



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Apprenticeships and traineeships for 16–19 year olds](#), HC 597

Wednesday 26 November 2014

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Ofsted \(AAT0024\)](#)
- [Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development \(AAT0034\)](#)
- [Sutton Trust \(AAT0039\)](#)
- [James Whelan \(AAT0012\)](#)
- [BT \(AAT0025\)](#)
- [OCR \(AAT0081\)](#)
- [New Economy Manchester \(AAT0076\)](#)
- [NASUWT \(AAT0049\)](#)

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Members present: Mr Graham Stuart (Chair), Alex Cunningham, Bill Esterson, Pat Glass, Siobhain McDonagh, Ian Mearns, Mr Dominic Raab, Mr David Ward, Craig Whittaker

Questions 144 - 277

Witnesses: **Lorna Fitzjohn**, National Director for Further Education and Skills, Ofsted, **Katerina Rudiger**, Head of Skills and Policy Campaigns, Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development, **Conor Ryan**, Director of Research and Communications, Sutton Trust, and **James Whelan**, Head of Mathematics, Harris Academy Morden gave evidence.

Q144 Chair: Good morning and welcome to the Education Committee, as we look into apprenticeships and traineeships. It is good to have you with us. The number of young people under 19 doing apprenticeships has flat-lined under this Government, even though the number of adult apprenticeships has increased a great deal. Is there a link between those two? Do you think the focus on adult apprenticeships has sucked attention and opportunity away from young people's apprenticeships?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Yes, I think it is likely that has happened, because an employer given the choice may well choose someone who is older, rather than someone who is younger. Employers are telling us that many of the young people, at 16 or 17, are not always ready to take on an apprenticeship. That particularly applies to a small or medium-sized employer.

Q145 Chair: What are the incentives that lead them to prefer someone older rather than younger?

Lorna Fitzjohn: They see someone perhaps who is more confident, who has a track record of having been in the workplace and understands how they need to behave in that situation, and who perhaps is a little more tried and tested than a 16-year-old.

Q146 Chair: Are there any incentives in the system that push them that way, whereas in fact it may be that the younger person is more easily moulded to the company and may offer things that the older applicant may not have? Are there aspects of the system and incentives in the frameworks that contribute to giving an edge to the older person, as opposed to the younger person?

Katerina Rudiger: Yes, that is exactly right. Whilst I agree with Lorna that employers absolutely tell us that they would prefer to employ somebody more experienced who has already been in the workplace, and they worry about the level of investment young people need, the interesting bit is that, when they do take on a young person, they are always very enthusiastic and very positive. They say, “It is fantastic to get somebody in who we can mould and train in the way we want them to train, and who grows up with our values”. That is the issue we need to overcome, that first hurdle for an employer to take on somebody. Those employers who do, then quite often become ambassadors for recruiting more young people.

Conor Ryan: The initial problem was that there was a focus on numbers and it became a numbers game, rather than a quality-of-qualifications game. That meant that, for example, Train to Gain qualifications that the previous Government had introduced simply converted into being apprenticeships, so you ended up with quite a lot of qualifications that were about showing what you had already achieved, rather than getting new skills. That has begun to change a bit but, we would say, it has not changed fast enough.

Q147 Chair: Should apprenticeships be delineated by occupation rather than apprenticeship frameworks or job role? Are we as a country, by not delineating by occupation as most other countries do, making apprenticeships less easy for people to understand? Is that an issue or not? Any thoughts on that, Conor?

Conor Ryan: There is an issue about public perception, certainly. One of the things we have found from our polling earlier this year is that there is still a reluctance among parents and teachers to promote apprenticeships. That lack of understanding and lack of clarity about them is probably a contributing factor to that. Certainly having a much clearer system where

people could see that they lead directly to particularly jobs, rather than being overly concerned about the bureaucratic frameworks, would help on that.

Lorna Fitzjohn: We certainly see schools, parents and young people really having quite a poor understanding of what apprenticeships are about, and the concerns about that perhaps academic/vocational split, that parity of esteem apprenticeships have, which is preventing people from getting involved.

Q148 Chair: We will move on to the lack of information in a minute. The last Government promised—I think it said by the earliest of 2010—to provide data on apprenticeships that were new apprenticeships. In other words, people joined their employer in order to do an apprenticeship, and those which were converter apprenticeships, which many people might think risked just certificating existing capability rather than actually being a genuine new injection, but no such data has yet been produced. Does anyone know anything about that? Lorna, why has that not happened?

Lorna Fitzjohn: What we are most interested in having is destination data. Where do young people go? We have seen in the last couple of days that there are issues around graduates getting work. There are issues about apprenticeships; 95% of them seem to be in work. Where young people go and what they go on to is perhaps the most important piece of data we are lacking. We are quite data-rich on qualification achievement, but that does not necessarily get people into jobs.

Chair: There was a specific point made that an awful lot of apprenticeships, under the last Government and frankly under this Government, were in fact people who were already in work. Whether it was Train to Gain or something else, basically they flipped over into something called an apprenticeship. There was not a new job. When the Government announce with great fanfare that they have all these apprentices, we imagine that they are people coming into a job for the first time with training and it is great news. It turns out that people who have already had a job for quite some time are just suddenly shoved on an apprenticeship within that job. That turns out not to be as good news as we had hoped, yet the last Government suggested it was going to make that data visible and that has not happened. If you have not got any specific thoughts on that, I will leave that.

Q149 Mr Ward: Can I just ask about your general views on this question? Apprenticeships have almost disappeared from view, to be honest. There are two ways that you can then introduce them: very, very slowly, great quality, small numbers, getting bigger and bigger; or you can have 432,000 new starts, loads and loads of them, stacking shelves, doing things they are already doing, accreditation, and then refine it, get the quality, get robustness and rigour. We seem to have gone down the latter explosion and then refine. Is that in itself a bad thing, bearing in mind where we were with youth unemployment four, five, six or seven years ago?

Conor Ryan: From our perspective, we feel that there is some improvement in terms of quality. We are moving towards more Level 3s for young people, but it is at a fairly slow pace of about 3% a year. The analysis that the Boston Consulting Group did for us last year,

which was looking at skills needs and international practice, was estimating that we should be aiming at about 150,000 additional Level 3 starts for young people—that is young people up to the age of 24, rather than 19—in order to meet both potential demand from the young people themselves and from the employers. They put forward some proposals about how you might do that with wage subsidy and argued that, over a period of between six to 10 years, you would have very significant GDP growth as a result of doing that.

Our feeling is that progress is being made, but it needs to be more rapid if we are to see the significant improvement in take-up. One way of doing that would be to have a lot of those who are Level 2 apprenticeships at the moment to try to focus on incorporating progression within the apprenticeship so, instead of having Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships, you actually have Level 3 as the goal of most apprenticeships. That is what you are really trying to promote in the long term.

Katerina Rudiger: I would say it is probably not as simple as that either. Overall growth in apprenticeships is probably a positive story; you can see this in the growth in higher apprenticeships. I do not think we should tar them all with the same brush. Whilst there are probably issues in some sectors, say hospitality, for example, or retail, the majority of employers see apprenticeships as an effective way to invest in their workforce and grow their own. Again, the majority of employers probably would not set out to run a low-quality apprenticeship scheme. Of course, there are some exceptions, but I think the overall story is a positive story.

What we have not quite seen yet is the game changer, both in terms of apprenticeships becoming the norm, as well as the sort of high-quality apprenticeships that lead to good jobs as the norm again. Overall, it is a positive story though.

Q150 Ian Mearns: Overall, is there not a significant problem that we are trying to deal with here in structural terms, inasmuch that employers globally, and in particular sectors, have not been engaged in the process of training enough people into the workforce for quite a number of decades? Construction is a good example where, if you look at the large construction employers, for about four decades now they have only trained in terms of apprenticeships about 40% of the future needs of their own workforce. Back in the day that used to be back-filled by things like local authority public works departments or direct labour organisations, but in many respects they do not exist anymore. There are structural problems that the industry itself has not got its heads around. The Construction Industry Training Board will tell you all the good things they have done, but they are nowhere near enough in terms of their own future employment needs.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Apprenticeships are particularly important in the construction industry. We see many people who are following classroom-based type qualifications in construction and yet, when they then enter the workplace, employers are telling us that they may well have some of the knowledge they need, but cannot cope very well with a building site and that aspect of their work. It is very important that we have that clear line of sight to work and work experience involved in it. There are differences. Engineering traditionally has a very solid apprenticeship programme.

Q151 Ian Mearns: Thirty years ago when the industry was structured differently, the big engineering companies in places like the north of England used to have very widespread apprenticeship programmes. Now that industry, in many respects, is fragmented and there are many more SMEs engaged in the process. It is about getting the critical mass of employers in the local area together in order to run successful training programmes.

Lorna Fitzjohn: The Group Training Associations model in engineering we see quite frequently, and that works quite well, where a number of small and medium-sized employers get together. By training and other things for their apprenticeships that works well. We have moved from quality; we have moved away from some of the 12-week apprenticeships we were seeing in ICT in the early days, which did devalue the brand. It is important that it is robust and it is something that is valued.

Q152 Ian Mearns: The point you are making, Lorna, is entirely appropriate. There is some good-quality stuff going on there, but the industries themselves have not yet come to terms with the scale of the problem. There has to be a sea change in the thinking of employers nationally on this, otherwise they are leaving it to Government to sort it out for them.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I agree.

Katerina Rudiger: It is not just their thinking; it is also giving employers the right tools. The whole drive towards employer ownership is essentially a good step in the right direction, but you need to give employers the tools and this includes measurement of investment. At the moment, we do not really measure workforce investment and we do not report on it. That is something we need to look at as well, so it is a very complex issue.

Q153 Chair: There is obviously an industry side to this across the country but, from the regional area point of view, are LEPs stepping up to the mark in this area? Should they be facilitating local apprenticeship boards bringing FE, HE and employers all together to think about the skills needs locally and help put pressure on some of the local employers to do their bit, think ahead and encourage that? What could we do on that front? Is it happening and are there recommendations we should make in our report, when we produce it, that could help improve the framework and increase incentives to have that curve?

Lorna Fitzjohn: It is beginning to happen. LEPs are beginning to. It has been quite a slow start. Many of them are interested in Level 3 engineering and STEM subjects. I do not think they are necessarily as interested in the lower-level aspects of the local workforce. They might have involved HE, but they have not always involved further education in schools, which would be important.

Q154 Alex Cunningham: When we started our conversation this morning, both Lorna and Conor appeared to lament the lack of understanding in schools in terms of talking

about apprenticeship options and careers. Can I ask the panel what your general view is of the quality of careers advice and then particularly in relation to apprenticeships?

James Whelan: The consensus, from my understanding, in schools is that careers advice is not adequate and is certainly ill-informed. That then has its own ramifications from that. Also, there used to be a 14 to-16-year-old age group that would go into work experience and that was not done properly either. It was more, from the schools' point of view, just something that was ticked off. Schools did not see work experience as as much of a priority as getting those 14 to 16-year-olds through their exams.

Q155 Alex Cunningham: The Education Business Partnership model used to be very successful. I think that was brought in under the Thatcher Government, and was very successful in finding places to allow children to have work experience.

James Whelan: They were finding the places. I am just saying that, from a schools' point of view, to have your 14 to 16-year-olds come out of school during that time would be not ideal, because you take away the time when they are supposed to be in class and studying.

Alex Cunningham: Are there other views on the quality of advice?

Lorna Fitzjohn: We did a survey last year on careers advice and guidance in schools, and looked at years 9, 10 and 11, and only one in five schools was offering the quality of careers advice and guidance at a good level. That clearly is a very worrying figure. The main issues were around the things we recognise—not perhaps enough use of good external advice when they need it. The most vulnerable were really lacking the right advice and guidance, and there was a lack of training for teachers. Although they were aware of the National Careers Service, it was very under-used and some of the materials they have would have been very useful, but just were not used by some of the schools.

Q156 Alex Cunningham: Has careers advice really collapsed in schools?

Lorna Fitzjohn: There are very few partnerships with employers.

