

Written evidence submitted by Group Training Associations (GTA) England

GTA England research into the impact of Covid-19 on the Apprenticeship programme – a submission for the Education Select Committee chair, Robert Halfon MP

We are a national high-quality network of not-for-profit training organisations. Founded, led and governed by employers we deliver predominantly STEM related and technical training “for industry by industry”. The majority of members being created by the Industrial Training Act in which also saw the creation of the training levy for the first time.

The following table describes our characteristics, reach and quality:

We have trained over 300,000 apprentices since the inception of GTAs in the 1960s	One third of the country’s STEM apprenticeships starts on ‘Standards’ are with our members
We have increased the number of starts by 52% to 9,000 in 2019 from 6,000 in 2014	81% of our apprentices are between the ages of 16 and 24 years of age
Through our 30 members we have a reach of over 24,500 employers who engage us to train their workforce and apprentices, the majority of which are SMEs	We work hard to ensure that our apprentices succeed and our success rate of 79% is 12% above the national average
The GTA network has over 22,000 Apprentices currently employed and undertaking training, the vast majority are at level 3 and above	GTA staff are well qualified with relevant industrial experience and quality delivery is our top priority
Levy employers account for 51% of apprentice recruitment and non-levy employers 49%	96% of GTAs inspected by Ofsted are rated good or better, 18% above the national average

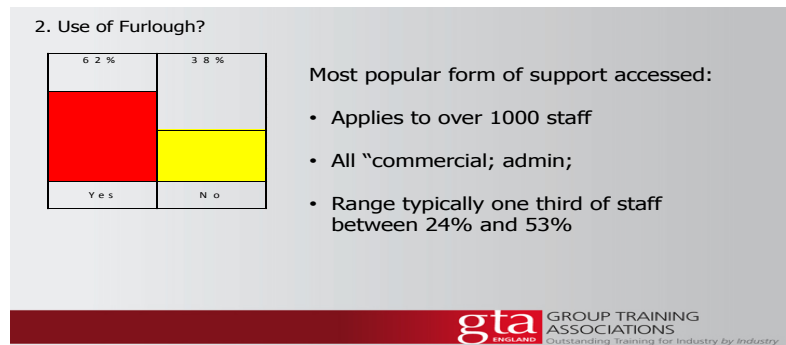
Impact of Covid19 on Apprenticeships performance

We conducted a survey amongst members and had a great response; with excellent comprehensive contributions. However, the key messages make for very concerning reading.

This survey was conducted in mid- May 2020 and we plan to revisit in late June as many employers are now telling us that recruitment will be much reduced form the information provided below.

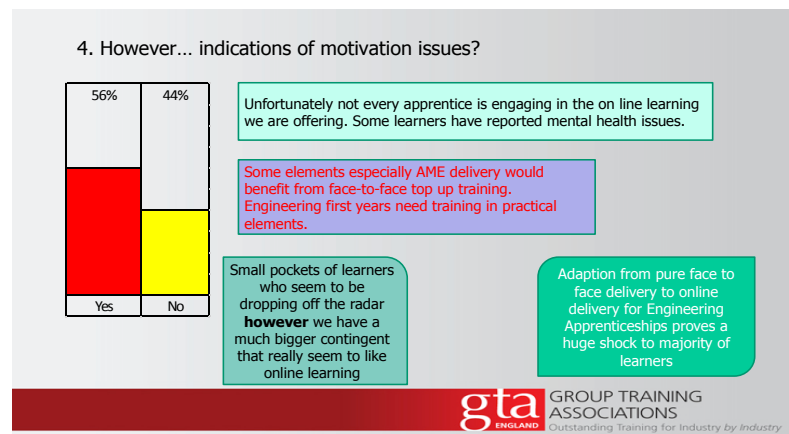
Some key messages from our survey include:

- 1. Limited success in using provider support measures**
 - a. Due to relatively high occupancy, testament to the quality of members, only 7% of members were eligible to apply for the support under the Cabinet Office Procurement Note 02/20. However, a further number would like the option to do so with one citing it use to help with making redundancies which is increasingly seeming likely.
 - b. There continues to be a lack of meaningful financial support which has been afforded to grant funded organisations. This means there are very real fears as to the the sustainability of the network once the economic upturn kicks in.
 - c. That said, the most used support has been furlough, which has been appreciated



