



Finding employment for your apprenticeship

2020

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Introduction

On Site Bristol has given you an offer of a place on an apprenticeship scheme. What does this mean? An offer from On Site Bristol means you can join the programme on the condition that: **You find a company to employ you as an apprentice. We can help you do this!**

For our part On Site Bristol will match a number of students to suitable employers, including Bristol City Council but, unfortunately, we will not have enough opportunities to start everyone on an apprenticeship programme.

To maximise your chances of becoming an apprentice we strongly recommend that you actively search for a placement yourself.

Finding an apprenticeship may seem like a daunting task but with some initiative and effort from you, and with advice and guidance from On Site Bristol, you should be able to find an employer.

Initiative

YOU need to take control of this process and contact as many people as possible; take advantage of every opportunity you find. It is not enough to just email or send letters out to companies, everyone does this and you won't get many replies.

This guide will explain different ways to find and contact employers that have proven to be successful. To do this we're going to break the process down into these steps:

- Friends & Family: Talk to everyone
- How to identify & approaching potential employers
- CV & Covering letter template
- Prepare for interview
- Phoning or visiting employers
- Plan B
- Make an action plan



Friends & Family | Talk to everyone

Did you know that most jobs aren't advertised? To find the right job you've got to network, this means talking to **everyone you know**

You can't leave it to chance that people will find out that you need an employer. You need to **tell them yourself!** This is pretty easy to do. Follow these next steps:

Step one: finding your first contacts

Experts say that the average person is connected to, at least, 150-250 people. If you were to hold a 'Town Hall Meeting' with all of those people with the purpose of them helping you find an employer for your apprenticeship, your chances of finding a new position quickly would be increased. So, with this in mind write down people you know (family or friends), ask them if they know anyone who works in the construction industry (you could do this by group text message, Facebook etc.) This will give you your first set of contacts. Here is a suggested list of the sort of people you might like to include on your list.

- Family (including parent's place of work, their friends and social activities i.e. social clubs)
- Friends (including your neighbours, does anyone on your street work in construction?)
- Acquaintances (contacts via school, college and in your local community)
- Employers and former employers
- Social & Sports Clubs or your local gym

Sport and social clubs can often be a good starting point to find potential contacts. If you are a member of a local football or rugby club speak to the club chairperson or coach, perhaps they may know of potential contacts or are willing to let you contact club members via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and club website), the notice board or a club meeting.

Step two: get in touch

Now you have your initial list of contacts, get in touch with them. Ask them if they can give you a job as an apprentice or some **work experience**. It is most likely that they won't be able to give you a job directly, but they will probably be able to suggest other people they know who you could try. Keep repeating this process. The idea is that you make a lot of connections in the construction/building services industries. The more you make, the more chance there is that you'll get a job out of it. Don't forget, you only need ONE employer to say yes!

Key contacts

You will make some **key contacts** whilst you are networking. Here are some types of key contacts you might come across:

Helpful People: you will find that some people are more helpful than others. Those that are helpful may well go out of their way to try to find you some really good contacts. Often these are older people who really want to see young people coming into their industry.

People who do the trade you want to train in: for obvious reasons, they often know a lot of people you can approach who could offer you a job

Owners of construction / building services companies: again, for obvious reasons.

You should **try your best** to stay in contact with key contacts

Keys Points to remember

- It is **very important** that you keep clear records about your work on this. **You could record your information in a table or spreadsheet on your PC or neatly in a notepad.**
- It's easier to have a conversation with someone you found out about through someone you know.
- When talking to a new contact make sure you mention the NAME of the person who referred you. This can make them more willing to talk to you.
- If someone gave you a potential contact, you can always go back to them again to see if they can think of any more contacts.
- Don't worry if your contacts are not in the trade you are hoping to train in. Most tradespeople know people from lots of different trades, so they can refer you on to the right contact in the right trade.

Work Experience: Why bother?

When you approach potential employers ask them if they may be able to offer you an apprenticeship and/or work experience.

