

## Employer Newsletter

### First Intuition Think Tank: exploring retention of trainees

A recent report published by QuickBooks identified that 44% of accountants noted that fewer graduates wanting a career as an accountant represents their biggest operational challenge, and 92% of accountants have experienced hiring difficulties in the past year. Alongside the time and cost of recruitment, retaining trainees is absolutely vital to the success of any organisation. Last month we hosted a think-tank that explored the driving forces around employee retention and typical practices in place to retain them.

What drivers are impacting trainee retention	What practices are being used to retain and inspire them
Lack of consequence (employers cannot recharge cost of training)	Some employers discussed positive reinforcements such as completion incentives and rewards for staying in employment post qualification.
Perceived lack of progression, career development	It was identified that sharing career plans at the start of employment, including post qualification opportunities, helped to fulfil the greater desire by many apprentices to have a clear career structure and know what promotion opportunities might be available in the future.
Desire for greater recognition and reward	Trainees expect a 'psychological-contract' whereby they value feeling safe and recognised within their organisation. Monetary rewards discussed included, for example, a pay increment be attached to each exam passed. Many trainees also value non-financial rewards such as additional holiday.
Lack of flexibility, a desire for greater work life balance	Some initiatives were shared around flexible working arrangements. One employer offered winter and summer working hours.
Trainees are less averse to moving jobs	Some employers shared how they build social structures, so they are not only leaving a job, but leaving colleagues they value making leaving a harder decision.
Desire for variation and diversity of work	Many employers build secondments into an apprentice's role. Allowing access to work with other departments and provide exposure to different tasks, another benefit identified was that it also allows the apprentice to see the full picture or career opportunities.
Being unable to manage the pressure points of work and exams	Provision of an internal mentor. One employer ensures every trainee is supported by a more senior trainee to help mentor and support them.

And finally, a big thank you to all those who attended and shared this valuable input.

## Neurodiversity discussions

Since COVID we have noticed that more learners are disclosing their neurodiversity. This ranges from dyslexia and ADHD as well as ASD and dyspraxia. As awareness increases, people feel more comfortable discussing their neurodiversity, and the post covid work environment has provided more flexibility for different working styles; there has never been a better time to consider how well your business accommodates neurodiversity.



Statistics suggest that less than 12% of apprentices declare their neurodiversity at sign-up despite estimates that up to 35% may be affected. At First Intuition we are keen to encourage these discussions at sign-up to ensure we can make any reasonable adjustments from the outset and support the learner in the best way we can. We use Cognassist to identify any hidden learning needs. It provides the learner with personalised support and gives our coaches and tutors a better understanding of how best we can support them. The support we offer can decrease a learner's anxiety and support with study skills and exams, therefore leading to higher completion rates. Unfortunately, we

cannot carry out formal screening for dyslexia or ADHD, but if your apprentice believes this may be relevant then we can carry out an assessment of their support needs which will allow us to put in place extra tutor support and, in some cases, a specialist mentor to help them develop workplace techniques and study skills. In some cases we can use our assessments to access reasonable adjustments such as extra-time or a scribe. However, at level 7 formal assessments may be needed for this.

Neurodiversity can bring a wide range of benefits to the workplace and only a few small adjustments can make all the difference to unlock their potential! Below are some sites that you may find useful when considering your current practices.

[In the workplace - British Dyslexia Association \(bdadyslexia.org.uk\)](https://bdadyslexia.org.uk)

[ADHD and Work - ADHD UK](https://adhd.org.uk)

[National Autistic Society \(autism.org.uk\)](https://autism.org.uk)

<https://cognassist.com/>

Discussions about Neurodiversity should be commonplace in both the classroom and the workplace. We would ask you to please encourage apprentices to let us know if they feel that they may have support needs so that we can help them to complete their apprenticeship programme successfully.

## The First Intuition Impact Skills Programme

Do you remember when you were freshly qualified? You had a degree under your belt, 3 years of professional training and you were ready to take on the world?

We have all been there – poised excitedly for the next stage of our career only to realise that all of our colleagues had broadly similar experiences and we did not stand out from the crowd. Developing the soft skills to prepare for leadership is often hit and miss based on those around you and the work you are exposed to. As managers we recognise the importance of those non-technical skills. We look for those who demonstrate gravitas and emotional intelligence as well as the ability to solve problems and lead a team.



## What is the skills programme?

Our skills programme seeks to fast track the development of those skills and challenges apprentices to rehearse these skills alongside their technical training. We create a safe environment for apprentices to rehearse key skills and encourage them to adopt these in the office. The skills modules can help your apprentices to add value in the workplace at an earlier stage in their career.

We have invested in developing our skills programme and invite you to take a fresh look at the content. We are seeking to partner with you in developing the skills which will help your workforce to be effective. The full skills brochure is attached but please let us know if you would like to discuss the contents in more detail. By showing apprentices how important these skills are in the workplace we can encourage them to make the most of the opportunities provided.

