



BRC Retail 2020: 'Getting a return on apprenticeship investment' workshop by People 1st

Key insights

Apprenticeship expert Annette Allmark, from people and talent management expert People 1st ran a workshop to identify critical opportunities, challenges and solutions to help employers manage, plan for and maximise the new levy and apprenticeship standards.

Below is a summary of the views and experiences shared by retailers attending the session.

Opportunities

- The levy ring-fences funds for training and development that focuses employers on innovating to maximise investment in talent.
- The new apprenticeship standards set a benchmark to ensure that apprentices achieve transferable skills.
- There are opportunities arising from greater flexibility for employers to use in-house training programmes
- Therefore, a major opportunity exists for employers to re-think their current training and talent strategies, and to take a totally different approach – using the levy to build the best possible future for the business through its people.

Challenges

- The anticipated resources needed to implement and maintain the new apprenticeship standards and levy-based changes, and to secure internal buy in has been a challenge. However, businesses on the whole are making positive progress in both these areas.
- More clarification around what evidence is required to maintain and demonstrate that apprentices are undertaking 20% off-the-job training, and further guidance on acceptable methods of training would be helpful.
- Becoming an employer-provider to deliver apprenticeship training is a goal for some organisations but is being approached cautiously until the new apprenticeship is fully embedded within their business. The implications of managing Ofsted inspection is proving a key factor in deciding whether or not to take on training responsibilities.
- For others, the challenge is getting the right provider in place that will have a suitable fit with the business culture and requirements.
- Providers play an important role in supporting recruitment which some employers are finding challenging.



Solutions

- The industry would benefit from a retail-employer focused communication from government emphasising the development investment opportunity the levy presents.
- Recommendations on how employers can maximise the opportunities presented by the new standards include: promote clear progression pathways; celebrate the career opportunities and choices and thereby address skills gaps; and retain people in the sector and ultimately improve overall productivity.

During the workshop, People 1st highlighted the importance of promoting the opportunities in the retail industry and its critical role in employing apprentices. Retail is currently not specifically referred to in the route panels, which advise the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) on apprenticeship quality and provision. This is a matter People 1st has raised with government and will continue to pursue.

Looking to maximise your levy investment and keep up to speed on apprenticeship developments?

The People 1st Apprenticeship Network helps levy paying employers maximise their apprenticeship investment, providing updates and insights on the latest apprenticeship reform developments.

[Secure your free membership to the network](#) and gain exclusive access to our new *Apprenticeships 101: A guide to help employers navigate the new-style apprenticeships.*