

Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Quality of apprenticeships and skills training](#), HC 344

Wednesday 9 May 2018

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Members present: Robert Halfon (Chair); Lucy Allan; Michelle Donelan; Emma Hardy; Ian Mearns; Thelma Walker.

Questions 221 - 287

Witnesses

I: Hannah Cuthbert, Business Administration Apprentice, University of Hull, Gavin Garner, Caretaker Apprentice, Hull City Council, Cheryl Sedgwick, Employer Liaison and Partnership Development Lead, Hull Training and Adult Education, and Lisa Shepherdson, Deputy Manager, Hull Training and Adult Education.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Hannah Cuthbert, Gavin Garner, Cheryl Sedgwick and Lisa Shepherdson



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Q221 Chair: Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for coming today, it is much appreciated. I know you have had to get up very early to come from Hull. I want to thank Emma Hardy, a member of the Committee, who is also, as you know, MP for Hull and was very keen that you came. It looks formal, but it is informal, because we are here to learn from you. Just for the benefit of those watching on the internet, could you kindly introduce yourselves—if you are happy, we can call you by your first names—and give your name and position, please?

Lisa Shepherdson: My name is Lisa Shepherdson. I am from Hull Training. I am the Deputy Manager.

Cheryl Sedgwick: I am Cheryl Sedgwick. I am from Hull Training and Adult Education and I am the Employer Liaison and Partnership Development Lead, looking at apprenticeships and employer liaison, to inform them about the new apprenticeship programmes.

Chair: The acoustics in the House of Commons are really poor—it is not you, it is us—so if I could ask you to try to speak loudly so that people watching outside can hear as well.

Gavin Garner: My name is Gavin Garner and I am an apprenticeship caretaker at Endeavour with Hull Training. There is a long name for my position or what qualification I am getting: it is multi-trade refurbishment and building maintenance operations level 2. That is what I do.

Hannah Cuthbert: I am Hannah Cuthbert. I am a business administration apprentice at Hull University.

Q222 Emma Hardy: I will start by declaring the following interests: my partner is employed by Hull Training.

Thank you so much for coming, Hannah and Gavin. I probably should declare that I think I used to be your primary teacher, didn't I?

Q223 Chair: What was she like as a teacher?

Hannah Cuthbert: She was really good, yes.

Ian Mearns: That is the right answer.

Chair: Good answer.

Q224 Emma Hardy: Which I did not realise before you walked in. Lovely to see you, really good to see you. I am so pleased you could come, because I met Gavin, as you know, a while ago. We were so impressed by everything you were telling me about how you enjoyed your apprenticeship. I wondered if you could share some of the things you shared with me with the rest of the panel, about how you got started on your apprenticeship and the type of support that you are being given to complete it.

Gavin Garner: Previously, for the past two years, I had no fixed abode and I was looking after my mum full time. I had no real quality, I did not have any purpose. I felt I had no purpose and that I wanted to do



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something different and make a change. I found the support from the local authority and my local training provider, Hull Training, to find an apprenticeship. I found the apprenticeship that I am on now and I thoroughly enjoy it. It gives me a reason to get out of bed in the morning. It is really good. I could not think of anything that I would rather do with my time.

The support is always there if I need it from Hull Training and they do offer a lot of support. Because I am independent and I live independently, it could range from food parcels to help me out, because the wage I am on is an apprenticeship wage, so it is difficult to live independently. There is a lot of support. They give me a bus pass for my bus fare to get to work and they help with me with a range of other things, so emotional support as well. If I have anything wrong, like in my head or if I need to speak to anybody, I know I can always go and speak to the people at Hull Training or my local authority, my PA, Phil.

Q225 Emma Hardy: What does Phil do, sorry? What does the PA stand for?

Gavin Garner: Phil was my pathway worker. Now he has a different job role, but he helped me find the apprenticeship initially, because he could see that I did not really have any motivation to do anything. He wanted me to do something with my time. He offers a lot of support. I have had to find an alternative to housing benefit so I can pay the rent on my flat; I have had to find alternatives for paying my council tax. He has helped me do all that. I have had a lot of help from the council and the people who are around to set myself up and I am really happy. I am in a lot better place now than I was before I started my apprenticeship. I was really depressed. I did not have, like I say, motivation to do anything, to even go out. I was looking after my mum a lot, you see, but my work now, my apprenticeship, it is based right near where my mum is. It is easy enough for me to get there in the morning on time and it is ideal. It is the ideal job. I love it, I really do.

But I think a lot of people my age would need an incentive or something to do an apprenticeship, whereas for me the actual apprenticeship itself is my incentive, because I know I am going to be better off in the long run, whereas in the short run, it might be not very good now, but my incentive is to work towards the goal at the end and what I can achieve from it. I think as well I have not had the best past and I have never made really good choices, but now I have realised that you can use your past experiences to make the right choices with your life. Instead of using them as an excuse to do the wrong things, I try to use them to do the right things with my life. I think that is the key thing. I think you have to want to learn and you have to want to do an apprenticeship, because it is quite difficult. Getting up at 6.30 every morning and getting two buses, it was a wake-up call, really. I had worked before that, but not very long.

Emma Hardy: Thank you so much, Gavin.

I used to give you a nickname when I taught you at primary school. I



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cannot remember, was it “Banana”?

Hannah Cuthbert: Banana.

Q226 **Emma Hardy:** It is all coming back to me now—Hannah Banana. All right, sorry. How have you found your apprenticeship now you are grown up?

