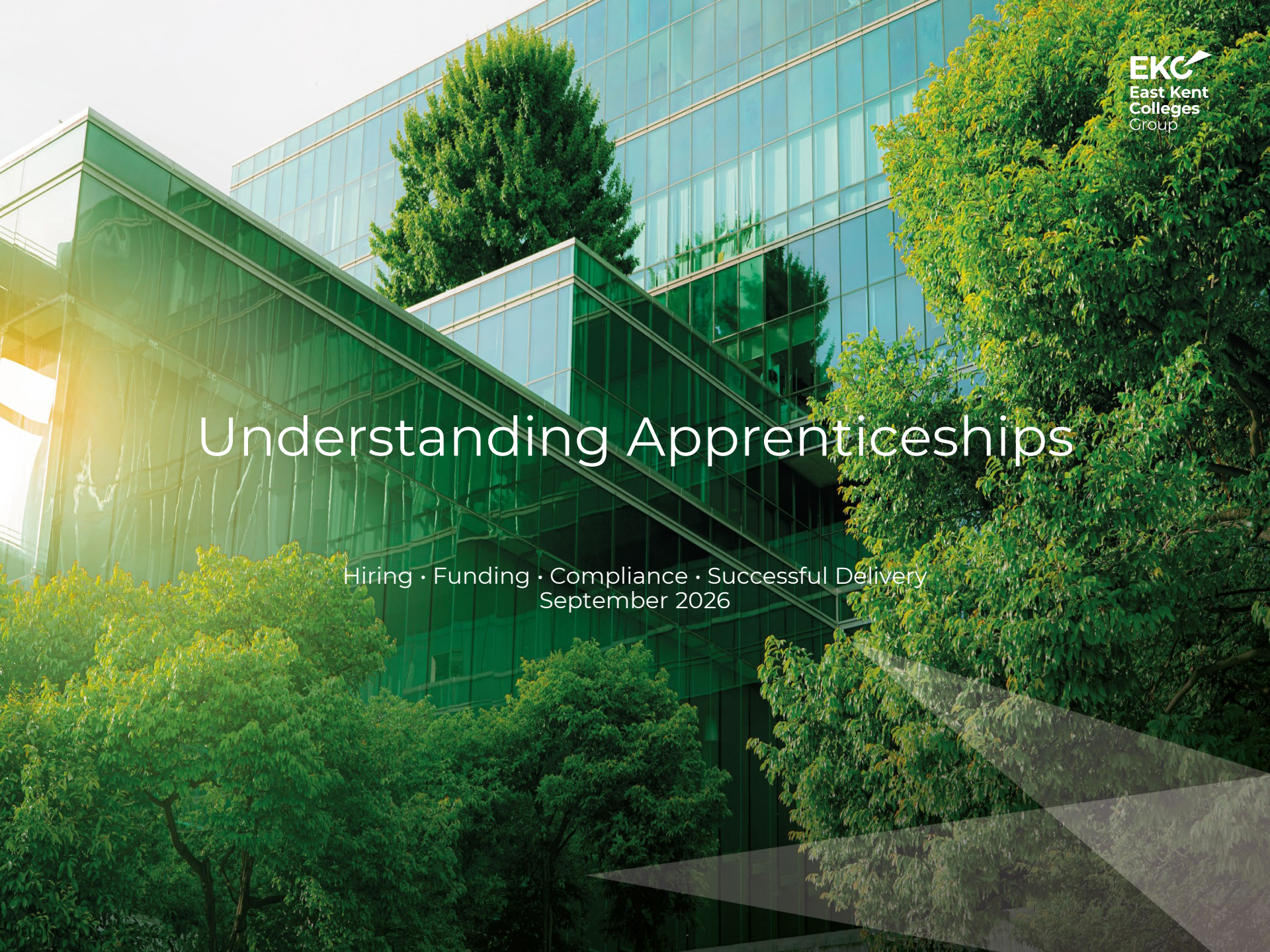

EKC
East Kent Colleges Group

Understanding Apprenticeships

Hiring · Funding · Compliance · Successful Delivery
September 2026

Treat an Apprenticeship as a job designed for learning

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Organisations gain most when apprenticeships solve real workforce needs

PIPELINE

Build entry routes into housing, repairs and asset roles.

CAPABILITY

Grow technical, customer, digital and leadership skills.

SOCIAL VALUE

Create visible local opportunity and stronger community links.

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Every apprenticeship has four key parts

1 **PAID JOB**

A genuine role with employment rights and productive work.

2 **APPRENTICESHIP STANDARD**

The approved occupation, knowledge, skills and behaviours.

3 **TRAINING**

A provider-led plan with protected off-the-job learning.

4 **ASSESSMENT**

Evidence that the apprentice has reached occupational competence.