- You are more likely to be successful in your job hunt if you have undertaken some good work experience.
- Work experience will make your CV look more relevant to your chosen career
- It will give you something to talk about at interviews with employers and give you a potential reference.
- It's the best way to get a real sense of your chosen industry. You'll get to speak to employees and ask them questions. You won't know what it's like until you get closer to the action.
- Doing work experience shows passion and interest. Evidence that you have done work experience shows the employer that you are motivated to get into a chosen career and that you've done your homework.
- It'll help you build up contacts and, you never know they might even give you a heads up about a future job or recommend you to another company.
- You might wow them so much that you'll manage to wangle yourself a job!

How to identify & approach potential employers

Not all job opportunities are advertised. In fact, up to 70 per cent of jobs are not advertised. Some employers don't want to generate large numbers of applications or pay for expensive advertising and others already get lots of applications without needing to advertise. Tap into this 'hidden' job market by making a **speculative application**.

A speculative application involves sending a CV and covering letter to an employer asking whether they can offer an apprenticeship/job, without a position being advertised. You can do this via email and then follow up with a phone call to ask if they received your email and ask if they have any vacancies or work experience opportunities.



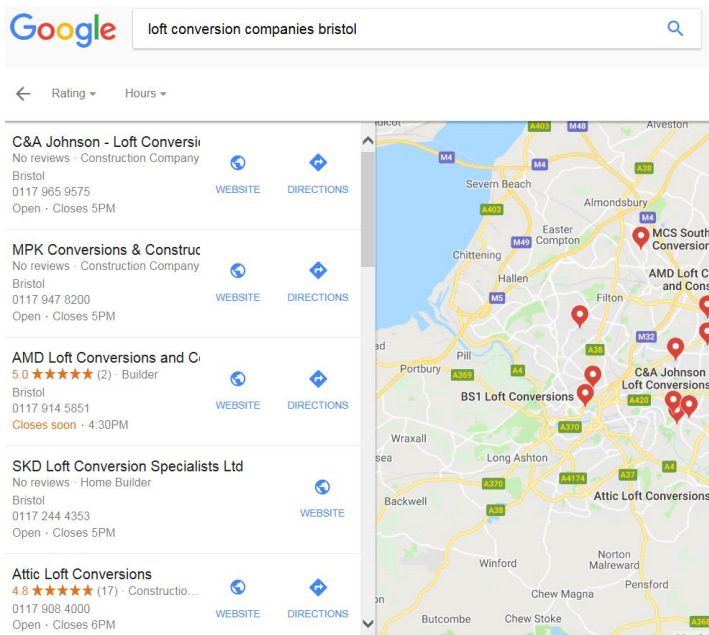
Keep your eyes Peeled Write down names and numbers of potential employers that you see on vans, shop fronts, offices and on boards outside construction sites. You could take a photo via your phone and give them a call when you get home. If the van is parked locally, perhaps on your street, ask your parents if they know the person. Make contact and tell them you're looking for an apprenticeship or some work experience. Check in with local builders merchants, perhaps you can put an advert on their notice board?

The Internet You can search for local companies via:

- ✓ Google
- ✓ Yell.com
- ✓ Thompson Local.com
- ✓ Federation of Master Builders - www.fmb.org.uk/find-a-builder/
- ✓ Chartered Institute of Plumbing & Heating Engineers – www.ciphe.org.uk (Plumbing & Heating Employers)
- ✓ Gas Safe Register - www.gassaferegister.co.uk/find-an-engineer/ (Plumbing & Heating Employers)
- ✓ Gumtree – www.gumtree.com
- ✓ Facebook - Try posting an advert on a local community group stating that you are looking for an apprenticeship or work experience
- ✓ National Apprenticeships – www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
- ✓ Indeed – www.indeed.co.uk
- ✓ NICEIC - www.niceic.com/contractor (Electrical employers)
- ✓ Checkatrade – www.checktrade.com

Keywords are important and will alter your search results on Google. Try searching for:

- ✓ Construction Companies (all trades)
- ✓ General Builders (for all trades)
- ✓ Loft Conversion specialists (roof installation is an essential part of the **carpentry** qualification)
- ✓ Plastering/Rendering/Fibrous Work (for plastering)
- ✓ Bench Joinery Workshops (Joinery)
- ✓ Staircases/Windows/Doors (Bench Joinery).
- ✓ Gas Engineers / Gas Safe Engineer / Central Heating Installation (Plumbing)
- ✓ Electrical Installation / Electrical Engineer / Electrician (Electrical)



Google Searches: If you type your keywords into Google you will notice a box with a map to the right. If you click on 'More Places' you will have a list of employers to contact. Alternatively you could type in a keyword search and your postcode, giving you employers directly local to your area. For example, General Builders, BS1 6XN.

