **New SME Grant (From 01/10/26):** A £2,000 incentive grant is available for SMEs (Small To Medium sized non-levy employers) taking on apprentices aged 16–24.*

The Eligibility Rules:

The Start Date: The apprentice must officially start their apprenticeship training on or after 1st October 2026.

Funding for non-Levy payers

- **The 90-Day Employment Window:** To qualify as a "new recruit," the apprentice must have joined your company's PAYE scheme **within 90 days (3 months)** prior to their apprenticeship start date.
- (For example: If they start training on 1st October, their earliest employment start date must be July 2026).
- **The Cut-off:** If an individual has been on your payroll for more than 90 days before starting the apprenticeship, you will not qualify for this cash incentive.
- **How Payments Work:** The £2,000 incentive is paid in two milestone instalments via your training provider:
- £1,000 after the apprentice completes their first 90 days of training.
- £1,000 after they complete 365 days (12 months) of training.

Funding for non-Levy payers

- ⚠️ **Important Pre-Warning:** Per latest government guidance, if an apprentice leaves your employment, withdraws, or finishes their active training programme *before* reaching the 12-month milestone, the final £1,000 instalment will not be issued. T&Cs apply.
- **Both grants** (where applicable) are paid in stages throughout the apprenticeship to help support the costs of employing and developing your learner. Please note that if an apprentice withdraws from the program early, any remaining grant payments will be forfeited.

- **Disclaimer: GFTS Ltd is not responsible for verifying or managing the specific employment timeframes required for grant eligibility. Ensuring compliance with these criteria is the sole responsibility of the employer.*

CITB Grants

CITB currently provides grants for construction industry employers who provide training for their workforce. Grants Scheme helps the industry maintain high standards, making sure people are being trained in the right skills for the industry to thrive.

Who can apply for a grant?

All employers registered with CITB can apply for a grant with them. Grants are available to employers of all sizes, whether or not you pay a levy to CITB.

Current courses we offer that CITB have grants available for:

- Carpentry & Joinery Level 2
- Construction Site Supervisor Level 4
- Curtain Wall Installer Level 3
- Fenestration Installer Level 2
- Interior Systems Installer Level 2
- You can find out more info at; www.citb.co.uk/levy-grants-and-funding/grants-and-funding/about-citb-grants-scheme/

Or if you would like further information please get in touch with me and I can point you in the right direction

Apprenticeship Specifics

- ✓ The apprenticeship is carried out at the workplace, so no need for apprentices to travel or go to college.
- ✓ Minimum duration for an apprenticeship is now 8 months (as of 01/08/25); however, as a training provider we still have an estimate of how long apprenticeships can take given apprentices' industry knowledge, skills, and behaviours.
- ✓ Duration will vary, depending on the number of Off The Job Hours the apprentice is able to complete through their working week, this is something that will be discussed in thorough detail at the enrolment stage.
- ✓ An apprentice is required to complete a set amount of Off The Job Training hours every week to aid with their learning and development.
- ✓ Evidence for apprenticeships can be collected in lots of different methods and not just written work.

Apprenticeship Specifics

- ✓ Apprentices are required to work a minimum of 30 hours a week for a standard-length apprenticeship. (30 Hours or below a week will mean apprenticeship practical durations may be extended, ensuring apprentices have a sufficient amount of time for learning.)
- ✓ Apprentices aged between 16-18 can work up to 40 hours per a week and any apprentice aged 18 and over can work over 40 although keeping to the governments time directive.
- ✓ In our email we will outline the specifics of the apprenticeship you're enquiring about along with attaching the standard and apprenticeship assessment criteria for you to read through in thorough detail.

On and off the job training

ON the job is when an apprentice receives training for the sole purpose of being able to perform jobs for which the company has employed them.

OFF the job training is a legal requirement for an apprenticeship and is in place to help an apprentice with developing the knowledge, skills & behaviours that are required within the apprenticeship standard. These hours are to be completed within their working weekly hours.

For example;

Apprentices are required to complete **6 hours (min) or more** each week of Off The Job training. This is all to do with learning and development for their apprenticeship.