Hannah Cuthbert: When I finished school, I was encouraged to go to college, so I did that for a bit. I found I just was not enjoying that much; I had no motivation to do it, really. I was a bit unhappy there. I tried moving college, so I went to Bishop Burton College, and I was not enjoying that either. Then my auntie found an apprenticeship for me, because she worked for Hull Training. I thought it was a really good opportunity, because it was Hull University, which is a good company to work for. I applied for it, got an interview and I got it, so I was really happy about that. It has given me loads of good opportunities. It has made me really happy, a lot better than college.

Q227 **Emma Hardy:** Do you get any extra support to complete your apprenticeship in the way Gavin explained? Do you have any extra things?

Hannah Cuthbert: Hull Training provide a lot of support, like they are helping me pass my business qualification, NVQ.

Q228 **Emma Hardy:** There are some extra things with that. Gavin, what do you think could be done to help other people in circumstances similar to yourself to do an apprenticeship? What kind of help do you think they should get?

Gavin Garner: I think that is difficult, because it is based on the individual. Every individual is different and every individual will need different things, different levels and kinds of support. But if it was similar to me, I think that for a start, the person needs to want to do an apprenticeship, because if you do not want to do an apprenticeship and someone has pushed you along or told you to do it, you are never going to do it. Whereas if the person is motivated, they should have all the support in the world, with the same things I get, travel, food—because I get my food while I am at work for free—just different things, like opportunities as well. This is a big opportunity for me. I would never have thought a few months ago I would be doing something like this. But like I said, I think it is based on the individual and how much they want to succeed and achieve. If they want to succeed and achieve enough, then the support will be there for them and they will always find it.

Q229 **Chair:** You just said you can only do this if somebody wants to do an apprenticeship, but how should we make it more possible for people to know and be encouraged to do it? I think you said in your notes to us that you had not been told about it in your school.



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Hannah Cuthbert: I was not told about it at all or anything. That is why I did not see that as an option. I just thought college was the only option. That is why I did it.

Q230 **Chair:** How do we make sure, especially with people who may have had disadvantaged backgrounds, that they know about apprenticeships and that that is a really good route for them?

Gavin Garner: From my experience when I was at school, everyone was given a choice of three colleges and that was it. No one was told what apprenticeships were on offer. We were all told to go off and look for something, but the three main colleges were Hull, Bishop Barron and Hornsea, and there was no mention really of apprenticeships. I think as well apprenticeships are really aimed at a certain age: the majority of people who do apprenticeships are younger, leaving school, and I think that would be a key time that you need to start an apprenticeship. I think that there needs to be more awareness around apprenticeships as well, because there is not much awareness. Schools just seem to think that everyone is going to carry on with education and further education and it does not work like that, because everybody wants something different, everybody has a different idea of what route they want to go down.

I think as well parents are very influential on where they want young people to go after they finish school. I know I was forced to go into college for a year at Bishop Burton to do land-based engineering and I hated it. I did not want to be there, I did not, and I rebelled against it. I could not stand it. I think if I had started an apprenticeship like this then, I would have been a couple of years ahead of where I am now. But like I say, I had to care for my mum, so that set me back a little bit and I have had my own things to deal with, but I think there needs to be a lot more promotion on apprenticeships and how they can benefit you skills-wise as well, because you learn a lot of skills that you would not in a classroom on an apprenticeship, because it is practical-based.

I have never done tiling before in my life: I did it last week and I am brilliant at it, but I would not have known that if I hadn't been on this apprenticeship. I think it is learning those skills that is important if you want to succeed and achieve.

Q231 **Emma Hardy:** Can I ask a quick question before we move on? In terms of having that extra support, do you think that apprentices should be supported with things like equipment and uniform as well? Because that—

Gavin Garner: Yes, definitely. I have had equipment and uniform for me, my personal protective equipment. I have the boots provided for me, overalls, everything I have needed has been there. But I am brave enough to ask. There might be some apprentices who might not be.

Q232 **Emma Hardy:** Do you think they should just be offered to all apprentices so they have the equipment and the uniform that they need?

Gavin Garner: Yes.



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Q233 **Emma Hardy:** What about yourself, Hannah, as well? Do you think that?

Hannah Cuthbert: Mine is very different because it is an office, basically, so it is not really anything practical. It is basically just the office equipment and stuff, which is all provided for me.

Q234 **Emma Hardy:** But in terms of the uniform—because you have to dress in a certain way, don't you, in an office—do you think there should be something? If someone came from a poor background, do you think they should be given clothing allowances and do you think that would be a good idea?

Hannah Cuthbert: Yes, I think it should be provided if they do not have the money to get it themselves.

Emma Hardy: Thank you both so much.

Q235 **Chair:** Can I just ask both of you, in terms of the support that you give to the apprentices that you are training, how does it work? Is it that you use the money you get from the ESFA and how have you decided to do this? Can you just explain?

Lisa Shepherdson: Obviously when we do take young people on, we speak to them individually, we get them linked straight away to a support worker and our support manager would have that discussion about what they may need right at the very beginning. We do not always recognise at the beginning, it may be a little bit further down the line, but things, as Gavin mentioned, such as food, if they need food, hygiene equipment.

Q236 **Chair:** How do you fund this?

Lisa Shepherdson: We do it through the line of support, so we put them on ALN or ASN and we pull down the funding from there.

Q237 **Chair:** Could you, just for the benefit for those outside, not use acronyms?

