



**PERFORMANCE
LEARNING
GROUP**



Mentor Handbook



Performance Learning Group

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Who are PLG?

Performance Learning Group is a training provider with a wealth of experience in designing bespoke apprenticeship programmes that support both the apprentices and the employer. For PLG it is all about the quality of learning, creating clearly defined development pathways for people who want to create a rewarding career, whilst empowering employers to grow their business by harnessing its internal and local talent through work-based training and development.

For the last 20 years the directors of PLG have lived and breathed work-based learning, supporting people to develop the skills and attributes they need to create a successful career in their chosen occupation; whilst empowering employers to build a talented and motivated workforce to help their business grow and build on their success. Performance Learning Group love to partner with like-minded employers who have people at the heart of their business.

The Directors at PLG all started their careers within hospitality and have been apprentices themselves, they are very proud to be spending their careers helping the next generation of talent within the hospitality industry.

Our Vision

To have every person associated with PLG benefit from its relationship and value its connection

Our Values

- Connect from the heart
- Spark success
- Make it personal
- Communicate and collaborate
- Work with integrity



Apprenticeships we offer

| | |
|---------|---|
| Level 2 | Hospitality Team Member |
| | Production Chef |
| | Commis Chef |
| | Customer Service Practitioner |
| Level 3 | Hospitality Supervisor |
| | Senior Production Chef |
| | Chef De Partie |
| | Customer Service Specialist |
| | Business Administrator |
| | Team Leader / Supervisor |
| Level 4 | Senior Culinary Chef |
| | Hospitality Manager |
| | Hospitality and Workplace Mental Health Management - Based around Hospitality Manager programme |
| Level 5 | Operations Manager |
| | L&D Consultant Business Partner |

Commercial Training

- Level 3 CMI in Principles of Management and Leadership
- Level 5 CMI in Management and Leadership
- Level 7 CMI Award in Approaches to Strategic Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Level 3 Award in Understanding Mental Health in the Workplace for Managers





What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship can be offered to both new and existing staff and is a way to bridge the gap between theory and practical learning. It provides the opportunity to gain a specialised education and fully understand the theory behind a particular job, at the same time as practicing skills and learning from the experts they work with to become a highly productive member of staff. As a business you will always have your own way of doing things and no college or university in the world can teach someone that! With an apprentice, the programme is designed around you, so by the end of the course you will have a fully qualified member of staff who works the way you want them to and following your processes.

Programme Design

PLG want to make sure you get the most out of your apprenticeship scheme, therefore, we make sure that the apprenticeship programme is tailor made around your business goals. All your internal training will be used and mapped to the apprenticeship standard, we will look how the standard can benefit you and add in any additional areas of teaching you want to be included in order to make sure the apprenticeship meets your needs. This will result in a personalised programme that exceeds the minimum standard and produces quality staff who know how to do things your way.

How does it all work?

Once you have an apprentice, they will receive a visit every calendar month from their dedicated PLG trainer, this session will take about 3 hours. During this time we will deliver a full training session based on your personalised delivery scheme. Our trainer will make sure that you are kept up to date with how your apprentice is doing and what they need to be focused on over the next month. The apprentice will need some time each month to work on what has been set for them including maths and English if applicable.

Recruitment

Don't have anyone suitable for an apprenticeship? Not a problem! PLG offer recruitment through the government "recruit an apprentice" service. We also provide additional advertising through job pages and social media for a reasonable fee. This could be the perfect opportunity to find your next generation of managers, training them from the ground up. The process is simple, tell us what you are looking for, we will take care of all the advertising and candidate screening, we will then send you over the best applicants and arrange interviews for the ones you would like to see.



What are the benefits for your business?

By making the investment into an apprentice, you are not only making sure that they stay with you for at least the length of the programme, but for years following the apprenticeship. With apprenticeships now available up to level 7, which is the equivalent to a master's degree, you can make sure that you are always investing in people at the right level. Apprenticeships are a clear way to improve staff retention, motivation and ensure you have a skilled and knowledgeable workforce you need to help improve your business and ensure you meet your business goals.

