techskills

CAREERS COACHES AND ADVISERS

Product & Design careers: a guide for careers coaches and advisers

Human-Centric Experiences

Figures checked from 11 July 2026. Built from the TechSkills Career Matrix.

About this guide

This guide is for careers coaches and advisers, including DWP work coaches, who help adults move into Product & Design work.

It is built from the TechSkills Career Matrix and Career Planner. Every pay, hiring and funding figure shows its source and the date it was checked. Where our data has a gap, the guide says so.

Areas of work covered	8
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Produced by	TechSkills, techskills.org

Product & Design at a glance

No.	Area of work	What it covers	Example roles	Pay range
01	UX Research	The scientists of the design world. Finding the 'Why' behind user behaviour.	UX Researcher, Content Strategist, UX Writer, A11y Specialist	£30,000 to £65,000+
02	UI & Product Design	Crafting the visual soul of the product, from buttons to brand identity.	UI Designer, Product Designer, Design System Lead, Interaction Designer	£38,322 to £100,000+
03	Product Management	Balancing user needs, tech limits, and business goals.	Product Manager, Product Owner, Associate Product Manager, Feature Lead	£32,500 to £95,000+
04	Service & Experience	Zooming out to look at the entire journey, both digital and physical.	Service Designer, CX Manager, Strategic Designer, Journey Lead	£50,000 to £80,000+
05	Design Leadership	Building great design teams and defining the creative vision.	Head of Design, Design Manager, Creative Director, VP Design	£57,000 to £165,000+
06	Emerging Design	Pioneering design for AI, AR/VR, and voice-only interfaces.	Spatial Designer, AI Experience Lead, VUI Designer, Future Tech Designer	£35,000 to £95,000+
07	Content Design & UX Writing	Writing the microcopy, error messages, and in-product language that make interfaces understandable and trustworthy.	Content Designer, UX Writer, Microcopy Specialist, Information Designer	£34,000 to £65,000+
08	Design Systems & Accessibility	Creating and maintaining the reusable design components and accessibility standards that keep products consistent and usable for everyone.	Design Systems Lead, Accessibility Specialist, UI Engineer, Design Ops Manager	£37,818 to £90,000+

Pay ranges come from job advert data. The source for each range is shown with the area of work in the next section.

The areas of work, one by one

01 UX Research

What it is	The scientists of the design world. Finding the 'Why' behind user behaviour.
Example roles	UX Researcher, Content Strategist, UX Writer, A11y Specialist
Skills used	Interviewing; Data Analysis; Persona Dev; Usability Testing
Who it suits	Curious minds who love asking 'Why?' and digging into behaviour.
Example of the work	A 3-month study on how users interact with digital healthcare.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to translate raw user research into actionable design and product decisions.
Sectors that hire	Healthcare & Life Sciences, Financial Services, Retail & E-commerce, Government & Public Sector, Higher Education
Pay	£30,000 to £65,000+. Source: Accessibility Specialist to Senior UX/User Researcher, Glassdoor & IT Jobs Watch UK.

02 UI & Product Design

What it is	Crafting the visual soul of the product, from buttons to brand identity.
Example roles	UI Designer, Product Designer, Design System Lead, Interaction Designer
Skills used	Figma/Sketch; Visual Theory; Typography; Prototyping
Who it suits	Creative builders with a sharp eye for detail and visual harmony.
Example of the work	Designing the complete design system for a new global fintech app.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to design interfaces that are both visually coherent and genuinely usable at scale.
Sectors that hire	Financial Services, Retail & E-commerce, Media & Entertainment, Technology & Software, Travel & Hospitality
Pay	£38,322 to £100,000+. Source: median, Junior UX Designer to Lead Product Designer, IT Jobs Watch UK.

Apprenticeship route: Digital UX Professional, Apprenticeship Route

What it is	Learn user research, interaction design and visual design inside a real product team from day one, on an employer funded honours degree apprenticeship, rather than a standalone university design degree. Unlike software development or cyber security, there is no shorter Level 3 or 4 technician standard here, every genuine match is a Level 6 integrated degree.
Example roles	UX Design Apprentice, UI Design Apprentice, Creative Digital Design Apprentice

What suits this route	Comfortable with a longer route, typically 3 to 4 years, in exchange for a paid wage and no student debt; Can meet the entry bar of around 104 UCAS points at A level, with no portfolio or prior design qualification required; Wants real client and product work from year one, not just a design school project brief
Pay	£20,000 to £55,000+. Source: Capgemini-style UX degree apprenticeship wage to qualified UX Designer median, IT Jobs Watch/employer apprenticeship pay UK.