Lisa Shepherdson: Sorry, yes. Additional Learning Support, Additional Social Needs or Additional Learning Needs, whichever that may be, and we pull the funding down from there. That may include clothes. Sometimes learners don't have the appropriate clothing, particularly learners who are based on maybe a reception desk, and they may not always understand what is appropriate to sit on a reception desk, so that does help them to see what is appropriate and what you should wear.

Q238 **Chair:** They are all external funding? Do you use any of the ESFA monies that you get, for example, the £60 million that goes to providers that have apprentices in deprived areas? Does any of that come to you to help with all this?

Lisa Shepherdson: Could I let know about that?

Chair: Please do, yes.



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Lisa Shepherdson: Is that all right? As far as I know, I would contact the support manager and then we would pull the funding from there. However, there may be other funding streams that we take the money from, so I could supply you with that information.

Q239 **Chair:** Do you know how many of your apprentices come from disadvantaged backgrounds?

Lisa Shepherdson: I know that around about 22% of our learners are on Additional Learning Support. I am talking about the centre that I work at, which is a mix, so we are business administration, IT, customer service. However, we also have our Access to Apprenticeship, where there would be the traineeships, the study programmes, and the percentage would be far greater in those. For us, 22% of them are pulling down some sort of funding or support to enable them to achieve their apprenticeship. For example, we have a learner who struggles with anxiety and struggles to get on buses, public transport, so we provide a taxi service. Since we have done that, her attendance has increased hugely. She has now passed two exams, whereas before there was a great reluctance.

Q240 **Chair:** That must have cost a lot of money, to get funding for a taxi. Do you just use your own funds or is that again from the grants?

Lisa Shepherdson: Again, we have drawn that down from the Additional Learning Support.

Q241 **Chair:** Before I pass on to Thelma, just one or two key things that we should be doing, that Government should be doing, to get more apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds to have the same opportunities that Gavin is doing brilliantly at. Of all the things that are happening, whether it is clothes allowances or the wages or whatever, what would you pick?

Lisa Shepherdson: One of the big things that we used to do, we have obviously lost the business admin level 2. For us, as a centre, that is a massive starting point for our young people, our 16 to 18 year-olds. The level 3 is all around managing and supporting and peer development. It is not for the 16 to 18 year-olds, it is not for the learners, such as Gavin, who want to get started. If we are saying that we want them to be a level 3, then possibly could we go back to where we offered the level 2 in school? Because we have done that with another school previously and it was really successful. We worked with a school from a deprived area of Hull—and we have a lot of that in Hull—and that did work well. These kids knew about the apprenticeship. The majority of them carried on with an apprenticeship and progressed, so that would be fantastic, to be able to offer the lower levels at school age, like Gavin. Maybe we could link them up.

Q242 **Chair:** Do any of your apprentices, before they come to you, if they come from particularly disadvantaged backgrounds, would any of them work with other organisations like the Prince's Trust maybe as a bridge before



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coming on to you?

Lisa Shepherdson: I think we have had one, but quite a few learners are coming through, as Gavin did, with personal assistants and often the personal assistants will come with them to get them linked up.

Q243 **Chair:** Do you think there is a role for the bridge organisations like the Prince's Trust and others as a kind of three or four-month mentoring and support before?

Lisa Shepherdson: Absolutely.

Q244 **Chair:** Would that make a real difference if there was a lot more—

Lisa Shepherdson: Yes, definitely.

Q245 **Chair:** Do you think funds should be directed to those kind of organisations?

Lisa Shepherdson: We have recently gone into a school, again in a lower area of Hull, a deprived area of Hull, and done some teaching in there. The teacher was really enthusiastic. I think if we could maybe educate the teachers a little bit more. My daughter said she felt like she would be a failure if she did not go to university and that is because of what the teachers have said. It was expected that the brighter children go off to university or all the children go off to university and not necessarily all of them want to do that, like Hannah not wanting to continue with college and sixth form.

Q246 **Thelma Walker:** Morning, everyone. We want to make sure that as many young people, brilliant young people like Gavin and Hannah, take up quality apprenticeships as possible. Recently, I attended a business breakfast at my local high school in Colne Valley and there were about 12 business leaders there and the school staff there. There was an appointed careers member of staff, who was there to support young people. Gavin, you mentioned it should start earlier, where that quality advice is there. If we are going to get as many as possible, young people in particular, like Gavin and Hannah, accessing quality apprenticeships, what are your thoughts about having trained careers advisers in schools, starting as early as possible, signposting young people to quality apprenticeship and what is out there?

Lisa Shepherdson: Myself, I did not do the typical university route. I left school and I went straight into work and I have never been out of education since then. I never enjoyed it at school, but since I have come out I have really enjoyed it and I have loved learning with the youngsters. If people who have done that route can go into schools and start to show the kids what it is like to be on an apprenticeship, the types of jobs that you would do, the opportunities that you would have, I think that would be just fantastic, to give them real knowledge of what an apprenticeship is and what the jobs are. I do not think they fully know what jobs they can go into. They don't know what they don't know.



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Q247 **Thelma Walker:** Would you say there is inconsistency in the different settings, that some provide more support than others?

Cheryl Sedgwick: I have worked in education for 27 years, and I worked in primary and secondary schools before I came into the apprenticeship realm, so to speak. When I was working in education, I did not know anything about apprenticeships and I was an educator. When I applied for the role within Hull Training, I thought, "Right, okay, my children have done apprenticeships, yet I do not know what an apprenticeship is". Both my children did the sixth form route and then they did an apprenticeship afterwards, because they were not necessarily not successful, but they were not as successful as they could have been. When they went down the apprenticeship route, they were exceptionally successful and they engaged with the employer and they found that employer route a better way of going about what they wanted to do as their careers.

