APPRENTICESHIPS REPORT 2022|2023

all party parliamentary group on
apprenticeships

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ABOUT THE APPG

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships is a cross-party group of MPs and Peers which provides a forum for parliamentarians and employers to discuss how to promote the role of high-quality apprenticeships. The Group works to ensure that apprenticeships serve as a pathway to a career and examine how the apprenticeship model can meet the changing skill demands from businesses. The Group has heard from all the top apprenticeship experts, including the Minister and Shadow Minister for Skills, top civil servants, business groups and most importantly from apprentices themselves.

The APPG would like to thank our sponsors for their support of the Group. The APPG's sponsors are: Amazon, Babcock International, BAE Systems, The Co-op, Engineering UK, Go-Ahead, London South Bank University, Multiverse, WMG at the University of Warwick, and the University of Salford.

FOREWORD

appg all party parliamentary group on apprenticeships

In a year that has brought us three Prime Ministers and three Secretaries of State for Education, it has been a fascinating time for us both to hear from the huge variety of speakers who have joined our meetings. What has stood out most is the dedication and passion of industry in ensuring equal access of participation to high quality apprenticeships, across all sectors.

A recurrent theme throughout the APPG sessions this year is a call for improvements to the Levy to ensure that it works to support all apprentices, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by allowing for greater flexibility in how the Levy is spent. This will not only open up access to apprentices but support small and medium enterprises in offering apprenticeships.

Analysis from the Chartered Management Institute in 2022 found that apprenticeships are on track to add £7bn to the economy by 2029, making clear the importance and strength of reward of investment in this sector.

We would like to thank all who have contributed to our sessions this year, and in particular the apprentices who have joined us to share their insights. Ultimately, we seek to improve the apprenticeships offering to allow more people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in technical education.

As we move towards a general election, there is no doubt that the importance of the post-16 technical education landscape will continue to be at the heart of the debate when it comes the future of skills. We will continue in our work to promote best practice for apprenticeships policy, bringing diverse and experienced voices to the table and building cross-party consensus on this most vital of education debates.

If you would like more information on the APPG, please contact the secretariat at: **ApprentceishipsAPPG@connectpa.co.uk** and follow us on Twitter via **@ApprenticeAPPG.**

Charlotte Nichols, MP for Warrington North
Co-Chair of the APPG on Apprenticeships

Jonathan Gullis, MP for Stoke-on-Trent North
Co-Chair of the APPG on Apprenticeships

RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Ensure that the functional skills requirement to complete an apprenticeship is not a barrier. Currently, you do not need a Level 2 qualification in English and Maths to pursue T-Levels, A-Levels, or a degree. We support encouraging the acquisition of these skills but believe there should be more inclusive pathways to prevent this from becoming a barrier to completing an apprenticeship.

2

Improve flexibility and simplicity for SMEs to grow apprenticeships further. Many SMEs have difficulty navigating the Apprenticeship System (AS) and, if mistakes are made reserving funds on the platform, there is no retrospective fix and levy transfers have to be made instead of co-investment. This could be mitigated by allowing training providers to reserve funds on behalf of their clients, or allowing SMEs to reserve the co-investment fee for at least up to one month after the start of the apprenticeship.

3

That no apprenticeship standards are only serviced by one End Point Assessment Organisation leaving employers and providers with no choice and at risk of being 'held over a barrel' with regards to EPA cost and requirements. This would encourage take up of apprentices by employers further.

4

The current apprenticeships budget must be a floor, not a ceiling. Any plans to broaden the Levy's scope must protect the current budget ring-fenced for apprenticeships. We would also like to see more transparency about how the levy is distributed, how Barnett consequentials operate in practice, and to which apprenticeships the levy is going. We would support the broadening out of funding to include covering backfill costs for the 20% off the job training requirement, as employees often need replacing while this is ongoing.

5

Limit red tape for employers by shifting the burden of levy transfer to training providers to benefit SMEs. It should be a national priority to support SMEs with apprenticeships from start to finish, even before a training provider is chosen. The apprenticeship levy transfer mechanism has proven to be an excellent way for larger organisations to support the SMEs in their network by donating their unspent levy funds. There are a few improvements that could be made to the logistics. The most straightforward of these would be to allow training providers to manage the levy transfer process.

6

A greater focus and investment on green apprenticeships. There is an increasing alignment between the green and digital agendas, and we would like to see further investment in green-focussed apprenticeships to accommodate for the jobs of the future and the green agenda. This could centre around flexibility of funding to allow greater support from colleges for green skills, and flexibility in standards development to allow for the incorporation of green skills.