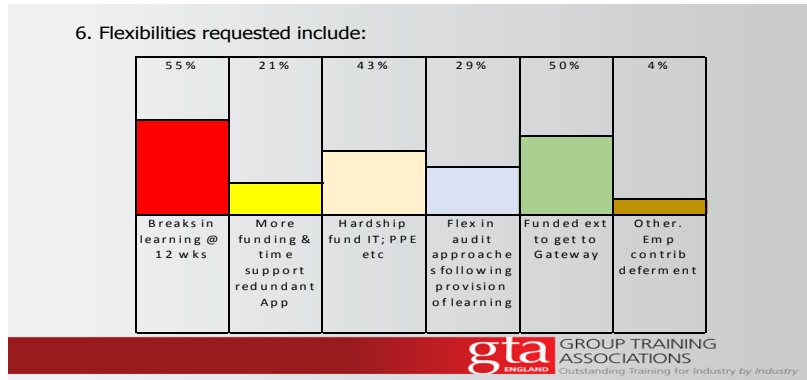
2. There are worrying indications of attrition

- a. Although occupancy is healthy currently at 90% or over in 61% of cases and over 75% in 86% of cases, there are indications of motivation issues reported by 56% of members. This is despite hugely successful adoption of on-line learning – it shows that we are starting to see the need for blended learning and the safe reopening of centres



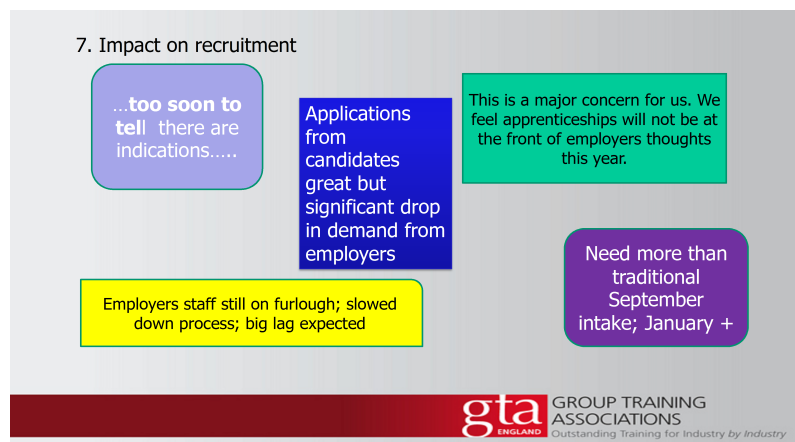
3. The government can help in the form of granting flexibilities for existing Apprentices

- a. In the table below the most requested flexibility is for:
- "Breaks in Learning" to be instituted at week 12 rather than week 4.
 - This was followed by a request for funded extensions to get Apprentices to Gateway which is necessary before completing End Point Assessment. This is due to the impact of Apprentices on furlough and limited access to the workplace and/or Apprentices being heavily focussed on on-job activities in the response to the pandemic.
 - The third most important flexibility is the request for access to a hardship fund as many Apprentices being residents in disadvantaged areas do not have access to IT kit or broadband in order to benefit from on-line learning and support.