We see a problem when we go into educational establishments. I had a meeting this week about ambassadors for the apprenticeships, and there were a couple of teachers there were looking—because they have apprenticeships within the school—at becoming ambassadors for apprenticeships. They came from industry originally. My comment was that teachers come from institutionalised education, so they are not the best careers advisers for apprenticeships. But she came from industry and she recognised it. I think that we just need that link-up. It is more than a tick in a box to invite us to do that presentation, to help the young people understand.

Q248 **Thelma Walker:** Do you think there is a training need then for teachers then within most schools?

Cheryl Sedgwick: Yes. I always say that teachers should do some work experience within industry to understand what industry is. That would be fantastic. But I do think, yes, we just need to have a bit better link-up with the schools for a better understanding of what apprenticeships are. They are not just for young people who are doing particularly well in education, they are for your A* students too, and you can progress to a degree through an apprenticeship. It is just getting that message through that no matter where your starting point is, you can either do it the academic route or you can do it an apprenticeship route, but you will get to that same point at the end. Some people suit an apprenticeship better.

Q249 **Thelma Walker:** From the business leaders I spoke with as well, they were saying, "We are a little bit nervous about how we support the apprentice and we do not feel equipped". That trained member of staff, could they be the bridge between the business and apprentice?

Cheryl Sedgwick: That is what we are trying to do at the moment. Lisa mentioned that we are going into one particular school, where we asked if we could do a little bit of a pioneering exercise in how we are introducing people to the apprenticeships. They could see the links and



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the teachers have really enjoyed it, haven't they? We have done it in all subject areas: sign making, business administration and even construction as well. That pioneering, what we are going to do is then offer it to other schools around the city to see if they can involve it.

What is helping with that is those educational people—the teachers—who are vital in encouraging people with their future careers, are getting a better taste of what an apprenticeship is. But it is vital, yes, we have to get in there. If they have more knowledge, they are better advisers, aren't they? But if you only have the route that you ever did, how do you know? I advised my children to do sixth form college, because that is what I knew. I did an apprenticeship at 16 and I loved it, but I still advised my children to go to sixth form college because that is what the educators told me was best for my children at that time and I forgot about my own experience. But then, like I say, at 18, 19, they did an apprenticeship and were successful.

Q250 Michelle Donelan: I just wanted to follow up on that. Do you think it is getting better? I met my own college in my constituency on Friday and they were saying that in the last year, they have seen a difference in attitudes, because of course now schools have to accept apprenticeship providers and the tide is turning slowly. It has taken a long time, but do you think it is changing so that schools are a bit more open now to the idea that we must show the full picture and that apprenticeships are a viable option? Do you think that is changing?

Cheryl Sedgwick: I think that is right, they are doing that. I think they are making sure that we see more young people, but sometimes we are not seeing the A* students too to give them that ultimate choice of where they could possibly be. Some schools are better than others.

Q251 Chair: The schools in your area, do you think they are changing their behaviours or is it only some?

Cheryl Sedgwick: I think some are. Some are sixth form colleges themselves, so they would like their young people who are very academic to stay with them.

Lisa Shepherdson: I think they are still protecting some learners. I think they are giving access to some learners, but not necessarily all of the learners. But you are definitely right, there is a change, more schools where we never could get into previously are starting to allow us to come in slowly, but sometimes at not quite the right events. They might let us be there when they are taking their exams, as they are coming out of their exams, but they are that hyped up or upset or excited, whatever they are, that they are not really stopping and talking to us, whereas if they would allow us in the classroom and we can do as we have done with the last school that we were working with. We did an activity that showed what you would do if you were a business admin apprentice, what you would do if you were an IT apprentice and we did customer service and operational delivery, so we did a little bit of a task around all



the different jobs that you would do and they then had a hands-on go at it.

Q252 **Chair:** What should be done to really push and impel the schools to do it properly?

Lisa Shepherdson: If they were forced to allow us to go in and do as we have done there, as opposed to them selecting which learners we can see at what events we can go to, because again, when you go to an event like an open day, you can see the kids walk in and they will go off to the different colleges, so Hull College, Wilberforce College and they will just do that. Then they do not get to know what it is that an apprenticeship can offer that is different. But I do believe if we could introduce the apprenticeship for those who are engaging with school at an earlier age we could make a difference for those kids. We have done that. We did it with a school previously and one of the young girls that was on there said to me, "Oh, what are we doing today, Miss?" but by the end of the day she was really enthused and she was engaged and she went on and did a next level apprenticeship. She is fully employed, she has a fantastic job and she works for a really good organisation, yet she hated school.

Q253 **Lucy Allan:** It is really helpful to hear all your experiences in this area, so thank you very much for taking the trouble to come and see us.

We have talked about the training support that is given. What about employers, their role in supporting and mentoring young apprentices? Cheryl, maybe we could start with you, what your view is on that. What more could they do?

Cheryl Sedgwick: Employers are my passion. I absolutely love my role with employers. I have worked at Hull Training for 13 years. We speak to employers on a daily basis through forums, so they inform us about new technology, new developments within their fields and they bring that to the table, because it is no good delivering an apprenticeship that is not suitable for industry, because what is the point? The employers, also what we are discussing with them now is about school events, getting into schools more, finding out more about those young people who are available to them, selling the industries that we work within and the roles that we do.

