

Apprentices and CoVid 19

Disruption to training

Because of illness, caring responsibilities, and operational disruption, apprentices may be unable to attend training, and training providers may be unable to deliver training over the coming weeks or months.

This will create significant implications for apprentices and employers, as well as for training providers and end-point assessment organisations whose income may be disrupted:

- for an individual, this might be necessary due to illness or self-isolation, or challenges getting to their place of employment or location for training provision
- for an employer, this might be necessary due to a temporary need to redeploy apprentices to different roles
- for a training provider, this might be necessary due to challenges in providing training or assessment due to staff absences or closure of facilities

If I need to self-isolate, what will happen to my apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, for example during a period of illness. If you need to self-isolate, please talk to your employer and training provider about the best way to continue with your apprenticeship, or report a break in learning.

Options include:

- an increase in e-learning
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in your apprenticeship while you are in self-isolation. This will not affect the planned end-date of your apprenticeship
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more will result in the planned end-date for your apprenticeship being re-planned, upon returning to learning, to take into consideration the duration in line with the length of your break
- re-scheduling planned assessment activity for a later date

The appropriate steps will be agreed based on your and your employer/training provider's situation.

Breaks in learning

Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for disruption in learning:

- less than 4 weeks – in these circumstances neither the employer nor the training provider needs to report the interruption, the end-date for the apprenticeship remains the same and there is no change to the payment of funding
- more than 4 weeks – in these circumstances, employers and/or training providers must report a formal break in learning. Where a break in learning is reported, the payment of funding to the training provider will be suspended for the duration of the break in learning

Where breaks in learning are required, it is our goal that apprentices are able to promptly resume their apprenticeship, and continue to successful completion of end-point assessment.

Funding rules currently state that a break in learning must be initiated by the apprentice. Employers and training providers **can now**, temporarily, also report and initiate a break in learning where the interruption to learning is **greater than 4 weeks**.

My employer is asking me to take a period of unpaid leave, what happens to my apprenticeship during that time?

Where you are no longer able to work, but have not been made redundant, you can take a break from your apprenticeship and resume when you return to work. Please get in touch with your training provider who will inform us of a break in learning.

Once you are back at work, you can resume your apprenticeship, which your training provider can help with too. You should refer any queries around terms and conditions, including wages, to your employer in the first instance.

The ACAS website may also be a good source of information.

What happens to the apprentice during a period of unpaid leave in terms of monies. Do they have access to Universal Credit?

Universal Credit may be available for both workers and the unemployed alike, as long as they meet the other conditions of entitlement (including that the applicant and their partner have savings of under £16,000 between them). Apprentices may be entitled to access Universal Credit during a period of unpaid leave. They may also have access to Universal Credit even if they were working and being paid. Being laid off or on a lesser number of hours could increase the rate of Universal Credit entitlement.

Apprentices on unpaid leave may also be eligible for other benefits.

Furloughed apprentices

An apprenticeship is a job with training, so even when you are not able to do your training, you are still employed. You will be paid in line with the details in your employment contract.

Where apprentices are furloughed (granted a leave of absence) or placed on unpaid leave, or where the nature of their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, the apprentice, employer and training provider should consider whether a break in learning would be appropriate

For the avoidance of doubt, during breaks in learning it is not necessary for apprentices to comply with the minimum of 20% off-the-job training requirement. **However**, an apprentice can continue to complete off the job training, for example via online learning, or by completing assignments via email, or even phone call discussion etc. It is also acceptable to frontload the Off the Job part of the programme, so while they're furloughed that may do 10 or 12 OTJ hours per week, far more than if they we're in work. It counts towards the 20% off the job requirement as long as the OTJ hours are undertaken during what would be their usual work pattern i.e. 8am to 4pm).

My employer is enforcing a work from home policy and my classroom provision has been withdrawn. What are my options?

If you are unable to attend scheduled learning events, there are several options available to you:

- your training provider may provide digital or distance learning

- you can take a short pause if it is likely your apprenticeship can resume in less than 4 weeks, and you will still be able to complete your apprenticeship by the planned end-date
- you can take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more, this will result in the planned end-date of your apprenticeship being re-planned upon returning to learning, to take into consideration the duration of your break

Please talk to your employer and training provider to agree the appropriate steps for your circumstances.

Apprentices made redundant to find a new employer within 12 weeks

Where apprentices are made redundant, it is the DfE's ambition that they will be supported to find alternative employment, and continue their apprenticeship within 12 weeks.

The training provider "must support the apprentice to find another employer" where redundancies take place.

In instances where a significant number of apprentices are made redundant, the ESFA said it will attempt to provide "exceptional practical support to the apprentices and training providers to secure alternative employers for the individuals".

Face-to-face end-point assessments can be rescheduled or 'modified'

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment, and cannot be assessed due to COVID-19 related issues, will be able to have their End Point Assessment rescheduled. Where there is a specified time limit for EPA post gateway, a further pause of 12 weeks is allowable.

Apprentices whose gateway is being delayed are allowed a break in learning, with an extension to the assessment timeframe.

Arrangements for April and beyond

For a break in learning greater than four weeks that begins on or after 1 April, the apprenticeship should be 'paused' by the employer through the apprenticeship service at the point the break in learning begins.

The employer should "not 'stop' the apprenticeship through the apprenticeship service as this will prevent it resuming subsequently".