

**NATIONAL APPRENTICE
WEEK 2015
SUPPLEMENT**

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CELEBRATING NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK



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It is more important than ever, in a general election year, to shine a light on all the good work that is being done on apprenticeships.

That has of course always been the main aim of National Apprenticeship Week (NAW) and providers, employers and learners gearing up for this year's celebration of 'earning and learning' will have been boosted by moves by all the major parties to stress their commitment to the programme.

The eighth NAW will feature more than

600 events across the country, including an apprenticeship Dragons' Den-style challenge at Hertford Regional College and a competition among apprentices from Jamie Oliver's Fifteen restaurant, in London, to prepare and sell food at nearby Borough Market.

It will also provide an opportunity to reflect on development over the past year, including the creation of more than 70 new employer-led Trailblazer apprenticeships.

The sector also welcomed the appointment of a new Skills Minister, Nick Boles, in July.

The change at the top apparently prompted a change of heart over apprenticeship reform, with the government shelving plans to route funding through employers in January.

There has been no let-up in the drive to increase participation, although government claims to have overseen the two millionth apprentice start should be met with caution.

Business Secretary Vince Cable announced the milestone figure on December 8, but told *FE Week* a week later that not all the vaunted starts equated to completions.

With all the major parties promising huge apprenticeship start number increases, we decided to dedicate page three of this supplement to looking at how those targets can be met.

Pages four and five feature an interview with entrepreneur Jason Holt reflecting on how recommendations from his 2012 review 'Making apprentices more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises' have been implemented.

Labour's Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna, Liberal Democrat Dr Cable and Conservative Business, Enterprise and Energy Minister Matthew Hancock set out their stalls for future apprenticeship policy on pages six and seven.

Detailed statistical breakdowns of starts and success rates by Lsect expert Nick Linford follow on pages 10 and 11, then page 12 features an article reflecting on the relationship between local enterprise partnerships and apprenticeship programmes by chair of South East Midlands Lep Ann Limb.

We looked at weird and wonderful apprenticeships now available on page 13 and you will find a NAW event guide on pages 14 and 15.



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FE Week

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DAVID GRAILEY

NCFE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The future of apprenticeships in England

Apprenticeships have been around for well over a century and yet they remain a hot topic of conversation, especially of late with the introduction of Trailblazers and the build up to the 2015 general election.

They may have gone through many changes over the last 100 years (from dressmaking, drapery and carpentry/joinery to a much wider range of industries), but the programme's longevity demonstrates its ongoing value.

They're a fantastic way to learn a skill, gain work experience and reach the end goal of getting into employment.

Best of all, an apprenticeship can offer up a real future — after finishing, the majority of apprentices (85 per cent) will stay in employment in comparison to the growing number of graduates who find themselves unemployed after completing their university course.

With these benefits in mind, you'd think apprenticeships would be the first choice for more young people, yet they don't

always have the right advice on what their full range of options are when they leave school.

Recently, Ofsted FE and skills director Lorna Fitzjohn spoke out about young people not being well advised on the benefits of apprenticeships when at school, resulting in the number of apprenticeship starts among young people 'flatlining'.

An apprenticeship can offer up a real future

It's been said that careers advice mainly focuses on A-levels as the preferred option for teenagers due to a lack of understanding in schools about work-based training.

New research from NCFE can back this up, showing that 40 per cent people feel that learners looking to do an apprenticeship aren't given enough support. The report also found that almost half (43 per cent) of respondents said that there weren't enough opportunities for apprenticeships.

This is despite the fact that *Advertorial* apprenticeships are the hot topic of the pre-election campaigns, with the government investing more money into apprenticeships and an ever-increasing emphasis on practical and vocationally-led courses.

It's also despite an increase in positive sentiment towards apprenticeships, with 94 per cent of parents saying they would be happy if their child chose to do an apprenticeship.

Not all young people are suited to the typical academic route and many learn more effectively through practical learning in a hands-on environment.

When it comes to education, one size doesn't fit all and at NCFE we feel it's important to ensure that young people are given the opportunity to carefully choose the right career path for them having considered all options.

NCFE offers a range of full and part apprenticeships at intermediate and advanced level in sector areas including health, public services and care, retail and commercial enterprise, leisure, travel and tourism, business, administration and law, education and training.

We also offer qualifications that help with progression into apprenticeships in terms of building confidence and transferable skills.

You can visit www.ncfe.org.uk for more information and use our qualification finder to find the apprenticeship qualifications that meet your learners' needs.

Staying on target in numbers game

The three major parties have committed to huge increases in apprenticeship numbers if their parties win the next election. Reporter Paul Offord looks at how this could be achieved.

Apprenticeships have taken centre stage in the build-up to the general election on May 7, but hitting targets set by the main parties will be no easy task.

Prime Minister David Cameron has announced plans to push apprenticeship starts up to the 3m mark by 2020.

Meanwhile, Labour leader Ed Miliband has pledged to add up to 80,000 more apprenticeship starts a year and Liberal Democrat Business Secretary Vince Cable has committed to doubling the number of firms offering apprentices by 2020.

But the number of all-age apprenticeship starts for 2013/14 actually fell 69,800 from the previous year to 440,400, so a lot of work clearly needs to be done to convince both learners and employers of their merits.

Head of post-16 development at the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Gina Bradbury thinks UCAS Progress will play an increasingly important role with directing students on to apprenticeships.

She said 9,000 applications for apprenticeships had already been lodged through the internet-based service, which went live nationwide in September and allows students to research and apply for vocational or academic post-16 courses.

"More and more schools and colleges are using the apply service and, as a trusted source of impartial guidance on careers and education, UCAS is in a really strong position to explain to young people, parents, teachers and advisers what apprenticeships are all about," she said.

Richard Atkins, Association of Colleges (AoC) president and principal of Exeter College, said better schools careers advice would be needed on apprenticeships.

He said: "The situation needs to improve as we find every year in colleges that young people lack knowledge about what apprenticeships offer."

Stewart Segal, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive, said independent learning providers could "be the link between schools and employers. Providers can use their links to local employers and knowledge of the local labour market to support schools".

Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), warned schools were "significantly under resourced" for apprenticeship



AoC president and Exeter College principal Richard Atkins (fifth from left) with apprentices awarded at his college's Skills Awards in November last year

careers advice.

But he said: "To encourage schools and colleges to work together, ASCL with other professional associations, has developed a 'Foundation Code' that sets out key behaviours schools and colleges need to adopt to encourage more students onto traineeships and apprenticeships."

Dr Rona Mackenzie, principal of Lincoln University Technical College (UTC), said: "We employ independent careers advisers who link with our industrial partner employers to advise students on apprenticeships, UTCs are well placed to do this because of their specialist nature."

"It's much harder for ordinary state schools that have to advise on a much wider variety of vocational training."

The government will also need to significantly increase the number of employers prepared to hire apprentices.

Former Dragons' Den investor Doug Richard recommended making apprenticeships more employer-led, to ensure they are tailored for the needs and therefore appeal more to businesses, in his Review of Apprentices report in November 2012.

But resulting government plans to route funding through employers, either through the PAYE system or a credit account, were shelved in January after Skills Minister Nick Boles admitted "more homework" was needed to address concerns about unwanted bureaucracy it could cause small businesses.

Mr Atkins said he would still like to see the "creation of

more incentives for employers to take on apprentices such as tax breaks".

Rob Wall, head of education and skills at the Confederation of British Industry, said: "While the reforms are heading in the right direction, there is still more to be done

to simplify the system for smaller employers.

