

Apprenticeships

A CII guide for parents



Foreword

Supporting your son or daughter in making career choices can be a daunting prospect. After all, you want what's best for them and their future. That is why the CII has produced this guide - to help you help them.

For some of you an apprenticeship might not have crossed your mind as an option, or you may recognise the name but be unsure where it can lead. An apprenticeship is a great way to enter a host of careers, including in insurance, whilst earning a salary and developing the necessary skills and knowledge for that role.

Apprenticeships provide a viable alternative to university and don't attract the debt that comes with studying for a full-time degree. However, apprenticeships can lead to a degree, either as part of an apprenticeship programme or as the next step after completion (often with employer support).

The apprenticeships available today have been designed by employers with an eye on the talent needs of today and tomorrow. The experience and qualifications gained as part of an apprenticeship will give your son or daughter the springboard for future success.

Far from being a second-best option, apprenticeships will play a role in shaping tomorrow's insurance profession – of that there is no doubt. With more employers, both large and small, waking up to the benefits apprentices can bring to their business, there has never been a better time to consider an apprenticeship.



Sian Fisher ACII, Chief Executive
Chartered Insurance Institute

About the CII

The CII exists to promote higher standards of integrity, technical competence and business capability among professionals. With over 120,000 members in more than 150 countries, the CII is the world's largest professional body dedicated to insurance and financial planning.

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After GCSEs – education and training

The changing face of post-16 education is creating many opportunities for school leavers that weren't around a generation ago. The visibility of vocational pathways and the increased number of companies recruiting talented people younger are having a big impact – apprenticeships are now rightly being seen as an alternative route to a degree as well as a high-quality work-based learning programme.

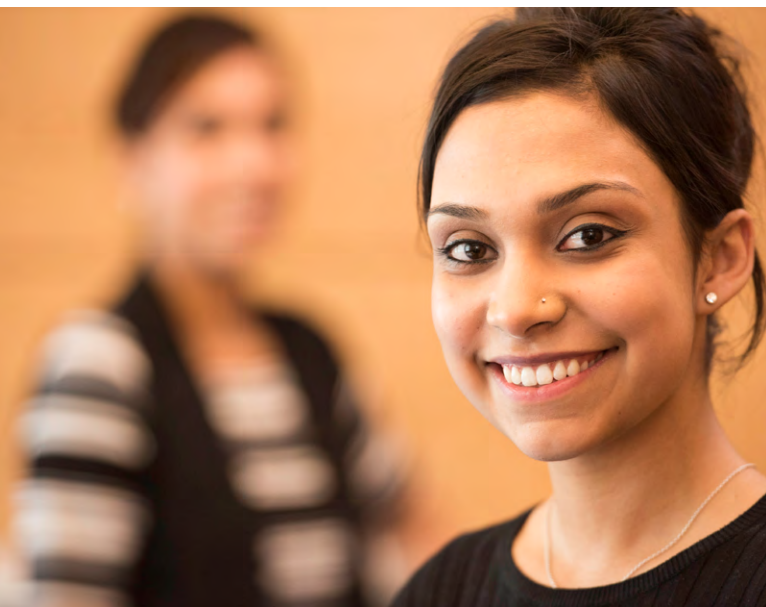
More students are taking a broader range of qualifications than in the past. There are record numbers of students applying for university with a mix of academic and vocational qualifications – A levels and BTECs, for example. This shows the erosion of the academic/vocational divide and that there are many ways to start a career.

Having A levels and a degree is not the only way into a great career and a rewarding professional life.

The cost of university makes it important to understand at least some of these different paths to success. This will in turn help you and your children make informed choices about their studies and the direction of their career.

One of the pathways that has been considered 'alternative' is apprenticeships. There are some major changes to how these work-based programmes are structured and funded – expect to see a rise in apprenticeship numbers and an elevation of the programme in the qualifications and careers landscape.