The Apprenticeship Levy

The apprenticeship levy is a tax taken by the government from large employers. To qualify as a levy payer your annual wage bill through HMRC must exceed £3m. If this is the case 0.5% of everything over the £3m will be taxed and stored in your digital apprenticeship service account. The government will top up your account by an additional 10% each month, but you can only use this money to pay for apprenticeships in your business. The apprenticeship Levy came into effect in May 2017, anything paid into your levy pot has a 2-year shelf life, this means if you haven't been spending your levy then there is a be accessed. high possibility that the fi rst payments you made into your levy account can no longer be accessed.

Keeping up with the times

PLG use a selection of specialist systems to make sure that you and your apprentices can access the resources you need quickly and easily. Apprentices are able to upload their work in a hassle-free manner using a range of media options from almost any device, they can also collaborate with other apprentices within your organisation to share experiences and support each other through the programme. These systems also give you a clear overview of the programme and allow you to track how your apprentices are doing live.





How is the apprenticeship funded?

There are two main ways for apprenticeships to be funded, either through SME funding or directly through the apprenticeship Levy. Below is a detailed description on what the difference between the two are:

What defines a Levy Payer?

To qualify as a levy payer your annual wage bill through HMRC must exceed £3m. If this is the case 0.5% of everything over the £3m will be taxed and stored in the digital apprenticeship service account. The government will top this up by an additional 10% each month, but this money can only be used to pay for apprenticeships within the business.

What is the apprenticeship Levy?

The Apprenticeship Levy requires all employers operating in the UK, with a pay bill over £3 million each year to make an investment in Apprenticeships. The Levy is there to be spent on 'Apprenticeship Training and associated costs'. The government have stated 'employers will get out more than they put in'.

Small to Medium Enterprises Funding (SME)

If you do not pay into the apprenticeship levy, then the government will fund 95% of your apprenticeship. You must agree to cover the remaining 5% towards the cost of training and assessment which you will pay to the training provider (PLG) directly and agree on a payment schedule.

If you have fewer than fifty employees, the government will pay 100% of the apprenticeship training costs up to the funding band maximum if your apprentice meets the below criteria:

- 16 to 21
- 19 to 24 with an education, health and care plan provided by their local authority or has been in the care of their local authority

You will access your funding using the governments Digital Apprenticeship Service, you will need to create an apprenticeship service account and add PLG as a training provider to access this. The PLG team will support with this process.

Levy Transfer

Apprenticeships can be funded by a levy paying employer transferring up to 50% of their unused levy to a different employer. Transferred funds are used to pay for 100% of the training and assessment costs of the apprenticeship up to the funding band maximum

At no point will the learner will be liable for any costs in relation to the apprenticeship.



Being a mentor

Every successful apprentice needs a good mentor, someone the apprentice can rely on and learn the practical side of the job from. This does not have to be the general manager, a good mentor needs to have the time and technical expertise to be able to support the apprentice, and help them grow in confidence, be able to offer professional, constructive feedback at all times and be able to nurture and guide the apprentice to meet their personal and business goals. The mentor will play a key role in the apprenticeship and work closely with our trainer to ensure the apprentice is developing at the right pace. A good mentor needs to be confident in their role and be able to motivate the apprentice through continuous personal development, but they also have to be able to listen, understand how the apprentice is feeling and highlight any areas the apprentice may be struggling with. The mentor is the person who will provide structure to the apprenticeship on a day-to-day basis, keeping the apprentice focused and energised across the length of the programme.

Barriers to success

PLG will do everything possible to ensure you have a successful apprenticeship programme, this includes highlighting when things may not be going to plan. We believe it is important that we learn from mistakes, after all that's what experience is! Some of the common challenges you may face could include: Operational issues: • Changes in mentor due to staffing changes – any changes in mentor can lead to uncertainties in your apprentice's mind. It is natural for your apprentice to worry about who the new mentor will be or if they will still get the same amount of support. Changes in staffing are sometimes inevitable, but when they happen it is important that we act quickly to reassure the apprentice and find them another suitable mentor as soon as possible. • Time constraints – it is important to remember that even if your apprentice is performing well in their job, they are still an apprentice, so if wage budgets get tight or staffing issues become a problem, we still need to focus on providing the apprentice the time the need to complete the apprenticeship work. • Apprentice starts to lose interest – Apprentices are people like the rest of us, and at times they may start to feel the pressure or lose confidence in their ability. These issues can lead to a lack of motivation. As mentors it's our job to be open with the apprentice and do as much as we can to find out the root cause of any problems, we need to do our best to motivate them and remind them of the benefits of what they are doing.