"If we are to increase employer involvement in apprenticeships, then giving employers real purchasing power by directing funding to them is crucial.

"The Trailblazer scheme is a good example of how businesses are helping to shape apprenticeships."

More than 400 employers have been involved with the development of 73 new apprenticeships that have now gained government approval through the Trailblazer scheme, with more than 100 more in development.

Mr Boles said: "We are working with employer organisations and others to develop a funding model that is simple, transparent and easy

for employers to use."

A Department for Education spokesperson said it announced the creation of a new employer-backed careers and enterprise company in December to improve careers advice in schools.

'Reform traineeship to improve flow of potential learners'

Reform of the government's flagship traineeship scheme could channel more young people onto apprenticeships, sector leaders have claimed.

Traineeships, which aim to get 16 to 24-year-olds "work ready" by combining work experience with maths, English and employability training, had a slow start in the first academic year following their launch in May 2013.

The number of traineeship starts for the whole of 2013/14 was just 10,400 — although there were subsequently 5,000 starts in the first quarter of 2014/15 (August to October) compared to 3,300 in the first two quarters of 2013/14.

The AoC has made reform of traineeships, so they would be specifically geared at preparing 16 and 17-year-olds for apprenticeships, one of its general election manifesto pledges.

Mr Atkins said they were "too general in their aims at the moment".

But he said: "They could play an important role in preparing more people for apprenticeships if they evolved into a pre-apprenticeship programme with more emphasis on good quality work experience. You wouldn't have to change the name."

But Deborah Lee (pictured right), chief learning officer for BT which has taken on almost 500 young people on its traineeship

scheme since its launch in January 2014, opposed narrowing the goal of traineeships.

She said BT's programme aimed "to prepare our trainees to make confident choices about what to do next".

"This might be a job, an apprenticeship, or it could be more training or education. All of these are good outcomes," she said.

Mr Segal agreed that apprenticeship progression should not "be the only successful outcome from participating in a traineeship".

But he thought traineeship starts could be increased by opening up the scheme to more providers, who could in turn bring more employers on board.

Current restrictions limit the delivery of traineeships to mainly grade one and two providers, but, he said: "We need to extend the programme to all providers who have evidence they can deliver high quality programmes."

Mr Atkins said: "To not allow grade three providers to run traineeships seems harsh on the people living in areas where there may only be grade three providers."



Brian Lightman and Stewart Segal



No 'holting' SME apprenticeship

Almost three years after Jason Holt published his review entitled 'Making apprenticeships more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises', the chief executive of Holts Gems seemed pleased with the progress that has been made.

The 42-page report made 15 recommendations in total, which it broke down into three main categories — Communication: raising awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships, Empowerment: SMEs to get the best from their training providers and Simplification: ownership and responsibility for the apprenticeships programme and removing barriers.

"I would say the review came at the right time," he said.

"There are lots of encouraging signs — the spotlight is much more on the SME than ever before and I'm hearing a lot more people talking about apprenticeships and asking about them."

As we head into the election, the three major parties are competing to over how many apprenticeships they can offer.

However, Mr Holt was cautious about a focus on numbers.

"There is still some way to go before there is a really clear strategy for SME engagement," he said.

"I think inevitably there is going to be an interruption now with the election but what I am trying to encourage Nick Boles and the government to do is to constantly think SME — it's very tempting to look at numbers.

"If it's a numbers game, it's very easy to cover that with large businesses which can take on more apprentices," he said.

"But working for an SME is very different to large business — small businesses can offer so much more diversity and flexibility in the role."

However much the landscape has shifted since the Holt review, it's about to face a much bigger upheaval with the funding reforms, currently halted for

further consultation after neither proposed funding method, funding through the PAYE system or an employer account, won sector support.

"I think Nick Boles made the right decision to pause rather than making the wrong decision," said Mr Holt.

"But he needs to make a decision quickly now as to what he plans to do."

Although he struggled to pick out his own preferred funding method, the important thing for him and for SME engagement, he said, was "simplicity".

"Inevitably taking on an apprentice is going to involve more action than just offering a job to a young person," he said.

"But whatever that step is, it has to be so blindingly easy that it's worth it.

"Because I'm not talking about the employer that has employed an apprentice before — they will go through a degree of pain because they have seen and recognise the value.

"It's those initial, new entrants that I'm talking about — so that's the big game."

Some of his recommendations haven't come to fruition — his suggestion that an online apprentice community leading to possible Royal Society of Apprenticeships was never picked up by government.

And although it is recommended providers tell employers how much their apprentice training is costing, as Mr Holt suggested, he said it often wasn't being done.

Mr Holt said: "As part of the new system you will see what the government pays — but my regret is we didn't make that happen first, because we might be in a different place from a knowledge point of view now in terms of how people think about the proposed new funding mechanism."

A spokesperson for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills said although it was for employers to decide if a society of apprentices would be "useful" it was "promoting engagement



Jason Holt

between apprentices" through social media campaigns.

She added a requirement for providers to ensure they made employers aware of the government's financial contribution had been introduced following the Holt Review.

On SMEs and apprenticeships in general, Mr Holt added: "We've still very much talked about large business, and I think we might have made more progress on SMEs with a more focused system plan, but I am forgiving of it because frankly there has been a lot of change. And I think we are getting back on track."

The Federation of Small Business chair John Allan agreed with Mr Holt that apprenticeships had to be simple.

"To make the system appeal to more small

and micro-businesses, these firms must have the support they need to navigate the system and reap the benefits of taking on apprentice," he said.

"We have been working with Jason Holt since the publication of his review, and progress has been made in engaging small businesses with the apprenticeships system."

The Confederation of British Industry had a similar view to Mr Holt's assessment of the current situation for SMEs, three years on from his report.

"While some progress has been made to date, there is plenty more to be done to reduce bureaucracy for smaller firms which have less time and fewer resources," a spokesperson said.

RECENT HISTORY OF APPRENTICESHIP PROPOSALS AND REFORMS

2012 (May) — Jason Holt published his review, 'Making apprenticeships more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises' (see above)

2013 (March) — The government published its initial response to Mr Richard's review. It recommended employers putting recognised industry standards at the heart of every apprenticeship

2014 (August) — Guidelines for 51 new apprenticeships were published through the government's Trailblazer scheme, as developed by more than 400 employers in 37 sectors

2012 (November) — Doug Richard recommended making apprenticeships more employer-orientated in his Review of Apprentices report. It called for employers to pay providers directly for apprenticeship training

2013 (July) — The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published its apprenticeship funding reform plans, including a proposal to route funding via employers through PAYE that provoked a mixed reaction from business leaders

o plans



HOLT'S 15 APPRENTICESHIP RECOMMENDATIONS (AND HIS THREE 'KEY' AREAS)

COMMUNICATION

1 National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to take lead on all apprenticeship related communication

2 A campaign for professionals such as lawyers and accountants to become apprenticeship ambassadors

3 Spread best practice examples of apprenticeship promotion by schools

4 Promote greater awareness of apprenticeships in young people

5 Create an online apprentice community which could become a (Royal) Society of Apprentices

JH: I think this will take two or three years to really flourish

On the back of the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and with the support of NAS we want apprentice makers to champion apprenticeships, create peer-to-peer networks and spread the word to their communities and sectors. It's starting to happen and there are thousands of businesses that want to know how to engage

And what I am hoping will happen is there'll be an apprentice network for each region and there'll be a kudos to being an apprentice maker

