

Discussing apprenticeship levy funding with your employer can feel daunting. Many employees wonder, “How do I talk about apprenticeship levy funding without sounding pushy or uninformed?” or “Will my employer even be interested in using the levy on me?” This blog post aims to demystify that process with clear, practical advice—especially if you're interested in fully funded workplace AI training in England, leveraging modern low-code and no-code tools, or are curious about the real value of a Level 4 apprenticeship compared to short paid courses.

Why Bring Up Apprenticeship Levy Funding?

The Apprenticeship Levy can unlock significant training opportunities that come **at no direct cost** to your employer. Yet, many employers don't fully utilise this fund. Raising the topic cleverly can help you get employer buy-in, enabling valuable upskilling that benefits both you and your organisation.

You know what's funny? plus, with the rise of ai-focused applied business standards like st1512, this is an excellent moment to discuss it. Many modern apprenticeships cover in-demand, practical skills particularly within the AI, automation, and data space.

Understanding Apprenticeship Levy Funding in England

The Apprenticeship Levy is a government initiative where UK employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million contribute 0.5% of their pay bill into a digital fund. They can then spend this on eligible apprenticeship training.

Unlike quick, paid short courses that you or your employer might pay for directly, apprenticeships, including those at **Level 4 and above**, are funded at 100% (up to funding caps). This means employers can access robust, recognised training without incurring additional training costs.



What Does the ST1512 Standard Cover?

The **ST1512 Applied Business Artificial Intelligence (AI) apprenticeship** standard is a Level 4 apprenticeship designed specifically for professionals who want to apply AI concepts within business environments. It blends:

- Core AI principles

- Practical application using low-code and no-code AI tools
- Project and change management skills
- Commercial awareness in AI deployment
- Governance and ethical implications

This means the apprenticeship is not just theoretical knowledge but focuses on developing your ability to deliver AI projects that help the business achieve real outcomes. Employers usually prioritise **experience and tangible results** over just certificates—this is key when you are talking to HR or line managers.

Why Employers Prioritise Experience Over Certificates

Many employers look beyond “tick-box” qualifications. What matters more are the skills applied in day-to-day work, measurable improvements, and practical know-how. This is why apprenticeship programs, especially those offering project-based learning, are in a strong position to impress.



A Level 4 apprenticeship will typically involve significant workplace learning over [msn.com](https://www.msn.com) 12-18 months. That means you aren’t just training in isolation—you’re building experience and value for the company as you progress.

Step-by-Step Guide: How to Talk About Apprenticeship Levy Funding With Your Employer

1. **Do your homework:** Understand the apprenticeship standard relevant to your role (e.g., ST1512 for AI). Research how long it takes, learning delivered, and the costs covered by the levy.
2. **Frame the conversation around business impact:** Focus on how the apprenticeship helps solve problems, deliver automation via low-code/no-code tools, or upskill in AI capabilities critical to your team.
3. **Identify the right person to approach:** This might be your line manager, HR lead, or L&D manager responsible for training budgets.
4. **Prepare clear questions and proposals:** For example, “Have we considered using our apprenticeship levy to access fully funded AI training? I’ve found this Level 4 course that teaches practical low-code tools that could automate routine tasks in week 3 of training.”

5. **Draw on any relevant business priorities:** If your company is digitising, automating workflows, or exploring AI, link your apprenticeship as a direct enabler.
6. **Address common objections proactively:** For example, if your employer thinks apprenticeships are just for juniors or teenagers, gently explain the value of higher-level apprenticeships designed for career progression and real workplace impact.
7. **Offer to help manage the process:** Apprenticeships require some admin and alignment with training providers. Show initiative by volunteering to assist with paperwork or liaising.

Incorporating Low-Code and No-Code Tools Into Your Apprenticeship Pitch

One great angle to highlight when discussing apprenticeship levy funding is the focus on **low-code and no-code platforms** in many AI apprenticeships today. Employers are excited by these tools because they speed up digital transformation projects and reduce technical bottlenecks.

Example benefits you can mention:

- **Faster automation delivery:** Build workflows and AI solutions without waiting on specialist developers.
- **Cost savings:** Reduce outsourcing costs for minor automations.
- **Increased innovation:** Empower non-technical staff to prototype ideas.

This also aligns with modern business challenges. When you say, "What will you automate in week 3?" you show you're thinking about immediate practical impact, which resonates well with employers.

Level 4 Apprenticeship vs Paid Short Courses: What's Better?

Aspect	Level 4 Apprenticeship	Paid Short Course
Funding	Fully funded via Levy (for eligible employers)	Employer or individual pays full cost
Qualification	Recognition of Learning (RPL) nationally recognised qualification and certificate	Usually no formal qualification beyond a certificate of completion
Duration	Typically 12-18 months	Hours to days
Workplace Integration	On-the-job learning embedded into role	Mostly classroom or online, less workplace application
Focus	Depth and breadth in skills, including softer skills	Very focused, narrow topic skills

While short courses can be useful for quick upskilling, apprenticeships offer a more comprehensive approach with a built-in path to career progression—without costing your employer extra.

Common Mistakes to Avoid When Raising the Apprenticeship Levy Topic

- **Don't assume your employer knows much about apprenticeships:** Be prepared to educate but keep it concise.
- **Don't frame it as "I want free training":** Instead, focus on mutual benefits—how your improved skills can help solve business challenges.
- **Don't mention apprenticeships only in terms of "certificates" or "qualifications":** Emphasize experience, project outcomes, and practical skills instead.
- **Don't overlook timing:** Find natural moments such as performance reviews, L&D planning meetings, or digital transformation initiatives.

Conclusion: Starting the Levy Funding Conversation

Talking to your employer about apprenticeship levy funding might feel uncomfortable at first, but with preparation, it's a highly effective way to unlock fully funded workplace training—especially in cutting-edge areas like applied AI and automation.

Remember:

- Research the apprenticeship standards relevant to your role (e.g. ST1512)
- Focus the conversation on practical benefits and business impact
- Highlight how low-code and no-code tools can accelerate automation and efficiency
- Understand employer priorities and address common misconceptions
- Offer to help manage the apprenticeship process to reduce their workload

With this approach, you can transform what might seem like a vague chat into a productive conversation that helps your employer invest in your future—and ensures you're making the most of their apprenticeship levy funds.

And just one final thought: what will you automate in week 3? Starting apprenticeship funding conversations with concrete, practical ideas is what really wins support.