Focus on local companies first, remember you will need to get to work or site; it will be easier to travel to local sites or employers.

You can search for local construction companies using a range of publications (printed text). You may want to try the following:

- ✓ YellowPages
- ✓ ThePhoneBook(BT)
- ✓ The Observer
- ThompsonLocal
- TheEveningPost
- ThePigeon & South West Voice (South West Bristol Only)

How do I approach potential employers?

Make a list of potential employers and their contact details. You should have at least **15 POTENTIAL COMPANIES** on your list. There are many candidates all looking for an employer and you will have to contact many employers to be successful. Produce an **email cover letter (see page 8 onwards)**, this is a document sent with your CV to provide additional information to explain why you're contacting them and the reasons for your interest in the company. Your letter should explain that you are undertaking an apprenticeship, have a place at On Site Bristol, and that as part of this, you will need an employer. For more guidance on writing your CV and covering letter, see our "standard CV template" and "cover letter template" on the last few pages of this booklet (p.8 onwards).

Track

You will need a way to keep track of the work you are going to do. This could be on paper, or on a computer spreadsheet; the most important thing is that you record your work. This will also allow you to show us at On Site Bristol who you have contacted, and help us to make recommendations to help you.

Contact

Call or personally visit all the companies on your list. Explain that you are starting an apprenticeship and that you are looking for an employer to tie in with that. Ask them if they would consider taking you on or providing you with some work experience. **Make sure you speak to the owner or someone able to make hiring decisions.** You should expect that most will say that they aren't taking apprentices on. **Do not take this personally,** stay upbeat and ask them if you can keep in touch.

Say something like;

"I am very keen to work for your company and wouldn't want to miss out on a position with you if things change, so could I please keep in touch with you? Maybe call you in 4-6 weeks' time?"

Follow up

Mark your list of companies with the date you called each company and the date on which you sent the follow up letter and CV (if applicable). If you agreed to make a follow-up call, make sure you set a reminder on a calendar, in a diary or phone to ring that company back 4-6 weeks after you made your first call.

Make the second call, just to find out if things have changed for the company. Don't press them too much. This will only annoy the person you speak to. If they still aren't looking for anyone, see if you can agree a call back to them in another 4-6 weeks' time for a 'quick check' on their situation. This will allow you to keep in contact with them – and you can repeat this process, always remembering to make a note of when you have to call them back.

Hopefully, you will be successful in getting an interview, so make sure you prepare for it properly; the things you need to do are fully detailed in section 7. Don't forget to contact us and we can always offer more help and advice.

Don't forget, if you speak with an employer and they seem interested **call On Site Bristol**, we will be more than happy to follow up with the company on your behalf.



CV Template -Name

Address Line City, Town, Postcode

Home/Mobile Number Email Address:

Date of Birth /Age:

Personal Statement/Summary:

This is where you can tell employers why you want to do an apprenticeship in your chosen trade. It is also an opportunity to tell them about your key skills/selling points and your achievements. For example, I have a placement with On Site Bristol, details of how I plan to travel to work; Scooter, Car, Bus etc. You may find it easier to list your key skills as bullet points rather than writing it long hand. You might want to mention that you have excellent school attendance records, or outline some of your key hobbies and how these skills may be transferable to the workplace. This section will be the first thing the employer will read, remember an employer only has a very short time to read these statements so you need to sell yourself fully. Some examples of effective bullet points/information for your CV could include:

- Excellent timekeeping and punctuality reflected by 100% attendance in school reports
- Team player for Hanham Football club for last 10 years including acting as Captain
- Enjoys keeping fit and active by attending the gym 3-4 times a week
- Good work ethic reflected by paper round carried out daily for 12 months

Education:

Start with your most recent place of study and work back, primary school information is not relevant.