Katerina Rudiger: What our members tell us is that careers advice and guidance is not adequate for young people, but also about the young people themselves. We work with young jobseekers who we mentor via our mentoring initiative called Steps Ahead Mentoring. We match HR professionals with young jobseekers, and one of the key issues coming out is the lack of advice and guidance around careers and the workplace. It is a key issue, and it is probably something that plays into the apprenticeship agenda. We can get employers to offer more apprenticeships but, if young people and parents do not know about it, and if young people do not know how to apply for these apprenticeships, then we will not be making any progress. It is quite interesting to see that 40% of all our apprenticeship vacancies in the last two years only attract up to five applications so, yes, we need to increase apprenticeship opportunities but we need to, at the same time, increase advice and guidance around those opportunities.

Conor Ryan: We published a report last month from Professor Tristram Hooley of Derby on the whole subject of career guidance. First of all, he did some analysis showing that having good career guidance, looking at the schools where they had an effective system in place, did actually have some benefits in terms of exam results and destinations, as you might expect. Also, their feeling was that there was very patchy provision. There are some places that are still managing to do it well but, as Lorna said, that is not the case in the majority of places.

One of the recommendations made in that was that the National Careers Service's role does need to be strengthened in relation to young people. One particular one that is specifically relevant to this would be having more specialist advice available to teachers on understanding apprenticeships and understanding other aspects. For us, it is important to have access to leading universities as well, having that sort of specialist advice there, because we cannot expect teachers to have all of the latest knowledge on it. We think that would help.

Q157 Alex Cunningham: Perhaps the re-introduction of professional careers advisors within schools, rather than it being left to some teacher or other who is encouraged to take an interest.

Conor Ryan: That would be something that ideally one would like to see. Of course, we were mindful of the financial restrictions that would be facing any Government in the coming years. At least having the NCS strengthening what it does would seem to us to be something worth doing.

Q158 Alex Cunningham: Are apprenticeships maybe portrayed as really for young people who are maybe not the academic stars at school? Are particular groups of people being pushed down that route? You are nodding your head, Katerina.

Katerina Rudiger: Definitely that is what we hear from employers: they are not getting the right candidates through. Arguably there is a little bit around employers' expectations as well, so they expect somebody who is work-ready. There are some real issues. Both schools and pupils themselves see apprenticeships as something that is for people who do not succeed academically, and the way to get a good job is still to go to university, which blatantly is not the case anymore. There is this real mismatch going on.

Q159 Alex Cunningham: What can we actually recommend to Government to change that mind-set that it is a very good route and can create a very good career for young people, regardless of their ability?

James Whelan: Is it perhaps a branding thing? Maybe apprenticeships, as you said, are associated with either you do your A-levels or perhaps you do an apprenticeship instead. I do not know if we are pushing this more high-profile approach that apprenticeships may be an alternative to university. Is it perhaps that it is so broad? I do not know if people

associate apprenticeships with that kind of thing. My understanding is that Deloitte and KPMG offer these school-leaver programmes, but I do not know if they are widely known about.

Q160 Chair: Is it a combination of the lack of incentives in schools and the fact that most teachers have little or no understanding of apprenticeship routes? Have you ever set foot in your local further education college?

James Whelan: I have indeed.

Chair: Excellent.

Siobhain McDonagh: James is lucky enough to be working in the best constituency in the entire world.

Chair: James will answer having heard all that input.

James Whelan: I have now forgotten the question. We were talking about schools' incentives, I think. I was saying that schools are graded on their A-level results. Those will be published. They all push to get their students through A-levels because they believe they can do the job there and that is going to make the school look good.

Q161 Chair: Also, it is financial. If you have got a small sixth form, you have got to keep pupils sitting on seats and you have no incentive to get them to go somewhere else and take their money with them.

Lorna Fitzjohn: You may have heard Sir Michael Wilshaw speak last week about the idea of clustering schools and colleges together, so that it is not that, at 14 or 16, you go up one route or the other route, but you have an arrangement whereby you bring a variety of establishments together, some of which might be specialist within the sector. Therefore, young people can perhaps even carry out a combined programme and move between organisations so that, by the time they know what they want to do, they have a more flexible system. You see those systems in Switzerland and you see them in Germany; it is maybe something we ought to have a look at here.

Alex Cunningham: We saw some of that in Singapore as well, but eventually they got to a point where they were pushed down a particular route until much later in their career.

Q162 Mr Ward: Can I go back to James? You are a careers advisor yourself, as teachers are. You are influential. When I was on BIS, we did an inquiry into apprenticeships. We had young people telling us that they were told at school, "You're too bright to do an apprenticeship". Would you say that if you teach a class in school and somebody is bright?

James Whelan: I would not, no. I would never use that language, but maybe I know

slightly more about what apprenticeships offer than other teachers. I do not know that for sure, but that may be the case. If that was said, I would be surprised, but if people think that, and maybe some teachers do, because the natural route in teachers' minds is probably what they did. They went through A-levels and then university so, if you see someone doing well, again, you would them to take that route.

Chair: As did nearly everybody in this place, which tends to influence policy making as well.

Conor Ryan: When we did the polling on this, with the NFER polling of teachers, 65% of teachers said they would rarely or never advise the student who had the grades for university to go on an apprenticeship. There are two issues that come out of that. One is that there is not enough financial information for teachers, and for students indeed, of what the cost-benefit analysis is here. Is it better to go, for example, on an apprenticeship than to go on some university courses that may have a very poor employment record? Having that information available, particularly at a time of higher fees, would be something very useful.

The second is, as the Chairman indicated, the perverse incentives where schools fight to get people to stay on for one year of the sixth form when, actually, if they are not going to go through to A-levels, that is not necessarily going to be the best option for them. There are something like 30% of students who drop out after the first year of the sixth form. Making sure that incentives are geared towards completion rates at A-level could do a lot to change the mind-set at schools.

Q163 Alex Cunningham: Lorna, Ofsted committed to giving careers advice a higher priority in school inspections. How is that going to be measured? Particularly as we are talking about apprenticeships here, how are you going to know or measure whether young people are getting the whole range of information they need, everything from the academic route through to the apprenticeship route?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Yes, we have put much more emphasis on that in our school inspections since September and we will do that again next September with a new framework. One thing is the destination measures; they are quite a good measure of where young people end up being. You can then measure how successful it has been through that. We spend a lot of time talking to young people and asking how much they understand about the options that are open to them. We do sadly see some of them who understand A-levels but not many other things.

Q164 Chair: You said you spend a lot of time talking to young people.

Lorna Fitzjohn: We do on inspections.

Chair: But increasingly your resources keep reducing. You go in pretty rarely. In some cases, it is years and years between inspections. You go in with a small team for a short amount of time. You do not have the time to give. Occasionally you might but, in general, is it not a false image to send out a message to the public that they can expect you to

spend time talking to the children in a school to find out whether they really do have a broad grasp of the employment market? I would suggest to you that you do not have the time, you do not do it and you will not.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I would agree with you that we have less time to spend on inspections, but the proportion of that time that we spend talking to young people is important and we do that. We also have the option, through specific things that we look at, such as the careers advice and guidance survey that we have done, where a lot of that time is spent. There are other ways that we can do that.

Q165 Chair: I did not mean to get at you and I think the emphasis from Ofsted is a good thing. I do not want to create a false impression that you can do more than you can. Ofsted has been quite good in making it clear that, if Ofsted is the answer to ensuring that every school is doing proper careers advice and guidance, then you are asking the wrong question.

Lorna Fitzjohn: No, I would not suggest that we are the answer to all of that, but it has to be important and it has to be something that we look at on the school inspections that we do. I was out on a school inspection yesterday and, yes, we were looking at careers advice and guidance.

Q166 Chair: Is there something fundamentally wrong with the settlement? The settlement was that Government gave the duty to schools and said that schools know best what is best for their pupils. The truth is the incentive for schools is to look after the institutional interest. That means pupils in the sixth form. It means meeting their accountability targets, which are primarily about exams. There is a misalignment and, therefore, generally you can trust schools to do the best for their pupils academically, but you cannot trust them to do the best for their pupils on careers advice and guidance, because their incentives are not aligned with that of young people. Is that true and, if it is true, we need a fundamental shift from the settlement that this Government have created—yes or no on that one?

James Whelan: Yes, that is true.

Katerina Rudiger: I am not sure I know enough about this, but I would say that governors can probably play a role. We are pushing for employers going into schools to become school governors, and they could act as that link and really make that point in governance, saying, “This is important. This is not something you can do on the side”.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Impartial careers advice and guidance is important.

Q167 Chair: At the moment the duty rests with the school and the school cannot be impartial, because it has got its own drivers.

Lorna Fitzjohn: That in itself is an issue.

Conor Ryan: Yes, broadly speaking, and they need to have the external support and resource if it is going to be run properly.

Q168 Pat Glass: There has been a constant drive over the last 40 years towards academic good and vocational bad, which probably started with the conversion of the polytechnics, which I think was probably a bad thing in this country. I also have concerns about, under the previous Government, this 50% of young people going to university. Every study I have ever seen suggests that, for a knowledge-based skill-based economy, it needs to be about 30%. So we have had this constant drive. What can we do to get parents and teachers to recognise the importance of apprenticeships? I have got lots of small engineering companies in my constituency, where I have seen absolutely outstanding apprenticeships and these young people going on to get really good jobs. What can we do with schools? You are a teacher, James. What do we do in schools to get teachers to recognise that actually some of these apprenticeships are the right things for bright young people?

James Whelan: Targeting parents might be wrong. The most powerful group will be the students themselves. If work experience, which I think is a good thing, was done properly and effectively that would be your most powerful tool, because then your students would drive and they would say, “Okay, I want to do this apprenticeship because I had such a good time at my work experience”. If there was some way of getting the people who offered apprenticeships to also do work experience, you are on to a winner there, because then they would be able to dictate how work experience was; they would then get a feel for who they are taking on; and the student who did that work experience, if they had a good time there, would probably then have the incentive to at least consider that, which maybe they would not have previously.

Katerina Rudiger: I would disagree with some of what James said actually. I do think parents are crucial here because what we see quite often, especially in that younger cohort we are trying to target, is that parents will make contact with employers; parents will push their kids into this. “Push” is perhaps not the right word, but they encourage. I do think parents are crucial. Actually, we are considering putting out a guide for parents on these opportunities. It is not just all about schools though. Employers have a key role to play as well. We need to get employers into schools to talk about those opportunities you mentioned, and perhaps bring their apprentices so they can hear it from the horse’s mouth. Nothing is more powerful for young people than hearing from another young person saying, “I’m doing this apprenticeship. I used to be like you and now this is what I do”. There are a number of things we need to do in this area.

Q169 Pat Glass: This is probably not fair—I do not know how many of you are parents—but are we right to prioritise university over apprenticeships? With your child, if you had a bright child, would you honestly be saying, “Do an apprenticeship or go to university”?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I have two children who have gone through university and one who has gone through an apprenticeship, and the apprentice now earns more than the other two.

Q170 Pat Glass: That is a good answer. You can see the dilemma, can't you?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I absolutely can see the dilemma. I think different things suit different young people.

Q171 Mr Raab: As an adjunct to what we have been talking about, school performance tables tend to focus on A-level results. Do you think the neglect of the vocational benchmark has also had an impact on the promotion of apprenticeships by schools? I do not know whether, James, you want to go first on that.

James Whelan: Yes, I would almost say certainly. If schools were accountable for what they did in terms of pushing people into other areas than A-levels, then you would soon find a change in anything other than just hoping people go on to do A-levels, if that was somehow measured.

Q172 Mr Raab: Are there any specific ideas around forming league tables that you think would make a difference in this area?

Lorna Fitzjohn: League tables do drive, but they do create some very perverse incentives sometimes. We should continue to value vocational education.

Q173 Mr Raab: How do we value it? There is a big push on transparency, accountability and competition in its broadest sense. If the apprenticeships, the training and the vocational option are not part of that, how do we do it?

Conor Ryan: One of the things that has been developed recently is the destination data from schools. Actually strengthening the destination data, celebrating the destination data, pushing the destination data and making sure that jobs, apprenticeships, college, as well as university are in there would be one way you could do it, but it needs to be given the same sort of oomph that goes with the league tables in January.

Mr Raab: Katerina, do you have anything on that?

Katerina Rudiger: I am not sure. The most powerful tool is probably again to show the destination data and really demonstrate what Lorna just said: that somebody who does an apprenticeship can have a better job than somebody who goes to university. It is that kind of information we need to get out there. As you can probably hear from my accent, I am originally from Germany. In Germany, it is very different. You know that you can get a good job if you do an apprenticeship, so people do not even think that way.