EMPOWERMENT

6 Allow SMEs to design develop their own training provision or work with providers

7 An online tool to enable employers to find provision with feedback from other employers' experiences of each provider

8 Funding to reflect higher cost for training providers of SME apprentices

9 Providers to set out funding contributed towards apprenticeship training costs for employers in a simple, consistent and transparent way

10 A Provider Charter relating to apprenticeship training provision to SMEs

JH: We've been talking more about the customer journey and the navigation and it's great this still exists and is being developed further

The new apprenticeships website that's being set up at the moment is allowing you to actually look at the Ofsted rating of providers. The next phase of development is for this to be employer responsive, in real time, which is what I think needs to happen, because Ofsted obviously can be quite dated in terms of its relevance to that employer. It's easier to navigate – so that's been good, but it will go even further

SIMPLIFICATION

11 Ensure roles and responsibilities of Government departments and agencies are clear, coherent and optimal

12 A way for employers to place a temporary advert for an apprenticeship vacancy before the official advert is approved by NAS

13 Bridge gaps between schools and apprenticeships

14 A network of SMEs who can mentor SME businesses new to apprenticeships

15 Government to explore incentivisation options for employers

JH: In terms of the new Provider Charter, the Minister, John Hayes, did not agree to a charter in his response

However, with AELP and AOC we did agree the wording to a provider promise. This articulated what a provider would endeavour to do which included the standard of service and responsiveness it would give employers, especially small ones. The Richard reforms took the issue of provider service standards as one of its major tenets

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal said: "We welcomed Jason Holt's recommendations and are pleased many of them have been taken forward.

"It is important the current reform process... does not impose barriers on greater engagement by smaller businesses. Such an outcome would undo much of the positives derived from Jason's work."

Association of Colleges senior skills policy manager Teresa Frith said the Government had made "good progress" implementing Mr Holt's recommendations.

"However, there is still more to be done to encourage small and medium-sized businesses to get involved in offering apprenticeships," she said.

2015 (January) — The government conceded that more research was needed on its proposals to route apprenticeship funding via employers either through PAYE or a credit account

Politicians lay out picture of apprentices



CHUKA UMUNNA

Shadow Business Secretary

Every year, National Apprenticeship Week provides a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the life-changing opportunities offered by the programme and to shine a spotlight on learners' work.

We must never lose sight of the huge difference and positive contribution high-quality technical qualifications make for individuals, families, businesses and society.

That's why my Labour colleagues and I will be banging the drum for apprenticeships and apprentices right across the country and why I am greatly looking forward to speaking at *FE Week's* Annual Apprenticeship Conference during National Apprenticeship Week.

Under this government, apprenticeship quality has been undermined and the historic and trusted apprenticeship brand is at risk of being tarnished as new concerns on quality and status of qualifications have emerged.

We've seen in-work training for existing employees rebadged under the apprenticeship label on a colossal scale.

Almost four-in-ten employers are unaware that the in-work training they provide is described as 'apprenticeships' by ministers.

One-in-five apprentices is receiving no formal training, and a staggering 93 per cent of apprenticeships for over 25s — which we've seen more than double as a proportion of all apprenticeships under this government — are being undertaken by existing employees.

At the same time, the proportion of apprenticeship starts by young people is down by almost a quarter under this government, and the number of young people starting apprenticeships has fallen in the last year.

The number of over 60s starting an apprenticeship has increased by 520 per cent since 2010 — 25 times more than the figure for the under 25s, while the vast majority of apprenticeship starts have been at lower levels — just 2 per cent have been at level four or above.

And to many apprentices, particularly young people, are not receiving the appropriate minimum wage.

So where this government has failed, the next Labour government will act. We will work towards a system where all apprenticeships are at level three and above, last at least two years and are focused on new entrants.

Employers in all sectors and of all sizes constantly raise with me the need for the system to be better aligned to their needs. That's why Labour will put employers in the driving seat, giving employers through sector bodies a greater role and helping them boost apprenticeships within supply chains. And we will give city and county regions the powers and budgets they need, including over adult skills based on local commissioning plans.

To boost apprenticeship numbers, we would put to

use the billions of pounds which government already spends on procurement to create more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities, requiring all suppliers getting major public contracts to offer apprenticeships.

This approach is backed up by the cross-party BIS select committee which has estimated that at least one new apprenticeship could be created for every £1m spent

We will work towards a system where all apprenticeships are at level three and above, last at least two years and are focused on new entrants

on procurement. Sadly, the government has blocked the progress of two private member's bills which would have legislated to put in place our plans.

So that young people and employers have the skills they need, we would also ensure all young people study English and maths to the age of 18.

We want FE lecturers teaching young people to have teaching qualifications, to be qualified in maths and English, and to spend time in industry regularly to refresh their skills.

We will introduce a new tech bacc to drive up the quality of technical education in schools and colleges, with new institutes of technical education to underpin excellence at the best FE institutions.

We would make it easier for Catapult Centres — initiated by the last Labour government to bring together scientists and engineers to develop new technologies into successful business propositions — to take on apprentices and drive the creation of high-quality technical opportunities.

And we will work with leading companies and universities to develop new Technical Degrees teaching the high-level skills which our economy needs.

This will enable us to tackle our skills gaps and ultimately increase the UK's productivity. That is the prize and we must grab it.



When we first came to government in 2010 the apprenticeship system was in a mess.

Some apprenticeship placements lasted less than half a year. Others offered next to nothing in proper on-the-job training.

So-called 'programme-led' schemes had no programme at all, isolating apprentices from the workplace and their employer.

Only 50 per cent of our apprentices reported receiving the vital in-house training they needed to succeed.

In the next Parliament the Conservatives commit to delivering 3m more high quality employer-led apprenticeships, so that more people than ever before have a chance to equip themselves with the skills they need to succeed

Labour let our apprentices down. Something had to change.

We set out a clear plan to drive up the quality of apprenticeships and deliver meaningful, respected training for all who wanted it.

We put apprenticeships at the forefront of our economic plan. And it paid off.

Since 2010 we've created 2.1m new apprenticeships, focusing on the quality of every single one of them.

We wanted to ensure every young person had the right skills to equip them for the workforce and we wanted apprenticeships to be in direct competition with universities for the most ambitious, highly motivated young people.

hips if election victory comes their way

MATTHEW HANCOCK

Business, Enterprise & Energy Minister

We put measures in place to ensure every student leaves school with good GCSEs in maths and English.

We want every qualification to be worthwhile and relevant to the workplace which is why we are transforming the curriculum.

For example, the new maths GCSE includes questions on financial literacy, such as calculating the interest on a loan not just abstract algebra.

We've made sure every apprenticeship is a real paid job with an employer and lasting at least 12 months.

If you have high expectations of people then I have no doubt that they will rise to the challenge.

We've put employer in the driving seat, designing apprenticeships to suit them, not us in Whitehall. Apprentices can rise to meet the challenges of their employers and gain real-life skills for the job.

That's why we've asked employers — market leaders in sectors from finance to food, retail to steel — to literally rewrite the apprenticeship rulebook.

They're condensing hundreds of pages of complex, messy frameworks to a two-page description of the skills and behaviour employees should demonstrate in a particular industry and how they should be assessed.

Shorter, clearer, better standards written by employers for employers.

We believe in them and we believe in young people. But we don't want to stop there.

In the next Parliament the Conservatives commit to delivering 3m more high quality employer-led apprenticeships, so that more people than ever before have a chance to equip themselves with the skills they need to succeed.

Apprenticeships have been at the heart of our skills revolution and they will be at the heart of the next government, if we are re-elected in May.

