

NON-VERBATIM MINUTE

DATE: Tuesday February 8 2022

TIME: 17:00 - 18:00

METHOD: Zoom Meeting

CHAIR: Emma Hardy MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships

Emma Hardy MP welcomed attendees and introduced the theme of the session, stating that apprenticeships were critical for building the skills needed for the fourth industrial revolution. She introduced the APPG's other Co-Chair, Jack Lopresti MP.

Jack Lopresti said that what motivated him to get involved in apprenticeships was the theme of opportunity. He said that his main passion was defence, and good apprenticeships were what was needed for strong defence in the future. He stated that he was astonished that so few younger people were aware of the opportunities that apprenticeships provide, and stated his evangelism for them.

Emma thanked Jack Lopresti and handed over to Toby Perkins, Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning.

Toby Perkins said that it is important to have the opportunity to celebrate apprenticeships. The online event is a timely reminder of the difficulties faced in pandemic. He paid tribute to providers and training colleges for their efforts in ensuring completion of apprenticeships, and stated that he was worried that a significant number of people will have fallen through the cracks, with there being 1.2 million vacancies in the UK economy now and employers at "wits ends". It is extra-important to build in preparation for the future, and to spare a thought for young people in communities without big manufacturers - apprenticeships need to be something that work for small businesses in small communities, and it is important to be able to celebrate apprentices in National Apprenticeships Week and highlight the benefits of apprenticeships for employers and apprentices. He said that Labour see apprenticeships as the gold standard of skills policy, and understand the importance of making the apprenticeship levy work well. Labour's key asks of Government are to make apprenticeships work for under-24's, as well as for Levels 2 and 3, and to make them more accessible for SME's. He stated that he looks forward to hearing from apprentices, and remains a passionate advocate for apprentices.

Emma Hardy thanked Toby Perkins and handed over to **Fiona White, Apprenticeships Team Leader from Amazon**. She said she joined Amazon's apprenticeships team reluctantly at first. She thought she was too old at first but it was the right choice, and she is glad that she is the team leader apprentice now. She said it has been a great experience, and has given her the confidence to be able to challenge decisions in the work environment, and given her a great opportunity to progress and develop.

Monika Jodlowska, EU WFS SF Optimization Specialist apprentice at Amazon said that the most exciting thing about her apprenticeship is the mix of working and learning, especially with the practical approach to knowledge and the ability to do jobs better, which helps with the professional challenges that arise every day. An apprenticeship such as hers is great for people

who could not afford to study otherwise, and gives other apprentices the opportunity to exchange experiences, and explore different areas of the country. She said it is sometimes difficult to balance workload and personal life, but she has good support from co-workers. It is possible to grow in all these areas and gives a great feeling of achievement.

Zoe Hopkins, Project Management Apprentice at BAE Systems, said that when considering options post A-level, she didn't have a particular area in mind. She wasn't sure about going to university and liked the idea of being able to earn her own money. The BAE project management scheme suited her, and she has had a really good experience on the scheme by putting learning into practice, being part of a good apprenticeship community, and earning a very good wage as well, especially considering as she is getting a degree with no debt. Personally, her college pushed the option of an apprenticeship, which she stated she is grateful for. She added that she is looking forward to graduating in July with a degree and five years of experience.

Jensen Berryman, Higher Engineer Apprentice at BAE Systems, said he originally decided to become an apprentice because it gave the best combination of experience and options, and was the best pathway into the workplace possible. He first heard about apprenticeships through a tutor who was an apprentice. He said that apprenticeships are a really strong basis upon which to build a career, and the best thing is the amount of placements he has been able to do – six so far in total, the variety is good. It has helped shape him and build his life, and his advice would be to do as many additional experiences as possible. Coming out of the pandemic, he said that extra promotion of apprenticeships is critical, and to a diverse group.

Claudia Hickman, Accounting Apprentice at KPMG, said the best thing about her apprenticeship was how much KPMG have willing to invest in her, adding that she has made friendships and networks that will be extremely valuable to her career and development, has received really good advice on her future career progression, and that an apprenticeship has been much better for her development than college would have been. She condemned the “college culture” driven by the number of alumni going to university. She said we need a change in college culture, to not be so obsessed with numbers of pupils graduating to university, versus starting apprenticeships.

Katya Andreychenko, Accounting Apprentice at KPMG said her favourite things were gaining valuable work experience, participating in KPMG events and having the opportunity for extra engagement to benefit her career. She said there was a lot more to a career than just the regular university route, and said her advice would be to explore multiple routes. She would recommend contacting current apprentices in interested fields for advice.

Rachelle McQueen - Degree Apprentice – Level 6 Rail and Rail Systems Engineering at LSBU said she was doing a Level 6 apprenticeship to build her skills and build her professional network. She said the best thing for her was the opportunity to apply the how and why, not just the how, to everyday tasks. Her advice would be to give it 110% to the apprenticeship, as the benefits are incredible, particularly for STEM and especially for women, which enable you to become a great role model. She said it helps massively for professional development.