Q174 Mr Raab: Are there any league tables in Germany that equate which people—
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Katerina Rudiger: You do not have to have them, because you know for certain professions and certain jobs you have to do an apprenticeship, so people would go to university, but then afterwards do an apprenticeship because they want to go into that specific profession. I do not know if that helps.

Mr Raab: No, that is useful.

Q175 Craig Whittaker: Can I just ask you what you think the impact of raising the participation age on the numbers of young people starting an apprenticeship has been or will be?

Lorna Fitzjohn: We have seen very little change in numbers of 16 to 18-year-olds going to do apprenticeships over the last 10 years. I cannot see it improving at all. I would worry that that might decline.

Q176 Craig Whittaker: You think it will decline.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Unless there is far more knowledge about apprenticeships in schools and the advice and guidance given to them at 14 onwards, the inclination is for their parents and them to stay where they know rather than move on to something else, so I think it could.

Q177 Craig Whittaker: There is a bit of a perverse incentive in that regard, keeping them in traditional routes of academia.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Yes.

Conor Ryan: Unless the incentives that we talked about earlier in schools are properly aligned, so that schools have a real incentive to get young people to go to what is best for them, rather than keeping them on for an extra year within the sixth form; unless there are enough good-quality apprenticeships of the sort that teachers respects—and when we polled teachers only 26% thought that there were enough good apprenticeships—then the effect of raising the participation age will probably be to continue the trend of more young people staying on in school, but not necessarily completing through to A-levels.

Q178 Mr Raab: I just wanted to add on to that that we know that truancy rates, particularly for the most persistent truants, spike at 14 to 16. I just wondered what you think that means for the more vocationally minded kids who are therefore forced to stay in education for longer. What happens to them?

Lorna Fitzjohn: We are seeing issues about the high numbers. The NEETs figures are

dropping, which we would expect. What we are seeing is an increase in those who are unknown in the system. If you look at somewhere like Birmingham, in the region that I manage, for around 23% of that part of young people we do not know where they are. They are staying in school or college, or moving on, then they drop out, but there is no compulsion to keep a record of where they have then gone, so they do not get any help with the barriers that they have to return into the system. That is something that has happened of late, which is a worry to us.

Katerina Rudiger: What we see is that young people just do not know where to go. Again, back to our mentoring programme, we work with the Jobcentre on this, and we see young people going to the Jobcentre for advice and guidance. They are not necessarily going there to sign on, although they might do that too, but they say, “I do not have anywhere to turn to. What shall I do?” It is that issue we need to tackle.

I would agree with all of these issues around mismatches, perceptions and so on, but there is another thing as well: even if they did know about apprenticeships and wanted to go for them, most young people do not know how to apply, how to do a CV or how to do an interview. At that age, they have not had any support on this, which is a real issue because, when they are put in front of the employer, of course the employer is going to choose somebody else if they are not able to talk about why they want this apprenticeship.

Q179 Pat Glass: Lorna, can I come back to your point when you said we do not know where these young people have gone? I am increasingly coming across young people who are telling me, “There’s nothing out there for me. I’m not interested in whatever. I’m tired of being sanctioned. I’ve just dropped out of the system”, and they have become part of the black economy. They are just taking work when they can. I get a feeling that this is increasing, so we have no idea where these young people are going; nobody is checking at all.

Lorna Fitzjohn: If they drop out of school or college, say at 16 or 17, there is no statutory requirement for that organisation, school or college, to let the local authority know that that young person has dropped out, so they then become unknown, as we call them. Therefore, the help they need to return into the system and find something else that they might enjoy and want to do better is far less likely. You see high numbers of them who we just do not know; it is 23% in Birmingham.

Pat Glass: 23% unknown—just disappeared off the system.

Q180 Chair: 23% of whom?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Of 16 to 17-year-olds. I would probably need to get back to you on the exact figure.

Pat Glass: That just confirms what I am increasingly worried about: that there are huge numbers of young people who are just disappearing off the system.

Q181 Chair: If you could, write to us with the specifics and whether this is 23% of the whole cohort or some sub-section of the cohort.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I will get back to you on the definition.

Q182 Craig Whittaker: Can I just ask you what schools can do to ensure that apprenticeships offer opportunities to the lowest attainers, without apprenticeships being the default setting for low attainers?

Chair: Are they suitable? Low attainers think they are going to do apprenticeships, apparently, when surveyed, and then it turns out they are not, because it is people in the third quartile rather than the fourth quartile who can access an apprenticeship.

Lorna Fitzjohn: There are apprenticeships at different levels. Going back to a point Conor made, there is a good starting point for some of them who then can move on to a more advanced apprenticeship. I would like to echo something James has said: I think the work experience part of it, particularly for that group of young people, is particularly important, because that will be their access to an apprenticeship and then they will hopefully move on within that system. Yes, I do think there is a place for them and work experience.

James Whelan: I have read about a supported internship programme for some of the low attainers that was initially incorporated to target some of these students to give them a little bit more support where maybe others did not need it. I do not know if anybody knows a little bit about how that is going. I know that was introduced, a supported internship programme.

Katerina Rudiger: I would say that it is probably the role of traineeships to bridge that gap to help those young people who are not ready to do an apprenticeship, but would want to go down that route, to get in there. What we have seen is that employers have engaged with this agenda quite a lot and we see employers offering traineeships to get people into apprenticeships.

Q183 Craig Whittaker: Do you think schools—in particular teachers, because they are the ones with responsibilities now—understand that there are varying levels or different grades or levels of apprenticeships too? Are they aware of that?

Lorna Fitzjohn: Schools' knowledge of apprenticeships is quite poor.

James Whelan: I would agree from that. Certainly from my experience, there has been no formal training, as it were, to constantly keep up to date with exactly the change in policy on these things and what is available. There has been no training on that.

Q184 Chair: Apprenticeships, according to Doug Richard, should involve “substantial and sustained training”. A question for low-attaining pupils at 16 is: are they capable of substantial and sustained training or not? If they are not, they obviously will not

be fit to do an apprenticeship. How would we know whether they were capable of that? Is there something that could be assessed or could be used to judge schools?

It seems very odd; we are going to talk about traineeships with the second panel, but the idea of a six-month traineeship after 11 years of full-time education simply to provide people with the basic facility to enter the world of work and training reminds me of the British Leyland production line. Their commitment to quality was such that they had a huge area at the end where they fixed all the cars, while the Japanese were basically stopping the production line if they made a mistake at any point on the production line. How do we assess whether children at 16 are at least capable of sustained and substantial training?

Conor Ryan: One of the challenges is what is provided between 14 and 16, what the options are there, and whether you make proper use of, for example, the facility for FE colleges to engage with young people from 14 to 16, whether you develop the studio school model and whether you revise the idea of young apprenticeships, which was something that the last Government had introduced but never really took off. I think just having a range of options between 14 and 16 would enable us to see whether those young people are actually ready to take on an apprenticeship at 16.

Q185 Mr Ward: Can I ask about the role of work experience? The criticism by many employers is that young people are just not ready for work when they arrive, one reason being their lack of work experience. It has been removed now as a statutory responsibility; do you think it should be reinstated as mandatory?

James Whelan: There is a lot of value in it, certainly.

Chair: In mandating it?

James Whelan: In bringing it back. Previously a two-week block seemed to be the conventional way to do it. When that happens, it may need to be revised. Students do have a long summer holiday. I do not know how well that would go down, using some of that time as well. You would at least have some flexibility there on the employer's time as well, if they have that six-week block. Part of the problem was we used to try to get all 200 students in work experience, in that two-week block, in year 10. I am not sure that would work all the time for the employers as well as for us, so timing has quite a fair bit to do with it, although I do think it is a good idea.

Q186 Chair: A major summer programme of work experience is a recommendation that we could consider.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I agree with James that reintroducing it at Key Stage 4, which is where it was, has its issues and problems, which James has articulated very well. However, it is clearly part of the study programme for 16 to 19-year-olds now, and there is perhaps more opportunity and, dare I say it, it would be easier for schools and colleges to fund it at that point, which would be a key part of the programme. There is a range of things to look at, not just introducing it again at Key Stage 4.

Q187 Mr Ward: When I was the Chair of Governors of a school at the time it was removed, I remember the school itself saying that, often, invariably, “Work experience is really so poor that it is just a waste of time and a hell of an administrative burden. We would rather do other things”, which is really good if they then do other things. In the absence of that, what does your school do, for instance, James, in terms of preparing people for work?

James Whelan: We offer a window for 16 to 17-year-olds where they can go and organise their own work experience. We can help them with bits and pieces like that, but we do not say, “You’re off now; we’ve found you a place”. Going back to what you said about quality, when I used to go out and talk to our students—this is a while ago when I was teaching in Yorkshire—about what they thought of it, it was a pretty dire two weeks for most of them. They did not terribly enjoy their time, whatever they were doing. I am not sure, from my experience of talking to some of them, whether it was worth it for the employer or the student taking part in those two weeks.

Q188 Chair: Leaving aside quality in terms of access, are disadvantaged children, if they have to organise it themselves, less likely to get work experience than others? Does it further cement disadvantage in our system, Conor?

Conor Ryan: Whatever one does, one needs to make sure that the structures are in place for disadvantaged children. We did a report on internships recently and some of the inequalities in that, which is obviously a slightly older group. It is important that you have a structure in, so you are not simply relying on who your parents happen to know for getting that work experience. A lot of the problems that James describes were inherent in the two-week work experience window that was there before, and it may be that some structured summer programme could be more useful in that sphere.

Katerina Rudiger: I agree with the rest of the panel, particularly James, about how important that work experience is. Lack of work experience is the one thing that really disadvantages young people in the labour market, plus work experience is quite popular amongst employers actually. Over half of employers offer work experience and they are quite keen to offer high-quality work experience. We have produced guidance around how to do that.

Q189 Chair: What does that look like? What does high quality look like?

Katerina Rudiger: You need to think about what you are going to do with the young person before they arrive in the workplace. The poor quality James has been talking about is when the young person turns up and everyone is like, “What are we going to do with them? You need to have a task; you need to have a person looking after them, some mentoring and some buddying to help them to reflect on their experience as well.

Q190 Chair: Is it best in a block or, if it were possible, would it be better to be a day a week over a whole period? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Katerina Rudiger: It probably does not matter, so long as it is the real experience of the workplace and you have somebody looking after the young person. I am not quite sure; James would be best placed to say what works best for schools and pupils. I do think work experience is crucial and we need to bring it back on the curriculum.

Q191 Mr Ward: Can I ask you, Lorna, and others, if you have come across other experiences that are provided by schools, other than working with a business, that provided them with something that makes them more ready for work—project work, working with groups?

Lorna Fitzjohn: There are some very good enterprise programmes about. We have had a close look at those, with people involved in business enterprise, often with local companies that come in and do that, which gives them some experience within the school setting of running a business. We have seen examples where employers come in and do some interviewing. You have got the usual talks that people might do and we see opportunity to shadow someone at work. We see employers involved as governors, which then has a knock-on effect down to more work experience. There is a wide range of things that can be done so that there is that line of sight to work.

Q192 Chair: I do not know if we have had answers from all of you. Should mandatory work experience should be reintroduced for 14 to 16-year-olds. Conor.

Conor Ryan: Yes, but in a way that is perhaps different from the way that it has been organised before.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Yes, but think about it for those who are slightly older.

Katerina Rudiger: Yes.

James Whelan: I am a yes.

Q193 Pat Glass: Just picking up from what James said, we have had evidence here from employers who say that part of the problem with work experience is that young people come in and expect to do the managing director's job. They do not necessarily understand that, actually, when you start a job, you generally do the filing quite a lot and you might be asked to make the tea. That is actually quite valuable for young people. While they may come back and say it is rubbish, it is character-building for them.

James Whelan: Quite. With a lot of lessons you teach students at school, they think it is rubbish at the time. That is something you maybe find out when you are slightly older.

Chair: Why are you not preparing them better for tedium, James?

Katerina Rudiger: Maybe they would stay on longer at school then.

James Whelan: I would like to go back to what was touched on by the panel about shadowing and the value of that. Students do not have to do any work as such, but get exposure to what is out there. This would also be valuable in the apprenticeships scheme too, if they were to shadow and see what it is like. One of the problems is that students have no idea what they are going into here. If there was some way of getting people in to do evenings in schools, where you could say, “We’ve got X, Y and Z from various different careers; this is what it’s like. You can come and shadow us”, even for a couple of days, that is powerful stuff.

