



all party parliamentary group on
apprenticeships

report

2015 - 2016



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apprenticeships

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Foreword

Jack Lopresti MP
Chair
APPG on Apprenticeships



I am very pleased with the level of activity that the APPG has undertaken this year, holding a number of well-attended meetings on a variety of issues relating to the opportunities and challenges created by the Government's commitment to deliver 3 million apprenticeships in this Parliament.

At the first meeting of the Parliamentary session, we welcomed the Minister for Skills, Nick Boles MP to address our newly-reconstituted Group. I know that the Minister was delighted to see the room bursting at the seams with people keen to hear his vision for apprenticeships policy.

I was also pleased that the Prime Minister's Adviser on Apprenticeships, Nadhim Zahawi MP addressed the Group, sharing his thoughts on the apprenticeships levy and the creation of the Institute for Apprenticeships.

The other meetings have looked at the key themes of disseminating apprenticeships best practice, examining the challenges faced by SMEs and large employers in delivering their apprenticeships programmes, the importance of the UK's creative industries delivering apprenticeships, and what more we need to do to improve and expand the careers advice offered to young people.

I personally believe that apprenticeships play a powerful role in promoting social mobility, something that has become clear in evidence we have heard from apprentices about their experiences. It has been a pleasure to hear from many former apprentices who have built successful careers and are now senior executives in companies like Boeing and Aston Martin. It is also evident that apprentices play a vital role in ensuring that the UK retains its sovereign defence capability.

As Chair of the APPG on Apprenticeships, I believe that apprenticeships offer a unique opportunity for businesses to help develop the careers of our talented young people. Employers have told us that apprenticeships have improved the quality of their products and services. By offering jobs with a real wage and the opportunity to gain valuable skills, work experience and recognised qualifications, high-quality apprenticeships can ensure the workforce of the future has the skills it needs.



Julia Chippendale
Managing Director
EAL

EAL is very proud to sponsor of the APPG on Apprenticeships.

Since we helped to establish the Group in 2013, the APPG has provided a forum for parliamentarians and employers to come together to discuss how to promote the role of high-quality apprenticeships, how to ensure that apprenticeships serve as a pathway to a career, and how the apprenticeship model can meet the changing skill demands from businesses.

EAL set up the Industry Apprentice Council (IAC), a representative body made up of apprentices from across the country, to ensure that apprentices have a real influence on policy and the opportunity to put forward ideas for improving apprenticeships. It is vital that apprentices themselves are involved in our work; that is why I am particularly proud of the apprentices and former apprentices the APPG has heard from this year.

The IAC has rapidly established itself as the voice of apprentices in industry and the wider further education sector by attending industry events and meetings with key policy makers and influencers and commenting and giving feedback on current apprenticeship policies, plans and reports. The IAC's annual Survey of Apprentices is now an important benchmark for policy-makers and employers to consider the views of apprentices working in industry today.

As the specialist skills partner and awarding organisation for industry, EAL has built unrivalled knowledge and understanding of employer skills needs through industry partnerships and years of experience supporting our core sectors. As a result, EAL's skills solutions and qualifications are respected and chosen by employers to deliver real career benefits for learners.

I look forward to continuing to work with employers, trainers and Parliamentarians in the years ahead.

Recommendations

The APPG has heard from a wide variety of speakers, apprentices and parliamentarians throughout the past year. The Group has been keen to understand the opportunities and challenges presented in seeking to deliver more apprenticeships of high quality.

Our key recommendations are:

- School and college careers advice should demonstrate and promote parity of esteem for apprenticeships, leading to a qualification that is considered on an equal footing with a university degree.
- Employers should promote apprenticeships to pupils, teachers and parents by highlighting good role models and sharing positive stories.
- New apprenticeships should be developed that are specifically targeted at skills gaps, for example in STEM.
- SMEs need greater involvement in all aspects of apprenticeships policy, rather than just being seen as providers.
- More employers should publicise the career progression pathways that apprenticeships can deliver.
- Government should take on-the-job training into consideration when recognising best practice in apprenticeships.



Disseminating Best Practice: Delivering apprenticeships

At the first meeting of this parliamentary session, the Group heard the Government Minister responsible for apprenticeships policy, Minister for Skills, Nick Boles MP outline his vision for the next five years.

The Minister said that the Government's policy to create 3 million apprenticeships was one of the Prime Minister's most deeply-held commitments. He said that evidence shows that apprenticeships have a consistently positive impact on a young person's earning potential. He also said that the data is sending the Government a very clear message about the importance of promoting apprenticeships.

He acknowledged that some people believe that there is a problem with the 3 million target, but made the case that the target is achievable. He highlighted that the UK has far fewer apprenticeships compared to other European countries, and said that he was sure that the new apprenticeships would be high quality. He added that, in his view, the more apprenticeships the better.

The Minister called for everyone to work together to ensure that there is not "dodgy practice in apprenticeships" and said that the Government are in the process of implementing employer-designed apprenticeship standards which will become an "absolute minimum" by the end of the Parliament.