7

To consider providing the cost of a dedicated resource to promote and provide apprenticeships within an organisation. We believe this could drive starts and outcomes as many organisations cannot afford an "apprenticeship manager" as an example.

CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD

University of Salford MANCHESTER

Supporting the pipeline of talent required for industry success

Skills have been at the forefront of the government's levelling up agenda and there are huge challenges for businesses in recruiting staff with the right skills. Tech UK's recent Digital Economy Monitor *(https://www.techuk.org/resource/digital-economy-monitor-q3-2022-results.html)* found that 57% of UK IT firms find the present talent shortage and access to skills among the biggest barrier for their companies. Furthermore, Make UK's Quarter One HR Bulletin *(https://www.makeuk.org/insights/publications/hr-bulletin-q1-2023)* found over the past three months 80% of manufacturing companies have been trying to recruit new staff in and only 24% of these companies successfully filled all of their vacancies. The two main barriers to recruitment were a lack of candidates applying with the right qualifications and a lack of technical skills.

Apprenticeships have transformed the way in which industry is able to attract and retain talent, and support, develop and progress existing staff. Ensuring that everyone has access to high quality training and opportunities to progress in the workplace throughout their lifetimes is a key plank of the Government's skills agenda.

The University of Salford has been offering higher and degree apprenticeships since 2016, and in that time the institution has had over 2,000 total apprentice starts and worked with almost 500 employers – large and small – across Salford, Greater Manchester and beyond.

Scott Bell is the early talent manager at Laing O'Rourke, an international engineering and construction company. He explained how employing an apprentice through the University of Salford has improved the organisation.

> *"Apprentices are a key part of our talent pipeline and as they develop, they bring enthusiasm, new ideas, and they also energise those who help them on their journey."*
>
> *But it's not just the individual and business that are boosted, apprenticeships have a wider impact: "Construction apprenticeships are essential to the industry and the UK economy," said Scott.*
>
> *"Construction is something that touches everyone's lives delivering the homes we live in, the offices we work in, the hospitals our children are born in or the stadium we watch sport in.*
>
> *"To deliver these projects, we need a continual pipeline of talent to grow into the industry and apprenticeships are key to this."*

It is this pipeline of talent that the University of Salford are continually looking to support employers across the region with. Apprenticeships and our new Level 4 and 5 higher technical skills programmes are providing employers with a valuable mechanism to train, upskill and retrain staff, supporting individuals to develop and progress and strengthening their organisations with the future workforce and access a pipeline of trained talent for generations to come.

WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND PATHWAYS IN APPRENTICESHIPS

Our session on widening participation explored what barriers currently exist to those wanting to enter or progress in an apprenticeship, and how we can improve uptake.

Carolyn Savage OBE, Head of Youth Engagement and Apprentice Participation, Department for Education outlined four common themes: fewer young people consider apprenticeships than other routes; the apprenticeships recruitment process is difficult for other people; that there is a lack of attractive and accessible apprenticeship vacancies; and that many young people are vocationally undecided where they do not know which occupation or sector they would like to work in.

Other attendees, including the OFS and Amazon, noted additional barriers to apprenticeships such as entry requirements unnecessarily placed on some job roles, functional English and maths skills, insufficiently diverse provision, the quality of careers advice and guidance, low attainment in prior years, and pathways into apprenticeships at Level 2 and below which provide the 'opportunity ladder'.

It was suggested that well-funded and well incentivised (for employers) pathways for underrepresented groups were needed to combat some of these barriers, as well as better evaluation of apprenticeships to use going forward.

Several attendees noted that apprenticeships can't continue to be treated as only for those with low outcomes, with Baroness Garden of Frognal saying schools should celebrate their apprenticeship leavers as they would other programmes.

Speakers from Amazon commented that many young people, families and teachers still think apprenticeships are low-paid and that there aren't many jobs. Concerns were also raised that young people and parents feel employers don't value apprenticeships. It was suggested that work experience could be encouraged for employers so they can see what it's like to have an apprentice.

Lord Baker of Dorking added that every provider should be asking to go into schools. It was mentioned that the Provider Access legislation should encourage more providers to go into schools. Baroness Bennett queried the point around whether functional skills like maths and English education were need in apprenticeships.

Attendees said that certain levels of maths and English aren't always needed, so removing them takes out the risk for the apprenticeship and lowers the cost for the employer. As they appear to be a barrier to access and completion, changing this could improve success rates.