Q194 Pat Glass: When I have asked young people who have come to my office, “What did you find most valuable?” there are all kinds of things, but one of them is just how long the day is and how tired they are. They had not realised that at all and that seems to be quite common.

Siobhain McDonagh: Mine is coming to my advice surgery, because it makes them think, “Oh God, I had better do something. I don’t want to have these sorts of problems later on”.

Katerina Rudiger: I would agree with everything that James and Lorna have said. Lorna talked about the careers insight talks and so on. One of the things we are supporting is Inspiring the Future—I do not know if you have heard of that—where employers go into schools again to do careers insight talks. The school matches themselves to a volunteer, and we send our members into schools to do a CV and interview workshop.

There is another thing we need to promote as well, which is social action and youth volunteering. I do not know if you have heard about the Step Up To Serve campaign. They are having their anniversary this week; there are lots of events around that. Basically they are campaigning for getting more young people involved in volunteering in their communities. You know there are double benefits, of course for the communities but also for the young people themselves. If they do not have any work experience, it gives them something to talk about in their interviews and put on their CV, but it is also developing employability skills and that contact with adults in the workplace.

Q195 Mr Raab: I just wanted to examine it from the employer’s point of view. We have heard from business groups like the CBI that they are quite critical of schools’ preparation of young people for the world of work, talking about the lack of readiness and the failure of the education system to equip young people with the basic skills that employers value. On the other hand, CIPD says there is quite a lot of appetite to home-grow the raw talent and polish up the rough diamonds, if I can put it that way. Who is right? Katerina, I probably should start with you.

Katerina Rudiger: I would of course say we are right.

Q196 Mr Raab: Even so, how would you reconcile the other evidence that has come through?

Katerina Rudiger: I suppose it is not that simple. If we ask our members, “Are young people ready for the workplace?” they would also say no, so clearly there is an issue around this. What we are saying is a bit more nuanced than that, and there are things that you cannot learn in school. Employers have a role to play and cannot just be consumers of the education system; they have to be active players. That is what we are saying. It is not that we disagree with the CBI that there are issues; we are saying, “What can we do about it?” That is why it is different. That is where, when we talk to employers, they say they do think they have a responsibility themselves and that you cannot expect somebody who has never worked to come into the workplace. The beautiful thing is that, when you have talked to them after a few weeks, you can see they have turned this around and suddenly they say, “Oh, these young people are wonderful; it just took us a few weeks to tell them how to pick up the phone”, and so on. What we are saying is that, yes, there are issues and things could be better in terms of preparation in schools, but employers also have a key role to play in some of this.

Q197 Mr Raab: James, what about you? Are schools just utterly closeted from what the real world is like?

James Whelan: I hope not.

Q198 Mr Raab: Is the CBI just self-serving?

James Whelan: It is quite easy to pass the blame perhaps. It is a tough one for schools to adequately prepare all students for all roles, and how you do that. I cannot say I know the answer on how to prepare students for the workplace adequately. There must be some sort of collaboration there between the employer and the school in exactly what they require. If I am completely honest with you, if someone said, “You need to prepare your student to go on and work here”, I am not sure I would know how to do that.

Q199 Mr Raab: What about basic things like turning up on time, personal skills, taking instruction and things like that? They are almost the soft social skills that you hear employers say, rather than the academic or skills content. What about that? Obviously not at your school, but is there any fairness in that charge across the system?

James Whelan: Is it fair to say that it is that school’s responsibility to make sure students are prepared to show up on time, for example?

Q200 Mr Raab: Or have a sense of timeliness, organisation, taking instruction.

James Whelan: Schools do what they can. We are very strict on stuff like turning up on time and speaking properly, and so is every school I have been to.

Q201 Mr Raab: You do not think that charge is fundamentally substantial.

James Whelan: No, I think that is a little harsh.

Lorna Fitzjohn: Certainly we would look at how schools are dealing with punctuality, behaviour and all those things. There are many that deal with it very well. Young people we see have got those skills. There are some that do not. There are also different types of employers in all of this. If you are a plumber and you are looking for a plumber's mate, it is high risk for you. You want to know and you want to get someone who is going to be 50% of your business and deal with your customers on a daily basis. Maybe it is different for some of the large employers within that, so it is worth looking at that.

Q202 Mr Raab: Conor, can I put this to you? My experience of work placement schemes is that school leavers are much easier to manage in the terms that we are talking about than graduates. I wonder whether actually it is not so much school that is the issue, but age, and perhaps universities are even worse at preparing people for those things than schools. I do not know what you think about that.

Conor Ryan: There is certainly an issue with universities and the extent to which it is now expected that you have to do an internship and quite often an unpaid internship, as we showed recently, in order to get your foot onto the career ladder. That has social mobility implications, which we have also talked about. There is an issue about having the character and the social skills, but there is also, I would say on the general point about employers, a responsibility on employers to engage with the education system and look at the work-based opportunities that they are providing. There are simply not enough of those opportunities available to young people.

Q203 Siobhain McDonagh: Particularly for small employers, do you not think the issue is the whole issue of red tape and the fear that they will not be up to it, or they will be required to take somebody who is going to behave badly and will not be able to say, "Gosh, I am really sorry. This is not working for either of us. Perhaps we should not carry on with this"? I have found in my work experience scheme that employers, even small ones, really accept their moral responsibility but, if the guy from the Jobcentre comes with his clipboard, they are unwilling to get involved. Is that fair?

Katerina Rudiger: There is certainly that perception in the media around young people being lazy and not turning up on time. That puts a lot of small employers off, because they think, "I cannot afford to get it wrong", as you say. We need to provide support to those small employers, but we also need to address those perceptions.

One of the employers we work with told us that our apprentices there are great but, on the first week there, they all turn up to the office before nine o'clock, but they did not get in because they thought there were not allowed to go into the office before nine o'clock. There are those kinds of things, and then somebody told them and it was all fine.

There is an issue around how you manage young people. We are all used to management approaches that are less command and control. With young people, it is almost the other way around, especially at the beginning. You need to provide more structure; you need to structure their day. That requires a change in mind-set really, and we need to provide support to employers and to line managers for that, because line managers are quite often the barrier. Our HR people would tell us, "We can set up these programmes", but then I go to the line manager and say, "Do you want to take on a 16 to 19-year-old?" and they are like, "God, what would I do with them in my team?" It is providing a bit of support to them.

Q204 Mr Raab: In terms of what you are talking about in getting businesses to be more proactive, how do you incentivise that better? How can we incentivise that better and then measure it, so that we have some sense of whether employers are reaching out in the ways that you are all suggesting? Conor, do you have any views on that?

Conor Ryan: The Boston Consulting Group did some analysis for us on potential incentives, which I think were based on an Austrian model. They suggested that you might improve the wage subsidies, but have it on a sliding scale so that, if you were doing a three-year apprenticeship, you have a higher subsidy in the first year and then it goes down to perhaps 20% of the wage in the third year. That model, they felt, would help to incentivise significantly the employers to start taking on more apprentices at the Level 3 that we are talking about.

Q205 Mr Raab: Katerina, do you have any views? What does best practice look like in this area, particularly for smaller businesses? It is all very well if you have a big HR department; they will take care of it.

Katerina Rudiger: In terms of connecting them to schools?

Mr Raab: Incentivising businesses to play a more active or proactive role in welcoming the students or the youngsters in, and how we then measure it.

Katerina Rudiger: Again, it comes back to the support we can provide them to make it easy for them and take some of the complexity out of it. Larger companies could provide them with some mentoring in this area. We see some of the large companies would maybe take on apprentices or train people and then pass them on to smaller companies, so it is working with the supply chains, putting those structures in place and the support.

Q206 Craig Whittaker: Katerina, I know you mentioned briefly earlier on the application process. One of the key problems for young people is going through the application process and not understanding what it is the employer is looking for. What do

you think schools can do better to help young people what process and what do you think employers can do to help young people through that process too?

Katerina Rudiger: I do think employers and HR professionals have a key role to play here to make that process easier and more transparent, so really to explain what is required in the application process and what the different steps are. Most young people do not even know that they will be filtered out in the first step if they do not have a certain qualification. They do not even know that there are different steps. It is making that much more transparent and more youth-friendly, so really speaking to someone who has not done this before. Again, we are doing a lot in this area around mentoring, so we get our HR professionals to talk to young jobseekers about the recruitment policies. That is what we need to do, not just for young jobseekers, but also going into schools. Again, we are working with the Inspiring the Future initiative on this to talk about how this process functions and what employers are looking for at the different stages.

Really what employers need to do is make that process more youth-friendly. One of the things that is probably the next challenge is that a lot of employers say, “We recruit for attitude and train for skills”, but then filter out people in terms of their degrees and qualifications. That is an issue. What we are doing quite a lot of work on at CIPD is how you find this understanding of talent, bring talent into your organisation and not just define it that narrowly.

Q207 Chair: Can you tell us a bit more about the mentoring? There are great schemes across this whole field; there are all sorts of fantastic schemes. It just does not seem very strategic. There are lots of schools, especially in London these days, where huge outfits are lining up to provide stimulation, mentoring and the like, and then you have other areas of the country and schools where there is absolutely nobody and nothing. What percentage of young people, or potential jobseekers, are getting mentoring from an employer to help them understand what might be required, what their CV needs to look like and what an application letter needs to look like?

Katerina Rudiger: Our programme is a national programme. We have just rolled it out across England. We work with 570 Jobcentre Plus offices in local communities, so it is all happening at local level. We have around 2,000 mentors involved in this. They are HR professionals. They volunteer to meet with a young person face-to-face, which is crucial. The simple premise is who you want to talk to if you have never worked? Obviously it is the HR professional.

Q208 Chair: What age are the children they meet?

Katerina Rudiger: They are 18 to 24-year-olds and they are sent by Jobcentre Plus.

Q209 Chair: They are not children. You are talking about adults, not the people we are focused on.

Katerina Rudiger: We are now starting to run pilots with the National Apprenticeship Service and Skills Funding Agency as well, and we are broadening this out. We are also working with schools via Inspiring the Future, where we send our members into schools to do talks around CVs and interviews, so it is not tailored face-to-face mentoring; it is a workshop.

Q210 Chair: There is zero mentoring going on at the moment in schools through your organisation. Is that right?

Katerina Rudiger: No, there is not one-to-one mentoring inside schools.

Lorna Fitzjohn: I just hope this is the sort of answer you might be looking for. It is really about the brokerage in getting people matched from school to apprenticeships or matched on to work experience and other things. I suppose there has been some talk about a UCAS-type system and how that might work. I can see that being helpful because I think there needs to be some structure and oversight, but in a local area. A national system would not work so much for apprentices because they are looking for something local. People like Chambers of Commerce and the LEPs getting involved to help the system work and these people matched up would be useful, because for many individual employers it is going to be difficult to incentivise them to join in.

Q211 Siobhain McDonagh: Research by the CIPD has found that young people who are unsuccessful in applying for apprenticeships during the summer peak can be put off applying later in the year when there is less competition for places. How can this be addressed?

Katerina Rudiger: There is an issue around mismatches that is geographical as well as the timings that young people would apply in the summer; some employers would advertise in February, but nobody would apply then. The problem with those is that, when young people apply for apprenticeships, they think that if they have not got it they will never get it. They just do not know it is because of those issues. Again, that is why we are broadening our mentoring to those who have applied for apprenticeships and have been unsuccessful. It is sitting down with that young person and saying, “Look, this is why you have been unsuccessful. Let us have a look at your application. Let us look at when you applied and for what you applied”. It is that sort of tailored support.

Again, we need to make clear to employers that they should not advertise their opportunities in February, because that is not when young people are looking, so it is working with both sides to even out those mismatches. We have supply and demand on one side but, somehow at the moment, it does not always match up.

Q212 Siobhain McDonagh: The Deputy Prime Minister announced that the UCAS Progress system for vocational opportunities would be in place by September 2015. Do you

welcome this? Will it solve the issues around young people getting the information they need about apprenticeships?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I have already touched on that and yes, I think it will help. I do think apprentices look for opportunities locally, not nationally, as many of them are dependent on families and do not have the income to support themselves. With a local focus on that, it could be very helpful.

Katerina Rudiger: I would agree with Lorna. It would be very helpful.

