In traditional apprenticeship schemes, apprentices work for one employer throughout their training period. In response to the difficulties some construction firms have in sustaining long-term placements for the full qualification, schemes have been established where apprentices can be employed by a specially-created host body, and then placed with different companies. This gives the apprentice a range of skills and experience, and allows contractors to participate in apprentice training even if they have only short placements available.

It offers greater security for the apprentices that they will be able to complete their training. It gives SMEs the opportunity to fulfil TR&T requirements in contracts and make a contribution to training and development.

CITB-Construction Skills is the accrediting body for apprenticeships in construction across the UK and they monitor the progress of candidates through the programmes. They are developing these new apprenticeship models across England and Wales.

CCTAL, an affiliation of construction firms for the promotion of training, ran a highly successful pilot of the shared apprenticeship scheme in Carmarthenshire. It has developed an independent company to act as host, to take on the apprentices with the training levy. It fulfils all the payroll and HR functions, and then allocates apprentices to construction firms for placements. It is planning to expand across the West Wales region.
(contact: Anthony Rees www.cctal.co.uk)

Y Prentis launched in 2012 covering the South East Wales area. It operates as a host on broadly the same principles as CCTAL and was developed by Melin Homes with CMC2. Their board has representation from clients and contractors.
(contact: Mandy Summers www.sosavi.co.uk)

There are currently negotiations with interested partners in North Wales to form a regional scheme there. Any queries can be directed to Construction Skills.
(contact: Wyn Prichard www.cskills.org)

As apprentices are shared around different areas, there is less chance of a candidate being from one specific housing association community or estate, but these programmes are open to discussions about what candidates are looking for placements. Housing associations can become pro-active in trying to direct tenants, their families or communities into taking up further education and apprenticeships.

What can you do as a Housing Association with construction contracts?

- Determine in your project planning meeting whether it could be suitable for an apprentice placement, contact your local shared apprenticeship scheme or CITB for advice
- Ensure that you include your local Shared Apprenticeship Scheme on your information sheet for contractors
- Consider supporting a tenant through an apprenticeship; there is a higher chance of success if they are mentored and supported with transport costs/childcare.