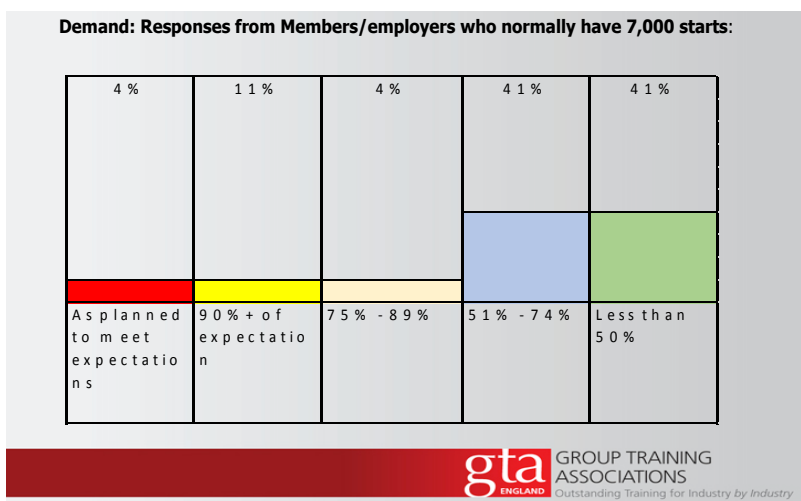
4. Impact on recruitment

a. The feedback ranged from the below comments



b. Last year in 2019, members who responded to the survey had starts just over 7,000 – the majority in STEM related occupations. Our research showed:

- Very worryingly we have only 15% of members with performance meeting at least 90%+ of the previous years starts.
- Furthermore, some 41% of members have performance at between 51% and 74%
- Most worryingly, a further 41% of members indicate that levels of performance will be below 50% the previous years starts.



5. Turning to the best measures which would offer support to stimulate recruitment

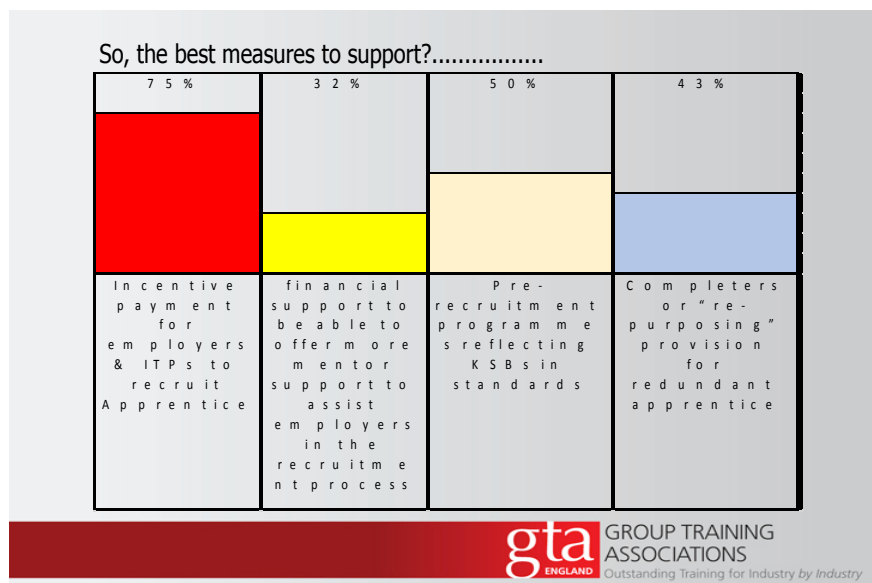
We asked members which of four measures would be most impactful in supporting attempts to stimulate recruitment. This is especially required given huge levels of unemployment are predicted as organisations adjust in a restructured economy; additionally, we recognise there will be further impact once furlough support is withdrawn.

The most called for areas of support include:

- a. **Incentive payments to Providers and employers** are considered imperative especially for 16-18 years old who fare poorly in times of recession. As part of this, we also discussed that there could be merits at targeting level 2 and level 3 new recruits bearing in mind the drift to level 6 and above under levy arrangements.
- b. **Pre-Apprenticeship recruitment training programme** reflecting core Knowledge Skills and Behaviours in Apprenticeships standards from September 2020. This is required as we prepare potential Apprentices for the workplace for when the upturn is evident. The need to reflect workplace norms in behaviours and including work experience placements was considered essential in order best prepare progression to the Apprenticeship programme

Significantly, Members advocate a very compelling case for incentive payments mentioned above to complement this programme.

- c. Finally, mention was made that redundant Apprentices may need a “re-purposing” training programme to ensure relevance to a broader range of jobs as opposed to some which may be more narrowly standard specific.



As mentioned earlier, we plan to reissue a similar survey in late June as many employers are now telling us that recruitment will be much reduced from the information provided above. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss such findings and hope they can be used in the creation of the Apprenticeship Guarantee

June 2020