[This is where you list the school that you went to and the GCSE subjects with the grade you got or are predicted. See below for an example. You can also list any additional courses or qualifications you have achieved, such as first aid.]

A School

01/01/2001-01/01/2001

GCSE English	C
GCSE Maths	C
GCSE Science	C
GCSE Resistant Materials	C

(Remember: state whether these grades are predicted or actual)

Additional Qualifications:

For example First Aid, CSCS Card

Work History:

Start with your most recent employment or voluntary position and work back.

[Set out your work history, including your work experience and any voluntary work. Remember, each entry must include the following information: The dates (from and to) that you worked for the employer, the name of the employer, your job title and a description of the duties you carried out. See below for an example.]

A N Employer

01/01/2001 – 01/01/2001

My Job Title

My duties were...

Interests and Hobbies:

This is an opportunity to let employers know what you do with your spare time. Only include things that show you in a good light. For example, "Hanging around with my friends" would NOT be a good thing to put down, whereas, "I have been an Air Cadet for 3 years and regularly go on expeditions" – this shows you have dedication and motivation which are both qualities employers are keen to see.

References: Here you can list the names and contact details of your referees. These should be people you have worked for, done work experience with, or who know you well, such as your tutor at school.

OR write 'References available on request'

Covering Email/letter template

Your Name
Your address
Contact number

Contact Name
Company Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
City/Town
Postcode

Date (DD/MM/YYYY)

Dear <add Contact Name>,

I am writing to ask if you would consider employing me as an apprentice [enter your chosen trade] with your company. I have applied to On Site Bristol to carry out the apprenticeship scheme with them and have been successful in securing a place.

I am [add some details about you – sell yourself. This should include things such as: why you want to do this / work experience / why you want to work for this company. Don't forget to explain the skills you have e.g. "I have had a daily morning paper round for three years for which I have had to be up early and on time every day".]

For more information about my background, I have enclosed a copy of my CV.

Yours faithfully (if you don't know the name of the person you are sending this to)

Yours sincerely (If you do know the name)

Your name

Preparing for Interview

Interviews can be quite a scary business, so it's really important that you **get organised**.

Know where you're going and how to get there

Make sure you know the **full address** of the interview venue. Look it up in an A to Z or on the internet (Google maps is useful). Once you know where it is, find the **best route** to get there and work out **how** you'll be getting there. Whichever way you travel, make sure you allow **plenty of time**. The last thing you want to do is get there late because first impressions are **really** important.

Present yourself in a professional manner

Whichever way you look at it, you need to dress **smartly**. Don't worry if you don't have a suit, although there is nothing wrong with wearing one. Generally speaking you should wear dark colours, a shirt or a blouse and smart shoes. The things you should avoid; bright colours, hoodies, trainers, t-shirts, hats, ripped jeans, shorts or jogging bottoms.



Social Media – you may want to edit your Facebook privacy settings or ensure the content on your personal page is reasonably presentable and/or professional. Employers often check personal profiles on social media and have been known to refuse candidates on the basis of this initial impression.

Take information with you

Your interviewer(s) will most likely want to see some information about you. The type of information to take should include:

- Your attendance records from school (if applicable)
- School reports and predicted grades (if applicable)
- References from previous employers (if applicable)
- Relevant certificates i.e. GCSE, Diploma
- Your CV

There are also some things that you can take that will help you stand out from the crowd. Examples of these include:

- Photos of practical projects you have completed or anything that shows off your practical skills
- Commendations from school or extra-curricular activities for outstanding achievements



You should make sure that the information you take is presented in a smart manner and is relevant to the post you are applying for e.g. held in a nice folder or holdall, NOT jumbled up in a plastic bag!

Research the company

It is really important that you know something about the company you're going to be interviewed by. It will look very impressive if during your interview, you can talk about their business. Examples of the types of things you might want to find out are:

- What type of work the company does
- What sectors (e.g. commercial, industrial, domestic) the company works in
- How many employees the company has
- How long the company has been in business

Finding out this information will not only look good at interview, but will also mean you get a feel for the type of company you would be working for. Most of this information will be pretty easy to find if the company has a website. Don't be afraid to print out copies of this information to take with you so you don't forget any details.