I have recently taken on a new role and I look after Hull City Council's apprenticeships as well as the external as well, while previously I purely did engineering. It has been a huge learning curve as to all the different careers that are possible within a council and they are phenomenal careers, but what young person knows about them? I am working with the city managers as well in departments and saying, "How can we best sell those careers that are available?" because we have an ageing workforce. That is the key thing with any employer that we are speaking to, whether it be engineering, construction, everybody has an ageing workforce. What they are trying to do is look at the young people who are available and the careers that they can now progress in.



Q254 **Lucy Allan:** To help that young person in that position, when they get in there, is there more that employers should do to ensure that they are being supported in the way that the training providers do? As Gavin described so eloquently at the outset, the type of help that made him incentivised to do, but to also be able to be capable of doing it.

Cheryl Sedgwick: Employers are there to do their business, aren't they, ultimately? What they are doing is giving opportunities to young people to develop the skill to help their own business, but within that, the companies that work with and alongside and in partnership, within the apprenticeship there is a mentorship. It says you have to be a supervisor and a mentor. For me, in engineering that has always been there, because engineering is one of the oldest apprenticeship professions ever. That has just been natural, you naturally have a young person who you mentor and you supervise and you bring along to become that wonderful young person.

Now I am looking at the wider scale of all the industries and council departments and that is not unique to engineering, it is everywhere. Some people are better at it than others, because some people are natural mentors, and they found it quite easy. Some people we have to train and we have to coach to be able to give that help, that support. Additional support, in the case of where Gavin is, because he is a young man developing and being independent, not everybody is in his situation, companies do offer that wraparound support there too. I think that is key, that companies do offer that.

Q255 **Lucy Allan:** Is that to ensure it is a successful apprenticeship for both them and the apprentice, that that is a key part of it?

Cheryl Sedgwick: Yes, that is key. Any company that we currently work with I would say their main goal is to make sure that apprentice is successful, and 99% of the engineering companies that I worked with, they had a permanent job at the end of it if they wanted it. It is a ladder of opportunity for a lot of young people, and it is that level 2 to level 3 and then going on to the higher levels of training that they can possibly do, because those young people they support and give that wraparound support to are their managers, their supervisors and their mentors of the future. Without them, their businesses cannot grow.

Q256 **Lucy Allan:** Is that your experience in the workplace, that you are getting that support, Hannah? Do you get that in the workplace?

Hannah Cuthbert: Yes, I do. I am being encouraged to go there and in the end they are saying that I will most likely get a full-time job there, which is really good. I feel like it is just sort of a head start, having an apprenticeship, because you get all the skills that you need to work where you are working.

Q257 **Lucy Allan:** Do you feel they are investing in you, effectively, investing in you and your future? Because I think that benefits them.



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Hannah Cuthbert: Yes. They are training me up to be the perfect employee, really.

Q258 **Ian Mearns:** The Government have changed the way in which apprenticeships are funded. Have you noticed any particular changes in the way in which apprentices can access apprenticeships because of those funding changes? I think particularly Lisa in the first instance.

Lisa Shepherdson: I think we are struggling massively with those in particularly the business admin level 2. Some 80% of our learners are employed within Hull City Council on their apprenticeship. The level 3 is not where a young person is going to be, so we have a real drop in the youngsters. What we are trying to do now is find an alternative and make the alternative fit, so we are using the operational delivery officer, which it does fit for Hull City Council, but the whole idea is around equipping them for the bigger picture and that is limited to those who want to stay within operational delivery. It means that they do not necessarily understand again, so where young people knew they wanted to work in an office, business admin was quite an easy link to make. We are using customer service, but they are not making that link—they think it is retail. There is a huge drop in our 16 to 18. However, there is an increase: it is benefiting the older ones. We used to struggle previously with finding level 4 funding, whereas now we have all that.

Absolutely, the standards have helped and the levy has helped with that, but for the youngsters I think we are restricting it. We are expecting them to go in at a level 3. I think it was 64% of children in Hull were coming away with their A to C grades or their grade 4 and above, so already we are seeing, "That is possibly going to be too hard for you. We are going to set you up for a fail possibly if we put you straight on that level 3". A lot of youngsters come to us because they want an apprenticeship, not because they would like to do it, but that is what they need to do. They need to earn money. They cannot go on a study programme or they cannot go to college because they need to fund and help the family and support the family. Because we have now lost that, more and more youngsters are not getting that opportunity to start earning and that is what they want to do.

Q259 **Ian Mearns:** You think the changes have become a real barrier to that lower entry level for quite a lot of young people?

Lisa Shepherdson: Absolutely.

Ian Mearns: Anything else?

Cheryl Sedgwick: On the flipside, we have existing employees who are able to have more opportunities as an existing member of staff. You have the funding there to help them to get the skills that they need for their promotion and to become better within their trades as well, so there are two sides.

Q260 **Ian Mearns:** So people who are already in the process, it is helping them



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to progress?

Cheryl Sedgwick: It has. Also with Government funding, they are putting 90% in for 19-plus, which means that SMEs can take older employees as well, if that is what they need for their businesses. There are positives and negatives.

Q261 **Ian Mearns:** Are those changes in what is happening in your locality as a result of what the Government have done or how the employers are interpreting how they are going to use the levy?

Lisa Shepherdson: I think there is a bit of mix.