Others mentioned it can be very disheartening for people to not gain those functional skills and therefore not gain their apprenticeship.

CASE STUDY: MULTIVERSE

Creating a diverse group of future leaders

Multiverse is on a mission to create a diverse group of future leaders by building an alternative to university and corporate training through tech apprenticeships. The company provides apprenticeships to young adults and those looking to reskill; 12-15 month programs that train individuals in in-demand skills such as software engineering, digital marketing, and data analytics.

Working with over 1000 organisations, companies use Multiverse so they can embrace digital transformation, close skills gaps and reach a more diverse population.

Individuals. meanwhile, can enrol on Multiverse's programmes without the constraints of their ability to go without pay or take on debt.

The impact of our approach is clear:

69% of Multiverse apprentices gain new job responsibilities after they finish their apprenticeship

93% remain at their company after they complete their apprenticeship

Multiverse has tracked over £550m in return for its clients, resulting from the work of apprentices

For apprentices like Jay, 45, a Multiverse apprenticeship offered a chance to learn a skill that had always interested him, while enhancing his career and benefitting his employer in the process:

> *"Data analysis had always been something that interested me, and I had taken on projects at work that meant sifting through piles of information.*
>
> *It's very clear from the outset that the apprenticeship runs at your own pace, and you can go over things after the sessions if you need. What also helps me is being able to use my new skills at work. I can see that there is actually a point to what I am learning.*
>
> *If you, like me, didn't have the best experience at school, don't do what I did and avoid education for 30 years. Consider an apprenticeship."*

With a community of more than 10,000 apprentices and alumni, Multiverse received an Outstanding in their latest Ofsted inspection and recently became the first apprenticeship provider to be granted degree awarding powers.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND NET ZERO

The UK has set a net zero emissions target by 2050, with interim goals to reduce 67% of emissions by 2030, and 78% by 2035. Therefore, when we think about the future of skills policy, we must always consider how it will feed into the UK's climate commitments – such were the words of Jackie Champman, Managing Director of Capital City College Training, at our November 2022 meeting.

This session focussed on the role apprenticeships can play in helping the UK achieve net zero, and what changes are needed to create a future workforce that can support the green economy.

Capital City College Group has up to 30,000 apprentices at any one time training in a variety technical education options, and has recently pioneered a Green Academy Hub. This was in response to an ever-increasing number of students looking for opportunities to take modules that allow them to develop skills that meet the climate challenges we face. However, many leave disappointed at the number of employment opportunities available during and following their studies.

This is not to say that net zero targets do not demand an increase in such roles. Beatrice Barleon, Head of Policy & Public Affairs at EngineeringUK, presented evidence from her organisation's report on the net zero workforce (*https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/318932/net-zero-workforce_engineeringuk_update_april2023.pdf*). This found that the largest skills gap is at Level 3, and that while overall demand for engineering skills remains high there are significant challenges ahead in key sectors required for net zero. In the buildings sector, for example, retrofitting will require the training of 45,000 technicians each year at its peak in 5 to 10 years' time.

Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Apprentices and Lifelong Learning, voiced Labour's belief in the economic and climate necessity of apprenticeships. Part of this included their proposed reforms to the Apprenticeships Levy to create a Growth and Schools Levy. This would allow for retraining of the existing workforce in the green skills of the future.

Participants in the session agreed that greater flexibility of the Apprenticeships Levy was needed to help providers develop curricula that better reflected the need for green skills, including the integration of digital skills within this. There were also calls for a new green unit in every apprenticeship to help futureproof professions.

CASE STUDY: WMG - UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

WMG
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

UK Battery Industry Trailblazer – A forward looking approach to apprenticeship design and delivery

The nascent battery industry in the UK is predicted to require the skilling or reskilling of a minimum of 100,000 employees in manufacturing and associated supply chain by 2030 to ensure that automotive manufacture can continue at its present level. An additional 50,000 could be added to this estimate for battery skills that will be needed outside of manufacturing and the automotive industry.

The existing apprenticeship standards did not provide an appropriate framework for the training of battery technicians. In conjunction with Cogent Skills, WMG - University of Warwick was asked to form a specific trailblazer group to pull together existing employers to develop a standard that would be fit for the battery industry.