This CII guide explains why apprenticeships have become a popular alternative to the traditional university route into a professional career including business and finance. As well as giving an overview of the key differences between apprenticeship and university routes, we have some specific examples from our sector of insurance, from people in technical and support roles. These clearly show that a successful career does not depend on having a degree earned through three years of university study.



“You don’t need any previous experience or technical skills to do an apprenticeship. You do need drive and passion.”

Satveer Kaur-Singh, Apprentice,
AXA Insurance

“I think every parent should encourage their child to do an apprenticeship.”

Gina Kaur-Singh, Satveer’s mother



Apprenticeships in more detail

Definition

An apprenticeship is a work-based development programme which sits within a full-time job and lays the foundation for a successful career in a chosen field. Often the apprenticeship will include a professional qualification relevant to the sector or role.

For example, in an insurance company, there are technical apprenticeships that include professional qualifications from the Chartered Insurance Institute (CII). There are also apprenticeships which include qualifications from other professional bodies in areas such as accounting, IT, law and marketing. These clearly demonstrate that apprenticeships are not just available in the so-called 'trades'.

Qualifications and duration

Apprenticeships are available at different levels (see table opposite) and every apprenticeship has to last at least one year. Typically, the higher the level of the apprenticeship, the longer the duration. Degree apprenticeships bring together an academic and professional qualification with full-time employment – and at a lower cost than studying full-time at university for a degree.

Unlike a degree, which is designed and awarded by a university, professional qualifications are developed by the sector for the sector and thus meet employer needs.



“I wasn’t interested in going to university and sitting in a lecture hall – I work best by learning on the job.”

Jonathan Catley, Client Service Advisor,
Aon Risk Solutions

“The apprenticeship is the best start to a career Jonathan could have had.”

David Catley, Jonathan’s father

Apprenticeship levels

Apprenticeship level	Qualifications at same level	Minimum duration
Level 2	GCSE/Level 2 NVQ	12 months
Level 3	A level/BTEC National	12 months
Level 4	First year of Bachelors degree/Foundation Degree	12 months
Level 5	Second year of Bachelors degree/Foundation Degree	12 months
Level 6	Final year of Bachelors degree	12 months
Level 7	Postgraduate degree	12 months

Apprenticeships in insurance

There are currently apprenticeships in insurance at three levels – Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4. We are developing a degree apprenticeship with companies and universities.

At present in our sector a Level 4 apprentice can go on and complete a Level 6 professional qualification with the CII, paid for by the company, and then progress directly to a top-up degree or have direct entry to a Masters degree.

Whatever the route taken, learners develop their technical knowledge, soft skills and personal network at a lower cost than a full-time university degree.

Apprenticeships or university?

For many, the advantage of an apprenticeship over university is that apprentices earn and learn in a full-time job. Are there other benefits?

University is the right path for some and graduate schemes offer an accelerated route into leadership. At the same time there are now apprenticeship pathways in nearly every sector, including financial and professional services. Here are reasons why it is worth making an informed choice.

Competition and jobs

Intense competition for places on graduate schemes and the cost of studying at university combine to enhance the appeal of apprenticeships, which often attract fewer applicants. The apprenticeship route is direct, starting with a real job and learning while on the job – with every likelihood of promotion on completion of the programme.

The introduction of an apprenticeship levy in 2017 will see an increase in the number of apprenticeship vacancies as the government aims to reach its target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020. Some of these apprenticeship vacancies will be degree apprenticeships.

Personal development

Apprentices learn while working. They are in a full-time job and, as part of their apprenticeship, they get the same technical training and soft skills development that graduates receive. Personal development is at the heart of apprenticeships – from presentations to senior managers, to self-awareness and resilience training.

Networking

Building a strong internal and external network is an effective way to progress in a career. Apprentices have this network from day one and some are even able to ‘reverse mentor’ senior executives – the apprentice gets invaluable business insight and visibility high in the business; the executive gains understanding of, for example, effective uses of social media.

