

IP Paralegal Apprenticeship





Skills England

IP Paralegal Apprenticeship

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Focus

- Apprenticeships headlines for employers
- The wider legal apprenticeships landscape
- Key action points



Skills England

A brief overview

Who are Skills England?

Formed in 2025 as an agency of Department for Education and as of 2026 an agency of Department for Work and Pensions. We work under Baroness Smith of Malvern as the Minister for Skills.

Skills England's mission is to:

- build our nation's world-class skills, supporting the [growth](#) and [opportunity](#) missions.
- help businesses to boost their workforce and get more people into skilled jobs faster, enabling our nation to prosper.
- drive forward the [Plan for Change](#) and [industrial strategy](#),
- identify skills gaps in the economy and uses this insight to improve provision so that people and businesses can access the right training to connect people to jobs.
- work across government to ensure both young people and adults have clear education and training pathways.
- support employers to equip their domestic workforce with the skills they need.

Apprenticeships form a valuable part of that mission by bringing together the worlds of skills and education in the offer of a job in a recognised occupation.

Apprenticeships for legal services employers

What is an apprenticeship?

What is an apprenticeship?

- An apprenticeship is **a real job** that helps people to earn while they learn, gaining valuable knowledge, skills and behaviours tailored to a specific job role.
- Apprentices, like any other employees, have a contract with you and **they are paid at least the relevant minimum wage**.
 - £8.00 apprentice rate applies for under 19s, or those aged 19 or over and in the first year of their apprenticeship.
 - Once an apprentice is 19 or over and has completed the first year, they must be paid at least the standard minimum wage for their age group.
- An apprenticeship **must last at least 8 months**. Some apprenticeship courses can be up to 6 years long, but the average is 2 years.
- Apprentices will be trained by a DfE recognised training provider, regulated by Ofsted or OfS, so they become competent in their role.
- They'll have to **complete a certain number of hours of training**. How many hours depends on the apprenticeship they're doing. Training is done during working hours - usually about a day a week or regular blocks of a week.
- Apprentices will be assessed throughout their apprenticeship to prove they're occupationally competent. At the end successful **apprentices gain a recognised qualification**.

Apprenticeship terminology

Qualification levels

Apprenticeships are available between level 2 and level 7. The qualification and experience requirements get higher with each level.

Level 2

No previous experience needed, equivalent to GCSE. Foundation apprenticeships are also set at level 2.

Level 3

Might need some qualifications or experience, equivalent to A levels.

Levels 4 to 5

Relevant qualifications and experience expected, equivalent to higher national certificate (HNC) or higher national diploma (HND).

Levels 6 to 7

Expert-level study in an industry, equivalent to university.

What do employers do in an apprenticeship?

On-the-job training

As the employer, you'll be responsible for delivering on-the-job training.

For example, if you hire an apprentice for a paralegal role, you'll need to teach them how to undertake legal research and handle allocated legal matters, guiding and supervising them to perform the tasks required for their role.

On-the-job training also covers broader knowledge and competencies essential for their job role, such as cybersecurity, GDPR etc.

Off-the-job training

Off-the-job training can be flexible and takes place during the learner's regular working hours.

The training is designed to provide the apprentice with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard, ensuring they achieve occupational competence.

There are a certain number of hours that must be completed for off-the-job training.

The employer must allow the apprentice time off for the off the-job-training to take place.

Minimum wage

Apprentices are entitled to at least the [National Minimum Wage](#). Different wage rates apply depending on their age and the year of their apprenticeship.

Who can I employ as an apprentice?

Existing employees can do an apprenticeship, or you can hire someone new.

They must be:

- 16 or over
- living in England
- not currently in full-time education

Government data shows that most paralegal apprentices tend to be aged 18 to 24yo but there are apprentices starting at any age from 16yo onwards.

Employers determine their own talent pipeline and set the academic or other attributes they wish to hire. There are no entry requirements other than those you choose to impose as a business.

Choosing the right apprenticeship

Once you have decided you are interested in apprenticeships, you need to decide which apprenticeship you are interested in and find a training provider.

Apprenticeships are arranged in “routes” that are relevant to the products.

For most office-based professional organisations, their apprenticeships will be in:

- Legal, finance and accounting 62 products
- Business administration 50 products
- Sales marketing and procurement 39 products
- Digital 46 products

You can find out more here: [Occupational Maps: Skills England](#)

A good conversation with your frontline teams and leaders about organisational skills needs and gaps saves problems later!

Choosing the right apprenticeship – paralegal

Each apprenticeship sets out employer curated content from your sector that sets out the key attributes for being **competent from day 1 of completing the apprenticeship**.

