

Artificial Intelligence (AI) training is all the rage right now, and hundreds of courses promise rapid upskilling for bewildered employees and employers alike. But not all AI training delivers real workplace value — and some £3,000-plus courses could leave you with little more than a certificate and no practical skills.

If you want to **choose AI training that works** and **avoid an expensive AI course** that's irrelevant to your job, this guide is for you. We'll explain how you can get fully funded, practical workplace AI training in England, and why a *Level 4 apprenticeship* in Applied Business AI (ST1512 standard) often outperforms short online courses that cost a fortune.

Table of Contents

1. Expensive AI Courses vs Fully Funded Training
2. How to Choose AI Training That Works
3. Why Level 4 Applied Business AI Apprenticeships Are a Game-Changer
4. The Role of Low-Code and No-Code Tools in AI Upskilling
5. What Employers Really Want: Experience Over Certificates
6. The Workplace AI Experience Route Explained
7. What Will You Automate in Week 3?

Expensive AI Courses vs Fully Funded Training

Hundreds of public and private providers offer AI training, charging prices often between £1,000 and £5,000. These courses are often short, online, and promise to “make you an AI expert” in days or weeks. But many lack:

- Relevant workplace context
- Hands-on experience with tools you'll actually use
- Recognition by your employer or broader industry

Paying £3,000 upfront can feel like a huge gamble, especially if the skills don't translate into your daily work or a pay rise.

Luckily, in England, many employers can access fully-funded AI training through the Apprenticeship Levy—a pot of money UK employers already pay, which the government holds for digital skills development. This fund can pay for a full **Level 4 apprenticeship** in Applied Business AI, so employers and employees aren't out of pocket.

What does Levy-funded training cover that the £3,000 courses don't?

Feature	Levy-funded Apprenticeship (ST1512)	Typical £3,000 Short Course	Practical workplace projects	Yes,
applied to real business challenges	Rarely;	mostly theoretical or generic exercises	Recognition by employers and industry	Nationally recognised standard and qualification
Varies; often only certificates of attendance	Integration with existing job role	Training tailored to your job and business needs	Broad, non-specific content	Use of real tools and software
Hands-on with low-code/no-code AI platforms and business tools	Mostly theory, or limited demos	Cost to employer/employee	Funded via Levy or government incentives	£1,000 - £5,000 upfront payment

How to Choose AI Training That Works

If your goal is to make a tangible impact at work—and avoid paying for courses that don't translate to value—follow these steps:

1. **Check eligibility for funded training.** Employers paying the UK Apprenticeship Levy can usually use it to fund AI training.
2. **Demand applied learning.** Training should involve projects solving actual business problems, not just theory.
3. **Look for apprenticeship standards.** The **ST1512 Applied Business AI apprenticeship** is specifically designed for business application of AI.
4. **Seek hands-on experience with accessible AI tools.** Look for courses incorporating *low-code* and *no-code* platforms that enable you to build AI solutions without advanced programming.
5. **Prioritise experience over certificates.** Employers want demonstrable skills improving operations, not just fancy-sounding documents.

Why Level 4 Applied Business AI Apprenticeships Are a Game-Changer

The ST1512 apprenticeship standard launched in England for individuals looking to embed AI into business processes, decision-making, and customer experience. Level 4 means this is an advanced apprenticeship (roughly equivalent to first-year university level), combining:



- Strategic understanding of AI's role in business
- Hands-on skills with AI tools, data analytics, and automation platforms
- Designed milestone assessments rather than just exams

This approach ensures apprentices aren't just learning theory—they're delivering value to their employer during and after training. And employers benefit from well-rounded talent capable of pushing AI projects forward confidently.

Some highlights of the ST1512 standard include:

- Understanding of AI principles and ethical considerations
- Skills to deploy and evaluate AI-driven workflows using low-code/no-code platforms

- Collaboration across teams to drive AI adoption
- Delivery of measurable business impact through AI projects

The Role of Low-Code and No-Code Tools in AI Upskilling

A major source of frustration I see with AI courses is an assumption you must be a coder or data scientist to contribute. That's simply not true. Increasingly, AI innovation at work relies on **low-code** and **no-code tools**.

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/other/littleknown-fully-funded-ai-apprenticeship-could-save-uk-workers-%C2%A32000-on-ai-courses/ar-AA2b3Sr1?ocid>

These platforms allow employees to build AI-powered processes, chatbots, or data models with minimal or no traditional programming. Examples include:

- Microsoft Power Automate and Power Apps
- UiPath (RPA with no-code drag-drop)
- Google's AutoML and Vertex AI tools
- Salesforce Einstein

Because low-code/no-code tools dramatically lower the barrier to entry, employers often want staff trained on them rather than expensive, advanced AI programming courses that don't match the role.

What Employers Really Want: Experience Over Certificates

It's tempting to think you need flashy certificates from expensive courses to progress. But employers increasingly value **demonstrable, relevant experience**. That means you:

- Show you've improved processes using AI tools
- Can explain outcomes and ROI of AI projects
- Collaborate with cross-functional teams to solve problems
- Adopt and evangelise AI technologies effectively

When applying for roles or asking for pay rises, focus on the impact of your AI experience, not just the certificate you earned for sitting in a virtual classroom.

The Workplace AI Experience Route Explained

One of the most useful, but little-known, ways to get recognised for your AI skills is the *Workplace Experience Route*—part of levy-funded apprenticeships allowing employees with prior experience to progress without completing every training module.

This approach lets you:



- Get assessed on your real workplace AI skills
- Gain an apprenticeship qualification linked to your job role
- Save time by focusing only on skill gaps
- Boost your professional confidence with an industry standard

Employers benefit too by upskilling existing staff without disrupting business delivery or overspending on generic courses.

What Will You Automate in Week 3?

Here's my favourite test to separate good AI training from fluff: "*What will you automate in Week 3?*"

Ask yourself or your training provider:

- What tasks or workflows will I realistically automate or augment with AI within a month?
- Which low-code/no-code platform will I use in day-to-day work?
- What measurable results can I expect to achieve by the end of training?
- How will my employer support applying new skills immediately?

If the answer isn't specific, workplace-relevant, and actionable, you risk paying for a course that's "nice to have" but doesn't drive results.

Final Thoughts

You don't have to spend thousands on AI training that doesn't make you more valuable at work. If your employer contributes via the Apprenticeship Levy, explore funded options based on the **Level 4 Applied Business AI apprenticeship (ST1512 standard)**. These combine practical experience with recognized qualifications and focus heavily on accessible, low-code/no-code AI tools.

Remember, employers want experience, impact, and demonstrated ability—not just certificates. Always ask during training selection: "*What will I automate or improve at work in Week 3?*" If the answer doesn't convince you, keep looking.

By choosing practical, funded AI training aligned to your job role, you can avoid expensive dead-end courses and genuinely boost your career.

Still wondering what to automate first? Drop me a line—I keep a running list of “stuff people pay for that they could get funded”.