> *"Ensuring we have a robust apprenticeship that will allow the battery industry to flourish is absolutely critical, in alignment with other skills initiatives, in demonstrating to investors that the UK has the skills environment necessary to meet their needs."*
>
> **Dr Benjamin Silverstone, Associate Professor and Director of WMG Skills Centre**

Currently chaired by the UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC), this trailblazer group has drawn on UK Battery Skills Framework established in 2021 to create a standard that can be used across the whole of the battery manufacturing process - from gigafactories to technicians working in companies innovating in battery pack technologies. Crucially, any company doing more than purchasing ready assembled batteries for installation can use the standard as a framework within which to train their technicians.

WMG continues to be involved with the trailblazer group providing expert input into the design of the standards. We are also exploring progression routes and means of supporting businesses with more short, sharp interventions to support immediate skills development.

APPRENTICESHIPS AND T LEVELS

With thousands of students already enrolled on T Level courses, December's session took the opportunity to examine how the Government's flagship new qualification and apprenticeships can work together to provide a cohesive technical education journey for young people post-GCSEs.

Evidence from UCAS suggests that, whilst small, the first graduating class of T Level students had done well in comparison to their peers. John Cope, Director of Strategy, Policy and Public Affairs at UCAS, presented findings that showed around a third of the 2022 graduating class had applied to higher education, with an acceptance rate of 80% - higher than A-Level students.

When it comes to digital skills, T Levels present an opportunity to expedite entry to the UK's tech sector which so often finds itself short of the necessary talent needed to support its growth ambitions, as well as supporting existing apprenticeships routes into the industry. Evidence from Nash Squared's 2022 Digital Leadership Report *(https://www.nashsquared.com/dlr-2022)* found that 70% of digital leaders said that a skills shortage prevented them from keeping up with the pace of change.

The company's CEO, Bev White, emphasised that the key to meeting this demand for tech talent is a system of further education that supports the creation of a sustainable talent pipeline of young people. She said the industry was encouraged by the creation of specified routes for key areas of talent shortage, such as the Cyber Security pathway of the Digital Support Services T level. However, the barrier to this was a lack of enthusiasm on the part schools and colleges in some regions for technical education, with a drive instead towards academic study. This is borne out in figures from UCAS which show that 1 in 3 students do not receive advice on apprenticeships from careers advisors.

Aside from the academic benefits of T Levels, Jason Beaumont, Chief Executive of Access Creative College, praised the qualifications and their associated work placements for allowing students to develop 'soft skills' by experiencing the workplace from a younger age. This, he said, created a more connected progression into intermediate and high apprenticeships where a greater degree of confidence was needed from young people, something that employers have increasingly come to expect.

A challenge raised by participants was the concern of SMEs when it came to the administration to host industry placements. While many would like to offer T Levels, the cost and work required to create a fulfilling programme was seen by many as prohibitive. This speakers to a wider trend in apprenticeships of a decline in SME participation. Data from Multiverse suggests that apprenticeship starts at small businesses remain 45% lower than before the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and 9% lower than before the pandemic.

CASE STUDY: ENGINEERINGUK

'Fit for the future' – Apprenticeship Inquiry

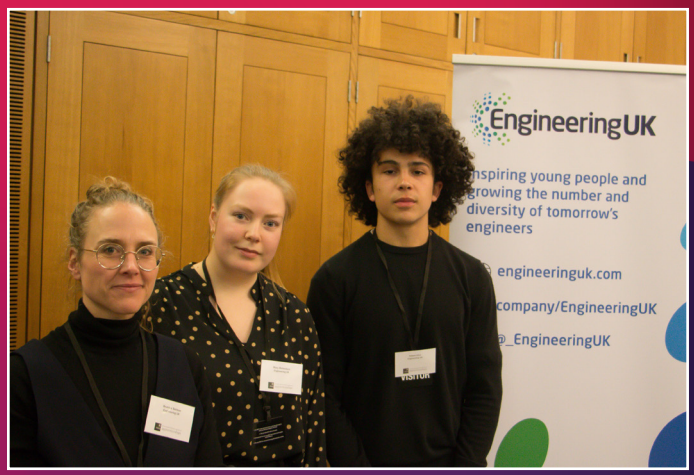
EngineeringUK is a not-for-profit organisation passionate about inspiring the next generation of engineers and creating a diverse future engineering workforce that enables the UK to thrive. The organisation works in partnership with the engineering community to inspire tomorrow's engineers and to increase the number and diversity of young people choosing pathways into engineering. An important part of their work is highlighting the vital role that vocational routes such as apprenticeships and T Levels play in widening career pathways for young people and meeting the skills needs of the sector.