Questions – prepare some

Interviewers are always impressed by a candidate who asks questions – it shows that

You care about getting the job and are genuinely interested in the company.



You should prepare some questions to ask, **write them down and take them with you**. Your research about the company should give you some ideas about what questions to ask or failing this you could ask some of the questions above.



Body language is important at interviews. Don't slouch in your chair, whether in reception or the interview room. Slouching says "I don't care" and should be reserved for lazy Sundays on the sofa.

Prepare for standard questions you may be asked

One of the scariest aspects of going for interview is that you don't know what the interviewer will ask you. However, there are some questions that are asked by interviewers pretty often that you can prepare for. Doing so can take the pressure off when you're in the interview. These questions could include:

- Why do you want to do this trade?
- Why do you want to work for us and/or do an apprenticeship?
- Have you had any experience on site or in a practical situation?
- Can you give us an example of when you worked in a team?
- Have you had any work experience? If so, tell me about it.
- What makes you stand out from the crowd?
- What are your predicted grades?
- What do you know about our company?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- What do you know about how apprenticeships work?



It is worth considering practicing giving your answers to a friend or family member. It's one thing thinking about the answer, but it's another actually putting it into words.

Things not to do at an interview

- Turn up late
- Dress inappropriately
- Play with your phone
- Chew gum
- Slouch or avoid eye contact
- Appear disinterested
- Bad mouth ex employers
- Discuss pay package or vacation time off



Handling interview nerves

Often the nerves and pressure of an interview situation can make us act differently. Our body seems to behave in weird ways and the sound coming out of our mouth doesn't seem to be our usual one.

Don't speak too fast: Breathe!

Nerves tend to make us speed up, so while you're waiting for your interview, **breathe in through your nose very slowly for a count of three**. Then breathe out through your nose for a count of three. Repeat this three times. That should take you a total of 18 seconds. In that time you will have significantly lowered your heart rate and when you speak, you'll find you won't rush.

Prepare, Plan and Rehearse

- ✓ Knowledge is power. The more you know, the more confident you'll be in responding to interview questions. Research the company/think about potential questions you might be asked.
- ✓ Don't memorize exact answers to likely interview questions; but outline points you want to make and think about the message you want to convey
- ✓ Don't wait until the last minute to print out copies of your CV and gather required paperwork.
- ✓ Lay out your clothes and do your ironing the day before. You don't want to pull your shirt out of the wardrobe an hour before the interview only to realize it has a huge stain on it.
- ✓ Get a good night's sleep the day before the interview.
- ✓ Map your travel route and check the traffic reports.
- ✓ Give yourself plenty of travel time and arrive to the interview 15 minutes early. Nothing will get you frazzled faster than being late.
- ✓ When you arrive at the interview site, allow yourself plenty of time to relax, gather your thoughts and breathe. If it helps listen to some music that lifts your mood and makes you feel positive and relaxed.



Phoning or visiting employers

Script One: **Your first call/visit to an employer**

"Hello, my name is [your name]. I was hoping to speak to someone about whether your company employs apprentices. Am I speaking to the right person?"

If they say they are NOT the right person, ask who is, take their name and contact them or ask to be put through to them.

If they say they ARE the right person to speak to, say:

"I have received an offer from On Site Bristol to join their apprenticeship scheme as a [enter your chosen trade]. I will need a job with an employer in order to carry out my qualification. I was wondering if you might be taking on apprentice [your trade]s at the moment?"

If they say YES, you say:

"I would be very interested in applying to become an apprentice with your company. How do I go about that?"

If they say no, you say:

"OK, thanks for letting me know, however, I wonder if I might be able to keep in touch with you just in case your circumstances change – I wouldn't want to miss out on an opportunity. Could I give you a call in a few weeks just to keep in touch?"

If they say YES: Make a note on a calendar or in a diary to ring them in 4 to 6 weeks time. Thank them very much for their time.

If they say no, you say:

"OK, no problem, just one final question – I don't suppose you know of any other companies that might be taking on apprentices at the moment?"

If they say YES: Make a note of the person they refer you to and thank them very much for their time.