I know just how valuable apprenticeships are.

I was proud to hire a brilliant apprentice who thrived in Parliamentary office, and is now standing as a parliamentary candidate for election in May. It's been incredibly rewarding to watch her grow professionally and to play a small part in that.

The Conservatives in government have thrown our weight behind apprentices and I'm proud of all we have achieved: there really has never been a better time to start an apprenticeship.

But we know there's more to do and we would go even further and run even faster to make sure that an apprenticeship is on par with a university degree.



VINCE CABLE

Business Secretary

My goal is for any young person to have two equally attractive routes to a rewarding career — by going to university or doing an apprenticeship up to and including degree level training.

During the last five years we have implemented reforms that have opened up the range and quality of apprenticeships and challenged the perception that a vocational education was inferior to a traditional university one.

As a result of conscious decisions I made as Secretary of State earlier in the Parliament, we have been able to double the number of apprenticeships over the last five years of coalition government and unique quality at a time of austerity.

Businesses, consumers and young people are now recognising the significant opportunities that apprenticeships can offer. It was one of my proudest moments as Business Secretary when, in December last year, we celebrated the two millionth apprenticeship — 16-year-old Paige, who marked this milestone and whom I met in Oxford, is being trained to design and manufacture advanced instruments for scientific research, as part of her higher apprenticeship.

She now has the opportunity to progress to a degree level qualification while learning on the job.

For me, the apprentice agenda is about quality as much as quantity. Employers have taken the lead in setting simpler, but more rigorous standards for apprenticeships in their own sectors. There are now clear expectations for apprentices embarking on careers as airplane fitters, electricians, paralegals, butchers, dental technicians and in more than 70 other fields — with demanding tests and tough grading along the way.

I want more companies to derive the benefits from offering high-quality training of this kind; 96 per cent of employers who've hired an apprentice believe their business has profited. This is just as true of small family firms as it is of Jaguar Land Rover, Airbus or British Telecom. We are simplifying apprenticeship funding to bring more small and medium-sized companies on board.

In the next parliament the Liberal Democrats would commit to doubling the number of businesses offering apprentices, in part by extending them to new sectors of our economy, like the creative and digital industries. This is not simply a numbers game; it's important that the apprenticeships we are creating teach valuable skills and expertise. I would like to see even more of degree-equivalent apprenticeships and more options within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

To help support this expansion the Liberal Democrats would change the funding mechanism to reward firms that

train. There would be a small levy on companies (except micro-companies) that would be fully ring-fenced and given back to companies that train — in the form of vouchers so those companies can choose their own preferred accredited apprenticeship arrangements.

To secure the high level vocational skills that businesses need, we also propose to develop specialist National Colleges as centres of expertise, where there is demand and an identified need, and these would represent a modern version of polytechnics. Those could typically involve partnerships with existing FE colleges.

The Liberal Democrats would commit to doubling the number of businesses offering apprentices

Liberal Democrats in the next government seek to ensure these opportunities are open to all, working with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the numbers coming from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors, and encourage under-represented groups to apply. We will also improve provision of independent careers information, advice and guidance for all, through the National Careers Service.

Apprentices make a vital contribution to the economy, boost business productivity and give people the skills they need to get on in the world of work. There is objective analysis which supports that apprenticeships typically yield £18 of benefit for every £1 spent; benefit to the apprentices, the company which invests in apprenticeships and the wider economy.

As we celebrate National Apprenticeships Week 2015, I am enormously proud of the opportunities Liberal Democrats in government have created for people to gain the skills to get ahead. From accountancy to pharmacy, fashion design to software design, care work to police work, we've supported thousands of businesses, big and small, to grow and compete by developing apprenticeship training. I hope to continue this work with my Liberal Democrat colleagues as part of the next government.

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great futures start here.

NCFE Apprenticeships

NCFE is top of the class when it comes to supporting educators and offering clear, skills based progression for learners.

Our range of high quality Apprenticeships provide you with everything you'll need to help your learners develop the essential skills and experience to get on in the workplace.

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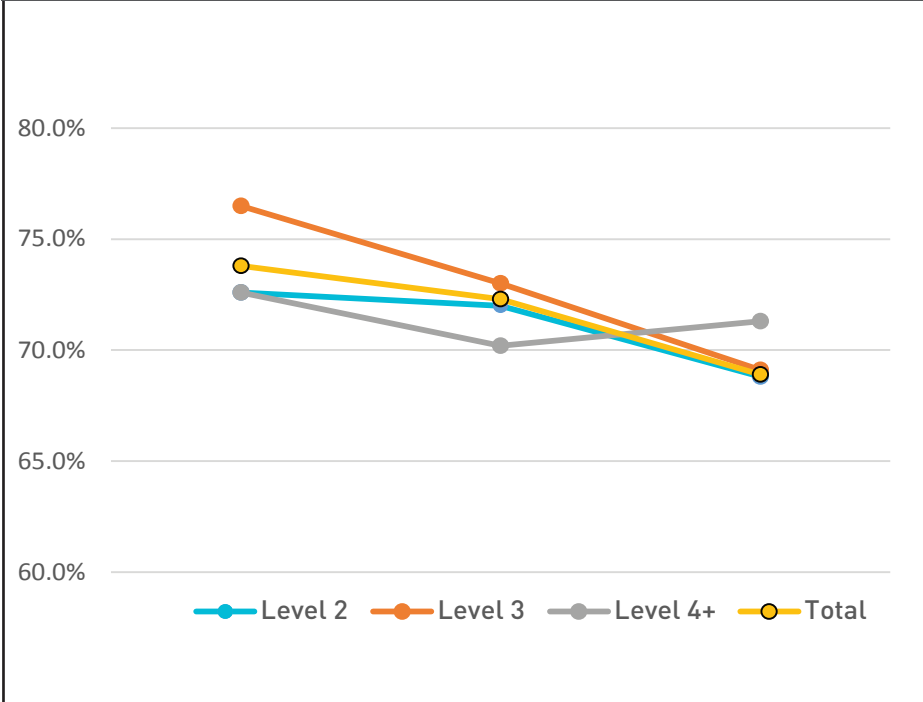
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AUTHOR OF THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO
FUNDING APPRENTICESHIPS