## What can you do?

We invite you to get involved. As a manager you are ideally placed to encourage apprentices to engage in the development of these skills.

- You should receive an email with a summary of the skills module to be covered two weeks in advance of the delivery date for the module. This sets out what your apprentice will learn and how you can help your apprentice to prepare for the module by evaluating their current strengths and weaknesses.
- Please join progress reviews with your apprentice. Our coaches will invite apprentices to discuss how they can put their new skills into practice.
- If you would like to share feedback on the skills days, would like more information, or would like to sit in on a session – just to see what it is all about - please let us know.

## Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules update



The Department of Education published the draft version of the apprenticeship funding rules for FY23/24. It is positive to see the draft version of the apprenticeship funding rules came out in March this year – two months earlier than in previous years!

We have not yet come across anything that changes our approach in any great way however one change that has jumped out is the eligibility criteria for funding has been revised which means that funding for apprentices from the EU will need to be reviewed carefully. Please contact your client partner for more information if this applies to you."

Also, from 3rd April 2023 the limit on reservations for employers who do not pay the levy will be removed, with these employers no longer restricted to 10 reservations per year. The Department for Education will continue to monitor the number of reservations used and will keep this under review.

## New CFAB School Leaver L4 Apprenticeship Programme

We are excited to announce we have added a L4 Apprenticeship programme covering the CFAB qualification to our portfolio of products, covering the first six exams of the ICAEW ACA syllabus. This programme has been designed with school-leavers in mind, ensuring that there is appropriate time to digest the learning required and providing a mix of face to face and live online tuition. We are running the programme from September 2023 and will look to provide this within the £8,000 funding band.

- The programme starts with a four day 'Fundamentals in Accounting and Assurance' course which covers the basics of bookkeeping and assurance
- Some modules are split out into two or three phases utilising both classroom and virtual classroom delivery allowing the apprentice time to digest and practice key concepts
- Some modules are longer in duration than our standard course lengths for the equivalent exam, allowing the learner more time to digest and practice the content

Unit	Total days	Incentre	Virtual class	Est . timing for Sept 23 intake
Fundamentals in Accounting and Assurance	4	4	0	Sept 23
Assurance	5	2	3	2 blocks Sept 23 and Oct 23
Accounting	10	7	3	3 blocks across Nov, Dec, Jan
Business Technology and Finance	4	2	2	Mar-24
Principles. of Tax	6	4	2	Jul-24
Law	4	0	4	Aug-24
Management Information	6	4	2	Oct-24
Role Sim (EPA)	4	0	4	Feb-25
Impact Skills Programme	5	5		5 days spread through programme
<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>20</b>	

We would be delighted to chat with you about this programme and the benefits it could bring. Please do contact your client partner should you want to discuss this further.

## First Intuition Apprenticeship Awards

Congratulations to our winners of the FI Apprenticeship awards 2023!

<b>Apprentice manager/mentor of the year</b>	Rachel Harris of StriveX
<b>Apprentice team of the year</b>	Sam Cheyney, Robson Kerr and Rebecca De Souza of Milward May & Co
<b>Apprentice employer of the year</b>	UK Research and Innovation
<b>Rising Star</b>	Lucy Stokes of James Cowper Kreston
<b>Apprentice of the year</b>	Hannah Rance of Rouse Partners

## Pass assurance

All learners that have attended a full classroom course for an exam are eligible for our unlimited pass assurance. This means that if they, unfortunately, fail the exam they can re-attend the courses again free of charge to help prepare them for the re-sit exam. However, there are a few conditions and expectations required by the scheme which we wanted to highlight:

- 1) The apprentice must have attended every day of the course in full.
- 2) The apprentice must have made a reasonable attempt of all course exams and mock exams provided on their initial course.
- 3) For ACCA and ICAEW courses, where submission of mock exams is required, a small fee of £20 will be payable to cover the cost of marking each exam when retaking the course under pass assurance.

## Recruiting an apprentice

We often receive queries about recruitment including the best way to recruit a new apprentice. One tried and tested approach is the Find an Apprenticeship site <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>. Many schools, colleges and universities direct their learners to this site to help them identify apprenticeship opportunities with local employers.

If this is a service you would like help with, we can set this up for you, free of charge, please do get in touch if this is something you would like to pursue.

## First Intuition Reading wins FSB Service Excellence Award



We were honored to have received this award for the work we do with our employers and apprentices. First Intuition Reading was recognised for providing high quality accountancy education to our students, helping them achieve their potential to become fully rounded professionals while delivering exceptional service levels to our employers, whatever their size. By understanding that every business and apprentice is unique we hope to provide each employer with a tailored and individual approach.