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**Apprenticeships Guidance**  
**Driving a Goods Vehicle and Traffic Office operatives**  
**RHA members**  
**(Northern Ireland)**

29<sup>th</sup> October 2019

**What is the Apprenticeship Levy?**

1. The Apprenticeship Levy is a Tax collected by Government through HMRC to provide funding for approved apprenticeship schemes. The levy is collected from all employers who have a wage bill in excess of £3 million. Within Northern Ireland the ApprenticeshipNI scheme is administered by the Department for the Economy via Skills to Succeed and the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. Digital accounts do not apply in NI and anyone wishing to utilise support for apprenticeship training must satisfy the eligibility criteria upon application through the relevant training provider. The funding provided by Government for apprenticeship training within NI forms part of the block grant and its allocation is based around the Barnett Formula for funding provided to the devolved administrations. No data is available on how much Northern Ireland Businesses have paid via the Apprenticeship Levy or how much has been utilised for apprenticeship training.

**Key courses available**

2. There are a wide range of apprenticeships available (<https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/apprenticeships-employers>). However, for the purposes of this guidance we will focus on drivers of goods vehicles and traffic office operatives. The apprenticeships for drivers of goods vehicles covers motorcycle couriers, van drivers, rigid vehicles (Category C licence) and Articulated/drawbar combinations (Category C + E licence). Subject to the qualification/s held by the apprentice they may be exempt from certain elements of the training. There are several different pathways (Examining bodies) for qualification and training providers within the region. [https://www.online.economy-ni.gov.uk/Training\\_Apprenticeships\\_Ext/Home.aspx#](https://www.online.economy-ni.gov.uk/Training_Apprenticeships_Ext/Home.aspx#)  
The apprenticeships framework has two levels of qualification – level 2 and level 3 for each type of vehicle within scope of the scheme.
  - Level 2 – Is primarily for apprentices who wish to be drivers only.
  - Level 3 – Includes the driver element but has content for drivers with additional responsibilities including supervision and who may aspire to supervisory or management roles.

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## What course is appropriate

To obtain the requisite qualification at level 2 the apprentice must achieve the required competence and knowledge for the vehicle required. It's unlikely an apprentice would be accepted as a level 3 entry without being able to satisfy the training provider they have achieved at least a level 2 or equivalent qualification. Its also unlikely any training provider would run back to back apprenticeship courses for an apprentice who aspires to a category C + E (articulated/drawbar vehicles) but needs to successfully complete a category C (rigid vehicle) apprenticeship course first.

## The apprentice eligibility criteria

### General

3. The apprentice must be:
  - aged 16 or over for Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships although some additional restrictions apply to persons over 25.
  - employed 50% + of their time in Northern Ireland;
  - be based in Northern Ireland and completing their directed training in Northern Ireland with an approved local Training Contractor, following an ApprenticeshipsNI framework.
4. There is no application or allowance to employers in Northern Ireland from the Apprenticeship Levy the ApprenticeshipsNI programme is the only option.
5. Apprentices must be employed on a permanent basis, with a minimum of 21 hrs per week and earn at least £3.90 per hour. They can be new or current employees.

### Driving Goods Vehicles

6. Obviously due to minimum age requirements for HGV Category C or C + E licence holders, driver training is restricted for people aged over 18 years. They combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job.

### Traffic Office Operatives

7. As per general eligibility criteria set out above.

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### **Am I eligible as an employer?**

8. The apprenticeship scheme is open to any employer and they don't have to be a contributor under the £3 million wage bill criteria.

### **How much money does it cost me as an employer of an apprentice?**

9. The Department for the Economy funds the directed training delivery costs and there are employer incentives which may be payable depending on successful completion of levels 2 and 3, this is the only payment the employer receives. The financial incentives are not fixed, however they are currently £500 for successful completion of each level of the driving goods vehicle apprenticeship
10. The apprentice must cover the cost of obtaining the appropriate provisional licence and the associated medical costs, etc.
11. The employer must offer permanent remunerative employment for the apprentice from day one, i.e. a minimum of 21 contracted hours per week with one employer which includes day release / off-the-job training (directed training must be paid as part of the apprentice's contracted hours).
12. Some of the training providers cover the cost of the theory Mod 4 practical test and practical driving test costs.

### **Duration for apprenticeship training**

13. The 'off the job' directed training for driving a goods vehicle lasts a minimum of 2 weeks, however it is subject to the aptitude and progress of the apprentice undergoing the training. The training provided by the training provider may need to be supplemented by additional training by the employer subject to the specific needs of the business. The cost of any additional training not covered by the framework is not covered by the Department unless there is another specific approved training framework for that aspect of the job.

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