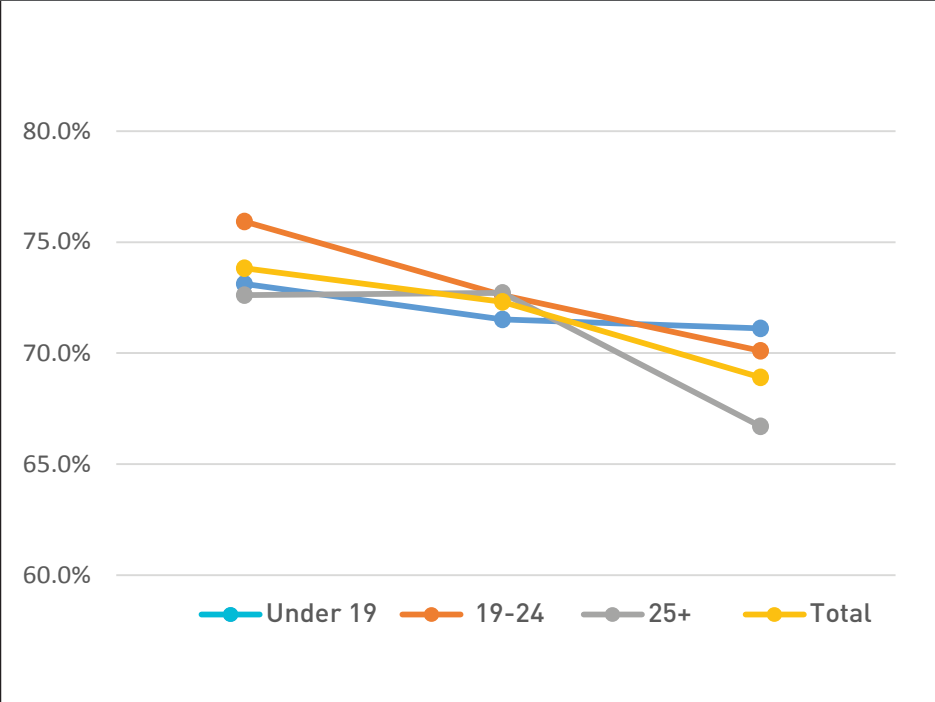
STATS

SUCCESS RATES BY LEVEL



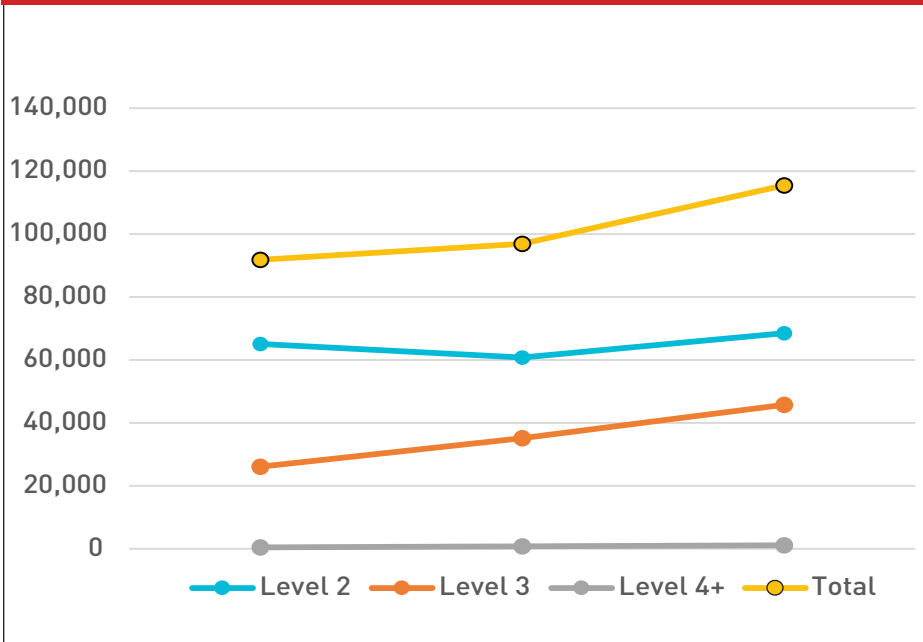
YEAR	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	SHIFT SINCE 12/13
Level 2	73%	72%	69%	-3%
Level 3	77%	73%	69%	-4%
Level 4+	73%	70%	71%	-1%
Total	74%	72%	69%	-3%

SUCCESS RATES BY AGE



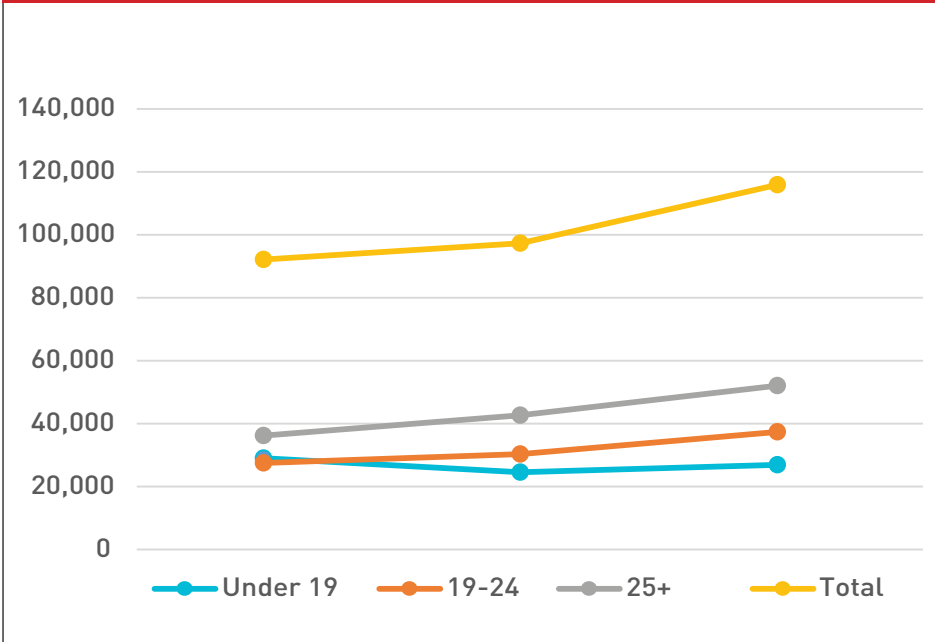
YEAR	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	SHIFT SINCE 12/13
Under 19	73%	72%	71%	-1%
19-24	76%	73%	70%	-3%
25+	73%	73%	67%	-6%
Total	74%	72%	69%	-3%

NON- ACHIEVEMENTS BY LEVEL



YEAR	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	SHIFT SINCE 12/13
Level 2	73%	72%	69%	-3%
Level 3	77%	73%	69%	-4%
Level 4+	73%	70%	71%	-1%
Total	74%	72%	69%	-3%