Standard	Reference	Level	Typical length	Checked
Digital User Experience (UX) Professional (integrated degree)	ST0470	Level 6	48 months	29 July 2026
Creative Digital Design Professional (integrated degree)	ST0625	Level 6	36 months	29 July 2026

03 Product Management

What it is	Balancing user needs, tech limits, and business goals.
Example roles	Product Manager, Product Owner, Associate Product Manager, Feature Lead
Skills used	Strategy; Prioritisation; Stakeholder Mgmt; Agile
Who it suits	Leaders who enjoy the intersection of business, tech, and design.
Example of the work	Defining the 12-month roadmap for a major feature launch.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to prioritise a roadmap when user needs, technical limits and business goals all pull in different directions.
Sectors that hire	Technology & Software, Financial Services, Retail & E-commerce, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Media & Entertainment
Pay	£32,500 to £95,000+. Source: median, Junior Product Owner to Head of Product Management, IT Jobs Watch UK.

04 Service & Experience

What it is	Zooming out to look at the entire journey, both digital and physical.
Example roles	Service Designer, CX Manager, Strategic Designer, Journey Lead
Skills used	Journey Mapping; Service Blueprinting; Workshop Facilitation; Systems Thinking
Who it suits	Big-picture thinkers who want to fix broken systems and flows.
Example of the work	Re-designing the entire student journey from application to graduation.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to map and redesign an end-to-end journey that spans multiple teams, channels and systems.
Sectors that hire	Government & Public Sector, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Higher Education, Financial Services, Transport & Logistics

Pay	£50,000 to £80,000+. Source: Service Designer to Lead Service Designer, IT Jobs Watch UK, CX Manager/Journey Lead widened, no dedicated listings found.

05 Design Leadership

What it is	Building great design teams and defining the creative vision.
Example roles	Head of Design, Design Manager, Creative Director, VP Design
Skills used	Mentorship; Hiring; Creative Direction; Design Ops
Who it suits	Experienced designers who find joy in helping others grow.
Example of the work	Building a 50-person design org for a rapidly scaling startup.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to grow and structure a design team so quality holds up as the organisation scales.
Sectors that hire	Technology & Software, Financial Services, Retail & E-commerce, Media & Entertainment, Professional & Consulting Services
Pay	£57,000 to £165,000+. Source: Design Manager to VP Design/Creative Director, Glassdoor UK.

06 Emerging Design

What it is	Pioneering design for AI, AR/VR, and voice-only interfaces.
Example roles	Spatial Designer, AI Experience Lead, VUI Designer, Future Tech Designer
Skills used	Prompt Design; 3D Modelling; Spatial UI; VUI
Who it suits	Early adopters who want to define the rules for new technologies.
Example of the work	Designing the UI for a medical surgery performed via VR.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to design usable interactions for platforms, AI, AR/VR, voice, that don't yet have established conventions.
Sectors that hire	Healthcare & Life Sciences, Media & Entertainment, Technology & Software, Automotive, Retail & E-commerce
Pay	£35,000 to £95,000+. Source: Conversation/Voice UI Designer to Senior Conversational AI Designer, Glassdoor UK, Spatial/Future Tech Designer widened, no UK listings found.

07 Content Design & UX Writing

What it is	Writing the microcopy, error messages, and in-product language that make interfaces understandable and trustworthy.
Example roles	Content Designer, UX Writer, Microcopy Specialist, Information Designer

Skills used	Microcopy and Tone of Voice; Content Strategy; Information Architecture; Accessibility Writing
Who it suits	Wordsmiths who believe good writing is invisible, it just makes sense.
Example of the work	Reduces confusion, support tickets, and drop-off by making language do the design work.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to write interface copy that measurably reduces confusion and support tickets, not just reads well.
Sectors that hire	Financial Services, Retail & E-commerce, Government & Public Sector, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Technology & Software
Pay	£34,000 to £65,000+. Source: Content Strategist 25th percentile to Senior Content Designer, Glassdoor & IT Jobs Watch UK.