He also said that the Government will be 'twisting employers' arms' in a number of ways, including introducing a levy for all large employers, which the Chancellor later announced at the Autumn Statement.

The Minister stressed the importance of educating teachers and parents in the value of apprenticeships. He said teachers often speak from experience and almost all of them have taken the academic route, adding that it is the school's responsibility to ensure that independent advice is given to pupils. The key to success is enabling apprentices to tell their own story to pupils as part of the school's careers advice service provision. Apprenticeships are something that people intrinsically feel good about, and it is vital that Government capitalises on this by ensuring delivery of high quality apprenticeships.

APPRENTICE CASE STUDY

Karl Mills Battersea Power Station



Apprentice Electrician Karl Mills joined the team working at Battersea Power Station having completed his Level 3 Diploma in Electrical Installations just over six years ago, but without having had an opportunity to complete his NVQ Apprenticeship.

When the removal company he was working for had to reduce headcount, Karl was introduced to mechanical and electrical sub-contractor Woodlands Site Services via the council brokerage Lambeth Working. Karl is now completing his NVQ Electrical Apprenticeship at Lambeth College.

When Karl applied for the position he was 27, which initially made him think he would be too old for an apprenticeship, but this was not the case and he is working and studying among people of all ages and backgrounds.

Karl lives in Vauxhall and has grown up in the shadow of Battersea Power Station. He now commutes to and from the site on one of the free buses which Battersea Power Station provides for the 3,000 workers and apprentices currently on-site.

The restoration of Battersea Power Station and the 42-acre site on which it is located is taking place in 7 phases. Phase 1 alone has had over 80 apprentices working on it, many drawn locally from Wandsworth and Lambeth.

Training and education is at the heart of Battersea's 12 year regeneration programme and later this year will see the launch of Battersea Academy for Skills and Excellence (BASE), a bespoke training and educational institute set up at the Power Station specifically to equip and qualify people for the 17,000 jobs being created as a result of the site's redevelopment.

Disseminating Best Practice: Opportunities and challenges for SMEs in delivering high quality apprenticeship programmes

The Group heard from the Federation of Small Businesses, the Chair of the Confederation of Apprenticeship Training Agencies and Chief Executive of the London Apprenticeship Company, and Mixed Freight Services, an SME based at Heathrow employing apprentices.

The meeting heard about the challenges faced by SMEs and what Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs) can do to help. SMEs in particular will need help navigating upcoming apprenticeship policy changes, especially implementing the trailblazers programme and funding arrangements which many small businesses may not understand.

It was suggested that the Government will need to help SMEs understand the costs associated with the Levy and how the standards and awards will be implemented. The key to successful delivery is likely to be found in partnership between Government and SMEs.

It is important that when the levy is introduced, it is done in a way that meets the needs of employers in the long term. There are lots of opportunities and it is clear that apprenticeships offer an effective way to grow small businesses, and SMEs still have capacity for more apprentices. SMEs need greater involvement in all aspects of apprenticeships policy, rather than just being seen as providers.

The Group heard that there is an opportunity to create an 'eco-system' for small businesses to work together to provide the apprenticeships needed, with providers and employers working together. A lack of confidence and the complexity of the system means that some SMEs still do not recognise the potential that exists. It is important that small businesses do not just 'sit back and watch' while apprentices go elsewhere.

It is clear that more SMEs want to be involved in the creation and delivery of apprenticeships. When SMEs talk about "employer ownership of policy" they mean that they want apprenticeships that will deliver the skills that small businesses need.

Creative Tech Consortium

The Creative Tech Consortium works with over 500 employers to support 1,500 young people a year through an apprenticeship. 96% of these apprentices are offered a full time job at the end of their apprenticeship in a range of specialisms including web skills, production, editing and animation.

The new apprenticeships standards and the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy provide an opportunity to encourage employers to see the Apprenticeship route as the main path for all employee development. This should grow the total market for apprenticeships over time.

SMEs in the creative sector are concerned about the funding changes post April 2017. The potential increase in cost to operating an apprenticeship scheme may deter some companies in the sector from pursuing this route of employee training and recruitment.

There is a continued need for improved and robust careers advice to be disseminated across schools to ensure students are fully informed about the multiple opportunities for training and career development that exist across the creative sectors.

Apprenticeships in the creative sector can help to deliver the skills required by employers to compete and progress in a digital world. Indeed, an apprenticeship can provide a non-traditional route into industries that have been historically dominated by graduates and can therefore have a positive effect on social mobility.



Disseminating Best Practice: The challenges facing big business in delivering high quality apprenticeship programmes

The Group heard from representatives of Carillion, Boeing UK and the CBI about the challenges their organisations and members face in delivering apprenticeships.

Developing best practice in apprenticeships involves a long-term strategy aimed at deepening the understanding of the education and training needs of each community that the business operates in. It was highlighted that the best apprenticeships programmes will use local workers for local projects and invest in their skills for the long-term.