If they say no: Thank them very much for their time. **REMEMBER**, if you get them to agree to you calling them back, or you get a referral from them, you have done very well – that is a good result. You don't have to get them to take you on there and then for you to have had success.

Script Two: **Making follow-up calls to an employer**

This is usually easier than your first call as you have already done a lot of the ground work.

Ring your contact at the company and say:

"Hello, its [your name] calling. I called you a few weeks ago about becoming an apprentice [your chosen trade]. You said it was OK for me to ring you to keep in touch. I just wondered if anything had changed or whether there was a possibility of you taking on an apprentice?"

If they say YES, you say:

"I would be very interested in applying to become an apprentice with your company. How do I go about that?"

If they say no, you say:

"OK, thanks for letting me know. Is it still OK for me to keep in touch – maybe give you a call in a few weeks?"

If they say YES: Make a note on a calendar or in a diary to ring in 4 to 6 weeks' time. Thank them very much for their time.

If they say no, you say:

"OK, no problem, just one final question – I don't suppose you know of any other companies that might be taking on apprentices at the moment?"

If they say YES: Make a note of the person they refer you to and thank them very much for their time.

If they say no: Thank them very much for their time.



Plan B: Don't just apply to On Site Bristol

Please be aware that it isn't always possible to start all students, with a conditional offer, on our programme. As we have previously mentioned you can only start on our apprenticeship programme once you have secured an employer. With this in mind it is very important to apply to other training providers and explore alternative options so that you have a back-up plan if you're unable to secure employment for your apprenticeship.

It may be useful to contact a local college to explore their available construction courses and apprenticeship opportunities. Local colleges are:

City of Bristol College – www.cityofbristol.ac.uk 0117 312 5000

SGS College – www.sgscoll.ac.uk 0117 931 2121

Weston College – www.weston.ac.uk 01934 411 411

Bath College - www.bathcollege.ac.uk 01225 312191

You may want to check out these websites for more advice and guidance

<https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/>

<https://www.findapprenticeship.service.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsearch>

<https://www.ucas.com/further-education/post-16-qualifications>

Visit www.bristol.gov.uk and search for 'Bristol's Post-16 Directory' for full listings of alternative options for September



Action plan

	Tick when done
<p>Ensure you have an up to date CV, relevant to the apprenticeship trade you are applying for. We can help you with this and it's important that On Site Bristol has a copy to forward to potential employers. Email this to info@onsitebristol.co.uk</p> <p>Draft a covering email in case an employer requests one and/or if you decide to send a letter and CV to a potential employer (see page 12 for how to do this).</p>	
<p>Make a list of at least 30 solid contacts in the construction industry.</p> <p>Remember: Identify and contact potential contacts via friends, family, local people, social clubs etc. Use the form we have given you to record their contact details, when you spoke to them and notes on your conversations with them.</p>	
<p>Make at least 15 phone calls to new employers. If you decide to email employers, attaching your CV, always follow it up with a phonecall a few days later, ask if they've received you email.</p> <p>Remember: Identify new employers by noting down information you see locally and via internet research following the advice you've received at your 1-2-1 session and in this booklet.</p>	
<p>Prepare and organise information for potential interviews. Gather all relevant paperwork such as school reports, school attendance, relevant certificates, references, and a copy of your CV.</p> <p>You should make sure that the information you take is presented in a smart manner and is relevant to the post you are applying</p>	
<p>Keep in touch with On Site Bristol on a regular basis. Let us know immediately if you get any potential employment leads. We can help you to make the final arrangements. Use the staff contact details below to do this.</p>	
<p>HAVE A PLAN B! Please ensure that your application to On Site Bristol isn't the only option available to you for September. You will need several back up plans in case you can't secure an employer for your apprenticeship. Research other options and apply now to other training providers, colleges, school 6th Forms.</p> <p>Visit www.bristol.gov.uk and search for 'Bristol's Post-16 Directory' for a full listings of alternative options for September</p>	

Very important:

If you are struggling with identifying potential employers DO **NOT** sit in silence – contact a member of staff at On Site Bristol who will be happy to help with some advice and guidance:

Faye Johnson – faye.johnson@bristol.gov.uk **0117 3521960**

Louise Dening – louise.dening@bristol.gov.uk **0117 3521960**