Q213 Chair: Will it have this local aspect or is it just going to be a national thing, do you know?

Lorna Fitzjohn: I do not know.

Q214 Chair: Do you have any insight into this UCAS bit? You do not know about that, Conor.

Conor Ryan: I do not know.

Chair: Fair enough.

Q215 Siobhain McDonagh: Will a UCAS-style application system create parity of esteem with the academic route?

Chair: To broaden that out, is this whole talk of parity of esteem a useful thing to do? Do we not just need to have navigability for vocational routes, value put on apprenticeships and information about how it could lead to good things, without wringing our hands about whether or not it is parity of esteem? In truth, socially and in every other way, a degree from Oxford is going to count generally as more valuable than an apprenticeship and there is no point in pretending otherwise, but we do not have to do down apprenticeships, do we? Can we get away from this parity of esteem issue and just make sure that we make it easy to understand, so that people can see the value of it?

Conor Ryan: I feel that the term “parity of esteem” has bedevilled the system for the last 20 years and actually has been one of the reasons why we have ended up with such trouble with vocational qualifications. They have sought to make them more academic and less appropriate. If we could move away from that that would be good. Will the UCAS system make apprenticeships more valued? Potentially, but it needs there to be more good apprenticeships out there and it needs schools to have the right incentives and the right career support as well for it to work.

Katerina Rudiger: We have just talked for an hour about all these issues, and a UCAS system is not magically going to sort them all out, I guess. It is probably a step in the right direction, but we need to address all the issues we have discussed in order to make it work.

James Whelan: Maybe I am not clear on the UCAS thing. If you are going to go for UCAS points, surely A-levels would be your main route. I am not sure if we are looking to push apprenticeships as a viable alternative to university and bits and pieces like that, and offering UCAS points—

Chair: It is not UCAS points. It is really that on their system they are going to try to capture apprenticeships. There is already stuff on there and they are going to try to add all the National Apprenticeship Service opportunities on to it, so it is just another route to access information about opportunities that could be available. By putting it on UCAS, whether or not it is driven by desperation to create parity of esteem or not, it is trying to at least show that you can go and look at university options and you can look at vocational options in the same place. I think that is the idea.

Q216 Mr Ward: I am not sure there was ever parity of esteem. Should we not be working towards as a situation where people regard an apprenticeship as leading on to something that is of value to that person? What it is equivalent to is irrelevant. Is it right for that person and will it lead on to something? How far off that are we?

Conor Ryan: Things have improved in the last few years. It is interesting the extent to which apprenticeships are now popularly discussed and promoted in broadsheet newspapers, for example. There has definitely been a movement on that, but we have still got a situation where the majority of teachers would not advise students about apprenticeships and where a lot of parents are still sceptical. There is still a real challenge and it is about quality, employer engagement, and hanging culture and perceptions.

Chair: Thank you very much, all four of you, for giving evidence to us today. If you have any further thoughts, particularly around recommendations, however small or large in scope, we would love to hear from you if you wanted to add to the evidence you have already submitted to us. Thank you very much indeed.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Deborah Lee**, Chief Learning Officer, BT Group, **Charlotte Bosworth**, Director of Skills and Employment, OCR, **Stephen Overell**, Principal, Employment and Skills, New Economy Manchester, and **Darren Northcott**, National Official, Education, NASUWT, gave evidence.

Q217 Chair: Good morning and welcome. I think you heard the evidence in the last session. Traineeships: I made a rather invidious comparison between British Leyland's famous huge area at the end of their production line to fix the broken cars as a sign of their tremendous commitment to quality, when the Japanese meanwhile just had red buttons on the production line to make sure they got it right first time. Maybe after 11 years of full-time education and increasing amounts of pre-school support in education, the idea that six months

of a traineeship is magically going to give someone the skills, soft or otherwise, that they need to access the world of work and continue training is a sign of failure. Discuss, Deborah.

Deborah Lee: We find it to be incredibly beneficial, for the employee, the trainee and the employer. 63% of our traineeships, having gone through our programme, which is six weeks and two days, have come out and gone into further education or a role. A number of things happen during those six weeks: they gain confidence; they get an insight into work life. In some cases, they have not had role models in their own households before, because they have come from families that have not been working. Just to understand what it feels like and to work with people who are quite excited about the workplace and work has been really beneficial. We have seen huge success stories with individuals gaining confidence and new skills, and coming out of it feeling quite proud. The graduation process is a point of pride for them. We make a big deal of it.

Q218 Chair: The heart of my question there is not whether or not they are valuable. After all, if you have a broken car at the end of the production line you need to fix it. The aim should be though, that when they come out at the end of the adult school system, young people already have that confidence, that sense of esteem and ability to do things. Should that not be possible in the prior 11 years? Do we need to take whatever it is that is good in your traineeship programme and try to inject that in a bit of an earlier time, so we do not have to spend money and time doing it afterwards? Is that fair or not, Deborah?

Deborah Lee: As much as you can build confidence in early years that is going to have a benefit, but there are some practical things that you do not get during school, which is the insight into work.

Q219 Chair: Is that not something we could have? We discussed in the earlier session the fact that the Government got rid of mandatory work experience. Good, bad or indifferent, they got rid of it being mandatory at 14 to 16. It could be that a really good programme at 14 to 16 might be able to provide that, so that you have got less to do when they leave school at 16.

Deborah Lee: Absolutely. The more employable students are when they leave school, the better it is for everybody. There are students who will, for whatever reason, fall by the wayside during the schooling period. It does work very well for those.

Darren Northcott: You make a very interesting point about traineeships almost ameliorating issues that arise during school. That is something that you might want to look at and, in the context of work-based education, that is critical, as your previous evidence session underlined.

We are where we are with some young people. Some young people will need help and support to move on to an apprenticeship or good-quality employment. Currently, there is a role for something like traineeships. Whether the programme, as it is currently constituted, is what we need we could discuss. Given where we are at the moment, there is some kind of role for traineeships.

Stephen Overell: We would very much go along with that. The problem is that traineeships are not going to rectify all the problems there are with schools. Some people come out of school having had an extremely bad experience, but what they do provide, and what is necessary—and listening to your previous session, you made the point—is greater work experience and greater contact with the world of work, in some form or other. A scheme such as traineeships that tries to provide that work experience is of value. That is not to say traineeships are necessarily the right scheme.

It is also important to remember that this is a very new thing. August 2013 is not that long ago. It is evolving. There have been quite a lot of movements from the time it launched, in terms of modifying the traineeship programme. As a basic idea, though, a form of work experience for people who are not so far removed from the labour market that it is beyond them, but who are motivated and want to work, is in the right direction.

Q220 Chair: Who is it aimed at? Looking at the data, the people in the top half of academic performance are typically guided away from apprenticeships, rightly or wrongly. The people in the bottom quartile think that apprenticeships are for them and then, when they come to actually apply, they find out they are not. Most the people who access them are probably in the third quartile. That was a kind of broad generalisation around the data. Who are traineeships for? Are they to help the people in the third quartile to strengthen their soft skills so they can do it, or are they for the people in the lowest quartile of academic performance and will traineeships be sufficient to help lift them up, so they can access the apprenticeships that too many of them cannot access at the moment?

Stephen Overell: It is a good question. One of the problems with traineeships is, arguably, they are not sufficiently targeted. We do not know exactly who they are for. There is a lot of speculation about precisely who traineeships are aimed at. They are clearly aimed at people with relatively low skills, given the eligibility criteria for them. Are they aimed at NEETs? Are they aimed at people who are jobseekers currently? These are all very valid questions.

In reality, trainees are likely to come from that cohort of young people who are currently claiming benefit in one form or another, but there are others as well. In an ideal world, I think they should be aimed at people who are not quite ready for an apprenticeship, but are nearly there. That is not sufficiently clear from the apprenticeships that there currently are. Further learning is one destination. A job or an apprenticeship is another. Perhaps they need to be positioned more as something that leads on to an apprenticeship for people who are not that far removed from them.

Charlotte Bosworth: I disagree with that point, really based on our own work we did with our pilot. We actually spent some time tracking the young people involved in our pilot. 96% went on either to further education, an apprenticeship or a job. 18% went on to an apprenticeship, so there definitely is a requirement for not just those people going on to an apprenticeship within the traineeship.

Q221 Chair: Who were your young people?

Charlotte Bosworth: They were 23 mostly NEETs, 80% with mental illness, from the Kent area.

Q222 Chair: In terms of academic attainment?

Charlotte Bosworth: Some had achieved Level 2, but the majority were Entry Level 3 and Level 1 learners.

Q223 Chair: From January next year, 19 to 24-year-olds who already have a full Level 2 qualification will be able to access traineeships, so will we see a repeat of what we have seen in apprenticeships and a big growth in adult numbers at the cost, arguably, of the young?

Deborah Lee: We have already put some people in that age bracket through our programme. We have not put them through the funding model of the traineeships but, for us, this is about people who have not been able to access employment. There is a whole raft of reasons. We have had a graduate go through. The objective of our programme is to make people more employable or give them choice. For whatever reason they have ended up claiming benefits, we see that there is talent out there. Given a chance, given a bit of support, actually you can create and inspire a new generation.

For me, saying it is pre-apprenticeship-only is too narrow for traineeships. We certainly found that broadening our own perspective from the BT point of view has given us access and given our employees a huge amount of giveback, because they feel quite inspired from working with these young people, bringing them on and giving them confidence. I am all for the widening, because it solves a problem that says there is a generation out there that is lost for whatever reason.

Stephen Overell: I would just like to raise a question about what we are calling a traineeship. If graduates are going through traineeships, that is so far removed from what the Government intended originally that it is interesting. Your point about apprenticeships is very interesting as well. They are increasingly dominated by older people.

Q224 Chair: Most of them have already got a job. They are already in work. They are not even new. We do not even have the data to tell us which are new and which are old.

Stephen Overell: Employers, if they had their own way, would generally plump for someone with greater experience rather than a young person, but we are here to talk about the 16 to 19-year-olds who are often having a hard time surviving in this kind of environment. Even Government agencies have different definitions of what a traineeship actually is. Jobcentre Plus seems to be running its own traineeship scheme that is not part of the official traineeship scheme that we are actually talking about. What they call traineeships are something a bit different from what we are talking about here, so there is quite a wide variety

of what is actually understood by it. If we are talking about the formal scheme, personally I think it is a good thing that it has been expanded to those 19-year-olds, because that increases the cohort quite significantly about whom we are talking about.

Q225 Chair: It requires the involvement of employers. Are there the spaces? We know for young people the biggest single issue in apprenticeships is the lack of apprenticeships. There are all sorts of other issues, but the danger of extending it up is that they simply do as has been discussed; they choose someone who is a bit older, more experienced, more mature and therefore you cannot access a traineeship. Is there a risk of that or are there going to be enough employers participating to mean that everybody who wants a traineeship can have one?

Stephen Overell: Engaging employers is always a problem with the world of skills. There are lots of them so that, in general, they do not have the time to think about any of this stuff. The question of incentives for employers around traineeships is a good one. There will be lots of employers who do it for reasons of good will, because they believe in it; they believe in bringing young people on. There are others who are doing it for the sake of free labour. In some cases, we have instances where I come from where employers are displacing current staff because they can get trainees to work for nothing for a certain period of time, doing relatively low-skilled jobs.

Q226 Chair: We need to get that balance right. I am sure the unions will say it is dreadful and they should all be paid lots of money, and then you end up with internal economics that do not work because a small number of big, well-funded employers do the right thing and most others do not, because it does not work for them and they are trying to make a profit. Therefore, we have this noble standard that means that most young people cannot access what they need. How do we get the balance right? It has got to work for the employers, so they have got to exploit them to some extent. They have got to make money. It has to make sense for their business bottom line, because most of them are not BAE Systems or Rolls-Royce, which can take a longer view.

Stephen Overell: Absolutely, but the risk of that is that it is not a good experience for the young person who goes through it and not a scheme that is seen as having value. It is really important that, if it is, ideally employers might be able to recruit from the traineeship scheme. That is the idea.

Q227 Chair: I am trying to work out how we get this balance right, because you can be so high-minded that you end up massively reducing the opportunity. The ones that exist are great, but no one can get on it.

Darren Northcott: The bar is not as high as some might sometimes portray. We are talking about some basic standards about what traineeships should involve. That certainly includes, for example, working in an environment that pays due regard to people's health and safety. I think it involves paying at least the national minimum wage for work of value.