08 Design Systems & Accessibility

What it is	Creating and maintaining the reusable design components and accessibility standards that keep products consistent and usable for everyone.
Example roles	Design Systems Lead, Accessibility Specialist, UI Engineer, Design Ops Manager
Skills used	Design Systems; WCAG Compliance; Component Libraries; Design Tokens
Who it suits	Systems thinkers who care as much about consistency as they do about craft.
Example of the work	Speeds up delivery and ensures products are usable by people with disabilities, by default.
What shows someone can do it	Ability to build reusable components that keep a product consistent and usable for people with disabilities, by default.
Sectors that hire	Technology & Software, Financial Services, Government & Public Sector, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Retail & E-commerce
Pay	£37,818 to £90,000+. Source: Digital Accessibility Specialist to UI Engineer, Glassdoor & IT Jobs Watch UK.

Routes into the field

Route	What it is	Cost and pay
Apprenticeships	Earn while they train through structured learning that combines workplace experience with recognised development.	their employer (or the government, via the apprenticeship levy and co-investment) pays for all their training and assessment costs directly to the provider, they are never billed for tuition, and they don't take out a loan for it. Apprentices are paid at least the apprentice minimum wage of £8.00 an hour.
Degrees	Build strong technical foundations through longer-form study with opportunities to specialise and progress academically.	Covers their tuition fees in full, paid directly to their university or college, not means-tested, so every eligible student can borrow the same amount regardless of household income. Repayments under Plan 5 are 9% of income above £25,000 a year, and the loan is written off after 40 years.
Bootcamps & Intensive Training	We don't currently have any Tech Industry Gold accredited bootcamp providers - accelerate their move into tech via the government's own Skills Bootcamps programme instead: free, flexible courses up to 16 weeks, built around employability.	Free to the learner. Up to 16 weeks. Available across England.
Flexible Learning (Apprenticeship Units)	Build relevant tech skills through shorter, flexible learning without committing to a full programme from the start.	Shorter, flexible training. Focused, in-demand skills. Aligned to employer needs. Can build toward larger qualifications.

Apprenticeships: Explore Apprenticeships

Degrees: Find Degrees

Bootcamps & Intensive Training: Find a Skills Bootcamp (gov.uk)

Flexible Learning (Apprenticeship Units): Explore Flexible Learning

Who pays for an apprenticeship	Employers with an annual pay bill over £3 million pay into the apprenticeship levy, topped up by government, to fund training. Smaller employers get most of the cost covered through government co-investment, and from the 2026/27 funding year, training for under-25s at these smaller, non-levy-paying employers is fully funded.
Apprentice minimum wage	£8.00 an hour: the National Minimum Wage apprentice rate, which applies if they're under 19, or 19+ and in the first year of their apprenticeship (from 1 April 2026). Once they're 19+ and past their first year, they move to the normal age-based National Minimum Wage (up to £12.71/hour for ages 21+ from April 2026), many employers pay well above the legal minimum.

Funding sources: gov.uk: Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027 (checked 20 July 2026); gov.uk: Student finance for undergraduates, gov.uk: Repaying your student loan; gov.uk: How interest is calculated, Plan 5 (checked 20 July 2026). Rates change each year, so confirm current figures on gov.uk before quoting them.

Apprenticeship standards in this career family

Reference	Standard	Level	Typical length
ST0470	Digital User Experience (UX) Professional (integrated degree)	Level 6	48 months
ST0625	Creative Digital Design Professional (integrated degree)	Level 6	36 months

ST0470 Digital User Experience (UX) Professional (integrated degree) Covers UX designer, interaction designer, UI designer and user researcher roles. Employers running this route include Capgemini, the BBC and Bentley Motors.

ST0625 Creative Digital Design Professional (integrated degree) Explicitly covers user research, personas, user centred design and front end UI design.