EngineeringUK has been working in partnership with Lord Willetts and Lord Knight on an inquiry into engineering, manufacturing, and technology apprenticeships for young people. This inquiry was launched in January 2023, with a call for evidence *(https://www.engineeringuk.com/research-policy/fit-for-the-future-growing-and-sustaining-engineering-and-technology-apprenticeships-for-young-people)* looking to better understand the reasons behind the worrying decline in engineering, manufacturing and technology apprenticeships starts seen over recent years.

The inquiry has gathered evidence from almost 100 organisations and individuals through written submissions, oral evidence sessions and focus groups with young people. In the Autumn, the inquiry plans to publish its report including a series of policy recommendations designed to help to increase the number and diversity of young people taking up apprenticeships in the sector.

EngineeringUK continues to work closely with employers to highlight the importance of vocational pathways, including apprenticeships, to young people through its offer of careers related programmes. In June this year over 25,000 young people attended EngineeringUK's flagship event, the Big Bang Fair. Employers taking part in the Fair including Rolls Royce, Amazon, Network Rail and National Grid.

EngineeringUK also publishes research and reports on a range of topics including education, skills and workforce needs. Recent publications include 'Engineering skills needs – now and into the future' *(https://www.engineeringuk.com/news-views/demand-for-engineers-increasing-with-rapid-growth-in-green-jobs)* and a joint report by EngineeringUK and Make UK examining the issue of T Level industry placements – 'Unlocking Talent: Ensuring T Levels deliver the workforce of the future' *(https://www.engineeringuk.com/media/318632/unlocking-talent-ensuring-t-level-deliver-the-workforce-of-the-future-final.pdf)*.



CELEBRATING NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS WEEK

The APPG was proud to celebrate National Apprenticeships Week once more, with an op-ed from our Co-Chair Jonathan Gullis MP in The House Magazine, examining how SMEs can be further supported to benefit from apprenticeships. Research from Multiverse highlighted that apprenticeships are still seen as largely inaccessible to SMEs and apprenticeship starts at small businesses remain 45% lower than before the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy.

To further showcase the experience of SMEs and larger organisations, we hosted an Apprenticeships Fair in Parliament with a wide range of apprenticeships and businesses. The Fair heard from Beth Chaudhary, Strategy Director at the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning, and Baroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance.

Parliamentarians and attendees were invited to speak to apprentices to learn more about their roles and experience, and how they hope to continue progressing in their chosen field. Exhibitors included Babcock, London South Bank University, BAE Systems, Amazon, Warwick Manufacturing Group at the University of Warwick, EngineeringUK, Adopstar, Aston Martin Lagonda, HS2, and Troup Bywaters + Anders.

CASE STUDY: BABCOCK INTERNATIONAL

babcock™

Meeting the Future Skills Demand

Babcock is an international defence company headquartered in London and operating in our focus countries of the UK, Australasia, Canada, France, and South Africa. Our UK direct reporting country is a major provider of apprenticeships, supporting over 970 early careers apprentices on programme at any one time across the UK's Marine, Land, Aviation and Nuclear sectors. A Babcock apprenticeship gives hands-on technical experience in the workplace combined with college-based learning on a part-time basis, and we offer apprentices ranging from level 2 to 7.

Due to the large volume of our Babcock apprenticeship offering, we utilise our levy to support us with meeting our future skills demand, alongside offering a range of apprenticeships to employees as part of their continued professional development. The coming twelve months will see us broaden our early careers offering to offer more pre-apprenticeship programmes and we will be increasing our offering on degree apprenticeships as well as continuing to support employees with upskilling via an apprenticeship.

This year we have focussed on delivering shorter term vocational programmes by designing and delivering a Production Support Operative Programme. The aim of this programme supports the Government's levelling up agenda as it acts as an alternative recruitment pipeline by attracting people who have transferable skills. We offer a short-term vocational qualification, on the job training and then discuss the opportunity of completing an apprenticeship in a specific trade. Our Production Support Operative Programme has been extremely well received within the local communities with over 140 new recruits to the business.

NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS WEEK 2023 WITH KEVIN HOLLINRAKE, MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

In February of 2023, as part of National Apprenticeships Week the APPG was delighted to host a Fireside Chat with Kevin Hollinrake, Minister for Small Businesses and Theresa Villiers MP.

The discussion was wide ranging, and included discussions on how the Government can make it easier, and more attractive for SMEs to take on apprentices.