Q228 Chair: There are hardly any now, Darren. The numbers are pitifully low. If you look at the percentage of the cohort, it is tiny, and you want to raise the bar further and you say that the bar is not the issue. I am looking at loads of people who do not get in the workplace, where they desperately need work experience. They desperately need to be part of something to lead them somewhere. I do not want it to be valueless; I do not want it to be grossly exploitative. But somehow, if you want small businesses to do it, you are going to have to make it worth their while. They are not going to do it because their corporate social responsibility document tells them to.

Darren Northcott: Some small businesses do engage in traineeships and other programmes, and do it properly.

Chair: But not many.

Darren Northcott: Maybe not enough, but some do. Part of the way forward is supporting those employers to provide those good-quality experiences for young people, but the answer is not to say that, because we face those challenges, let's provide really poor-quality traineeships where, in fact, young people are in danger of being exploited. That solves no problem.

Q229 Mr Ward: Can we take one step back and be radical with a clean sheet of paper? We have 200,000 young people who are NEET and only 7,000, if we look at the numbers, on traineeships. Forget the 7,000 for a moment and look at the 200,000. What shall we do with those 200,000 and which part of that 200,000 group are traineeships going to be successful for? Instead of wrongly criticising the traineeships for not doing it for the others, how much does it not fit those? You have 200,000; what are we going to do with them? Where does this fit in?

Charlotte Bosworth: I personally think that traineeships would actually meet a lot of their requirements, if we go back to what a traineeship was originally set out to do, which was: ensuring progression, whether that is into an apprenticeship, a job or into further education; making sure that there was the basic level of maths and English to allow people to survive; then also building that confidence in young people, who did not necessarily have that self-belief; and getting them back into re-engaging in learning. If we take those as basic criteria, when we start thinking about the 200,000 that would actually meet a lot of their needs and requirements.

Deborah Lee: I would agree. What we find is the traineeship for many of the people who have been through our programme has been the thing that has broken the cycle of “I can't get a job because I don't have experience; I can't get experience because I don't have a job. I also just don't know how to turn up, have an interview and converse with people of the world of work”. Giving people that opportunity to experience it in a safe environment, but with some structure, with some very clear rules—and there is a fine balance between work experience and work—giving them that experience, coaching and support is the focus that traineeships can really have. I would not underplay the benefits that companies get back from it, in terms of building engagement and building a feeling of connection to new people.

Q230 Chair: Why are there only 7,000 of them if it is that marvellous for employers?

Deborah Lee: It is still very early actually. It has been quite complicated, because we have a long history, 50-odd years, of doing apprenticeships, working with Ofsted and working with the criteria. That has given us an advantage in BT. The simplification of the programme and the benefits issue helps. Further simplification will help those organisations that have smaller HR departments or experience in that. The up-skilling of Jobcentre Plus that has been going on as well to really understand what a traineeship is about and to be able to give the right advice to young people has really made a difference, but these are still quite early days, I would say.

Q231 Mr Ward: That is not all very radical, I must say. If this is really where schools have failed the young person, which is an argument, should they just stay in school while they are doing all this? Should they stay at the school until they have this additional experience, work experience, English and maths?

Darren Northcott: I am not sure it is necessarily a case of schools failing all these young people.

Mr Ward: I think you were here earlier and heard that 23% of people just disappear from the system.

Darren Northcott: That is a question about the education system more broadly and how we are implementing, for example, raising the participation age. It is an outrage that we raised the participation age from 17 and then to 18. We do not have the system to track those young people in the way that we do when they are 16 or under. That is a real issue of concern. Schools can make a great deal of progress, given the current constraints they work within and the curriculum they have to deliver, with all those young people but, notwithstanding that excellent progress, there may be some young people, and I am sure there are, who leave school not yet in that position to transition to an apprenticeship or to good-quality employment. They need that help and support.

To return to the Chair's comments at the outset of this session, it is really important to look at what more we can do in schools and what support we can provide, to allow schools to provide even more support to those young people we are talking about here and that you have just referred to.

Q232 Craig Whittaker: I was just going to ask Deborah what proportion of young people through your pilot have actually gone on to get a job thereafter?

Deborah Lee: A job is exactly 49%, so just about half. It is rising every day, because we are still waiting for some of the young people to tell us what has happened. We track them even when they come off and we continue to give support. At the end of our programme, we do an interview with them to test for ourselves whether we think they are

job-ready or not. Where they are not, we step in and give extra support. For us, it is about employability as the main objective. That is really important to us, and the employee buddy that they get feels quite responsible for that person beyond.

Q233 Mr Ward: Can I just come back to schools? We were talking about incentives. If a student is really bright, they want to keep them in the sixth form because it helps their figures. If they are not performing that well, they do not want them in the school because it affects their figures. Why should we not say, “You have failed the student in terms of making them employable or ready for further study. You can damn well keep them until they are ready”?

Chair: It is an interesting point, but strays slightly off the focus of today’s session.

Mr Ward: It is responsibility. Who is responsible for those 200,000? It appears that many of them just drift away and nobody is actually responsible for them. Who should be responsible for them?

Charlotte Bosworth: This has been very clear on the different programmes and different responsibilities. If I take school, is it that actually their responsibility is making sure people are prepared for the world of work? Then there is some kind of experience of work, rather than work experience that is part of that. Then there is that absorption in real-life work. For traineeships, often I would dispute whether that would be the responsibility of school. There is more than can be done within a school environment, absolutely, but that real absorption in work is maybe something different.

Stephen Overell: It is perhaps slightly off the area of practical recommendations for reform, but it is quite important to remember, when we are talking about this, the bigger picture about the interaction between education and work. Across the whole of the OECD, young people are delaying contact with the world of work for as long as they possibly can. There are more people staying in formal education for longer, and it is an increasingly eccentric choice to have much to do with work at the age of 16, 17 or even 18. We need to remember that the formal schooling age is, in general, culturally, getting longer and you are also working for longer as well. What is seen as normal in terms of a life pattern is evolving.

Schools are terribly worried about their position in league tables and about delivering the qualifications they are expected to. The idea that they are fully au fait with what is happening at work as well is perhaps a bit naïve, because they have so much to take on board in merely delivering the day job that they cannot quite grapple with issues such as traineeships and apprenticeships, because they are beyond their natural experience.

Q234 Pat Glass: Before I go on to talk about traineeships, I do not know whether you were all here for the previous session, but we had some discussion about schools that encourage young people to stay at school, and then they leave at the end of year 12 without any qualifications. Should we be holding schools to account for that, perhaps even financially, in that they are encouraging these young people?

Charlotte Bosworth: Yes. There is too much self-interest happening at the moment and that needs to be overcome, one way or another.

Q235 Pat Glass: Given that we are about recommendations, is that something that you would all support?

Darren Northcott: It is about how you might hold them to account. It is wrong that young people are being steered towards routes that are not going anywhere. No one can recommend that, but part of the recommendation has to take into account what we have just discussed, which is that schools are subject to quite perverse incentives about what they focus on and what they do not. Rather than just saying we will hold schools to account, sure, but we will also do something that challenges the pressures that they face.

Q236 Pat Glass: For instance, whenever I wanted head teachers at a meeting, I used to put “finance” in the title and they would all turn up. I do not blame them for that, because they need the money in order to run their schools. If we fined them, if there were some way in which we could say, “You’re not getting paid for that young person for that year; we’re going to claw the money back”, would that force head teachers then to think a little bit more carefully about who they should be encouraging to go into sixth forms and who they should be encouraging to go elsewhere?

Darren Northcott: That is solving the problem at the end. A more positive approach would be to look at why these decisions are being made in the first place and what incentive is persuading the schools that that is an appropriate route or policy to adopt, and address that. Much of that relates to the perverse way in which we hold schools to account and the kinds of behaviours that that incentivises.

Q237 Pat Glass: Can I just check some figures? Charlotte, your trainee pilot scheme in summer 2013 had a 96% success rate of young people moving into employment, apprenticeships or further education. Did you say that was 23 young people?

Charlotte Bosworth: Yes, that is right.

Q238 Pat Glass: Deborah, can I check yours, because I think you have given us updated figures. 63% of yours went into education, employment or training. How many was that? How many are we talking about?

Deborah Lee: Exact numbers of totals?

Chair: Just tell us the size of the cohort if that is easier.

Deborah Lee: There were around 290.

Chair: In the cohort?

Deborah Lee: Yes.

Q239 Pat Glass: Charlotte, yours was particularly successful with some quite challenging young people, but in small numbers. What is it that you think we can learn from your pilot scheme that needs to be incorporated in developing traineeships?

Charlotte Bosworth: That engagement and way of incentivising employers, and them realising the benefits of getting involved in the pilot. It was particularly challenging to get smaller employers involved from the outset. One of the things that also turned out to be really beneficial was actually that peer-to-peer support. We found that the young people involved really supported each other in their continued engagement, and a way of making sure that that can happen would help.

Q240 Pat Glass: Deborah, yours were a larger number. Of that 37% who did not go on to some other form of employment, training or apprenticeship, what more could have been done? What more needs to be in the traineeship to be able to capture those young people, so that they can be more successful?

Deborah Lee: We have had a few waves of them and, as we have gone through, we have improved the content. Our success rate for the later cohorts that have gone through has been higher than the earlier. We have taken an approach that says, actually, we are going to take the people who Jobcentre Plus gives us. We do not have any sort of selection.

The challenge often, with some of these folk, has been that in some cases their decision is that they do not want to go back into further education. We have had a single mother who has gone through and, actually, it has made her feel better, but she has continued to be a single mother. There are those sorts of cases. We do find that the dropout rate for us, in terms of taking folk in who we have to remove from the programme or who leave the programme, usually happens within the first week. Within our cohort where those people do not complete, usually it is that, sometimes for good reasons.

Q241 Pat Glass: Are they self-selecting in that they either do not turn up or is some of it that their behaviour is so difficult?

Deborah Lee: Some of it is that the behaviour is so difficult that we have to take a decision that we want to protect the experience for the rest of the trainees, and we have to remove them. Some of it is a motivational issue. They turn up and they do not want to come back. In some cases, they have got a job, so that is a good outcome, although it has not been as a result of the traineeship. What we have found with a number of the people who find jobs towards the end of the traineeship is that they land jobs, but they still want to complete, because they want to get their certificate. They think it is a good thing to have on the CV and

they want to finish something, so there is a mixed story within the numbers and, as I say, we still track. Sometimes it is not an immediate position, but they get positions afterwards.

Q242 Alex Cunningham: The Chairman has really covered the section that I was going to cover now, so can I apply that question to apprenticeships instead? What is actually preventing more employers from providing quality apprenticeships? Lots of people are doing lots of good things out there. But there was one programme on Teesside that I have alluded to before here, where there were 100 places on engineering apprenticeships available, but the organisation—Sembcorp and George Ritchie who runs it—could not find the placements for those young people, so they handed the money back to the Government. How do we get more employers to engage and provide traineeships and apprenticeships?

Charlotte Bosworth: There are a number of things in there. This was touched upon in the last session around careers advice and guidance. I can get the exact figures for the Committee. A Labour task force advisory group recently commissioned some work with a number of 16-year-olds. 68% knew what an A-level was; only 6% were aware of an apprenticeship.

Q243 Chair: Alex's question is from the other end. Rather than the young people, how do we get more employers?

Charlotte Bosworth: On the flip side, with vocational learning there has been a number of different programmes running and a number of employers are quite confused. GCSEs and A-levels have remained since 1988, while we have had a number of different programmes running for vocational. Part of it is that they are not sure what is providing what.

Q244 Alex Cunningham: The formerly nationalised industries had huge quality four- or five-year apprenticeship programmes. That has virtually dried up over the years. They trained plenty of people upfront, but those people are now in their 50s and 60s. How do we get employers, because there are much smaller organisations, to start providing the traineeships but also the apprenticeships?

Stephen Overell: The point that has just been made about the confusion of employers is a really important one, because employers in general are bewildered by the variety of different skills interventions there are out there. The idea of pushing more funding towards apprenticeships was that it provided a simplification, something that everybody understands around how you develop people by apprenticeships. Having said that, the numbers of employers actually doing them are currently very low. It is about 4% or so.

Alex Cunningham: Pretty pathetic.