Topping up

It’s easy to think of apprenticeships as an alternative to university. In fact, the two aren’t mutually exclusive. If getting a degree is important to you, and getting a job is important too, it’s good to know that the apprenticeship pathway marries these two concepts seamlessly. The route to a degree via an apprenticeship includes a salary and professional qualifications paid for by an employer, with no outgoings for study. More people will be topping up their apprenticeships in the coming years or taking degree apprenticeships.

Costs

The days of a free university education in England are a distant memory. Gaining a degree comes with a large debt – typically £45-55k that takes years to pay off. The starting salary for large graduate schemes is higher than for apprenticeship programmes but competition is intense. By contrast, apprentices begin with no debt and a salary which, while lower than many graduate schemes, will increase over the three years of a standard degree. Most importantly, there are no glass ceilings for apprentices. Indeed, many sector CEOs are not graduates.

Comparing the options

	Apprenticeships	University
Qualifications	Apprenticeships often include professional qualifications relevant to the sector. These are recognised in their own right and may also form part of a degree at higher levels	Degrees are widely recognised but rarely include professional qualifications. Graduates usually gain professional qualifications through a formal graduate scheme or more informal career development
Costs	Apprenticeships are employer-funded development programmes in full-time, salaried jobs	Graduates from English universities typically have a debt of £45,000*
Duration	Apprenticeships last 1-4 years, depending on the level and sector	Degrees last 3-7 years, depending on the subject
Starting salary	Apprenticeship salaries vary by sector, location and company size; the average apprentice salary was £257 per week**, or just over £13,000 per annum, with some sectors offering in excess of £20,000	Graduate salaries vary by sector, location and company size; figures also depend on whether a graduate is on a formal scheme; expected salary ranges £15,000-£40,000
Work experience	Full-time employment	Optional placements and internships
Personal development	Soft skills, technical knowledge	Soft skills, academic knowledge
Career development	<p>After five years' post-school education, apprentices and graduates are at similar positions and on similar salaries</p> <p>Apprentices can progress as far as graduates – even beyond</p>	

*Sutton Trust research Degrees of Debt, April 2016

**BIS research paper No 207, Apprenticeship pay survey 2014

Employers and apprenticeships

Employers offer apprenticeships and graduate schemes as a way to sustain their business and bring in fresh ideas. More young people are aware of high-quality apprenticeship programmes across all sectors. More companies are reaching out to young people to talk about their opportunities. New degree apprenticeships give food for thought even for those who had previously been set on going to university.

While London is the centre of graduate recruitment, and other major cities in the country have large graduate intakes, you can find apprenticeships across the country, even in small towns. So, whether your children want to work in a corporate environment or gain more opportunities to work across a small business, you don't have to look far.

Here are some words from companies that support apprenticeships and work with the case studies in this guide. They represent large, multinational businesses and more specialist organisations.

“The aim of the Lloyd’s Apprenticeship Programme is to attract and recruit high-calibre emerging talent as an alternative route to university in the corporation and the Lloyd’s market. This is in line with the Lloyd’s Vision 2025 strategy of attracting the best talent and providing accelerated career paths for the progression of high achievers.

“At the end of the 13-month programme our apprentices and graduates look to secure permanent roles within the corporation and market. The employment rate for apprentices who have completed the programme to date is 100% within the corporation and market.

“Apprentices and graduates will work together throughout the programme and their career in the market. We encourage a collaborative working environment for both apprentices and graduates looking to work within the industry.

“Both programmes are the first emerging talent programmes to be accredited by the CII in the industry, demonstrating the high quality of the training provided and the structure of the programmes.”

Anna Wright, Talent Programmes Manager,
Lloyd’s of London



“Channel wanted to be involved with giving young people an opportunity to experience working in a professional environment and to support their learning and development in their chosen career.