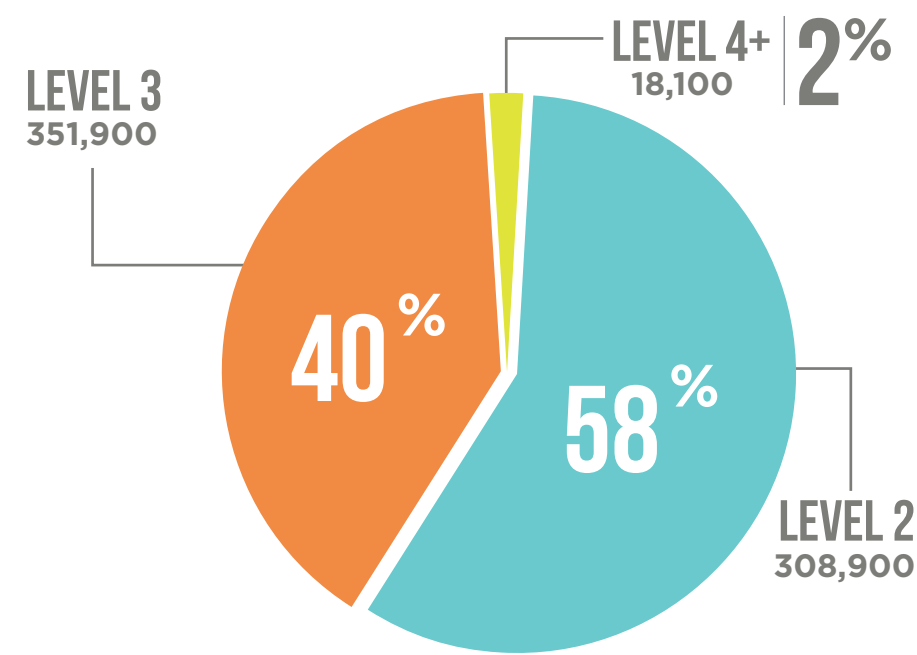
NON-ACHIEVEMENTS BY AGE



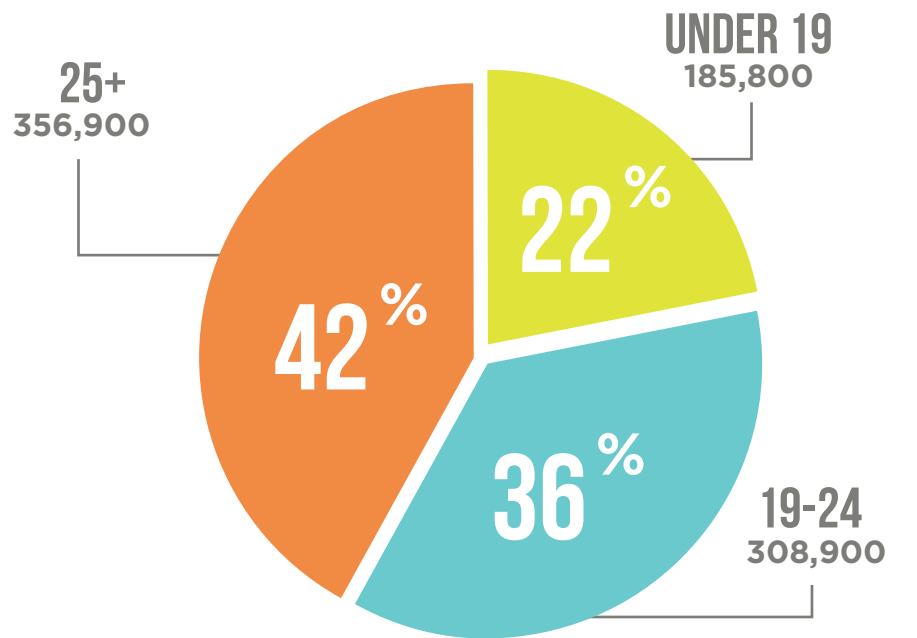
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Total	74%	72%	69%	-3%

Analysis of apprenticeship figures by Lsect number crunching expert and former FE Week editor Nick Linford has thrown up some eye-opening results.
Success rates among learners aged 25 and above, for example, fell by 6 per cent between 2012/13 and 2013/14.
The figures also demonstrated that apprenticeships are not London-centric, with the North West seeing the most starts in 2013/14 at 71,640, compared to 40,050 in London.
It was also interesting to note how popularity of different sector frameworks, again taking into account 2013/14 starts, varied between age groups. Hairdressing was, for example, second most popular for 16 to 18-year-olds, but did not make the top 15 for people aged 25 and above.
But which stats stick out for you?

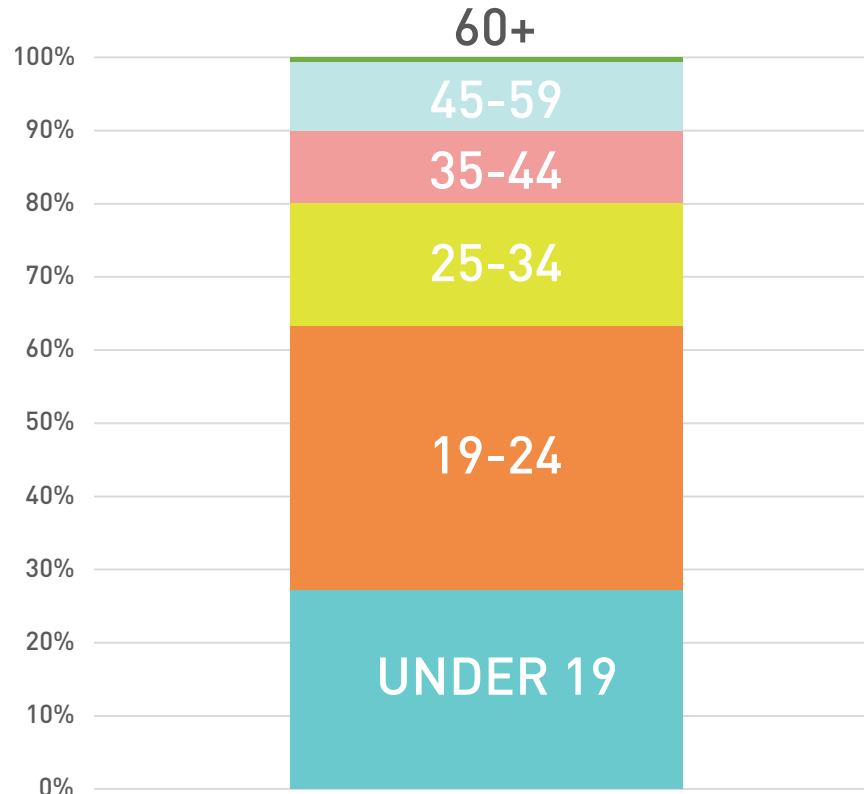
PARTICIPATION BY LEVEL (2013/14)



PARTICIPATION BY AGE (2013/14)



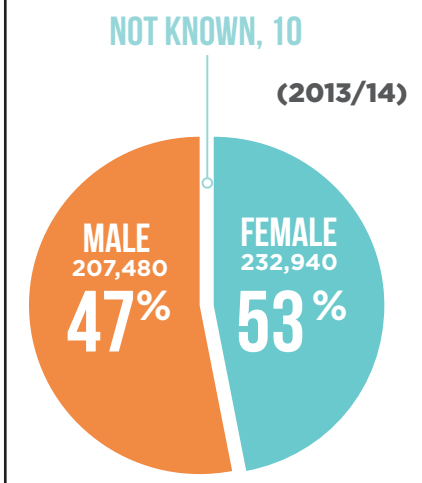
STARTS BY AGE (2013/14)



STARTS BY REGION (2013/14)

North West	71,670	16%
South East	60,220	14%
Yorkshire and The Humber	53,120	12%
West Midlands	52,410	12%
South West	45,960	11%
East of England	40,430	9%
East Midlands	40,290	9%
London	40,050	9%
North East	30,480	7%

STARTS BY GENDER (2013/14)



SECTOR FRAMEWORK	2013/14 ALL STARTS	% OF TOTAL	2013/14 16-18 RANK	2013/14 19-24 RANK	2013/14 25 RANK
Health and Social Care	70,080	16%	9	1	1
Business Administration	44,190	10%	1	2	5
Management	33,140	8%	not in top 15	6	2
Hospitality and Catering	32,010	7%	6	3	4
Customer Service	31,320	7%	7	4	3
Children's Care Learning and Development	24,320	6%	4	5	8
Retail	16,560	4%	14	7	7
Engineering	15,550	4%	5	8	not in top 15
Construction Skills	15,510	4%	3	9	not in top 15
Industrial Applications	14,860	3%	11	14	not in top 15
Hairdressing	14,670	3%	2	12	not in top 15
IT and Telecoms Professionals	9,820	2%	10	10	not in top 15
Active Leisure and Learning	9,130	2%	12	11	12
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	8,500	2%	8	15	not in top 15
Warehousing and Storage	7,110	2%	not in top 15	not in top 15	10
TOP 15 FRAMEWORKS BY STARTS	346,770	79%			

Debating the future of skills training

The issue of just who should be able to take apprenticeships is a hot topic for the political parties.

Labour is pledging to drive up standards by scrapping any below level three and lasting less than two years.

But the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives think there should still be a place for level two apprenticeships which are more accessible to less academic learners.