What is off-the-job learning?

Off job learning is the term given to the time apprentices spend learning something new away from their daily job. The term “off-the-job” does not mean out of the business. These hours can include shadowing managers, practicing activities learnt as part of their apprenticeship as well as the time the apprentice spends with their trainer or working on their apprenticeship work.

The facts:

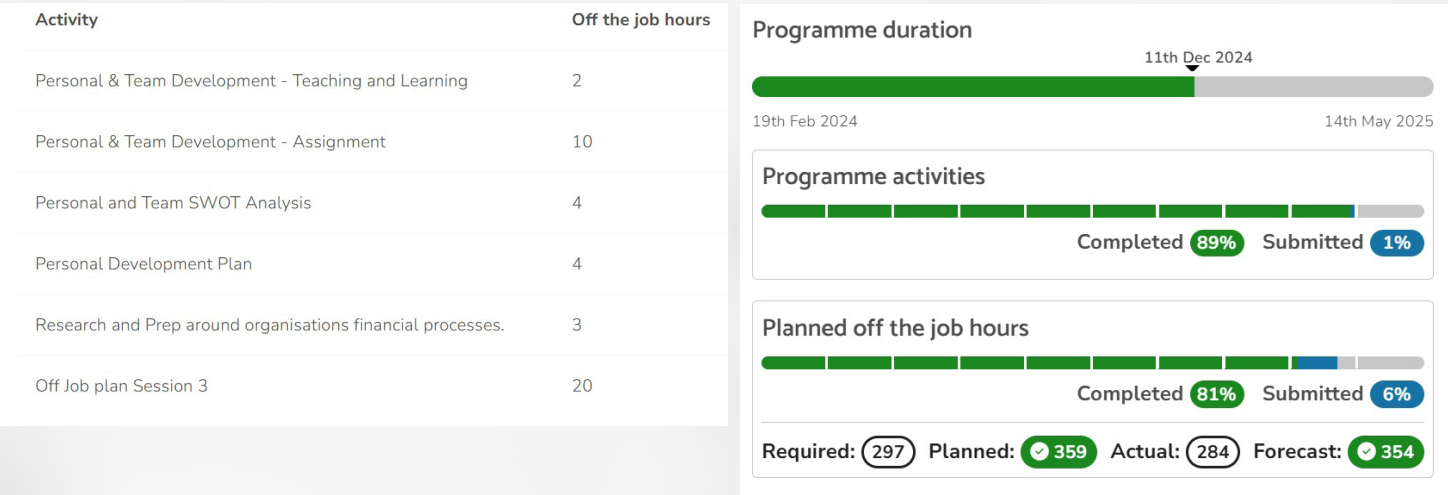
- The government state that an apprentice must complete a minimum of 6 off the job hours a week as part of their job role for the full length of the apprenticeship programme. Off the job training can be flexible in its delivery. It can vary from block release to a day a week and many more variations.
- This time must be paid time, which means that all hours recorded as off-the-job must be during working hours.
- These hours will be set out in the set plan, this is sent out at the beginning of the programme and reviewed every 8 weeks as part of a welfare review. The welfare review is a progress meeting between the trainer, apprentice and the manager where we look at personal targets, check how well the apprentice is progressing and updating the plan, recording the hours that have been completed as well as detailing what mento support is needed each month.
- Should the apprentice fall more than 4 weeks behind on their off the job hours, this will constitute a breach of funding rules.
- The time spent with the trainer is counted as off-the-job learning.
- Any relevant training/courses the apprentice completes as part of their job can be included as off-the-job hours

What this means in practice:

- Off-the-job hours does not need to be out of the business. A large part of an apprenticeship is about practicing what has been taught in order to master it, all of these hours can be counted.
- An apprentice will need to be given time to spend with the trainer, this will be 3-4 hours a month, this appointment is booked a month in advanced and at a time that suits your business needs.
- The apprentice will need some time to focus on their apprenticeship work, during this time they will complete any assignments that have been set for them, keep a diary of what they have been practicing, complete any work set by the trainer for the next month. This amount of time will vary depending on the apprenticeship and the apprentice themselves. This time can be planned in by you to fit around your business needs and is considerably less than the number of off-the-job hours needed for the full month.
- The apprentice will need a strong mentor who can commit to the welfare review every 8 weeks, and can support them throughout the month to achieve the development activities planned.

Off-the-job hours example:

As you can see for the training plan example, each module will have a number of activities, including teaching and learning sessions, SGL (Self-Guided Learning) activities, informal assessments or Mock assessments, as well as time set aside to be planned with the employer. This time is designed to allow the apprenticeship and the off job hours to be planned around the apprentice and your business and must be planned in advance as part of the welfare review process.





Gateway & End point assessment

At the end of your learning period with PLG your trainer will hold a meeting called the 'Gateway'. The apprentice and the apprentices line manager will be required to attend, during this time the trainer will go over all of the completed training sessions for the full apprenticeship. This is an opportunity for all parties to ask questions and confirm that the apprentice is fully prepared to go into the end point assessment.

Following this meeting you will then be submitted into End Point Assessment. Each apprenticeship programme has its own combination of assessment methods. Common assessment methods include, observation, multiple choice tests, professional discussion, business projects and the compilation of an evidence portfolio or recipe log.

Apprenticeship standards are graded and can result in either a pass, merit, or distinction (depending on the standard and the assessment plan). If any elements of the apprenticeship are not completed successfully, the individual assessment can potentially be retaken depending on the individual circumstances, however in some assessment plans this can limit the outcome to a pass grade.

Health and safety

Ultimately as the employer you have the same responsibility for health and safety of your apprentice as you would any other member of staff. Should an apprentice have an accident however, it is important that PLG are notified as we hold a secondary duty of care and would need to record any accidents. This can be done on the review sessions or via email/phone call.

Equality and diversity

PLG are committed to assisting all our learners to be successful and enjoy their learning programme. If learners feel the treatment or support, they are receiving does not meet their individual needs then please tell us.

We support and adhere to a policy of non-discrimination. This promotes equal treatment, respect and opportunity across all learners, regardless of gender, age, marital status, civil partnership, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, colour, religion or belief, ethnic or national origin.

We are against any form of racism. We will use our best endeavours to provide a learning environment free from unlawful discrimination and will challenge any form of racism, harassment or victimisation

Safeguarding

The PLG safeguarding policy is made available to all apprentices and is designed to make sure that all adults and vulnerable people are kept safe. Below are some of the categories that fall under our safeguarding policy. If you have any concerns that an apprentice may be affected by any of these categories, then please contact us immediately on: safeguarding@plgrp.co.uk

Physical Abuse

No one should touch you in a way that physically hurts, e.g. punching or hitting you.

Emotional Abuse

No one should make you feel upset by teasing or bullying you.

Neglect

If you are looked after by a carer, he/she should not neglect or ignore you. You should know you are cared for.

Sexual Abuse

No one should touch you in a manner that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset. No one should make suggestive, sexual remarks to you.

Stealing

No one should force you to hand over money or possessions. Stealing is a criminal offence.

Discrimination/hate crime

No one should hurt you or discriminate against you because of your age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, cultural background or religion.

Extremism/radicalisation

No one should attempt to influence you to hold extreme views including those justifying political, religious, sexist or racist violence.

Online

You should feel safe online - e.g. email, websites or social media. No one should bully or harass you, share information or images which make you feel uncomfortable, or get you involved in suspect activities.