Cheryl Sedgwick: It is a bit of a mix, yes. If you look at your larger companies, they are now looking at bringing in new talent, but making sure that existing staff have the opportunities that they maybe have not had for a number of years due to the cost of training. The smaller companies, they got full funding beforehand, so they would look at your school leavers immediately and look at that level 2 to level 3 and progression that way. I do think it is a mixed bag. There are those that are in the know with the levy and pay the levy and are using it wonderfully and those that are not in the levy but are getting support from the Government with that 90%. It has not changed massively the thought process of apprenticeship. We are lucky in Hull that they value apprenticeships. The employers have always sought to give somebody an opportunity. In Hull we have not seen that great barrier, because they have always done apprenticeships. Even during the recession, we were fortunate to have that.

Q262 **Chair:** Just to clarify, the smaller businesses, unless they have fewer than 50 employees, the fact that they are paying 90% and they have to pay 10%, that is not a disincentive, is that what you are saying?

Cheryl Sedgwick: They are saying it is not a disincentive if it is the right person for the right role. What we are trying to encourage is making sure that they give an opportunity to 16 to 18s as well, because then they have full funding as well. If you have 50 or more, you are paying that 10% anyway. But no, it has not been as negative an experience as we envisioned a year ago, when we thought employers just would not go with this, they would say, "No, that is it. We are not doing apprenticeships". They have not been like that.

Q263 **Chair:** Do you think it is right that employers pay that 10% just so they are invested in it, so it does not become a form of cheap labour for employers?

Cheryl Sedgwick: That is a difficult question. We always say you earn the right to do something, don't you, so do you earn the right to have that young apprentice or be able to help your member of staff with training? The answer is yes, probably, but it depends on the individual company. I think it would have to be case by case. Are they a new company? Are they trying to develop something? I cannot answer that



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question. It is too difficult, because there are positives and negatives and they outweigh each other quite equally.

Lisa Shepherdson: I think what worked well previously is when there used to be the scheme where if you had taken an apprentice in the last—I cannot remember the exact time—

Cheryl Sedgwick: It was 12 months.

Lisa Shepherdson: —12 months, that you could have support to do that, because we did find that when they did that, they then carried on with an apprentice, didn't they?

Cheryl Sedgwick: Yes, they did. That incentive is still there for 16 to 18 year-olds and up to 24 with care leavers as well. They still get that £1,000 back, so a couple of companies have gone, "Why are you giving me some money?" and I said, "This is the Government saying thank you". Some companies said, "What can I do with it?" and I said, "It is for you to do what you want with your young person, if you would like. Give them a treat, a reward, use it as that bonus for your person". There were a lot of positives out of the levy and the companies are embracing it.

Q264 **Ian Mearns:** Can I apologise to Gavin and Hannah? I have another question for Lisa and Cheryl, I do apologise. I am just interested in how much you were involved in the 2016 Ofsted inspection of Hull Training and Adult Education.

Cheryl Sedgwick: From my personal experience, I was not seen by the inspection team, they did not see me personally. They looked at the area that I work in and they were happy with the progress that we made. They spoke to employers and found out that relationship that we have with them and everything was positive within there. Personally I was not spoken to directly by the team.

Ian Mearns: How about you, Lisa?

Lisa Shepherdson: Our centre was not particularly involved either. We obviously welcome the feedback from there and the scrutiny and that is being fed down and we are looking at action plans and things to put in place as an organisation, but we were not subject to anything particularly in the last Ofsted inspection.

Ian Mearns: That is fine. That is all we need to know. Thank you very much indeed.

Q265 **Michelle Donelan:** Two things. First I just wanted to ask about where we want to be in terms of numbers of apprenticeships and targets, and we massively need to engage more businesses and get more apprenticeships on the books. Do you think that there is a little bit of perception by businesses still that they are more for the technical roles or the technical skilled roles and less for business administration and things like that? That is the perception I get from some of my businesses. Some



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of them are very good, but some are thinking, "How could an apprenticeship work for us?" Is that one of the challenges that you experience?

Lisa Shepherdson: I do not think so. For us, the challenge at the moment is the learners, getting the knowledge of the apprenticeships to the learners. We have more companies at the minute wanting learners than we have learners, so I think it is more about educating schools and educating learners and parents about the advantages of apprenticeships.

Cheryl Sedgwick: From my perspective, I am looking after Hull City Council's apprenticeships, so I have been talking to Trailblazer chairs for legal, for accounts, all different departments, people I would not normally think I would go and speak with. I think it is just understanding the changes from that academic route, that they went to university and did that degree and to think that a solicitor's role now can start as a chartered executive and then go on to the next level to become that solicitor in seven years' time and seeing that as that apprenticeship route and that wraparound support that you get, rather than the academic route, where you are doing the research in isolation a lot of time. With these apprenticeships, people are developing and seeing them as a different route in.

It is different, you have that mentor there, you have those people to support you around you, because you are working within that area. You are not just learning academically, you are learning from your masters, which is what an apprenticeship is all about, you are learning from the people that know. For some of the more academic ones, like the legal side, when I have spoken to the people within those departments, getting their thoughts around apprenticeship versus how I did it, yes, it is quite difficult for them to understand, but when they see the learning curve, the academic side is equal, but what you are getting is that wraparound support in addition, they are embracing it now. They are starting to look at it quite differently.

But it is a hard one, isn't it? If you have only had that one way of thinking about how you get up that ladder, then you are always going to look at it that way and now we are saying there is another opportunity, where we are in the same pot, we are all supporting that person to get to that main goal. It is all about that individual getting to where they want to be in their career.