It has split the sector and created a debate around whether apprenticeships should be geared towards helping people who did not excel at school gain skills to establish themselves in well-paid jobs, or whether they should just offer a viable alternative to university for high-achievers.

Brian Lightman, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), said: "Apprenticeships should be accessible to all young people and therefore it is important that traineeships and level two apprenticeships continue to provide progression opportunities."

However, he thought a minimum of two years would "reinforce the image that apprenticeships are a valuable and well-regarded progression route".

Martin Doel (pictured left), chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: "We would not want those level two apprenticeships such as catering, which are respected by employers, to be lost. We will continue to discuss this issue with the Labour Party."

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), said: "We share the view of Skills Minister Nick Boles and employers that apprenticeships should start at level two because they offer a ladder of opportunity to higher vocational and degree learning opportunities as well as excellent career prospects."

"All employers know that their main

entry requirement is a willingness to learn, so entry requirements need to be as open as they can to give everyone a chance to maximise their potential."

That view also appears to have the backing of the business sector, as Rob Wall, Confederation of British Industry head of

education and skills, said: "An academic route is not right for everyone, so young people from all backgrounds [including differing levels of academic achievement] should be encouraged to think about the value of 'learn while you earn' routes, such as apprenticeships."

But Di McEvoy-Robinson (pictured right), co-owner of independent learning provider (ILP) Aspire, Achieve, Advance (3aaa) said the traditional view that apprenticeships should be for less academic learners "went out with the ark or is based on adults who have known nothing but a university route".

"It makes my blood boil to hear such outdated views," she said.

She is proud of the "robust" apprenticeship selection process run by 3aaa, which was rated outstanding across the board by Ofsted in November and is currently training 2,000 apprentices at level three and four only.

But Ms McEvoy-Robinson was "fundamentally opposed"

to any minimum length for training programmes and said: "A young person should be able to complete a qualification in the timeframe that suits them."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: "Level two training is really important, but we shouldn't call it apprenticeships, we should just call what they are doing training."

"The key thing is that apprenticeships lead to a proper job with prospects for career progression and level three is the absolute minimum level for that."

"I don't think you can become an expert in a job in six or eight months, so there is a strong argument for setting a minimum apprenticeship length."

Dr Lynne Sedgmore, executive director of the 157 Group, said focus on levels for apprenticeships was "unhelpful".

"What is critical is that industry sectors determine the right level of skills if they for entrants to different parts of the profession and these are then held in high regard by schools and colleges," she said.



ANN LIMB

CHAIR, SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNER (SEMLeP) AND FORMER PRINCIPAL OF MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE AND CAMBRIDGE REGIONAL COLLEGE

Sharing the take-up challenge

A concern of the FE and skills sector around Leps has been that their interests may lie not in apprenticeships, but in other areas of business concern, such as transport infrastructure. Ann Limb outlines where she sees the programme in the Lep list of priorities.

Apprenticeships are back in fashion with — political parties vying to outbid each other with bigger, bolder, better ideas for apprenticeship reform.

Political promises and media hype combine to create a climate in which the 'currency' of apprenticeships is one you'd want to buy right now — but are employers and young people and their parents so eager to get their hands on them and do Leps have a brokerage role at local level in encouraging and facilitating take-up?

Whichever government is in power after

the general election, I think Leps will play a critical coordinating and connecting role in ensuring targets for apprenticeship growth are met — and Leps will need to up our game to lead this change.

One of the achievements of Leps over the last four years has been to engage more businesses in the work of skills providers of all types from across their local areas.

Where Leps have been successful, they are able to demonstrate that they have helped bridge long standing, and sometimes entrenched chasms of misunderstanding between the different worlds of employers and providers — that tired refrain that goes something like 'providers don't turn out the skilled recruits employers need' and 'employers don't know that their local providers can supply the skills they need'.

The culture, language, and behaviours

required by 'local growth deal making' have helped break the mould. Negotiating and prioritizing local growth deals have presented opportunities to Leps to develop strong strategic relationships with the principals and governors of FE colleges, independent learning providers and local authority adult education services, leading to maturing relationships based on shared vision, mutual respect and a commitment to shared partnership working.

No one says this is easy, and sometimes individuals from all sides slip back into more familiar game playing and point scoring habits.

However, where key players have formed effective partnerships, robust foundations now exist on which further positive developments can be built.

Our shared challenge is to ensure greater take-up of apprenticeships by employers of all sizes, together with stronger promotion of the importance of apprenticeships.

We have made some progress on this front for example in my own Lep — SemleP — where apprenticeships are integral to our agreed growth plans to 2020 for three principal reasons.

They are a significant contributor to job growth in key sectors (with 12,939 starts during 2013/14) and to our GDP target (an estimated £30 to 40 return on every £1 invested); they help our businesses to 'grow their own' and to identify and nurture new talent in our Lep growth

sectors, with businesses now providing evidence of increased productivity, greater employee loyalty and improved customer satisfaction through their participation in apprenticeship programmes; and they provide career progression pathways for young people, unemployed/young NEETs and adults helping to promote a more diverse workforce.

To realise our 2020 target, SemleP providers and employers have jointly agreed a partnership plan to improve the volume, value and impact of apprenticeships across our Lep area.

Our shared ambition is to increase the number of apprenticeship starts by 5 per cent each year until 2020.

This is not, however, without its challenges that include achieving significant year-on-year growth at the same time as implementing major change in national funding and standards reform, limited impartial support for SMEs to broker the skills they need to grow their business, ongoing limited awareness of apprenticeships and positioning higher apprenticeships as a viable route for both learners and employers and building provider 'readiness' for higher apprenticeships.

Notwithstanding the enormity go the task ahead, I am optimistic about what we can achieve together over the next five years — regardless of the political colour of the government.

It's not unusual

Everyone in the sector knows that the tired old idea of an apprenticeship as only for young people going into traditional areas such as construction or bricklaying is a thing of the past — but the huge range of apprenticeships out there could still come as a surprise to many.

Yes, there are apprenticeships in business admin and law, but it's also possible to sign up as an apprentice in anything from funeral directing to fish husbandry. FE Week takes a look at some of the more weird and wonderful apprenticeships out there.

Fish husbandry and fish management



Fish husbandry apprentice Charlie Moore

Charlie Moore, aged 19, completed a level two apprenticeship in October with Sparsholt College and Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF), a charity encouraging young people to try fishing.

"I got involved with GHOF, doing coaching and volunteering for them," he said.

"And then they offered me an apprenticeship.

"A lot of it is working with children —

we teach people from all backgrounds, some are socially excluded, some have disabilities and we work with local schools.

"And then the other side is fishery management — we have six coaching lakes here and my job is to collect ticket money, make sure the lakes are looking presentable and looked after."

Charlie has now been offered a full time job with GHOF.

Costume and wardrobe

Louise Scholz-Conway, aged 23, has finished a level three apprenticeship with Angels the costumiers and Amersham and Wycombe College, and is now a full-time employee, helping costume designers for stage and screen.

Louise, who has always loved historical and vintage clothes, said she was keen to find out how to turn her passion into a career.

"Day to day, the apprenticeship involved learning about different periods and shapes, putting together looks as requested by customers (usually costume designers), and



Costume and wardrobe apprentice Louise Scholz-Conway

recording what I had done," she said.

"A personal highlight has been working on Call the Midwife.

"I also really enjoy getting the opportunity to be completely historically accurate with the looks I put together for documentaries, as I get to show off my expertise."

