

Written evidence submitted by the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is responding to a request for further suggestions from the Chair of the Education Select Committee on how to drive up participation in apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people. On that basis, we are delighted to share the following seven suggestions for consideration:

A joined-up approach to careers information, advice and guidance to raise awareness of the opportunities to all young people, including those who are disadvantaged.

AELP believes that the Government should now ratchet up from their rhetoric and finally crack down on non-compliance with the Baker Clause by instructing Ofsted to make it a material consideration (limiting factor) as part of the inspection process. More detail on these ideas can be accessed in order to raise the awareness of the opportunities of apprenticeships to all young people, including those who are disadvantaged. Furthermore AELP called for a range of measures including:

- Incentivising schools to promote apprenticeships
- Investing in better workforce development for teachers
- Facilitating collaboration between schools and training providers
- Refocusing existing initiatives and programmes

Further information on this is available: [AELP Submission: #81: A joined-up approach to careers information, advice and guidance – 27 February 2020](#)

Routes into Apprenticeships – Turbocharge Traineeships

It is vital to ensure there are adequate and appropriate feeder routes into apprenticeships, with traineeships being the ideal established example. Traineeships allow young people who are not fully job ready a chance to top-up their skills in maths, English and employability, along with gaining vital work experience to get them ready for work. For disadvantaged young people, traineeships should be playing a vital part in tackling the issue of increasing participation in apprenticeships. Traineeships have a phenomenal completion rates, increasing year-on-year and outstripping other employment programmes run by the likes of DWP. Traineeships that were started during the 2014/15 academic year saw a completion rate of 66.5%, rising to 79.1% of those started in 2017/18. Latest provisional figures for traineeships started during 2018/19 show a completion rate of 79.4%

In May 2020, AELP published a short paper on [Tackling the Barriers and Turbocharging Traineeships](#) which we shared with the Government. Our proposals include ten steps to success including relaxing eligibility, more responsive growth funding and greater flexibility for providers with an adult traineeship contract to also deliver to young people.

Reintroducing disadvantage area funding uplifts

Prior to the Apprenticeship Reforms of 2017, the ESFA funding methodology used to account for both the additional cost of specific area delivery (area uplift) and additional funding for apprentices living within a pre-defined list of areas being deemed as being of deprivation. Reinstating an uplift for learners from disadvantaged areas would help drive behaviours through targeted incentivisation.

Review additional learner support (ALS) and bursary funding options for disadvantaged apprentices

There is a range of support available through additional learner support (ALS) but the criteria need to be reviewed to ensure consistency across programmes and the ability to utilise it to further support disadvantaged learners with mental health issues and alike. Furthermore, Covid-19 has highlighted the challenges of accessibility to technology for many disadvantaged apprentices. Currently the bursary scheme operated by the ESFA is not available to apprentices, opening up the bursary scheme to disadvantaged apprentices, coupled with a review of the additional learning support scheme would help address barriers to accessing training.

Remove the co-investment requirement and fund young people through the DfE 16-19 Budget

Bizarrely apprenticeships are the only part of the education system where the training of young people is not solely funded by the government, with apprenticeships employers still need to either pay co-investment or fund training from their apprenticeship levy pot. AELP has called on the government to fund 16-19 apprentices from the central Department for Education mainstream 16-19 Budget, in essence removing the need for employers to fund their apprenticeship training directly. This would help the recruitment of both young people and those young people who are also disadvantaged.

Equitable maths and English funding in Apprenticeships

AELP has publicly raised concerns that the current funding rate of £471 per subject as part of an apprenticeship is almost 50% less than the standalone rate for the same programme for no rational reason. From research undertaken by AELP, even the standalone rate at £724 is incurring financial losses in delivery that increases with each level studied. As a result there is a disincentive for providers to training apprentices who are not exempt from functional skills. As functional skills training is on top of the off-the job requirement there is also a further disincentive for employers to take on apprentices without maths and English as they need more training time. With 40% of young people leaving school without a pass in maths and English the current system effectively disincentives those young people already behind in the education system. Increasing funding and allowing maths and English to be included in the off-the-job training measure would help equalise that disincentive.

Providing free public transport to young people, including those who are disadvantaged.

Building on the examples set by the metro mayors, free travel should also be considered for all 16-24 year olds in respect of apprenticeships and other skills and employment programmes. For many learners the cost of travelling to work can represent a considerable portion of their income this would most benefit the disadvantaged and those on the lower end of the apprenticeship salary scale.

About AELP

Members of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) support employers in the delivery of 70% of apprenticeships in England and they deliver other publicly funded skills and employment programmes through engagement with 350,000 employers. The majority of AELP's 800+ members are independent private, not-for-profit and voluntary sector training and employment services organisations with employers, universities, FE colleges, schools and end-point assessment organisations.

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