



**APPG on Apprenticeships: Report Launch 2020-21**

**Wednesday July 21 13:00-14:00**

**Chair:** Emma Hardy MP, Co-Chair, APPG on Apprenticeships

**Speakers:**

- Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning

**Also in attendance:** Andrew Jones MP, Nick Fletcher MP, Jane Stevenson MP, Virginia Crosbie MP, Lia Nici MP

Emma Hardy opened the discussion and said the report highlighted the impact the pandemic had had on young people. She briefly summarised the reports' main findings and recommendations.

She emphasised the importance of supporting SME's, many of whom wish to take on apprentices but are often unable to. She emphasised the importance of the apprenticeship levy review and reform, and handed over to Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning.

Toby Perkins began by congratulating everyone involved in the report, which he said showcased the importance of APPG's. He complemented the quality of the report, and said it gives a real sense of issues facing the sector and what needs to be done to better support young people. He was particularly interested in the Level 2 and 3 provisions of the report. He raised the issue of Kickstart and said the Government needed to build on existing proposals, as the current situation is the wrong way round with excessive generosity on Kickstart and not enough on apprenticeships.

He added that he was supportive of a UCAS-style portal, and expressed concern over T-levels being seen as a secondary path to A-levels rather than one with parity. He stated his particular interest in the recommendation for statutory training for providers and employers for mental health.

He stated that he was glad that the report focused on regional differences in apprenticeship provision, and added that he hoped the Government would respond formally to it. He then handed back to Emma Hardy.

Emma Hardy asked how the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill could be used to improve overall apprenticeship provision. She handed over to Aidan Relf, Director of Public Affairs at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

Aidan Relf asked, regarding SME access to levy funding, if the APPG agreed with proposals for a standalone budget for levy funding for SME's apprenticeships.

Toby Perkins said he supported it as it was a Labour proposal, adding that existing levy provisions risk sending the message that apprenticeships aren't for SME's. He said that Government support for Labour's proposal would send a strong message of support. He then handed back to Emma Hardy.

Emma Hardy stated that SME's were going to drive the economic recovery from the pandemic, and that was why it was critical to support them in taking on apprenticeships and easing their load of the levy.



Charlotte Morris, Corporate and Regional Affairs Manager at the University of Salford, stated that the University welcomed the proposal of a UCAS-style portal, though she noted that there is a big difference between applying for university and for an apprenticeship. She added that one of Andy Burnham's mayoral pledges was creating such a system, which has now launched and is called GMax. She concluded that a one-stop shop is useful on a local/regional basis, but less so on a national one.

Ali Scowen, Senior Public Affairs Manager at the Co-op, added that the levy share provisions were encouraging, stating that the Co-Op are operating a similar system. She encouraged consideration by MP's of increasing the share of the levy that could be given, with 40% ideal and 50% even better, adding that she wanted to extend the period of the levy share sunset clause to up to four years, from two. She added that the levy share should be about building a coalition of businesses that support apprenticeships.

Anna Ambrose, Director of the London Progression Collaboration (LPC) added that the LPC was focusing on helping people progress from Level 2-4 up to higher levels, and that the levy share is a major part of that.

Jenny Taylor, Foundation Manager at the IBM, added that the IBM does not use their levy share. She added that giving more than 25% would be preferable.

Nic Hutchins, Principal Skills Manager at the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, discussed the levy transfer service, stating that he has helped build relationships with large companies such as Amazon and the Co-op. He said that employers would love to give more than 25% if they could, adding that business planning would be helped by both this and having more time. For example, if they were supporting a four-year degree apprenticeship, it would be helped by the sunset clause being extended.

Toby Perkins added that UCAS portal scheme in Manchester was a great initiative. On degree apprenticeships, he stated his hope that they would reach all parts of the community, and not just the middle class. He agreed with comments regarding the levy share, and said that he "can't see sense" in any cap on the levy, adding that money allocated for apprenticeships needs to be spent. He was sceptical on a four-year sunset clause, and stated his concern that it could lead to less overall spending on apprenticeships. He stated that increasing flexibility within the current two years is preferable.

Candace Miller, Executive Director at the Workforce Development Trust, emphasised the importance of reforming the system to support SME's, beginning with funding issues. She stated that we need to examine if degree apprenticeships are diverting potential apprentices away from SME-focused apprenticeships.

Emma Hardy asked for contributions on safeguarding apprentices' mental health.

Toby Perkins stated that employers have emphasised the importance of signposting apprenticeship opportunities to young people early on, as early as primary school leaving age. On mental health, he emphasised the importance of the Government providing support for SME's to be able to safeguard their apprentices' mental health.

Jenny Taylor added that it was important to make apprentices' managers Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) trained and include non-work icebreaker sessions for new virtual starters.

James Deller, Head of Training Academy and Talent at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, stated that the use of former apprentices as mentors/buddies is helpful for apprentices' mental health and personal development.



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Emma Noble, Senior Manager for New Apprenticeship Programmes at KPMG, stated that KPMG have implemented frequent events and check-ins to safeguard apprentices' wellbeing, as well as additional signposting around what KPMG offer as a firm.

Emily Austin, Engagement Director at the Association of Apprentices, stated that the Association had created a bespoke virtual environment for apprentices from different companies to connect. She added that they were working on virtual learning tools, which will be ready by September to make virtual working easier for SME's.

Emma Hardy advised all attendees to read the report, and invited closing remarks from Toby Perkins.

Toby Perkins reiterated the excellence of the report and contributions, adding that there was plenty of useful material in it for making apprenticeships more accessible and enjoyable. He reiterated his hope for a formal Government response to the report, and stated that he looked forward to being part of the discussion going forward.

Emma Hardy wrapped up the discussion and thanked attendees for coming.