The “standard” for the occupation sets out:

- What a competent paralegal DOES day-to-day at a core level (duties)
- What KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS the competent paralegal needs to undertake those activities (duties)
- And how a competent paralegal must behave.

EACH apprenticeship standard is deliberately designed to be as context neutral as it can be so that the programme can be flexed to meet employer need across the labour market.

Your training provider will create a programme that works for you as employers and your specialism as needed. They will guide you through the process step by step.

Each apprenticeship sets out how the apprentices should be assessed to ensure consistency and quality across programmes.

Growth and Skills Levy – funding bands

Each apprenticeship is assigned a government contribution or funding “band” which you can draw down against to help fund the apprenticeship. This may be in full or in part depending on the programme.

You spend your GSL by reference to the funding band.

You may need to “top up” if the band doesn’t cover the full cost of training the apprentice.

In each case it is vital to remember that the government contribution is still a significant sum available to you as employers that will be irrecoverable if you do not spend it within the allocated time available.

The paralegal apprenticeship has a current maximum funding contribution of £11,000.

Growth and Skills Levy – a quick summary

If your pay bill is over £3 million, employers must pay the GSL to HMRC.

These funds are managed by the employer using the apprenticeship service to train and assess apprentices.

The government currently adds a 10% top-up to your account funds (top-up ends in August 2026).

If your funds run out, you pay 25% of the remaining costs, and the government covers the rest, up to the funding band maximum for each apprenticeship.

If the apprenticeship exceeds the funding band maximum, the employer pays the extra costs.

If your pay bill is under £3million, you do not pay the GSL but can still have your apprenticeships funded.

In most cases you'll need to pay 0 or 5% of the training and assessment costs for your apprentice, depending on their age or certain characteristics. The government will cover the rest, up to the funding band maximum.

- From August 2026, apprentices under 25 years old at non-levy employers will be fully funded.
- Apprentices 25 and over will be 95% funded.

Other benefits to apprenticeships

Paying employer National Insurance contributions

You might not need to pay Class 1 National Insurance contributions for an apprentice if they:

Are under 25 years old

Are on an approved UK government apprenticeship standard or framework

Earn less than £967 a week (£50,270 a year)

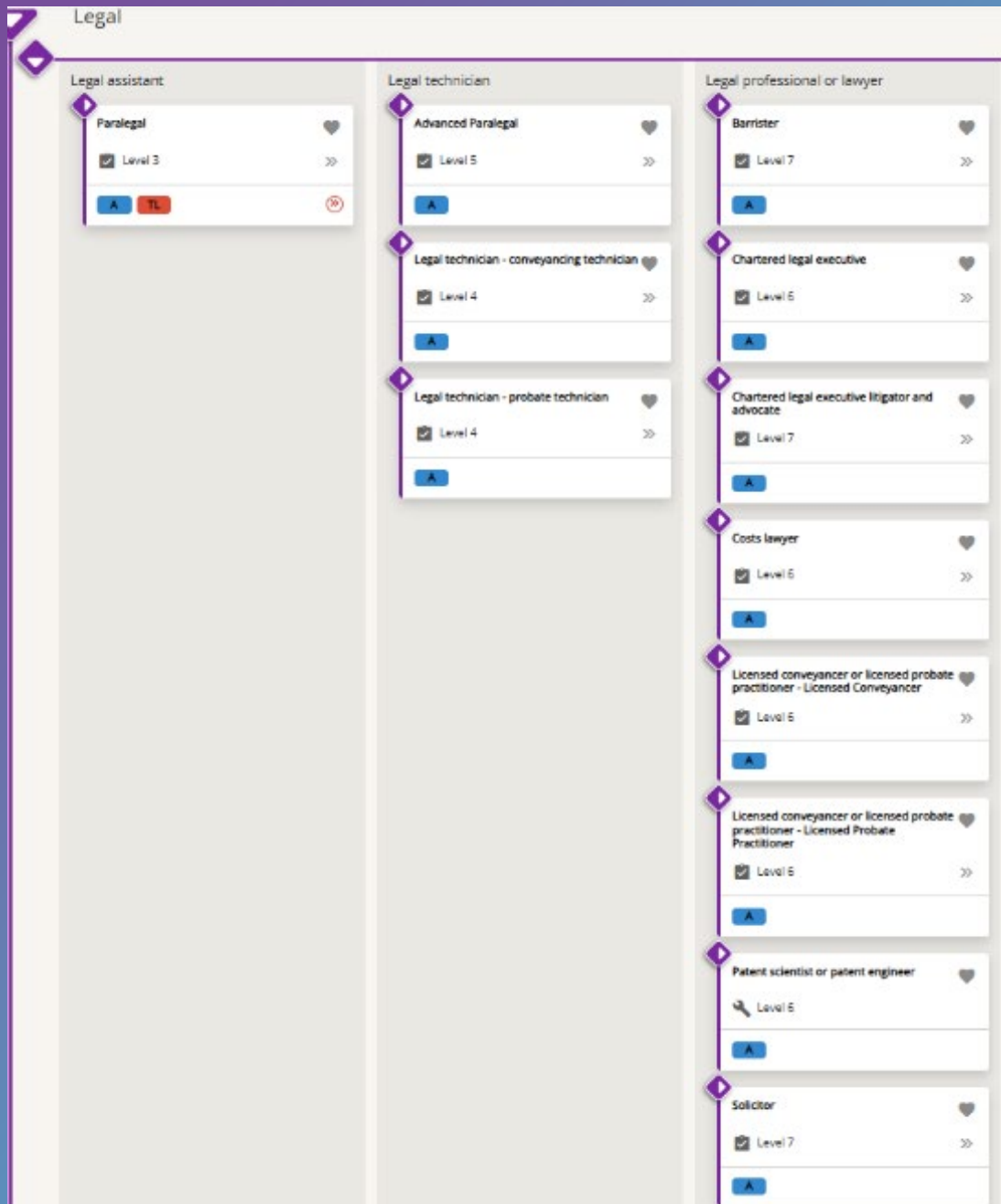
The apprentice still pays Class 1 National Insurance contributions through their salary. This exemption only benefits the employer.

