

DATE: Tuesday July 12 2022

TIME: 15:00-16:00

VENUE: Room G, House of Lords

TOPIC: 2021-22 Report Launch

CHAIR: Richard Holden MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships

Richard welcomed attendees and opened the discussion, complementing the work of the APPG and the report produced. He handed over to **Jennifer Coupland, Chief Executive of IfATE (Jennifer)**

Jennifer said IfATE were working as hard as they could to match skills needs, and working with the DfE to meet the needs of the green economy, for example training and upskilling of heat pump engineers. She noted that the APPG's report also commented on the apprenticeship levy, which she said had been used to double the amount of support training. She said IfATE had also made good strides in improving overall assessment, and for other apprenticeships, were working closely with bodies and regulatory bodies, while another challenge they are dealing with is around completions. She said that at the moment, employers they talk to say that they are reflecting the diversity makeup of the population in their workforces, which is a good thing. She said she wanted to see advice out there supported by a good digital apprenticeships offer. She said IfATE were working hard to drive up apprenticeships and skills standards.

Richard agreed that future jobs and green skills apprenticeships were critical, and handed over to **Toby Perkins MP, Shadow Minister for Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning (Toby)**.

Toby said the report had a number of very useful recommendations, with widespread agreement on the importance of apprenticeships as a tool for levelling up. He said there is no greater way of promoting apprenticeships than meeting people who have had their life chances revolutionised by apprenticeships, and that promotion is critical. He said he was very interested in the report's work on the apprenticeships levy, and said that he welcomed the levy but was conscious that it is a policy in need of reform, as the Government likely didn't expect it to be spent so much on level 7 apprenticeships when it was introduced.

He said that levy reform needs to involve public sector apprenticeships, and working with training providers across the UK to make sure more money gets spent in the sector, including on getting more apprentices into the construction sector. He added that the report's recommendation on a one-stop shop advice service was also needed, and that we need to ensure smaller/independent providers can access apprenticeships as well.

He added that he had previously run his own small business, and shared Jennifer Coupland's frustration at the number of people who expressed regret that apprenticeships were never advertised when they were at school. He added that we want to see more people completing their apprenticeship, but that can't discourage providers from giving apprenticeships to those who might find it a challenge. In closing, he thanked the APPG for their 'tremendous' work, and said the report's net zero recommendations in particular were key, adding that there was an opportunity for the UK to be a real world leader in this space. He concluded that Labour agree with all of the report's recommendations, and he'd like to see more detail on them.

Richard Holden noted that Nissan did a lot of work in his constituency, and that the point around net zero is one which he particularly agrees with, with a major impact in many points of the country. He opened the session to questions and comments.

Baroness Garden of Frognal noted that in the coalition years apprenticeships were underappreciated in schools in particular. She said that schools needed incentives to promote apprenticeships. Richard agreed.

Lord Aberdare added that it was a superb report and that he agreed with its recommendations and with Toby and Jennifer's comments. He noted that flexi-job apprenticeships schemes, especially for industries such as construction, would make a small difference overall but a big difference to SME's.

Jennifer said that DfE have had a lot of feedback from SME's on this and a keenness for more flexibility. She said DfE colleagues were working on how to get SME's more engaged in the process. She said a steady stream of funding would be welcomed by providers as well. Tom Bewick added that it was great that we have had 20 years of cross-party support for apprenticeships, and that it's time for a serious debate about the levy.

Toby noted that careers vouchers could be an option, and said he wasn't sure that careers should still be a sole responsibility of schools. On the question of small businesses, he agreed with Jennifer that there needs to be a far more reliable route to funding for small businesses. The current regime works well for large business such as Nissan, but it's when you get to 25-50 employee companies that provision needs to improve.

Baron Hall of Birkenhead added his support for the report and recommendations. Jennifer agreed with Toby that the perennial problem with the apprenticeship program is that it is trying to do a lot of things at once, noting that there are many more older apprentices who need support who need to be factored in. She added that IfATE would be running college roundtables on access and routes into apprenticeships, and that IfATE were also looking at occupational maps.

Richard thanked the APPG, attendees and speakers and ended the discussion.