

Written evidence from Women's Tech Hub (SFF0004)

Questions

The Committee is interested in answers to the following questions:

- What kinds of skills do you think will be needed for the future of the UK economy? Is the UK's skills and training system capable of equipping increasing numbers of people with these skills?

Tech skills are becoming more dominant – this includes Cyber and Engineering – We see a drive towards Cyber but engineering is really declining – and women in the industry is really low. We concentrate on women reskilling or transferring and those that have fallen through the system to get them into the industry. That's reasonable for software but for hardware engineering there really aren't any simple options to sign post to.

- Is it clear to everyone involved in the skills system what the respective roles of the Government, employers, individuals and institutions are within that system?

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- What is the appropriate level of government intervention in the development of skills policies? How can government best add value in this area?

Less red tape – for example why do the levy payers have to support an SME levy user to use up their unused levy (as I'm given to believe). Why can't we just support the SME's to apply and allow the government to manage that part – similar to innovate funding bids? Also the providers area bit hit an miss on quality and some of the colleges seem pretty unprepared on how to manage them in our experience.

- Are current Government policies on skills, particularly apprenticeships and training, sufficiently clear? Have policies and the institutional set-up been sufficiently consistent over time? If not, what changes or reforms would you recommend?

No – we are a great supporter of the apprenticeships – but trying to get companies to buy in and support them on that journey is really complex. We are currently speaking to WTPN about how to encourage more and we are likely to run an event later this year to publicise the options to companies and to our women wanting to get into the sector. Its also difficult to find the providers and skillsets they cover – once they have been found its okay.

- Are the right institutions in place to ensure an effective skills system for the future? Should co-ordinating institutions be national, regional or sectoral, or a mixture of each?

I believe the process should be the same in all regions. However the offerings may identify and target particular regions that are short on particular skill sets.

- Concerns have been raised over the operation of the Apprenticeship Levy, particularly in relation to the decline in young people taking on apprenticeships. Is there a case for reforming the levy, for example by ring-fencing more levy funding for training for younger apprentices?

Personally I would go in and promote the apprenticeship offerings in the local schools (unsure if you do or not) – there's not been a lot of clarity on the equivalence of Degrees etc. I would also like a different name for the younger and older apprenticeship offerings as we have to explain to the more mature women that the apprenticeships are not like the ones that were around in years gone by and directed towards 17 year olds only. A masters apprenticeship is really good for upskilling returners we find and giving them confidence to return to the workforce.

- What should the role of business be in encouraging the development of skills in the UK? Should business be a consumer, funder, trainer or co-designer of skills provision?

Some companies such as Torchbox <https://torchbox.com/> , Made tech <https://www.madetech.com/> and IASME consortium are all great examples of in house learning enterprises. They also allow our members to be able to provide for their children whilst learning (especially the single parents).

- In a more mobile, flexible labour market, what incentives do employers have to provide training for their employees? Why do you think that employer investment in training has declined in recent decades?

I believe that jobs don't last as long and people move more often so it's not worth the investment as you are likely training for a possible competitor. Something like a golden handshake related to training courses (payback of costs if you leave within x years) might be a possible solution. I believe you should have some commitment to companies that are supporting career progression.

- Should further incentives be put in place to reverse the decline in employer investment in training, and if so, what form should these incentives take?

See above – somehow you need to build in some loyalty to reward good company culture and investment in their employees.

- What incentives do individuals have to involve themselves in apprenticeships and training? Is the system available and attractive enough to encourage individuals to seek training, and if not, what can be done to improve this?

I believe it is – its more about the quality of training and availability of information/complexity of joining etc

- How does the UK's approach to skills and training compare to those of other countries? Are there examples of good practice that the UK should be learning from?

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