“There are no bad points to taking on apprentices. You have keen, excited individuals who are willing to learn all there is to know about their chosen profession!”

Sophie Cavanagh, Business Support Manager,
The Channel Syndicate

“Aon see Apprenticeships as a key talent pipeline. The Apprenticeship provides a structured training and development programme for school and college leavers, in addition to an industry-recognised professional qualification. Aon also see this as an opportunity to attract candidates from a diverse range of backgrounds to reflect the clients and communities we serve.

“Our Apprentices add value from day one, performing a real job in a permanent role. They are an integral part of their team building strong relationships with clients and colleagues whilst developing their professional skills.

“Aon Apprentices also receive a competitive salary that grows with their experience. As part of their Apprenticeship they’ll be fully supported to study for the Advanced Diploma in Insurance (ACII) from the Chartered Insurance Institute.

“Aon provide a training programme to support the development of business skills to help Apprentices assimilate into the working environment. This includes a two-week residential induction and ongoing virtual and face-to-face training and development sessions.

“Like our Graduates, Apprentices at Aon are prepared fully for success on a journey that’s often demanding but always rewarding. Our Apprentices join many of the same client-facing teams that our Graduates do, and are expected to progress on the same career path and to be ahead of their age group peers that have studied at University.”

Rosie Ellis, Early Careers Recruitment Specialist,
Aon



LLOYD'S

Case study

Dan Williams

Case Manager

JLT

Throughout school going to university was always 'Plan A', but after spending a summer working in a leisure centre, going back to school I felt like I'd outgrown it. I still wanted to learn, but I didn't see school as the right environment.

School friends were slightly jealous that I was leaving, but my family's reaction was different. I remember my mum crying when I told her I was leaving the sixth form, but I was lucky that my dad and stepmum were pretty supportive.

I felt that some of my extended family were secretly disappointed, and while most came across as supportive, they did have concerns at the time. I think, looking back, their perspectives have changed, although my dad did an apprenticeship himself so he knew the value of going down that path.

I feel that the apprenticeship had tangible outcomes in skills and qualifications, but more than anything it gave me a platform to demonstrate my potential, the skills I had and what I could do.

The ability to apply the skills you're learning in a practical environment worked really well for me, although it is a personal thing and some people benefit from a greater degree of theoretical learning.

Looking back, after ten years, at friends from school who went down the uni route, we all now have similar level roles and similar salaries. They spent a lot of money going to university and had some great experiences; I've gone about things in a slightly different way, but I think we're on a pretty level playing field.

"Starting from the ground up you learn an awful lot about the business and its inner workings. That way you get a really good idea of what it takes to progress beyond that."

Neil Williams, Dan's Father



“More than anything, the apprenticeship gave me a platform to demonstrate my potential.”

Dan Williams, Case Manager, JLT

Case study

Leigh McGonagle

Underwriting Assistant

The Channel Syndicate

So many different things made me choose an apprenticeship over university. One was the fact that I wanted to get out in the real world – I wanted to earn and learn. University fees were a factor. Did I want to walk away with a £30-50k debt that I would have to pay off?

The Lloyd's of London apprenticeship application process consisted of an online test, a phone interview with competency-based questions; and an assessment centre of 4-5 hours.

I didn't get any guidance from school. I felt slightly neglected and went off teachers' radars.