Stephen Overell: It is really low. One of the issues around this is that those apprenticeships are extremely varied in quality, so you will get some extremely good ones. It is a brilliant way of getting on in the professions, in the traditional industries, but you also get

some very ropey ones. Where I live, there are apprentice car valets and apprentice chip shop people. These are not apprenticeships; these are low-skilled jobs. Employers are gaining the funding for that through slightly scurrilous practices from the providers, but they are not really apprenticeships as you or I might understand them.

Q245 Alex Cunningham: Sorry to interrupt you, but what should we be recommending in relation to all of that? You have turned my question around to say what is bad out there. I want to see how we create more good ones. What recommendations do we make to Government to encourage a greater volume of employers with good apprenticeships, but also to deal with this nonsense that a chip shop job can actually be an apprenticeship?

Deborah Lee: I think, number one, it is about complexity. The simpler you make it for people to engage in the process and understand it the easier it will be for those companies that do not have the big functions that can support it. For me, it seems an obvious thing to get apprentices because they are incredible. We have representation at the very senior level of our organisation who started out as apprentices.

Q246 Alex Cunningham: They are probably some of those people I was alluding to from the days of nationalised industry.

Deborah Lee: Absolutely. We have huge amounts of stories around that. A lot of it is quite a long-term commitment for some of the organisations, so three or four years hiring someone in and training them up is a big investment. I would imagine that some of the reticence for some of those organisations might be making that commitment and being able to follow through.

Q247 Alex Cunningham: How do we encourage them to make that commitment? Everybody is telling me what the problems are, but nobody is telling me what we should recommend in order to make it easier for employers to say, “Yes, I am going to create three-year apprenticeships in my business that has 120 people and I am going to train them to do this”?

Chair: Sorry to do this, because this is important stuff as part of this inquiry, but today we are focusing primarily on traineeships. As there are so few of those and it is new, perhaps you could particularly focus on those.

Darren Northcott: To answer that question, mainly substituting traineeships for apprenticeships in what you have said, more broadly around employer engagement, there are not enough. That is right. Clearly there is a policy challenge to get more employers involved. I wonder if not all, but part of the solution relates to the fact that many employers do not quite understand what the benefits are of becoming involved in these programmes and the competitive advantage that other employers have by being involved in good-quality traineeships or other kinds of programmes. I wonder if part of it is an educative process that encourages employers to look at the positive employer experience there can be and why it is

in their interest. Some may be involved for altruistic reasons or corporate social responsibility, I understand that, but there could be quite hard-headed business reasons why you want to provide good-quality traineeships or other comparable programmes.

Q248 Chair: What are those the small businesses then? For a three-man business, what is the hard-headed reason why they would do a traineeship?

Darren Northcott: It is about staff quality, training and access to support that you simply would not get otherwise if you were not part of a well-structured programme. There are not enough, but there are small businesses that involved in these kinds of programmes. Some of the testimonies you hear from those organisations show that they absolutely do not regret becoming involved in those programmes, so why? What is the reason they want to become involved and how could the lessons from their involvement be used to help other employers and other organisations get more involved in the programme? There must be benefits, otherwise they would not do it. If we can distil why they are doing it and communicate those messages more widely, perhaps we can encourage more employers to take part.

Deborah Lee: Another reason for them to be involved is that, increasingly, bigger businesses are putting a requirement around their suppliers for having involvement in youth employability issues. One of the objectives around the Movement to Work, which is a Government and business activity that we are involved with, is to put that as a requirement for suppliers, particularly in the SME market. The bigger businesses are taking our suppliers and our small and medium enterprises through the benefits themselves of doing these sorts of schemes and these sorts of introductions. Actually, there is a commercial reason why people would want to get involved. Of course, the more flexible and easy it is to get involved with this, it will show the path and, conversely, it will encourage more people to take on apprentices, because it is a shorter commitment.

Q249 Alex Cunningham: So the educative thing is very important around our recommendations. Charlotte talked about the poor quality of careers advice. I would be interested, Darren, in what your teachers are actually saying about their ability to deliver career advice and whether apprenticeship or traineeship advice is included in that package, or are they simply ill-equipped?

Darren Northcott: I know this is an issue that this Committee has looked at before and it came up earlier. I would echo many of those issues, in that schools have been given a responsibility to provide impartial careers advice with insufficient support to do so. It is also a circumstance where, for various reasons, schools find it difficult to provide impartial careers advice, and so perhaps would not suggest that young people might be better off seeking other education experiences at other institutions, because in their interest to keep a pupil at a particular school. They face those challenges—lack of support, but also a context where, because of the accountability regime, there are incentives within the system for schools to try to retain learners who might actually be better served by looking at alternative options. We would repeat those kinds of messages that I know you have heard many times before.

Q250 Chair: What counterweight would you support that we could put in place?

Darren Northcott: You were talking earlier about the fact that schools are placed in a very difficult set of circumstances in respect of careers advice. A lot of those responsibilities are defaulting to teachers who have, I think it was described earlier—

Q251 Chair: We have agreed on the problem, Darren. The question is what we do about it. There are those incentives; how do we counterbalance them?

Darren Northcott: There are two approaches that could be adopted. One is that there is not enough resourcing into external support and advice for schools. Schools want to get external support. They are not sure where they can go to get it. I understand the points made earlier about Ofsted around the National Careers Service.

Q252 Chair: That does not get over their incentives though. If they have no incentive to do it and they want to keep everyone in their sixth form, you can give them as much money as you like, but it is not going to change the fundamentals of how they approach the issue.

Darren Northcott: That is true. Part of the problem is the lack of resources. I am not saying that that is the entire solution, but there is an issue about accessing those. More fundamentally, it is about how the accountability regime incentivises particular behaviours within schools.

Q253 Chair: What should that look like? What we are trying to get at is how that should be changed. If you do not know that is fine.

Darren Northcott: No, I think there are a lot of ways it can be changed. One of the ways it can be changed is to try to encourage greater collaboration between schools. For example, if you take the previous Government's 14-to-19 agenda, one of the key planks of that was that schools had to form collaborations. They worked together to meet the needs of all the children and young people in that collaboration. That then led to quite interesting discussions around collective accountability. It is not just one institution in a local area that is accountable; all local institutions are accountable collectively.

Q254 Chair: I can see how that confuses the issue. I do not see how it crystallises it.

Darren Northcott: I think it does because if you have more effective collective arrangements at a local level—

Q255 Chair: You just have six people with the same incentives to put their own interests ahead of the kids' rather than one. How does that change anything?

Darren Northcott: I think you have a diversity of providers within that collective. If you move towards more collective accountability rather than the accountability being placed on—

Q256 Chair: I have a small sixth form. I need to fill it and I am struggling. Small sixth forms have the worst outcomes. They offer, in 16 to 19, a very poor range. I still need to fill it, however many schools are I am collaborating with. I might send you to some other collaborative school rather than the FE college, because they are part of my team, but it has not changed my incentives. If you have any thoughts, Darren, if you are at some future point able to answer that question, we would love to hear from you.

Q257 Alex Cunningham: Surely the answer is independent advice for young people within schools. Never mind your collaboration, surely they should have access to somebody who is a professional person who can look at the whole breadth of options to them and say, "This is it", without somebody saying, "No, it would be better if you went into our sixth form because we need the numbers".

Chair: If your members cannot do it, it has to be independent, yes or no?

Darren Northcott: Agreed, yes.

Q258 Siobhain McDonagh: What evidence is there about the quality of traineeship placements offered by employers? What can a young person do if a placement is not really working out to them or is not up to scratch?

Charlotte Bosworth: There has been an issue with the evidence, because data has only just started to be collected on how traineeships have got on. We welcome the move to having that measurement in place now. That data has not been readily available up until now.

Stephen Overell: It is a very big worry, and it is a worry for training providers and it is a worry for individual schemes. The surveys there have been so far, and there are very few because we do not have the data yet at a national level, indicate that it is a very new scheme. It is evolving and there are some anxieties around the quality of what is on offer, as indeed there are with apprenticeships as well.

Q259 Chair: We are back to where we started with the balance and whether someone is better stuck on the dole or being exploited but having work experience. How do we get that balance right? The last thing I want is for them to be exploited; on the other hand, it has got to work for the employer.

Deborah Lee: I do not think every traineeship is exploitation though.

Q260 Chair: BT, BAE, Rolls-Royce, Bentley, for apprenticeships, traineeships, great, but there are just hardly any of them. All over the country, there are 200,000 young people just stuck on the dole, being left and scarred by unemployment at an early age. We have to get them out of that. If we want people to do it who do not have your capacity, then we will have to find a way of incentivising them and not be high-minded about it. We have got to get that balance right and not get caught up. We can get so caught up in being politically correct that we just carry on. Leaving them on the dole to rot is fine, as long as we do not allow them to be exploited somewhere. We have to get that balance right somehow.

Stephen Overell: The thought I want to throw in, which we have not talked about too much, is the nature of the labour market. Traineeships and apprenticeships are, in theory, oriented towards the needs of the labour market. What do employers actually need? When you look at apprenticeships, the ones that are growing are not our traditional apprenticeship sectors. They are things like customer service, retail, and health and social care, not necessarily everyone's idea of high-quality jobs in themselves. That will reflect somewhat on the nature of apprenticeships. It is the same with traineeships. There has been no attempt to match up the development of traineeships with the needs of the labour market in any locality. It is a national scheme that operates in ignorance of the needs of employers that there are in any particular locality.

One way around this and one way you might try to address this problem of incentives that we have just talked about is perhaps to route funding to localities. They are perhaps best placed to recognise the needs of employers within their particular area, rather than a national scheme. Maybe they could incentivise higher-quality apprenticeships and monitor those apprenticeships in the areas that are growing and likely to deliver decent-quality jobs. These are just possibilities, but there is some movement in this way around the settlement in Manchester, so we have some control and influence now over the apprenticeship grant for employers. Perhaps we ought to go the whole hog, though, and say that that part of apprenticeship funding should be given to local areas. Maybe that is the direction to head in, rather than to try to run these national schemes.

Deborah Lee: One of the things that we have found in our traineeship scheme, talking about collaboration, is that we have over-trained for the needs that we have, which is why I would break the link to apprenticeships. We have collaborated with some of our suppliers and our partners, and other companies in the area, to involve them in the graduation. Because we have the facilities to train the people, we are quite happy churning out more employable people who get a job with other people in the area. One of your incentive questions was about how you encourage, and maybe getting big companies to train more than they need to would help local companies.

Chair: We probably do not have time to explore that now, but would it be possible for you to write to us if you have any further thoughts on how that could be delivered? Getting the big companies, which have the capacity, to do more certainly seems to me to be part of the solution, as well as trying to get the incentives right for the small companies.

Craig Whittaker: I just want to come back on the scheme, because in the Calder Valley, which I represent, 20% of the people work in high-end manufacturing. We only have a 1.8% unemployment rate and the problem for us is, if that money was sent to us to train,

there are not enough people within our area looking for work to use that money. What we need is places like Manchester to send us some high-school-qualified or potential high-school-qualified people. That is exactly what Deborah was talking about as well. There is no question, just a statement, Chair.

Q261 Mr Ward: In Bradford, we have got one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the country, but we also have a very large number of vacancies. We have got more apprenticeship offers than we have people who want to take on the young people to do it, whilst we still have youth unemployment. One of the arguments that I have heard is that they are not employable, hence the need for traineeships, so they are not at the level at which they would take on the apprenticeships, because they failed at school or whatever other reason, hence the traineeships, but they are not taking on traineeships because they are unpaid. We have mentioned the shortage of employers, but 7,000 out of 200,000 is a very low proportion. How much of that is due to the fact that they are not paid?

Stephen Overell: Is this traineeships specifically?

Mr Ward: Yes.

Stephen Overell: Traineeships are not jobs, and that is the key point of distinction between an apprenticeship and a traineeship. An apprenticeship is a job; a traineeship is not a job. In a way, the problem afflicting both with this unfilled vacancies issue, is the same. It is a mystery we need to understand more about, so this is slightly speculative but, from what research I know of into this question of how come there are all these unfilled vacancies, it is partly an issue of unattractive roles. Regarding apprenticeships, the pay is often way below that advertised on the National Apprenticeship Service official website. It is often below the national minimum wage, for all I can tell, for apprenticeship roles as well.