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A housing association can build pathways across the whole organisation

1 FRONTLINE HOUSING

- Housing & property management (L3)
- Senior housing & property management (L4)
- Customer service (L2/3)
- Housing and Property Management Assistant (L2)

2 HOMES & ASSETS

- Carpentry & joinery (L2/3)
- Plumbing & domestic heating (L3)
- Electrical installation/maintenance (L3)
- Painting and Decorating (L2/L3)
- Horticulture/Landscape Operative (L2/L3)
- Horticulture/Landscape Supervisor (L3)

3 PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Business administration (L2/3)
HR Support (L3)
People Professional (L5)
Accountancy (L2-L5)
Data Analyst (L4)
Business Analyst (L4)

Apprenticeship search / Skills England

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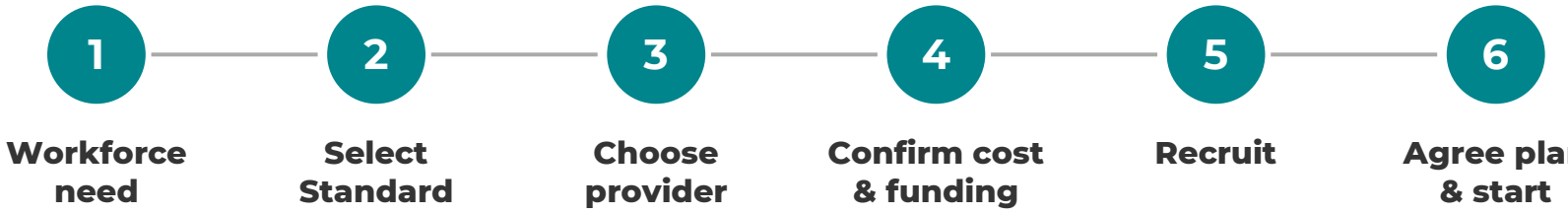

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Who can become an apprentice?

- Age 16+ and past compulsory school leaving age.
- A new hire or existing employee; there is no upper age limit.
- The role must require substantial new occupational knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Employment, residency and funding eligibility must be confirmed before start.
- Prior learning must be assessed; it may shorten the plan and reduce the price.
- The apprentice cannot be charged for required training or assessment.
- A previous qualification—including a degree—does not automatically rule someone out.

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APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING

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Pay compliance depends on age and apprenticeship year

APRIL 2026 RATES

£8.00	£8.00	£10.85	£12.71
Apprentice rate	**Under 18**	**Age 18–20**	**Age 21+**

The apprentice rate applies if the apprentice is under 19, or aged 19+ and in the first year. After the first year, use the age rate.

Employer NIC relief No employer Class 1 NIC for qualifying apprentices under 25 earning below £50,270 a year.

All employers will receive £1,000 for every 16-18 year old they hire

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The Apprenticeship Levy

WHO PAYS?

Employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million pay the levy through PAYE. In simple terms: 0.5% of the pay bill, minus a £15,000 annual allowance.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Funds appear in the employer's Apprenticeship Service account and pay for approved apprenticeship training and assessment, up to the funding band.

WHAT IT DOES NOT COVER

Wages and employment costs · any training price above the funding band · non-apprenticeship training

From August 1st 2026, once levy funds are exhausted employers will be expected to pay 25% of the funding rate with the government funding the remainder (under 25's exempt)

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Levy transfers can turn unused funds into supply-chain skills

Up to 50%

of the sender's previous financial year levy funds may be transferred

Recipient benefit

100% of training and assessment up to the funding band

Control the commitment

agree priorities, due diligence, approvals and reporting before the apprentice starts

Transferring your apprenticeship levy to another business - GOV.UK

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CASH INCENTIVES

£1,000 for eligible 16–18 apprentices

£3,000 Youth Guarantee

NATIONAL INSURANCE

No employer Class 1 NIC for qualifying apprentices under 25 earning below £50,270 a year

COST TO BUSINESS

salary · pension · holiday · protected learning time · supervision · equipment · travel · PPE

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CHOOSING A TRAINING PROVIDER

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Choose a Training Provider that behaves like a partner

Verify quality and legitimacy

approved/register status, achievement and retention, accountability indicators, Ofsted where applicable

Test the fit

occupational expertise, employer references, local capacity and credible staffing

Inspect the programme

curriculum, off-the-job plan, initial assessment, support, assessment transition and learning platform

Review Cycle

service levels, data, escalation, and continuity plan

PARTNER

A good provider will do a considerable amount of work for you and hide the wiring! They should add value to your organisation

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EKC Group combines strong outcomes with end-to-end employer support

1,200

APPRENTICES IN LEARNING

70%

OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT

8 percentage points above national

100%

EMPLOYMENT DESTINATION

Reported for 2024/25
Historically never below 92%

- Ofsted Outstanding
- Free professional recruitment service
- Dedicated Account Manager

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Making Apprenticeships Successful – partnership working

EMPLOYER	PROVIDER	APPRENTICE
Meaningful work	Initial assessment	Active learning
Protected learning	Teaching and coaching	Workplace evidence
Manager and mentor	Progress evidence	Raise barriers early
Safe, inclusive workplace	Early intervention	Own progression

regular manager check-ins • scheduled tripartite reviews • visible milestones • rapid action on attendance, progress or wellbeing

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Questions

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