Q266 **Michelle Donelan:** Would you agree that the problem, the blockage, is the parents and the teachers and the perceptions among the students, rather than the business community in terms of meeting those targets?

Cheryl Sedgwick: It is a bit of a mixture at the moment, but I think the more that we get that publicity out there that the apprenticeships are for everybody, they are just not for your low level or technology applications, they are for anybody that can do an apprenticeship, because you are



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learning from a master, whether it is a master technician or a master solicitor, you are learning from somebody who has knowledge.

Q267 **Chair:** How do you get that message across that it is for everyone, not a particular group?

Cheryl Sedgwick: It is a joint goal, isn't it, from all the people who provide that knowledge and education, that we all need to shout and say, "An apprenticeship is about learning from the people you work with. We need that and we need you to be masters, you need to teach people who are coming through your businesses".

Q268 **Michelle Donelan:** Touching on the funding that we talked about before, there have been a lot of claims that the system is a bit slow and bureaucratic. Is that your own experience?

Cheryl Sedgwick: What we did, we knew that the DAS—Digital Apprenticeship Service—system was coming, where we draw down the funds and we push all our little buttons. We say the apprentice is there, what they are doing and we match it to all our systems as well. We knew about that 18 months previous to the levy coming in and the reforms coming in. What we did was we prepared and we had a small working party and we looked at what the system could possibly look like. We had practice sessions on it and then the working party cascaded those down to the other teams, "This is how the levy is going to work" so that we were ready to tell employers how it would work and we would be able to help them once it became live. We have not had any issues. We have had all our payments. We have managed to speak to the companies. I have access to quite a few companies' systems, because I put their learners on for them.

Q269 **Chair:** Have you had an ESFA client manager helping you?

Cheryl Sedgwick: We just did the workshops. They were helpful with that. We know that if we have a problem that they are on the other end of a telephone, but it was just basically the workshops and the working party, but we have not had any problems with our funding whatsoever. We have drawn down everything that we need to be drawing down.

Q270 **Emma Hardy:** I have a couple of questions. I just wondered what Gavin and Hannah thought about how we could convince more young people to do apprenticeship. What do you two reckon? Do you want to go first, Gavin?

Gavin Garner: Do you want to go first?

Hannah Cuthbert: I feel like in school there should be presentations on them a lot. In assemblies, I feel like people should come in and talk about it, but I think the schools are just more like, "Go to college, go to university" but I feel like there should be more encouraging to do apprenticeships as well, because they are also really good routes.

Q271 **Emma Hardy:** You could do that, Hannah. You could go in and talk to an



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assembly.

What do you think, Gavin? How could we convince more young people to do it?

Gavin Garner: Maybe trips to an employer. There is Point Engineering in Hull and they do all sorts of different things and they have apprenticeship there, or different places, different workplaces, so that they can visit the different workplaces and get a taste, even if it is for a couple of hours on a school trip, so they can get a taste of working life and maybe meet other apprentices while there on the job as well and showing them what they can do.

Q272 **Emma Hardy:** You mentioned about having support with the changes to housing benefit and council tax. Do you think that puts some people off in similar circumstances to you? Do you think they might worry about starting apprenticeships because of having to change the housing benefit and having to change council tax?

Gavin Garner: Yes, it is quite difficult, but if you want to do something enough, you will find ways round it so that you can do it. But I think it does, yes. The wage is quite low, which makes it really difficult, but you can always find ways round it. It is easy.

Q273 **Chair:** Do you mind me asking—and please do not answer if you would prefer not to—are you paid the basic apprentice wage of £3.50?

Gavin Garner: I get £600 a month and with that I have to pay for my own bills. I have to pay for my food, for my cats, my pets, I have to pay for my phone bill, I have to pay for numerous other things that come along, like my internet.

Chair: What about you, Hannah?

Hannah Cuthbert: Mine is a bit higher than the basic apprenticeship wage, which is really good for me. It is good.

Q274 **Thelma Walker:** Hannah, I know you already know about brilliant teaching from Emma, but if I could ask both of you, Gavin and Hannah, how has good teaching helped you be successful with your apprenticeship? How important is that?

Gavin Garner: In general day-to-day or while I am on the job?

Thelma Walker: You mentioned earlier, Gavin, how important it was having that person to talk to you about the emotional side—that stuck with me—who was there to help you on the emotional journey as well as the academic or the practical. What I am saying to you is what makes a good teacher and how has that good teaching helped you with your apprenticeship?

Gavin Garner: Somebody who is supportive and listens; somebody who is not judgmental; somebody who if you are in the wrong does not judge you for being wrong, they point you in the right direction and show you



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which way you should go; somebody to guide you, really, somebody who can guide you through everything. I think a teacher is more a guide, somebody who you learn experience from, somebody you can have experiences with and learn from that. A teacher can be anything. I do not know: anybody can be a teacher. It is like you say, somebody can teach you right and whether somebody knows those teaching skills obviously to pass on.

Q275 **Thelma Walker:** It is about skills and relationship?

Gavin Garner: Yes.

Thelma Walker: The double combination. Hannah, any thoughts?

Hannah Cuthbert: Yes, I agree with Gavin completely on that. We get taught at Hull Training on just the basic things about being an apprentice. That is really good, they are really supportive there as well.

Q276 **Thelma Walker:** Lisa, getting those teachers with the skills, business leaders in Colne Valley were telling me that many apprentices do not have core digital skills or the basic English and maths foundation skills. What do we do about that in terms of skilling up future generations?

Lisa Shepherdson: In terms of English and maths?