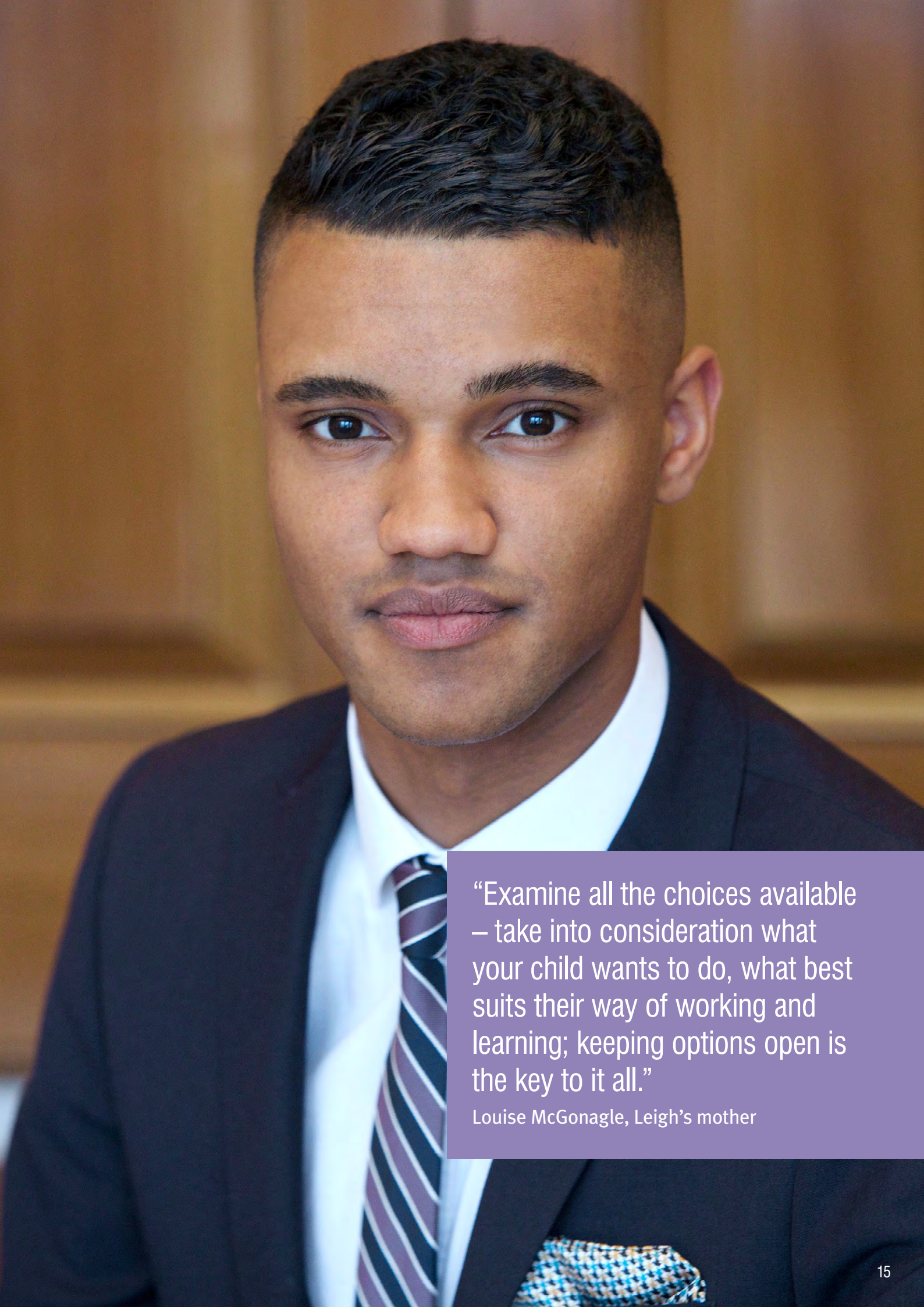
When I first contemplated telling my parents that I wanted to choose an apprenticeship over university, I made sure I collected all the information I needed to hold a strong argument. I know my mother was a little worried because I didn't apply for university.

My friends think it's great. I've got a very close group of friends who were on my apprenticeship. We've all finished now but we all meet a lot. We had so much exposure around the market to different areas we have now got completely different jobs.

If you want to build a career and work the way you want to work and earn money I would suggest doing an apprenticeship – it puts you ahead of the game, not behind.

“There are no bad points to taking on Apprentices. You have keen, excited individuals who are willing to learn all there is to know about their chosen profession.”