Young person additional payment

You may get an additional £1,000 if you take on a young person who is age 16-18 at the start of their programme or is age 19-24 with an Education Health Care Plan or has been in care.

For non-levy payers/SMEs - you may get an additional £2,000 apprenticeship incentive payment for every apprentice aged 16-24 you hire (for those starting apprenticeships from 1 October).

**Apprenticeships available in
legal and professional
business services**



Legal pathway apprenticeships in context

You can contact the occupational group leads to discuss how they and their employers use these products:

- Paralegal and Advanced Paralegal – Sarah Donoghue at Cooley
- Conveyancing and Probate – Siobhan Connolly at Headleys and Nicola Houston at Pavilion Row
- Barrister – Tim Coulson at Cornwall Street chambers
- Chartered Legal Executive – Andrew Lee at Manchester City Council
- Costs Lawyer – Paula Walkden at Irwin Mitchell
- Solicitor – Michelle Tunney at BCLP and Kerry Gilbert at TLT
- Patent Scientist/Patent Engineer – Bobby Mukherjee at BAE Systems

The increasing popularity of legal pathway apprenticeships with employers

- [Paralegal Apprenticeships | Irwin Mitchell](#)
- [Early Careers at TLT | Graduate Schemes, Apprenticeships, Internships & Routes into Law for Future Legal Professionals](#)

Note this is an incomplete reporting year to date

2025/26 2024/25 2023/24 2022/23 2021/22 2020/21 2019/20

Chartered Legal Executive (ST0244)	60	60	20	40	100	90	160
Chartered Legal Executive Litigator and Adv	120	60	10				
Paralegal (ST0245)	360	620	520	540	480	390	510
Solicitor (ST0246)	1,950	2,000	1,350	780	580	220	240

Next steps to consider

What next: quick steps to taking on an apprentice

1. Does your organisation want to “grow their own” talent?
2. Have you identified your skills gaps and considered if apprenticeship is right for your business – can you give an apprentice access to roles that fit the duties set out in the apprenticeship standard?

If the answer to these is “yes” then the next step is to consider the Growth and Skills Levy (GSL)

3. Does your business pay into the growth and skills levy?
If YES – you are losing money month-on-month if you do not access the GSL.
If NO – you are losing out on claiming a government contribution to paying for training your talent pipeline. You can still use apprenticeships!
4. Your final step is to contact a training provider recognised by the department for education to talk about where you go next...

Sources of information

[Apprenticeships](#)

Guidance on starting running an apprenticeship programme

[Skills England Apprenticeship Finder](#)

For apprenticeship products

[Training courses](#)

Find a provider

[Employer Support Team](#)

For guidance on apprenticeship programmes

Contact me at helen.dalton2@dwp.gov.uk for any queries

Sources of information – apprenticeship employer contacts

Paralegal	Sarah Donoghue	sdonoghue@cooley.com
Conveyancing	Siobhan Connolly	siobhan@headleys.com
Probate, Wills and LPoA	Nicola Houston	nicola.houston@pavilionrow.com
Chartered Legal Executive	Andrew Lee	Andrew.Lee@manchester.gov.uk
Costs Lawyer	Paula Walkden	Paula.Walkden@IrwinMitchell.com
Solicitor	Michelle Tunney	Michelle.Tunney@bclplaw.com
	Kerry Gilbert	Kerry.Gilbert@TLTsolicitors.com
Barrister	Tim Coulson	tim.coulson@cornwallstreet.co.uk
Patent engineer/Patent scientist	Bobby Mukherjee	bobby.mukherjee@baesystems.com



Why Damar?