Our Commitment to Quality Information, Advice & Guidance

We are dedicated to empowering apprentices and employers with exceptional Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) that supports informed decision-making, promotes continuous development, and drives success. Our approach is centered on providing clear, accurate, and impartial guidance tailored to individual needs, ensuring every apprentice and employer feels supported throughout their journey.

For apprentices, we aim to inspire confidence, enhance skills, and help navigate their career pathways by offering personalised advice that aligns with their aspirations and abilities. From enrolment to completion, our guidance is designed to foster resilience, growth, and success in achieving their programmes and beyond.

For employers, we provide expert advice and support to help integrate apprenticeships into their workforce development strategies. We work collaboratively to identify skills needs, tailor solutions, and ensure apprenticeships deliver measurable value for their organisation.

Our commitment to quality ensures that our IAG services are accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the evolving needs of both individuals and businesses. We uphold the highest standards of confidentiality, professionalism, and continuous improvement, drawing on feedback to refine and enhance our services.

By fostering open and transparent communication, we aim to build long-lasting relationships that empower apprentices and employers to thrive in an ever-changing skills landscape. Together, we contribute to a highly skilled and motivated workforce, driving growth, opportunity, and success for all.



Mental Health

Anyone can develop poor mental health at any time, this could be triggered by any number of reasons and cannot necessarily be seen coming. Poor mental health is quite often linked with hospitality due to the long hours and high-pressure lifestyle and is something we take very seriously at PLG. All our staff are trained to look out for signs of poor mental health, and will provide information, support, and guidance.

Prevent & British Values

Our apprentice safety is firmly at the forefront of our focus when it comes to PLG programmes. PLG work with learners, employers, and other stakeholders to ensure we have very clear reporting guidelines regarding any potential issues or threats which could jeopardise learners' safety or wellbeing.

PLG has developed processes which allow learners to report any potential issues or concerns through our clear safeguarding policy. All of our trainers are trained in recognising and reporting safeguarding issues and undertake annual training to ensure they remain fully up to date with changes in legislation and referral trends within the sector.

Alongside our safeguarding processes PLG engage with local authorities to keep up to date with local threats and occurrences which happen on a regional level which allows our trainers to contextualise discussions and ensure our learners are always aware of what's happening and how to keep safe in their local area.

Complaints Policy

If at any time you are unhappy with the service you have received from PLG, please contact our Quality Director at safeguarding@plgrp.co.uk. Our full complaints policy can be found at <https://plgrp.co.uk/complaints-policy>

Invigilation Policy

As part of their apprenticeship most learners are required to complete Functional Skill external assessments. Whether these tests are on-screen or paper based they must be completed under invigilated conditions, and in accordance with awarding body regulations. Here at PLG it is our policy that all our Invigilators are either our Site Managers or learner Mentors. Being an Invigilator is a responsible job and one that we must ensure is carried out by trained personnel. To ensure that all our Invigilators are equipped to do the job, all our trainers carry out a short training session in each site, to the appropriate person to ensure they have all the tools for the job. All our employers are proud to be part of this process in ensuring that their staff sit their tests under exam conditions, enabling them the best possible opportunity to pass.





The Burnt Chef Project

PLG proudly partners with The Burnt Chef Project

Launched in May 2019, The Burnt Chef Project was founded with the sole mission of eradicating mental health stigma within the hospitality industry.

The hospitality sector is known for its slim margins, and with increasing pressure to cut costs, both employers and employees are feeling the effects on their mental health. Long, antisocial hours, tough working conditions, and the constant pressure to perform are just some of the daily struggles that hospitality professionals face.

A recent survey of 1,273 hospitality workers revealed that 8 out of 10 (84%) had experienced mental health issues during their careers, and 46% would not feel comfortable discussing their concerns with colleagues.

Mental health is just as important as physical health, and hospitality staff deserve the support of their peers and employers. We believe it is essential to create an environment where mental health is openly discussed, and where policies are regularly reviewed to reflect this. This should be the true “badge of honour” in the hospitality industry.

Together, we can break down the stigma surrounding mental health and create a more supportive environment for hospitality professionals.

To understand more about The Burnt Chef Project, or to access support, tools and advice around mental health, please visit www.theburntchefproject.com.





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