Sophie Cavanagh, Business Support Manager, The Channel Syndicate



“Examine all the choices available – take into consideration what your child wants to do, what best suits their way of working and learning; keeping options open is the key to it all.”

Louise McGonagle, Leigh’s mother

Case study

Satveer Kaur-Singh

Solutions Analyst

AXA

Before I started my apprenticeship I didn't know much about them. I left college with my A levels and worked for a couple of months in the family business.

I did consider university fees when making my decision. I discussed it with my parents and I was in a good position whereby they could contribute. The fees weren't something that affected my decision.

To be honest, I wasn't really confident with my decision. All my friends were going to university and I felt like I was missing out.

I started the apprenticeship with three other graduates. We've had the same opportunities, we're on the same pay, there's been no difference.

Looking back, my friends have come out with a degree, they're finding it difficult to get jobs. I've got a salary, I'm on a career path of my choice and I'm enjoying the job. I'm so glad that I took an apprenticeship.

The highlights so far have been the job promotion, the salary and working with people of all ages.

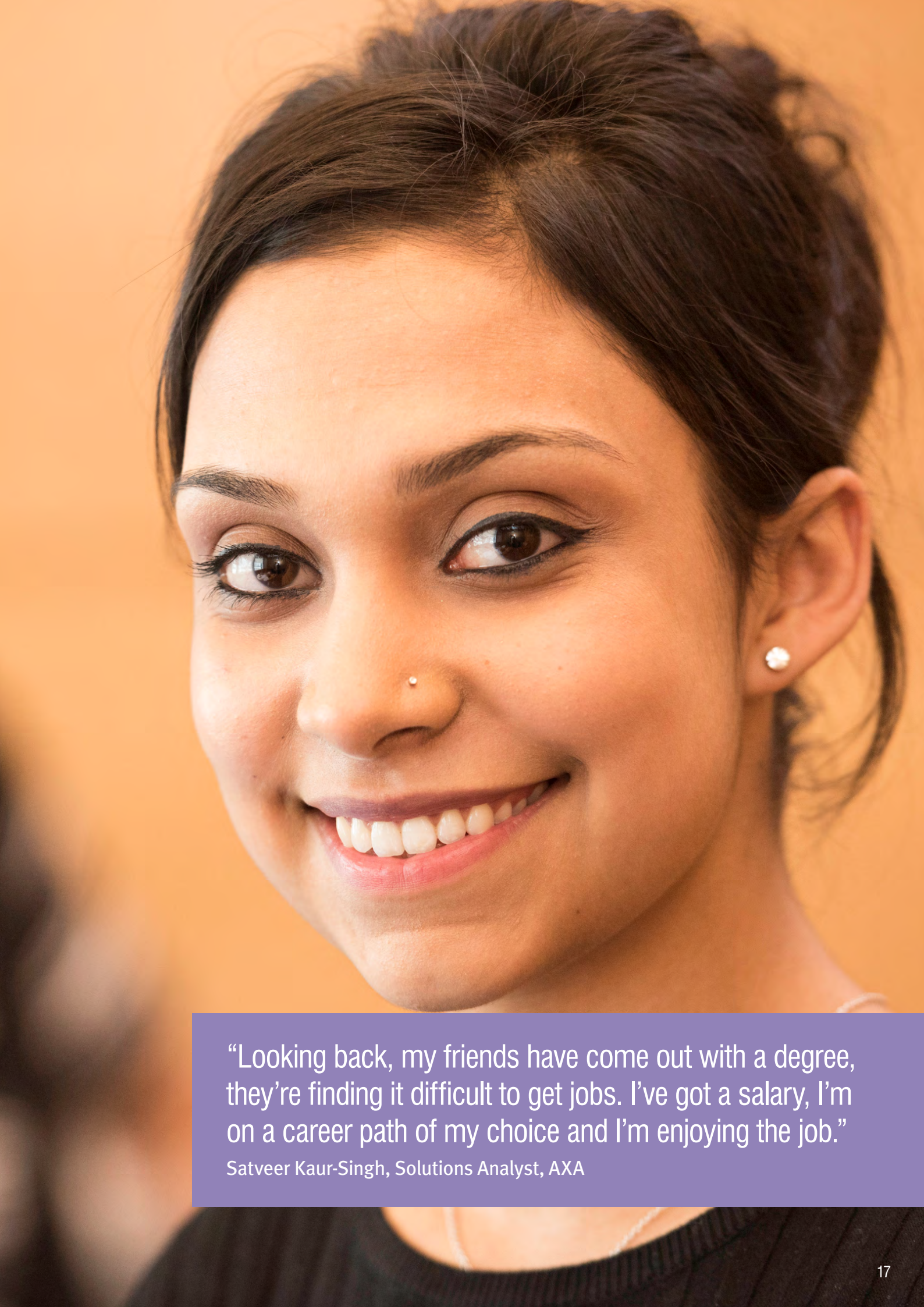
My apprenticeship has helped me massively. Once you've got in to an organisation you've access to many different jobs. Before the apprenticeship I didn't know what a business analyst did!