The Minister highlighted the important contribution that apprenticeships make to a high skill, high wage economy, and the benefits of the apprenticeships route for creating opportunities for work pathways. Minister Hollinrake recognised a key opportunity to make things easier for SMEs was by continuing to introduce and possibly expand the funds from larger organisations into the supply chain.

The Fireside Chat also offered the opportunity to discuss the massive skills programme that Government will have to deliver as part of achieving Net Zero. Minister Hollinrake praised SMEs as being "fleet of foot'", and often leading as innovators, highlighting the huge opportunities for SMEs that lie in decarbonisation, and new green jobs. In particular, he called attention to the role of apprenticeships in delivering skills for the future, in industries such as heat pumps, insulation and wind farms.

Minister Hollinrake paid tribute to the work already carried out by Government on apprenticeships and highlighted the amazing apprentices he met at the APPG's Apprenticeships Fair, and the value of hearing their experiences firsthand. The session ended with Minister Hollinrake highlighting the feedback he receives regularly about the need for greater flexibility in the Apprenticeships Levy – a theme amongst this year's report.

CASE STUDY: BAE Systems

BAE SYSTEMS

Partnership Working and Improving Diversity

BAE Systems is committed to apprenticeships. They form a key part of our skills strategy. The company is recruiting a record number of apprentices – recruiting 1073 in 2022 and on target to recruit c.1350 apprentices in 2023. This will be on over 60 different apprenticeship standards and frameworks across the UK, ranging from intermediate/ advanced apprenticeships through to higher/ degree and masters apprenticeships. Roughly two thirds of our apprenticeship opportunities are at intermediate/advanced apprenticeship level and one third at higher/degree level. The company has taken a leadership role through the Apprenticeship Trailblazers to develop standards that meet our and our wider sector's skills needs.

We are keen to use apprenticeships as a route into high skilled skills for young people from all backgrounds. As part of this we were a founder member of Movement to Work and working with the Prince's Trust to provide around 100 placements each year for the young unemployed and as a pathway into apprenticeships with us.

Apprenticeships really work for us and provide occupationally competent people to meet our complex STEM skills needs; often in areas like nuclear, software engineering and fabrication skills such as welding where there are real shortages of skilled personnel in the wider workforce. We are proud of the fact that c.95% of our apprentices complete and have maintained that high completion rate despite a significant growth in apprentice numbers in learning and the number of apprenticeship programmes too.

Apprenticeships also play a critical role as part of our diversity and inclusion strategy. Just under 30% of our 2022 apprentice intake was female and 31% of our 2023 apprenticeship offers are to women. Just under 9% of our 2023 apprenticeship offers are to ethnic minority applicants. 27% of our 2022 apprentice intake came from disadvantaged

communities. Our commitment to apprenticeships is helping to make us a more inclusive employer and making us more attractive as an employer to people from backgrounds under-represented in the engineering and manufacturing sector where, for example, in England less than 10% of the apprentice intake is female.

In this context the Apprenticeship Levy is important to BAE Systems. With our record intake of apprentices, we are in a fortunate position to be able to fully utilise our Apprentice Levy. It helps offset the investment the company makes in apprenticeships to meet our current and future skills needs. We have worked with our peer employers and with IfATE to ensure that we have the apprenticeship standards in place to meet our needs. The Levy also helps us to address new emerging skills needs as well. Around 10% of our 2022 intake were for digital apprenticeships and the company started using the Sustainability Business Specialist apprenticeship too to support our wider Carbon Net Zero strategy and acquisition of critical green skills for our future.

BAE Systems sees partnership with other employers, our education partners and with Government and its agencies as crucial to ensure that the UK skills system provides the skills needs for us as employers and the pathways into high skilled, long-term careers for young people that they need too. By working together as partners, we can make the Levy and the development of apprenticeship standards meet our needs and that of UK plc.

GENDER PARITY IN APPRENTICESHIPS

In March of 2023 the APPG was delighted to host a panel discussion to celebrate the contribution of women in apprenticeships and skills, highlighting best practice from stakeholders across the industry.

The session examined the role we can all play in making the sector truly gender-equal, across a wide range of industries. The theme of International Women's Day was #EmbraceEquity which the session sought to discuss through the lens of apprenticeships.

The panel was chaired by Baroness Alison Wolf of Dulwich. The session heard evidence from representatives at the Royal Shakespeare Company, Southwark Council and Engineering UK.
The session heard about the challenges currently facing the sector on gender parity across industries including:

- Lower levels of take up in apprenticeships sectors such as engineering and technical theatre.
- Barriers to take up of apprenticeships including outdated gendering of certain sectors, including STEM.

