

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

Team leader

ST0384 · Level 3 · Business and administration

Employer commitments, progress reviews and workplace engagement guidance

STANDARD

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VERSION

1.4

LEVEL

3

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15 months

MIN. HOURS

348 hours

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Team leader apprentices develop their management capability in the workplace from day one — through real decisions, real teams, and real operational pressure. Employers are not passive hosts: the quality of challenge, support, and responsibility they provide directly determines whether apprentices develop genuine first-line management competence or simply accumulate theoretical knowledge. Across sectors as varied as healthcare, financial services, and logistics, the employer is the single most important variable in programme quality.

Employer Essential Commitments

Mandatory

- Agree the training plan before training starts; the fully signed plan may be completed within the 42-day qualifying period only where the agreement was made virtually or by correspondence.
- Take part in progress reviews at least every 3 calendar months — employers who cannot attend must be given the opportunity to contribute, and attendance (in person or virtually) must be the norm across the programme, not the exception.
- When the apprentice is approaching gateway, be satisfied that the apprentice is ready for end-point assessment before confirming readiness in consultation with the provider.

Provider Expectations

- Provide appropriate support and supervision that gives the apprentice genuine scope to practise and develop their leadership — not just observe it.
- Share relevant operational context — such as team performance data, project objectives, or organisational priorities — so that workplace learning is grounded in real challenge rather than contrived activity.
- Raise concerns about apprentice progress or workplace circumstances early, rather than waiting for a scheduled review, so that the provider can adjust support promptly.

On-programme Engagement

Progress reviews take place at least every 3 calendar months as a three-way conversation between the provider, the employer, and the apprentice. Employers play an active role — contributing their view of how the apprentice is performing in the role, not simply receiving an update from the provider. Between reviews, the person supporting the apprentice at work should be engaged enough to notice when progress is stalling or when circumstances have changed. If a team restructure, a change in role, or a drop in performance raises a concern, early contact with the provider — rather than waiting for the next scheduled review — allows the programme to adapt before problems compound.

Workplace Opportunities by Theme

Leading and developing people

- Give the apprentice genuine responsibility for managing individual team members — including setting expectations, holding one-to-ones, and supporting development.
- Ensure the apprentice has the authority to have real management conversations, not just to relay instructions from above.
- An apprentice at a housing association identifies a development gap in a team member and arranges appropriate support, then reviews its impact over the following weeks.

Planning, resource management and operational delivery

- Involve the apprentice in real planning decisions — rotas, task allocation, budget monitoring — where their choices have visible consequences.
- Share relevant operational information and give the apprentice space to make and own decisions, rather than requiring sign-off on every step.
- An apprentice in a logistics team adjusts the weekly schedule in response to a colleague's absence, balancing workload and customer commitments with limited resource.

Stakeholder communication and influencing

- Create opportunities for the apprentice to communicate across departmental boundaries and with a range of internal and external stakeholders.
- Brief the apprentice on stakeholder priorities and give them feedback after significant interactions on how their communication landed.
- An apprentice at a financial services firm leads a cross-team operational update, adapting their communication style for both frontline colleagues and a senior manager audience.

Continuous improvement and change

- Give the apprentice a meaningful role in a real improvement initiative or change — where they contribute to planning, experience setbacks, and see outcomes.
- Provide the authority and space to trial small changes, and discuss with the apprentice what worked and what they would do differently.
- An apprentice in a retail team identifies a process inefficiency in stock handling and works with colleagues to implement a practical change, tracking the effect on team output.

Employer Induction Checklist

- Role scope and authority** — Confirm what decisions the apprentice can make independently, where they need to escalate, and which management responsibilities they will hold from the outset.
- Access to operational information** — Ensure the apprentice can access the data, systems, and organisational context they need to carry out meaningful team leader activities — such as performance figures, budgets, or scheduling tools.
- Appropriate support and supervision** — Identify who will provide day-to-day support and supervision for the apprentice at work, and ensure that person understands their role in enabling occupational learning.
- Off-the-job learning time** — Confirm how and when the apprentice will take their agreed off-the-job learning time, and how operational cover will be managed so that release is sustained consistently across the programme.
- Organisational policies and procedures** — Give the apprentice access to the key policies relevant to their role — including conduct, absence, and any sector-specific regulatory requirements — so they can begin applying them in context.
- EDI and wellbeing expectations** — Set out the organisation's expectations around equity, inclusion, and wellbeing from the start, so the apprentice understands how these principles should shape their approach to leading their team.
- Gateway role** — Make sure the employer representative who will be involved at gateway understands what their role involves and that it is grounded in an honest assessment of the apprentice's readiness, informed by what they have observed across the programme.

Common Mistakes

Treating the apprentice as an experienced manager from day one and providing no genuine development challenge.

Avoid: Agree with the provider at the start which areas of the team leader role the apprentice needs to grow into, and build in stretch activity progressively across the programme.

Restricting the apprentice's authority so that they cannot make real management decisions, reducing their learning to observation rather than practice.

Avoid: Confirm at induction what the apprentice is empowered to decide independently, and review this as their confidence and competence develops.

Engaging only at scheduled reviews and assuming the provider will flag any concerns in between.

Avoid: Maintain informal contact with the provider when circumstances change — a restructure, a difficult team situation, or a shift in the apprentice's role can all affect the programme and benefit from early discussion.

Conflating the gateway confirmation with a routine sign-off rather than a genuine assessment of readiness.

Avoid: Base the gateway decision on honest, direct knowledge of how the apprentice performs across their full role — drawing on what has been observed throughout the programme, not only in the final weeks.