Harry Hannaford, Nurse Associate Apprenticeship, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, Studying at LSBU said that most of his working life has been spent in hospitality, but that he decided he wanted to make a change and make a career out of an apprenticeship. He said that working for the NHS during the pandemic has taught him skills he wouldn't have learnt otherwise, that it has been brilliant to make progress and that he enjoys nursing for so many reasons, adding that his colleagues have felt like trusted friends. He said that he can't stress enough how beneficial the apprenticeship has been to him. He considers himself extremely lucky to be able to do something

like this, and said he would encourage the Government to promote the idea of an apprenticeship as like being a student, but with the benefits of work and without debt.

Luke Turner, Mechanical Design Apprentice at Babcock International introduced himself, and said his intention was to work towards a degree that he could complete with the company. He recommended that young people start to think about studying apprenticeships while at GCSE level. He said that he and his family had no reservations about an apprenticeship, and added that he was surprised he got it but glad he did. Now that pandemic is nearly behind us, it is good to be able to trust the process and embrace the apprenticeship. He added that it was great to be able to evangelise about apprenticeships, recounting that he previously spoke to a group of children at a local school and that and lots of them were now keener on apprenticeships than university as a result of hearing about his experiences.

Chloe Austin, Third Year apprentice at Babcock International said that the pandemic had had a massive impact, and that she was lucky to remain in work (as a key worker) and gained valuable management skills in the process. The main way the Government could encourage more people to sign up to apprenticeships would be to increase the apprenticeships minimum wage – despite recent increases to £4.81, it is still an issue that needs addressing, especially for SMEs.

James Allen, Store Manager at the Co-op said that his Co-op journey started in 2016 as a Co-op apprentice. He said he valued Co-op's progression ladder, and that the best part of being an apprentice is constantly learning, especially outside of work. He said this has built his confidence massively, had a great impact on his mental health and that he is now looking at significant career progression as a result, possibly to an area manager within the next year.

Chris Lovell, Store Manager at the Co-op said that his story started 10 years ago in sport, and that he changed careers into retail, as a result of being keen to develop himself as a leader and find opportunities to do that. He said that he was really enjoying his time on his apprenticeship, and would never have had the opportunity to take part in something like this following a degree. He said that one way it could be made more engaging by Government would be by improving apprenticeship network.

Josh Oldham, Fourth Year Engineering Degree Apprentice, Aston Martin (WMG) said apprenticeships were heavily promoted in his sixth form college. Aston Martin had a partnership with his college, which was where he found his apprenticeship opportunity. He reiterated that it was important to promote apprenticeships to sixth form and GCSE years, as these are really valuable opportunities that need to be signposted early on.

Jaymisha Nayee, Software Engineer Degree Apprentice, Thales (WMG) said she first heard about apprentices through sixth form careers sessions, and that the idea of gaining four years of experience while earning a degree was too valuable to turn down. She said she had grown in ways she couldn't have had imagined at university, and that the experience has been extremely valuable. She said that companies should be thinking more about apprenticeships and the value they bring. She said she would also recommend giving apprentices further opportunities to upskill.

Eleanor Mears, Nursing Associate apprentice, University of Salford said she had just qualified as a nursing associate. She said the pandemic transformed her entire experience, which was shocking as a nursing apprentice but that working throughout it was great for her experience and personal development. Before she started, she had only worked as a healthcare assistant, and it only through word of mouth that she became aware of apprenticeships. She said that her friends can't believe the opportunities she has had from this, and that being able to work as well as

balance her home/work life and training has been difficult but managing them has been brilliant for her experience. She said that a lot more should be signposted about nursing apprenticeships, especially given staff shortages in the NHS. She said that she was looking forward to applying for top-up courses and as qualifying as a registered nurse as well.

The Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills Alex Burghart thanked apprentices and chairs for their remarks, and thanked apprentices for their stories and hard work. He stated that it was a highlight of his job to hear stories from apprentices and the variety of experiences they have had. Hearing all their testimonies highlighted that there were a range of opportunities out there, and that hands on experience is absolutely invaluable. The highlight of an apprenticeship is being able to have the best of both academic and professional worlds, building experience that can be taken into the real world.

He said that the Government is boosting apprenticeships numbers, which are “*right up*” on this time last year. He said that he wanted to put rocket boosters under the campaign to recruit apprenticeships, and that the Government are starting to see more people proactively leaving school and starting an apprenticeship, but wants to see more. He said he has written to every pupil in their final 3 years of school (GCSE and sixth form) to promote apprenticeships. The ‘data brains’ in government need to illustrate how useful an apprenticeship is to finding work afterwards. Plugging that all together and demonstrating how useful it is to kids and parents will encourage more people to sign up. Networks are critical as well, the Apprenticeships Network is useful, as is Amazing Apprenticeships, and the Disabled Apprenticeship Network. The Government is also interested in growing the number of apprenticeships provided by small businesses, and have a number of ways of helping SME’s do this and are also increasing the number of flexi-apprenticeships. He said he hopes it can open up great opportunities for people who might not otherwise have experienced apprenticeships, and that the Government are also making it easier for large companies to transfer levy funds to SME’s to help with apprenticeship costs.

He and Emma Hardy thanked apprentices and attendees for their inspiring stories and said they welcomed feedback, before wrapping up the discussion.