The session heard from the Royal Shakespeare company who listed the ways they are encouraging gender parity in take up of their apprenticeships including:

- The continuation of development work breaking barriers/stereotypes of apprenticeships.
- The regular review of apprenticeships standards being fit for purpose and when in development and use.
- Ensuring there is sufficient support for apprentices to cope with the cost of living in addition to the apprentice salary.

The session recognised that whilst progress has been made within recent years, there is still much to do.

CASE STUDY: LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

EST 1892 LSBU

Asma Parker, Architecture Apprentice, London South Bank University

Asma Parker is studying for an Architecture Apprenticeship at London South Bank University (LSBU).

After researching apprenticeships, she decided studying for one would be a “no-brainer” thanks to the combination of practical and theoretical work. She was encouraged to apply because it offered a realistic insight into the profession, would fast track her career, and allowed her to earn a wage whilst studying.

Through workshops and academic staff support, LSBU offered Asma a range of opportunities to develop both her practical and theoretical skills. Asma 100% recommends apprenticeships to anyone eager to get started in an industry they want to work in, and strongly commended LSBU for offering the best training for apprentices with modules catered to their work regime.

Asma is just one example of an apprentice studying at LSBU. As a University of Technology, they are one of the largest providers of higher and degree apprenticeships in the UK and deliver 32 apprenticeship standards - more than any other UK university - to 3,000 apprentices.

The University have established a first-of-its-kind group model which also comprises South Bank Academies, South Bank Colleges, South Bank Innovation. Their ambitious partnership offers technical pathways for local communities and businesses from Level 2 to Level 7.

THE FUTURE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Our session on The Future of Apprenticeships examined the changing world of work, and the skills we and employers will need in the not-so-distant future.

Speakers such as Multiverse explained how the future of work is changing faster than people can predict and that training should be available throughout an individual's career and at a time appropriate to the individual. Training should be flexible to employers and, as the labour market ebbs and flows, employers should have more ways available to them to upskill employees. Doniya Soni-Clark, Policy and Public Affairs Lead at Multiverse, said that the whole approach must be inclusive, and Government must find ways to get more people from more diverse walks of life into the workplace and into apprenticeships.

Dr Benjamin Silverstone, Associate Professor at Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG) at the University of Warwick focussed on how we need more skilled staff to deliver apprenticeships and that school level education is not currently conducive to technology and manufacturing businesses for the future.

Chris Pook, Government Policy Director for Nuclear AMRC, spoke about the Nuclear Skills Academy in Derby and said we need to increase the supply overall and how it is important that solutions don't rest on one particular part of industries but on sectors as a whole. He explained how helping to distil the skills that are useful in the whole sector provides people with more career certainty and options.

The Q&A discussion focussed on how trade unions can help make apprenticeships more accessible and equitable, whether the living wage is too low for apprentices, and how to encourage those businesses who have never had an apprentice to take one on.

Duncan Baker, MP for North Norfolk, spoke about trying to encourage new businesses to take on apprenticeships, and Chris gave the example of how Crossrail built in apprenticeships to contacts with procured suppliers. Doniya highlighted the benefit of using former apprentices to talk to those in school, and how useful organic marketing on social media can be, but that Multiverse is wary of generating too much demand if there is not enough supply. It was also discussed how exposure to real-world industry and apprenticeships could happen earlier in schools, which could help make them more equal with university education from a culture standpoint.

CASE STUDY: THE CO-OP

Tackling Underrepresentation

Under the apprenticeship levy funding guidelines, funds can be transferred from a levy payer to pay for the training and assessment costs of apprenticeships employed by any other organisation.

In 2021, the Co-op established a fund to help to tackle some of the underrepresentation within apprenticeships, such as from ethnic minority and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

This brought otherwise unused levy contributions from donating employers into one place to provide Apprenticeship opportunities to employers that might not be able to afford to offer Apprenticeships. The Co-op pays over £5m annually into its levy pot and uses less than £2m to cover the cost of training its own apprentices, up to 25% of the funding, so the Co-op typically transfers up to £1m each year to support Apprenticeships outside of the Co-op.

The ambition for the service was to co-operate with like-minded levy payers to pledge unspent levy funds and share them in a targeted way to support the provision of apprenticeships for under-represented groups. This removes some of the administrative burden for an employer.