I want to develop in the role I'm currently in, progressing in to something more senior or managerial and work my way up in AXA.

I wouldn't change my choice.

“Satveer was a very timid young girl before she started the apprenticeship – now she's very confident and has grown into herself.”

Gina Kaur-Singh, Satveer's mother

A close-up portrait of a young woman with dark hair pulled back, smiling warmly at the camera. She has a nose ring and a small stud earring. The background is a soft, out-of-focus orange.

“Looking back, my friends have come out with a degree, they’re finding it difficult to get jobs. I’ve got a salary, I’m on a career path of my choice and I’m enjoying the job.”

Satveer Kaur-Singh, Solutions Analyst, AXA

Careers in insurance

Among the world's best-paid professions, and recognised for its good work-life balance and social value, insurance offers a rich set of opportunities to aspiring young professionals. There are roles across the country in companies of all sizes, looking at a truly diverse range of risks from marine to cyber, from climate to political risk – as well as personal lines (car and home to you and me).

Technical apprenticeships in insurance tend to relate to the following roles:

Underwriting

Underwriters work for insurers and assess risks and decide whether or not to accept applications for insurance cover, and on what terms. The aim is to minimise exposure for their company and help it to make a profit.

Broking

Insurance brokers talk to insurance companies on behalf of their customers (who could be individuals or businesses), advising on the most suitable product for their needs, getting the best deal for them and arranging their cover.

Claims

Claims teams are responsible for investigating incidents and paying out claims against an insurance policy. They decide the validity of the claim, and whether it's genuine or not, keeping an eye out for fraud.

Business support

Every business has its valuable support staff and insurance is no exception. From accounting to digital marketing, from IT to HR, there are apprenticeships that link to these areas. They contain professional qualifications and offer credibility to those completing them.

Useful links

CII www.cii.co.uk/apprenticeships

Features the latest list of approved apprenticeship providers and the apprenticeships that contain CII qualifications.

The CII runs a **Discover Risk** campaign www.discoverrisk.co.uk which reveals the full set of opportunities that insurance offers young people. The Discover Risk campaign includes a free membership scheme for students and careers advisers to build knowledge, network and receive apprenticeship information. Email discover@cii.co.uk for more information.

Get In Go Far www.getingofar.gov.uk

Provides information for employers, potential apprentices and parents and teachers. Includes a vacancy matching service.

Insurance plays a key role in the UK economy

£1.9trillion
invested assets

334,000
people employed

£3.4billion
paid on protection policies

£29billion
contributed to UK GDP

£180m
annual levy to fund
Flood Re

£370m
travel insurance claims paid out

Notes

Notes

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