With traineeships, there are obviously unwaged placements, and it is a difficulty getting young people to see them as attractive. Arguably, they see the comparisons between a minimum-wage job and a traineeship. It may not be realistic for these young people to be thinking of getting a minimum-wage job, which is why someone is trying to steer them towards an apprenticeship, but that is the thing they are weighing up in their own minds.

Q262 Mr Ward: What message does it send out about the value of the traineeship if we are not actually going to pay you anything to do it?

Stephen Overell: It is a good question, but I just do not think employers will participate in the scheme if we turned it into a waged scheme. There is a solution around allowances.

Q263 Mr Ward: It could be Government-funded.

Stephen Overell: Perhaps a more productive route might be a recommendation you could make that trainees should command an allowance—not a wage but some kind of allowance—to help with travel and lunch, or something like that. At present, there are too

many disincentives to taking one, and I think that is why you have problems with the low take-up of traineeships; it is very unclear what the attraction is.

Q264 Chair: Where is the bigger problem with traineeships? I know it is early days, but is it that young people do not want to do them or that the employers are not offering them?

Stephen Overell: It is both. It is making them attractive to employers and it is making them attractive to young people.

Q265 Chair: It would be unusual if they were entirely equal. Normally there is one thing more than another. For young people's apprenticeships, we know there are many more applicants than there are apprenticeships, so the obvious problem is that.

Charlotte Bosworth: I think it is how we are selling it, both to the learners and to the parents. I am the owner of an 18-year-old, and if he had come home and said to me, "Somebody is going to give me the opportunity to really get prepared for work, give me work experience and allow me to have some bite-sized learning to make sure that I am ready to go for a job", I would have bitten their hand off if it had been sold to me in that way. There is this element of how we sell the value of that traineeship.

Deborah Lee: I think awareness is one of the things and providing some status to going through it, which is why we always have a qualification and a big graduation ceremony to make it feel like a status activity. We also cover lunch and travel, because we did find that early on that was quite a disincentive for some people, who just were not able to travel to our centres. There is a combination of things that could be barriers, but putting more status on getting involved with this, with some high-profile campaigning about some success stories, some of those young people who perhaps at the moment are a bit "Why would I do it because I am not getting paid?" would see that it leads to something greater.

Q266 Siobhain McDonagh: Do traineeships adequately prepare people for undertaking an apprenticeship?

Chair: Early days, but are they working for apprenticeships in particular?

Deborah Lee: 9% of our folk have gone on to an apprenticeship, not always with us. One of our traineeships is a lovely story of a 17-year-old girl who certainly did not really enjoy maths at school. She went through our traineeship and is now doing a finance apprenticeship with us, in the company, and has huge confidence. In some cases, it will prepare them. In others, it is just about getting them the confidence to be able to walk into the workplace, sit in front of the interviewer and present themselves in a confident manner. It depends on the student or the young person.

Charlotte Bosworth: With the young people who we had on our pilot, a lot were totally disengaged with learning. That is where the traineeship played a massive part in re-engaging

them in learning, moving away from questioning why they were doing something. That work experience actually gives them that.

Q267 Siobhain McDonagh: Should there be an expectation of progressing from a traineeship to an apprenticeship with the same employer? Should traineeships have a greater connection with business sectors?

Stephen Overell: From what I said earlier, I think so. The link between traineeships and a vocation is currently very vague. It is general work experience rather than preparation a lot of the time for a particular career that you might pursue. Just touching on your earlier question, I do not know specifically whether traineeships prepare people for apprenticeships, but it is important to note that apprenticeships are increasingly tough. The standards that are being developed currently around apprenticeships imply that apprenticeships are getting tougher and more academically challenging for individuals. That probably has a knock-on effect to traineeships, in that they would probably tighten their eligibility criteria in the future. For those people who are some distance away from being ready for an apprenticeship, I suspect it becomes even more challenging for them to get into.

Deborah Lee: I would have a real concern about making it a pre-apprenticeship programme, because you then get a way of pre-selecting candidates onto apprenticeships, which is not what traineeships should be about, in my view. They are about preparing people for the world of work, whatever work looks like. If it is about solving employability of the 200,000, keeping it wider makes a better case. I do know that some people are using it as a way of pre-selecting apprenticeships; I just do not think that is right. You get apprenticeship funding for apprenticeships. It could therefore become an extension of the apprenticeship funding. I just think you have got to keep it separate.

Q268 Pat Glass: Do you think the success criteria for judging traineeships at 16 to 19 are effective, and are the Government proposals going to make that better or worse?

Chair: Changed success measures.

Darren Northcott: A greater focus on destination outcomes is something the Government have emphasised quite strongly. You can understand why that would be considered. The danger, in terms of having a fair and equitable way of holding providers to account, is that those destination outcomes can be influenced by factors that are beyond the control of individual providers. For example, if one of the destination outcomes is around movement into employment, to some extent that is influenced by local labour market conditions, the availability of work and so on. I would have some reservations about relying too strongly on destination data, because it is not really telling you everything you need to know about the quality of the work that the provider has undertaken, because those destinations are influenced by things a provider cannot always control.

Stephen Overell: What people get out of the traineeship is a very good question. It is quite vague and varied at present. One possible way of addressing that would be some kind of qualification at the end of it. The best providers currently, as well as running a traineeship,

run in parallel some kind of vocational qualification, so it is not just work experience; there is something definite that comes out at the end of it. The open-ended nature of traineeships at present is a problem, both for getting individuals to do them and for employers to see the value of them. What comes out of it apart from an exit interview at the end?

Q269 Chair: Is it a hand-holding exercise though? The whole point is you should leave at any time, as soon as you get a job. It is basically that you do not have a job now, so therefore you can have this hand-holding exercise; you have somewhere to go; you have people talking to you about how to make your letter better, how to make your CV better and doing interview training with you. If you get a job on day three, they are delighted. That is the whole point of it. Therefore, if you build it into something where the whole point is to get the qualification at the end, you are going to entirely turn the thing on its head.

Stephen Overell: That's great, but, remember, a traineeship lasts for up to six months and if you do not get a job at the end of it—

Charlotte Bosworth: This is where do know that a lot of people like recognition for their achievement. That does not necessarily mean it has to be a big bulky qualification. If we can build some kind of bite-sized recognition in that would be really useful, but I agree that progression should be the destination we are after here, whatever that looks like.

Q270 Pat Glass: Do you think a payment-by-results system would put off providers?

Charlotte Bosworth: We need to be very clear about what we mean by progression, but by saying automatically that a qualification has to be a measurement of that progression will turn a number of providers off.

Deborah Lee: Purely paying by results means that you would encourage people to be selective to begin with. Therefore, you end up with an even more reduced pool of folk. It is right to have some outcome metrics in there, but we should hold true to what traineeships are about. If they are about creating employability for people who are not in work, then you would actually need to think very carefully about how you would measure that success.

Q271 Pat Glass: So it is a balance with access.

Deborah Lee: It is a balance, but I am very supportive of the recommendations that the Government have made.

Q272 Mr Raab: One of the things the Government are doing is proposing to collect and publish more detailed data about the outcomes of traineeships. I would be interested to know what the panel thinks of that. I know that NASUWT has concerns about data protection so maybe, Darren, you would like to go first, but I would like a get a view across the piece as to how important that is. Darren, from your point of view, are the concerns

surmountable? Are there proposals, amendments or changes that could be made that would overcome your concerns?

Darren Northcott: We made clear in our evidence that we did have those concerns around how you could have destination data, but also protect the data of individual participants. The current systems, as I understand it, are difficult to use for that purpose. Whether they are surmountable or not, I would be very interested to see proposals that might address those.

Q273 Mr Raab: Would you have any thought?

Darren Northcott: I would not have any proposals, no. I think I have identified the problem. I would be interested if the Government want to use that data. It is incumbent upon the Government to set out how that data could be used in a way that meets those data protection expectations.

Going back to the point I made earlier, our fundamental concern around destination data is whether it tells the Government and whether it tells potential participants in traineeship programmes, and all kinds of stakeholders. Does it give them really accurate data about how effective a particular provider has been because, as I say, some of those destination data indicators can be influenced by factors that are behind the control of the current employer?

Q274 Mr Raab: That is always the case with data. The question is: if the data protection aspect can be overcome, is it better than nothing? Is it still going to be of some value?

Darren Northcott: There are several barriers. One is data protection, but the other barrier is important as well.

Deborah Lee: I would say that more sharing of information is beneficial for the young person and for companies, because then you start to see what the benchmark is. If I saw that my colleagues in the same area were achieving much higher outcomes, it would make me think very hard about how good my scheme is and vice versa. The collaboration of sharing of what is working, particularly in this space, because it is not a competitive environment, has got to be for the benefit of the young people.

Stephen Overell: It is a competitive environment. Providers are competing with each other, and so there are grave sensitivities around data, always. If one provider is doing particularly well, particularly if there is some prospect of payment by results, it is incredibly sensitive stuff.

I kind of slightly disagree with Darren, because I am not sure what the data protection issues are here. We do destinations data at Key Stage 4 and at Key Stage 5. Why would destinations here be any different from that which we already produce? In the higher education world, there is the higher education leavers' survey every year. Further education

colleagues are getting into destinations as a requirement imposed on them by Ofsted. I do not quite get that point.

On Darren's other point that you cannot just judge institutions on what happens after, I agree wholeheartedly, because the labour market is very different in very different parts of the country. You cannot really hold institutions to account necessarily on the basis of things they are not responsible for. Destinations as a whole is something that applies to the whole of further education. We need better understanding of what happens to people afterwards. We are trying to rectify that locally by doing our own surveys, as well as the national ones, but the results might be slightly alarming when you get them. There are an awful lot of people who go to college but end up unemployed as a result, quite apart from the traineeship scheme, so it is part of a bigger debate.

Charlotte Bosworth: I totally agree with Deborah.

Q275 Mr Raab: That is a nice succinct answer. Final question: we have had a lot of evidence given to us by witnesses about young apprenticeships, which were introduced by the last Government and phased out. Their value in terms of the success rate of getting youngsters into further training or a job was very high and, for 14 to 16-year-olds, the spike in truancy rates means this seems to be a vocational option beyond the pure academic setting. Therefore, we are looking as one of our recommendations, possibly, about whether they should be revived, whether as they were done previously or in a modified form. I would be very interested in a quick sense from each of you as to whether you think that would be a good or bad thing.

Charlotte Bosworth: It would be sad to actually get rid of the traineeship brand just as it is beginning to gain some momentum.

Q276 Mr Raab: It is a different model for the young apprenticeships for 14-to-16-year-olds. It is two years, about half the time spent doing numeracy and literacy, the basic academic, and then half your time work-based training.

Charlotte Bosworth: I would welcome appropriate learning for that young person. If that happens to be vocational learning, brilliant.

Mr Raab: Stephen, any views on bringing back young apprenticeships in some form?

Stephen Overell: None in particular. I would echo the point that traineeships are a new scheme. It needs refinement but it is in the right area. What people need is greater experience of the workplace. I would be very loath to modify it too much.

Q277 Mr Raab: I should have been clear that we are not talking about replacing or removing the traineeships. They seem to be dealing with a rather different set of demands, as Deborah has articulated rather well. It is a much broader question—we are getting lots of

witnesses coming before us—of whether the young apprenticeship model would also plug a gap.

Chair: It might reduce demand for traineeships, but it certainly would not reduce the requirement for them.

Darren Northcott: We were involved with the last Government in developing its young apprenticeships programme and it had a lot of promise. It is a shame that it was not pursued quite as rigorously as it could have been, but it certainly has the potential to address some of the issues that you, Chair, raised at the outset. They are how we can ensure that some of the issues that traineeships are now currently trying to address are addressed in the 14-to-16 phase or maybe even earlier, rather than post-16. That is what the young apprenticeship is intended to address. It did not quite get the support that it should have done and it is worth at least looking at again.

Deborah Lee: Anything that helps prepare young people for work, particularly for the group that you are describing where school is not the right answer, is worth exploring and running some pilots around whether it makes a difference. If the issue is not education and is not access to work, and it is something else, some sort of social issue, then it will not solve the problem.

Mr Raab: The pilots were very successful; it was just very expensive, but that is a taxpayer public policy issue.

Chair: It was never scaled up to the point where it was less expensive, so who knows? Thank you very much indeed. If you have any further thoughts or reflections following this, particularly around recommendations, please do be in touch. Thank you very much indeed.