Since the Co-op established the service in 2021, it has received pledges of over £18m from 60 organisations and has matched over 1,500 opportunities. Pledging businesses include Amazon, Greencore, Pertemps, BT, Nationwide and many others. Co-op Levy Share service is run and administered by The Growth Company, but the Co-op finances it.

The Apprenticeship Standards supported are broad, from Arborist and Adult Care Worker to Business Analysts and Civil Engineers, as well as Forklift Truck Technicians and Motor Vehicle Maintenance apprenticeships – currently over 75 standards are supported.

To date the apprenticeships supported have been:

- 35% individuals of non-white British ethnicity
- 64% female
- 22% declaring a caring responsibility
- 17% declaring a disability

The ambition of this service is to promote social mobility. This is achieved by supporting the training and assessment of new entrants into apprenticeships who might previously have struggled to secure an apprenticeship.

PUBLIC SECTOR APPRENTICESHIPS

To finish the year, the APPG looked to the public sector and the contribution apprenticeships make to workforce management and development.

At a time when public services are facing significant pressures, we heard from figures involved at the front line of delivering workforce strategies about the role apprenticeships can play in the future of their respective services.

Network Rail have introduced apprenticeships at various levels of their organisation to combat the impacts of an ageing workforce and preserve institutional knowledge. However, they have found that the cost of training to an appropriate standard is now so high that it is no longer fully met by the Apprenticeships Levy, particularly in safety critical roles.

The NHS has found that apprenticeships present an excellent opportunity to fill skills gaps in new areas such as prosthetics, mammography, and orthotics, with a much lower attrition rate in comparison to degree courses. For example, data suggests that over 95% of NHS nursing apprentices complete their qualifications, with most then choosing to remain with their employer following this rather than moving elsewhere in the country.

Jane Hadfield, the NHS's National Lead for Apprenticeships, explained that apprenticeships are being used as a tool to feed into wider progression pathways within the health service, as well as working in tandem with local skills development plans. A particular focus was put on creating a long-term sustainable workforce strategy.

As a challenge, Michelle Wyat of NHS Employers raised the inflexibility in the Levy, with Jane Hadfield also noting the expense to employers of apprentices undertaking extensive hours of off the job training. This includes those looking to qualify in essential roles such as registered nurses, health visitors and other allied health professionals. For the new medical doctor apprenticeship, this is expected to include up to 80% off the job training.

CASE STUDY: GO-AHEAD

Go-Ahead Group

Mehmet Pacaci, Apprentice with Govia Thameslink Railway and Go-Ahead Group

After a temporary career swap to the Metropolitan Police, Mehmet Pacaci, 27, made a comeback to the railway last year and is currently completing his second apprenticeship with Govia Thameslink Railway, part of Go-Ahead Group.

"As strange as it sounds, it took leaving the railway for me to appreciate how much I enjoyed it. Working for the police gave me good career experience, but I found I was missing the railway family and I'm very happy to be back. There's lots of opportunities to upskill yourself in rail, helped by a variety of apprenticeship courses that support personal and professional development.

"As well as my day job, I'm currently studying a Passenger Transport Operative apprenticeship, which was introduced as a new course last year. I've been doing it for four months and it provides a well-rounded look at customer service, security and safety on the railway, as well as preparing us with how to deal with difficult situations.

"As the apprenticeship is provided by my employer, my manager is very supportive of me carrying out the studies alongside work. You have to be quite disciplined to make sure you attend the workshops and complete assignments within the deadline, but I'm keen to progress so I try and do a little every day. I think everyone should take the opportunity to do an apprenticeship if they can because it's another qualification to proudly put on the CV."

Mehmet already has a customer service apprenticeship under his belt from his first stint in the railway. Now he's back again, he's setting his sights on a career as a train driver in the future.

He added,

"I was keen to do another apprenticeship as I learned so much on my first one and I'm constantly looking to develop my skills. As long as apprenticeships are on offer, I will always look to see which ones fit with my career because they really do help you progress in the industry."

Go-Ahead Group are targeting to hire over 1,000 apprentices in 2023 across their companies in rail and bus. Go-Ahead was also named as one of the UK's top 20 apprentice employers for 2022 in a ranking developed by the Department for Education, and as the top provider in the transport industry.

MORE PHOTOS FROM CELEBRATING NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIPS WEEK

If you would like any further information about the APPG, please contact the secretariat at **ApprenticeshipsAPPG@connectpa.co.uk** and follow us on Twitter **@apprenticeappg**