RAF intelligence analyst



Lauren Viles, with training instructor Group Captain Stuart Stirrat

Former air hostess Lauren Viles quit her job with British Airways to become a level three intelligence analyst apprentice for the RAF.

The 25-year-old, who had been an air hostess for six years, completed a 16-week training course as part of the programme last month (February) at Chicksands military services academy, in Bedfordshire, and will now gain on-the-job experience at RAF Digby, in Lincolnshire.

She said: "The apprenticeship interested me because I come from a military family and I've loved every minute so far.

"I've learned how to analyse information on fictional conflicts and pick out what's needed for briefings for commanders. The next step will be to apply that in real-life military situations."

Funeral operations and services



Training manager Chris Douglas with one of Eileen's apprentices, Richard Bland, aged 38

There are several job roles available on this framework — funeral service operatives, who drive and care for hearses and carry coffins, funeral arrangers, an office-based role arranging helping families choose a funeral plan, and funeral directors, who oversee the process and support the family through the funeral itself.

Eileen Dobson, training development officer for Co-Operative Funeralcare, which runs level two and three apprenticeships with Learndirect, said: "It's very popular, we get learners from age 18 up to 58 — male and female.

"It's a marmite profession — but young people are interested in it because it's something different and you can make a difference to people at the most traumatic times of their lives, so job satisfaction is huge."

Automotive clay modelling



Nissan clay modelling apprentice Sanny Kumar

Automotive clay modellers bring car designers' ideas to life, creating clay models from blueprints to test the designs in three dimensions — it's a niche area with a huge skills gap.

Sanny Kumar, aged 18, is a level three apprentice with Nissan and West Thames College.

Sanny said: "I have always been creative and into cars and the job role of a clay modeller is a combination of both.

"I have always been interested in 2D and 3D building, but didn't really know how to develop my interest. Since being on the Nissan apprenticeship, I now have the know-how and hands on experience I need for my future career."

EVENTS CALENDAR MARCH 2015

JUST A SMALL SELECTION OF WHAT'S ON

MONDAY 9

TUESDAY 10

WEDNESDAY 11

LAUNCH EVENT (5.30PM TO 7.30PM >),
EMPLOYERS' LUNCH (12PM TO 1.30PM)

EMPLOYERS' LUNCH (12PM TO 1.30PM)

APPRENTICESHIP OPEN EVENING

JOB SWAP BETWEEN HAIRDRESSING AND CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICES >
INTRO TRAIN, OXFORD > 10AM TO 2.30PM
MORE INFO: www.introtrain.com

'MEET THE EMPLOYERS EVENT (10AM START > TUESDAY) AND OPEN
EVENING (5.30PM TO 8PM > WEDNESDAY) > NESBOT COLLEGE, EPSOM

LASTS
2
DAYS

APPRENTICESHIP INFORMATION EVENT (10AM TO 4PM > MONDAY),
APPRENTICESHIP WORKSHOPS (12.30PM TO 5PM > TUESDAY) > SUSSEX
COAST COLLEGE

LASTS
2
DAYS

MORE INFO: www.sussexcoast.ac.uk

APPRENTICESHIP DRAGON
COLLEGE > 11AM
MORE INFO: www.h...

APPRENTICESHIP NETWORKING EVENING > PORT ACADEMY LIVERPOOL >
5.30PM TO 9.30PM
MORE INFO: www.portacademyliverpool.com

ENGINEERING OPEN EVENING > MIDLAND GROUP TRAINING SERVICES > 4PM
TO 7PM
MORE INFO: www.mgts.co.uk

'MASTER AND THE APPR
10AM TO 3PM
MORE INFO: www.c...

YOU'RE HIRED JOBS FAIR > EAST SUSSEX APPRENTICESHIPS > 5.30PM TO
7.30PM
MORE INFO: www.sussexdowns.ac.uk

APPRENTICESHIP INFORMATION OPEN DAY AND CAREERS ADVICE SESSIONS
> BURY COLLEGE > LASTS TWO DAYS > 10AM TO 4PM

LASTS
2
DAYS

AAC | 2015

FE WEEK ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP
CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2015
MONDAY MARCH 9 - TUESDAY MARCH 10, 2015 | LONDON

WWW.FEWEEKAAC2015.CO.UK

APPRENTICESHIPS NETWORKING BREAKFAST (7.30AM TO 9AM > MONDAY)

CAREERS FAIR (1PM TO 7PM > TUESDAY)

APPRENTICESHIPS NETWORKING
WEDNESDAY)

015



Apprenticeships

National Apprenticeship Week

9–13 March 2015

WEDNESDAY 11

THURSDAY 12

FRIDAY 13

LASTS
4
DAYS

EVENING (4PM TO 7PM)

APPRENTICESHIP GRADUATION EVENING (5PM START)

JAMIE OLIVER FIFTEEN APPRENTICE CHALLENGE > BOROUGH MARKET, LONDON > 11AM TO 4PM
MORE INFO: www.jamieoliver.com/the-fifteen-apprentice-programme/home

MORE INFO: www.hughbaird.ac.uk

MORE INFO: www.nescot.ac.uk

DROP-IN DIGITAL APPRENTICESHIP SESSION > BEYOND LOCAL, WESTERHAM > 3PM TO 7PM
MORE INFO: beyondlocal.co.uk

W'S DEN CHALLENGE > HERTFORD REGIONAL

rc.ac.uk

APPRENTICESHIP INFORMATION EVENT > MACCLESFIELD COLLEGE > 5PM - 7PM
MORE INFO: www.hrc.ac.uk

APPRENTICE DAY > CAMBRIDGE REGIONAL COLLEGE >

amre.ac.uk

BRITISH GAS APPRENTICESHIPS OPEN DAY > LEICESTER ACADEMY > STARTS 9.45AM > REGISTER IN ADVANCE
MORE INFO: www.britishgasjobs.co.uk

BRITISH GAS APPRENTICESHIPS OPEN DAY > LEEDS ACADEMY > STARTS 9.45AM > REGISTER IN ADVANCE
MORE INFO: www.britishgasjobs.co.uk

APPRENTICESHIP INFORMATION EVENT > MACCLESFIELD COLLEGE > 5PM - 7PM
MORE INFO: www.macclesfield.ac.uk

MORE INFO: www.burycollege.ac.uk

APPRENTICESHIP FAIR > NORTH OXFORDSHIRE ACADEMY > 6.30PM TO 8.30PM
MORE INFO: www.northoxfordshire-academy.org

EMPLOYER & LEARNER OPEN DAY > FNTC TRAINING BOURNEMOUTH/POOLE > 10AM TO 4PM
MORE INFO: www.fntctraining.co.uk

DROP-IN APPRENTICESHIP SESSION WITH NHS APPRENTICESHIP SERVICE > TORBAY HOSPITAL > 10AM TO 5PM
MORE INFO: www.sdhct.nhs.uk/horizoncentre

APPRENTICESHIP NETWORKING EVENT > CHELMSFORD COLLEGE > 11.30AM TO 2PM
MORE INFO: www.chelmsford.ac.uk/

WORKING BREAKFAST (7.30AM TO 9AM >

LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS FROM CARPENTRY, ENGINEERING AND MOTORCYCLE REPAIR APPRENTICES (11.30AM TO 1.30PM > THURSDAY)

LIVE DEMONSTRATIONS FROM SPORT, MARINE AND IT APPRENTICES (11.30AM TO 1.30PM > FRIDAY) > SOUTH DEVON COLLEGE

MORE INFO: www.southdevon.ac.uk



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