Pay and hiring

Level	Median pay	25th to 75th percentile	Salaries in sample	Source	Period
Junior	£33,750	£32,188 to £34,688	2	IT Jobs Watch: Junior UX Designer (UK)	6 months to 11 Jul 2026
Mid-level	£55,000	£45,000 to £65,000	165	IT Jobs Watch: UX Designer (UK)	6 months to 11 Jul 2026
Senior	£70,000	Not given	41	IT Jobs Watch: Senior UX Designer (UK)	6 months to 11 Jul 2026

A small sample makes a figure indicative only. The hiring note below says where that applies.

Hiring	82% of design leaders report their organisation's need for designers has increased or stayed the same in 2026, but the market is shifting toward smaller, more specialised teams rather than large generalist design headcounts, and junior-level postings specifically have decreased, making early-career roles more competitive than the overall demand figure suggests. The junior-level figures above are based on an extremely small sample (2 salaries), treat that band as indicative only, not precise.
Remote working	Fully remote positions had the lowest median salary of the three work arrangements (£50,000, versus £85,000 for London on-site roles), genuine remote UX roles exist but tend to pay less than office-based ones, an important nuance worth knowing before assuming remote is a straightforward win.
Fastest growing skill	AI literacy now appears in over 15% of UX Designer postings, and designers who combine core UX fundamentals with AI-tool familiarity and product thinking are specifically named as standing out in current UK hiring commentary.

Skills and certifications

Skills employers ask for

Skill	Importance	Demand	Time to learn	Route
Figma	Critical	Very High, in 29% of postings	2-3 weeks	All routes
User-Centred Design & User Research	Critical	Very High, in 24% of postings	3-4 weeks	All routes
Accessibility (WCAG)	High	High, in 22% of postings	1-2 weeks	All routes
Prototyping & Interaction Design	High	High, in 21% of postings	2-3 weeks	All routes

Figma: Figma's own learning resources Figma

User-Centred Design & User Research: Foundations of User Experience (UX) Design Coursera (Google, free-audit)

Accessibility (WCAG): Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) overview W3C

Prototyping & Interaction Design: Figma prototyping guide Figma

Figma: Share of UK UX Designer job postings mentioning Figma specifically. User-Centred Design & User Research: Share of UK UX Designer job postings mentioning User-Centred Design; a further 18.22% mention User Research specifically. Accessibility (WCAG): Share of UK UX Designer job postings mentioning Accessibility. Prototyping & Interaction Design: Share of UK UX Designer job postings mentioning Prototyping.

Certifications

Certification	Provider	Cost	Time	Level	Recognised	Best stage
Google UX Design Professional Certificate	Google (via Coursera)	Coursera subscription, approx. £35-45/month, typically completed in 3-6 months	3-6 months part-time	Beginner	Medium	Before you apply

Professional standard

Chartered Society of Designers publishes the Chartered Designer status (CPSK™ framework).

Title	Code	What it recognises
Associate Member	Associate CSD	For designers at the early stages of their career.
Member	MCSD	Full membership, awarded once a designer demonstrates established professional competence.
Chartered Designer (in a named discipline, e.g. UX/UI)	Chartered Designer	The chartered pinnacle: the highest level of competence in professional design practice, recognised on the international Register of Chartered Designers.
Fellow	Fellow CSD	The Society's most senior grade, for significant achievement in design practice or contribution to the profession.

Entry title	Associate Member (Associate CSD), launched ongoing route. CSD offers a membership category to suit every stage of a designer's career. Associate Member is the entry point for those at the early stages, building toward full Member (MCSD) and, eventually, Chartered Designer status in their specific discipline.
Keeping a title	Chartered Designer status isn't a one-off award: CSD requires an Annual Compliance Statement, tracked through its own CPD Toolkit and benchmarked against the same CPSK framework used for chartership itself, to keep the title current. Members also commit to CSD's formal Code of Conduct, enforceable by the Society's Conduct Sub-Committee, including reprimand, suspension or expulsion for a serious breach.
Used by employers	This is a real, live professional route today, not a proposal: CSD's "MCSD UX/UI Chartered Designer" pathway sits alongside its Industrial Product and Engineering chartership routes, meaning a UX/product designer can already become chartered in that specific discipline, on the same Register of Chartered Designers as every other design specialism the Society covers.