Jonathan Bourne
CEO
Damar Training



Who we are

- Independent apprenticeship training provider – since 1980
- Work nationally
- Regulated: Ofsted, DWP and Skills England
- Apprenticeship training and recruitment support
- Specialise in business and professional support services – especially legal
- c.1,500 apprentices with c.600 employers; over 50% in legal services
- Apprenticeships include paralegal, CILEX, solicitor, administration, accountancy, customer service, data protection.



What we do – and why

- Our goal is for apprentices and the organisations that employ them to achieve their potential
- Apprenticeships help employers address a range of people-related opportunities and challenges
- Training and coaching delivery is a blend of 1:1 online with a dedicated Damar coach; expert-led workshops; and engaging online resources
- Apprenticeships are a stepping stone, with many apprentices progressing through further programme levels with Damar or remaining in employment with their apprenticeship organisation.



How we work

- Consultative and human-led
- If apprenticeships (or Damar) aren't right for you, we will say so!
- Long-term relationships
- We are spending public money and impacting thousands of lives and businesses... we take that responsibility seriously.



Apprenticeships

Who are they for?

- New or existing employees doing or moving into a role that matches an apprenticeship
- With a significant developmental need (i.e. that requires 6+ hours a week of study, for the apprenticeship duration)



Apprenticeships

Government investment

- For levy payers, the government pays 100% of the training costs (Growth and Skills Levy)
- For smaller employers, the government pays 95-100% and the employer pays 0-5%
- Grant incentives available for some younger apprentices; NI saving for most under 25s.



Apprenticeships

Your investment

- The apprentice's salary
- Paid time for study, taken during normal working hours, known as off-the-job training
- Exposure to relevant work
- Supervisor engagement in the journey.





The Paralegal Apprenticeship

Designed for:

- Those in their first paralegal role
 - Those moving from admin/support roles into fee-earning roles
 - In-house and private practice
 - Graduates (not law) and non-graduates.
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- Underpinning legal knowledge and specialist pathway content
 - Also develops wider professional and business skills.

IP Paralegal Overview



Darren Addicott
Curriculum Specialist
Damar Training



Paralegal Overview

- Level 3 programme
- 72 weeks of learning
- 12 modules covering the full paralegal standard
- Specialist IP pathway content



The IP Paralegal Pathway

- Foundations and types of intellectual property
 - IP rights and lifecycle management
 - The global nature of IP protection and administration
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The IP Paralegal Pathway

- Ownership and professional practice
- Enforcement, disputes and risk management



Delivery Approach

Blended learning:

- Online content
- Live workshops
- Regular knowledge checks
- Peer to peer activities





Core Themes

- Legal and regulatory understanding
- Ethical and compliance-based judgement
- Stakeholder engagement and communication skills



Core Themes

- Advanced legal research and analytical problem-solving
- Digital tools and commercial awareness
- Caseload management and professional accountability.

O-Shaped Lawyer

Open

Open to change and feedback.
Open mindset. Open with emotions.



Optimistic

Positive outlook. See the best
in others. Positivity "rubs off."



Opportunist

Seek and seize existing and new
opportunities. Use networks to
collaborate and create openings.



Original

Original ways of working and thinking.
Creative, innovative, adaptable.



Ownership

Solutions-focused, accountable,
own the outcome.



Assessment

Project reports:

- Legal research-focused
- Practice area specific
- To include case law/legislation.



Assessment

Project presentation:

- 10 minute presentation based on the project report
- 15 minute Q&A



Assessment

Professional discussion:

- Supported by a portfolio of evidence
- 50-60 minute discussion



Support

- 1-2-1 dedicated learning coach meetings (6-weekly)
- Employer engagement
- 12 x group coaching sessions to help with portfolio build
- 7 group workshops across ITWIL and pathway, facilitated by expert tutors



Support

- Set interactive activities
- Student forums
- Careers information and guidance
- SEND support (where appropriate)



Timescales and next steps

- First cohort of IP paralegals will start on 5 October 2026
- Most likely to be existing staff, but there is still time to recruit!
- If interested, email info@damartraining.com before the end of June.