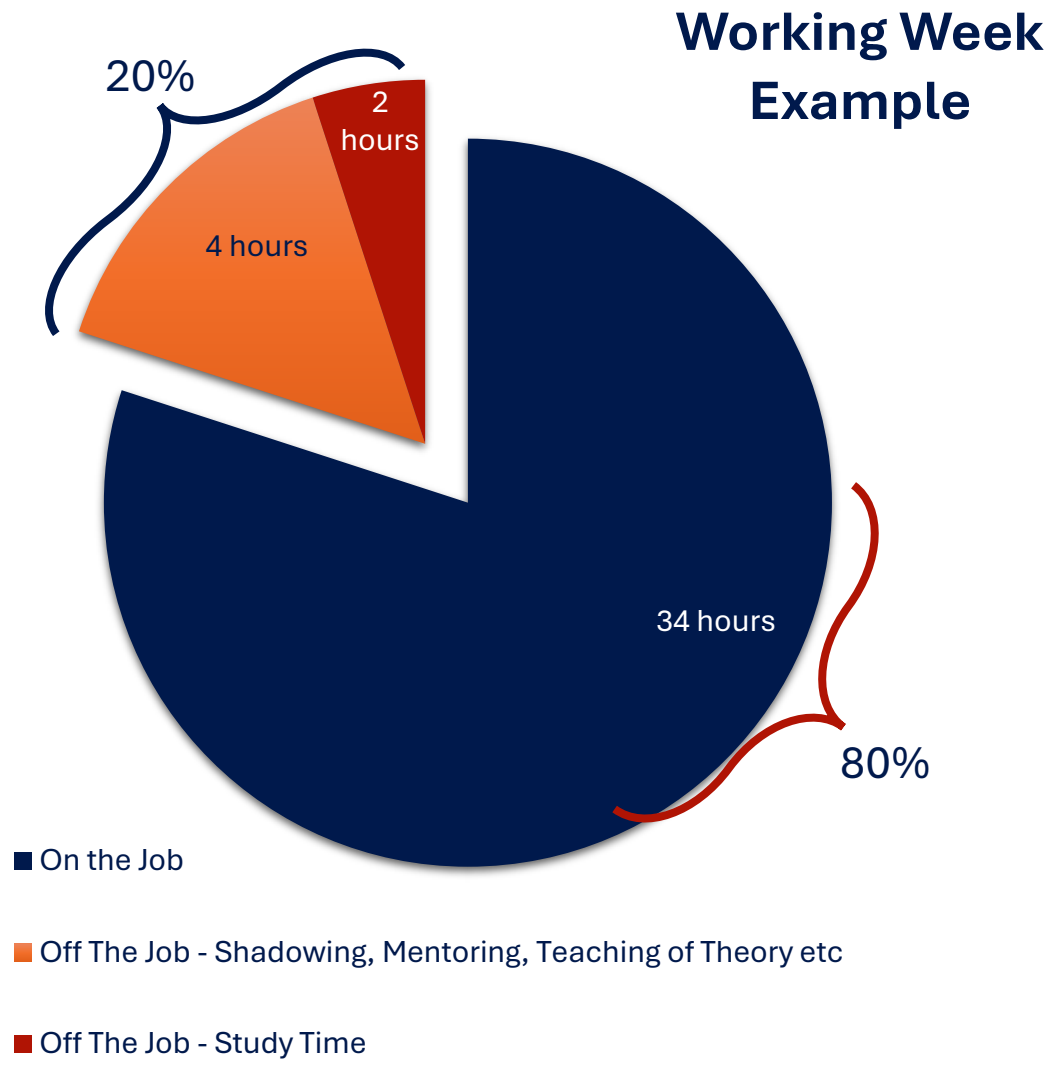
2 hours a week of this needs to be set aside for the apprentice to complete Study Time. This is an opportunity for the apprentice to spend time in a quiet environment away from their day-to-day job role to complete workbooks, targets set, self-study & research for the apprenticeship.

4 hours a week needs to be for the apprentice to shadow, be mentored, have practical training, have teaching of theory or to have classroom sessions with their assigned assessor.

This together = 6 hours a week for the Apprentices Off The Job training.

Everything for the apprentice's apprenticeship must be completed within their working weekly hours and not outside of this.

On and off the job training



Apprenticeship Assessment

Once all parties involved are confident that all of the elements of the apprenticeship have been achieved, the assessor will visit to carry out an apprenticeship assessment.

The purpose of the apprenticeship assessment (AA) is to test that an apprentice is fully capable of doing their job before they receive their apprenticeship certificate. It also helps to demonstrate that what an apprentice has learned can be applied in the real world.

The AA has become a core feature of new apprenticeship standards because it assesses the apprentice's performance across the whole standard rather than for individual tasks.

There are a range of assessment methods including:

- practical assessment
- interview
- project
- written and/or multiple-choice tests
- presentation or sales pitch

The apprentice must be assessed by a minimum of 2 different assessment methods, the methods used will be the ones most relevant to the job. After the AA, the apprentice is graded by, pass, merit or distinction. Clear grading descriptors are set out the requirements for each grade.

Contact me

You can contact me with any questions that might arise from thi presentations, with specific questions or if you would just like a general chat about apprenticeships. Understanding whether taking on an apprentice is the right thing for you business is the key first step, and I am here to help you work through all the considerations. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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