Chartered Society of Designers, home

CSD, Chartered Designer membership route

CSD, the CPSK™ framework

CSD, Code of Conduct

For careers coaches and advisers

Area of work	Who it suits	Example roles	Apprenticeship standards
UX Research	Curious minds who love asking 'Why?' and digging into behaviour.	UX Researcher, Content Strategist, UX Writer, A11y Specialist	None listed in the Matrix yet
UI & Product Design	Creative builders with a sharp eye for detail and visual harmony.	UI Designer, Product Designer, Design System Lead, Interaction Designer	ST0470 Level 6, ST0625 Level 6
Product Management	Leaders who enjoy the intersection of business, tech, and design.	Product Manager, Product Owner, Associate Product Manager, Feature Lead	None listed in the Matrix yet
Service & Experience	Big-picture thinkers who want to fix broken systems and flows.	Service Designer, CX Manager, Strategic Designer, Journey Lead	None listed in the Matrix yet
Design Leadership	Experienced designers who find joy in helping others grow.	Head of Design, Design Manager, Creative Director, VP Design	None listed in the Matrix yet
Emerging Design	Early adopters who want to define the rules for new technologies.	Spatial Designer, AI Experience Lead, VUI Designer, Future Tech Designer	None listed in the Matrix yet
Content Design & UX Writing	Wordsmiths who believe good writing is invisible, it just makes sense.	Content Designer, UX Writer, Microcopy Specialist, Information Designer	None listed in the Matrix yet
Design Systems & Accessibility	Systems thinkers who care as much about consistency as they do about craft.	Design Systems Lead, Accessibility Specialist, UI Engineer, Design Ops Manager	None listed in the Matrix yet

The Who it suits column comes from the Career Matrix. It is a starting point for a conversation, not an assessment.

Notes on your client

Where to send someone next

National Careers Service Careers advice, job profiles, information and resources. (Department for Education. Checked 1 November 2026.)

Find an apprenticeship Register a profile, search vacancies and apply for an apprenticeship. Applicants must be 16 or over. (GOV.UK. Checked 1 November 2026.)

Skills Bootcamps For people updating their skills to progress in their current job or move into a different role. (JobHelp, GOV.UK. Checked 1 November 2026.)

Jobcentre Plus: contact and nearest office Contact details for claims, appointments and help finding a job, and a way to find the nearest Jobcentre Plus. (Department for Work and Pensions. Checked 1 November 2026.)

Skills England: apprenticeship search Skills England's apprenticeship search. (Skills England. Checked 1 November 2026.)

General notes

Sources and checking

The figures in this guide were checked on dates from 11 July 2026 to 1 November 2026. Each source below shows its own date.

Skills England: ST0470 Digital User Experience (UX) Professional (integrated degree) Checked 29 July 2026

Skills England: ST0625 Creative Digital Design Professional (integrated degree) Checked 29 July 2026

Chartered Society of Designers, home

CSD, Chartered Designer membership route

CSD, the CPSK™ framework

CSD, Code of Conduct

National Careers Service, Department for Education Checked 1 November 2026

Find an apprenticeship, GOV.UK Checked 1 November 2026

Skills Bootcamps, JobHelp, GOV.UK Checked 1 November 2026

Jobcentre Plus: contact and nearest office, Department for Work and Pensions Checked 1 November 2026

Skills England: apprenticeship search, Skills England Checked 1 November 2026

- gov.uk: Apprenticeship funding rules and assessment plan guidance, 2026 to 2027 (checked 20 July 2026)
- gov.uk: National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates (checked 20 July 2026)
- gov.uk: Student finance for undergraduates (checked 20 July 2026)
- gov.uk: Repaying your student loan; gov.uk: How interest is calculated, Plan 5 (checked 20 July 2026)
- ONS ASHE Table 14, 2024 (revised) (checked 11 July 2026)
- IT Jobs Watch: UX Designer / Junior UX Designer / Senior UX Designer (UK) (checked 11 July 2026)
- UX Design Institute: The UX Job Market in 2026 (checked 11 July 2026)
- IT Jobs Watch: UX Designer skills (UK), 6 months to 11 Jul 2026 (checked 11 July 2026)
- Coursera: Google UX Design Professional Certificate programme page (checked 11 July 2026)
- The Interview Guys: Google UX Design Professional Certificate Review 2026 (checked 11 July 2026)