Thelma Walker: Or digital skills, because we are thinking about the Fourth Industrial Revolution. How are we are going to meet that skills gap?

Lisa Shepherdson: One of the things that we are really pushing and trying is to make the English and maths particularly and the IT embedded into what they are doing. As opposed to going out—and obviously we appreciate you still need to do some of that—to a separate maths class or a separate English class, we are trying to embed it and make it vocational so that if they are learning maths, maybe not saying they are in a maths lesson, but that they are going to be learning this particular project and that will include some maths or English, so trying to encourage them to use vocational maths and English and ICT skills. In terms of us recruiting for staff who can do that, we are tending now to look more for the skills and behaviours in vocational experience, not necessarily the qualifications, so we are recruiting for the behaviours and the attitudes and the motivation and then training them up ourselves, because we are finding it more difficult to recruit people with the skills.

Q277 **Thelma Walker:** Going back to my earlier question about having the careers adviser in schools, if we get that early intervention with those core skills, would it make it easier later on?

Lisa Shepherdson: Definitely. I think also, just going back a little bit to where we were talking about support for people particularly like Gavin, we have a learning support manager who supports people for college, but if we also had—and she is starting to do this a bit more, but the percentage of our learners is increasing with learning needs and social



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needs—that link with the workplace as well so they have somebody who would support and know what funding they can get, how they use the levy for the different things that they can apply for, that would help with support so that there is a lot more joint working, a school/college plan to a workplace support plan. There are the differences of how the workplace can support to how we support in the class, because their anxieties might not even be about the workplace, it might be the day release side of things or it might be that they cannot do the telephone bit, so looking at two separate packages of support and what they can use to support people who find it difficult in different situations.

Q278 **Chair:** Can I just a final question? Do both of you have any interaction with the National Apprenticeship Service? Did you have a look at the website?

Hannah Cuthbert: I applied through the website.

Q279 **Chair:** So it was not the National Apprenticeship Service. Have you ever heard of it, both of you?

Gavin Garner: I had not.

Hannah Cuthbert: I had not heard of it, no.

Q280 **Chair:** No. Which website? How did you get your apprenticeship, which—

Hannah Cuthbert: It was gov.uk.

Cheryl Sedgwick: It was the recruitment apprenticeship website.

Q281 **Chair:** That is the Government one?

Cheryl Sedgwick: That is the Government one. That is where we advertise now.

Q282 **Chair:** How did you know to go there?

Hannah Cuthbert: I was encouraged, especially by family members who knew I was not enjoying college, to go there.

Chair: They said go. What about you?

Gavin Garner: I found my apprenticeship through the council. I went to a council meeting at the Guildhall where I live and I saw a manager there, who was the manager where I work now. He got me on to the apprenticeship I am doing and my PA helped me through it all and helped me go to the interview and everything.

Q283 **Chair:** It was through the council that you found out about it?

Gavin Garner: Yes.

Q284 **Chair:** How do you find that Government website, the National Apprenticeship Service?



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Cheryl Sedgwick: We do advertise. In fact, most of our apprenticeship vacancies are advertised on that recruitment apprenticeship website. It is useful, it is really good. I do not think as many people know about it as should do. Again, should we be saying in school, "You have different ways that you can apply for vacancies. It is not just going to your local Jobcentre. There is this application that you can use that the Government has sat there waiting for you"? Most of our apprenticeship opportunities do go on there, whether it be a council internal post or if it is an external company, so we are opening it out to everybody.

We are fortunate, because in Hull we have the downstairs of the BBC building and we have some offices and classrooms there, so we advertise in there as well. A few of the offices where the young people go, the care leavers go, the housing officers, we advertise our vacancies there as well. We have different people who would access the apprenticeships available in different ways and then we have our own website as well that we post on and some of the schools put them on their screens for us too.

Q285 **Chair:** If I could ask Gavin and Hannah briefly, should there be a lot more on social media about apprenticeships, and if so, what social media? Should it be Facebook, should it be Snapchat? What would be the best way to reach people?

Gavin Garner: Everything.

Chair: Is that your view as well?

Hannah Cuthbert: Yes.

Q286 **Chair:** If there was a lot of stuff on Facebook, would most young people your age see it or not?

Gavin Garner: They would, but there are a lot of advertisements anyway and you flick past the advertisements. But if the apprenticeships are local, then there could be a good chance that they would have a good look at it.

If I can add as well, on that website you mentioned where you fill in an application, I think a lot of young people are faced with applications or paperwork and they think, "No, I am not doing that. I am not filling that out. I do not want to fill that out" and I think if they are interested in apprenticeships, there should be somebody there to help them go through that maybe. I just thought I would submit that.

Q287 **Chair:** Who should that someone be, a teacher or adviser or what?

Gavin Garner: It depends on the individual. If it is an older person like me who has been out of school for a while, my PA or somebody I work with, or if it is in school, then a designated person who can go through those sorts of things with young people.

Chair: Thank you. Both of you are inspirational apprentices and I am sure are going to be a great success and I am sure you will get jobs in



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the organisations that you are working with. Thank you, both of you. Especially, if I may say, it is lovely to have a former apprentice—

Cheryl Sedgwick: 1977.

Chair: —putting it into practice and making sure many young people in Hull are having those opportunities that you had. Clearly both of you understand it more than most. I will give you another thank you, because you mentioned the ladder of opportunity and that is something very special to this Committee and to me. I wish you every good wish. What you have said will really help in terms of our report. We are just trying to learn and we will publish our report over the next months. Thank you.