It was noted that the prestige of an apprenticeship still needs to be heightened as companies need a mixture of skilled graduates and apprentices. However, the signs are positive with more people applying to undertake an apprenticeship at Jaguar Land Rover than apply to attend Oxford or Cambridge Universities.

The speakers all agreed that if more companies would publicise the career progression pathways that apprenticeships can deliver, then applications for apprenticeship schemes would increase significantly.

Many organisations view the upskilling of their current workforce as an investment in the business' productivity. It was asserted that large businesses should encourage the use of apprentices throughout their supply chains.

It is clear that large businesses have an interest in ensuring the money raised by the apprenticeship levy is spent effectively and that it is vital that a degree of flexibility is built into the levy so businesses aren't penalised for offering different training schemes.

Many senior executives believe that businesses have a responsibility to mentor and train the next generation. An apprenticeship scheme should be assessed by the quality of the guidance that apprentices have access to. Businesses should adopt an approach of "leaders teaching leaders" and by harnessing the power of the mentors in their organisations and ensuring they are directly involved in the apprenticeship scheme, a business can become more successful.



Case studies



PERSPECTIVE

Dean Smith
HR Director - Group
Operations
Carillion

Carillion is the largest provider of apprentices to the construction sector, providing the industry with important elements of the construction workforce required for the future. In addition they attract develop and retain apprentices across their businesses in Rail, Civils, FM and Engineering, with plans for significant expansion across all sectors and levels in their current business plan.

An apprenticeship with Carillion is both a rational and emotional exercise in engagement for both parties, while their programme recognises and integrates the philosophy into our approach.

An apprentice should be recruited into a recognised role and the training, mentoring, coaching, work experience and learning should be designed to prepare them to be the best they can be, both as a technician and person. It is often a time of great personal change and individuals must have a framework of support that is led by strong company values and ethics.

Complementing the technical skills, Carillion apprentices have access to resources that will develop their personality to ensure that “how” they conduct themselves during the programme will form the basis of behaviours they carry forward throughout their career.

An apprentice makes a sacrifice deferring rational rewards for an emotional contract with the employer. That emotional engagement needs to be nurtured with mentors and coaching, as they make both the technical and personal journey through the programme. Successful completion is a personal milestone that requires recognition.



British Gas and apprenticeships

British Gas offer a range of apprenticeships to support the 7 million visits made to customers' homes and the 10 million customer calls handled every year. They have developed two trailblazer quality standards, and more than 75% of all of apprentices are still employed with the company 10 years after starting training.

Today, British Gas have around 1,200 apprentices in training across six academy sites. Looking ahead, British Gas will also be training more smart energy engineers to support their role in the delivery of the smart meter roll-out.

British Gas' apprentices are recruited from a wide variety of backgrounds and age groups, and prove that today's apprenticeships are not just for the very young - 70% of apprentices are over 24, and over 30% of those joining in 2015 were over 30.

British Gas have worked closely with Business in the Community CareersLab and others to get apprentices into schools, where they can become visible role models and inspire young people to consider apprenticeships. In 2015, 50 female British Gas engineers spoke in schools across the country, and making sure apprentices are highly visible is a key part of challenging the perceptions of apprenticeships.

The Group was joined by the Prime Minister's adviser on Apprenticeships, the co-chair of the Apprenticeships Delivery Board and the Chief Executive of Aston Martin.

Only 15% of the UK's employers currently operate apprenticeship schemes and in order to increase this there needs to be a stable funding model for apprenticeships which ensures that employers are embedded within the education system. There is a real need to inform people at a young age of the opportunities that apprenticeships offer so that a clear, career path is obvious.

Apprenticeships must offer opportunities for progression within an organisation and there must be a significant focus on the quality of the apprenticeship offering as well as the number of starts provided. It was asserted that if the Apprenticeships Levy does not result in high quality apprenticeships then employers would see the levy as just a tax.

It seems that the decision to undertake an apprenticeship is often presented as being at the expense of attending university and doing a degree, however higher and degree level apprenticeships let young people do both and are the fastest growing part of the apprenticeships sector. The speakers agreed that the combination of university study and industry experience actually gives higher level apprentices the "edge" over graduates in terms of their attractiveness to employers.

A high quality apprenticeship can provide young people with genuine career direction particularly when supported by the presence of enlightened and supportive management. The importance of an indentured apprenticeship was discussed at length where there is an obligation on the master/expert to ensure high training standards and the opportunity for post apprenticeship higher education. The investment in apprentices and their ability to progress within an organisation is considered vital to the future skills and management base of a business.

Employers should present apprenticeships as resulting in a qualification that is considered on an equal footing with a university degree and Government should take on-the-job training into consideration when rewarding best apprenticeship practice.

Disseminating Best Practice: Delivering Apprenticeships

BAE Systems Our commitment to apprenticeships



BAE Systems is the UK's largest engineering and manufacturing company and develops and supports some of the world's most complex defence and aerospace programmes, such as the Astute Nuclear Submarine and Typhoon military jet. These require specialist and often scarce STEM skills that have been developed in-house to meet future skills needs.

Apprenticeship programmes underpin BAE's future skills needs and help mitigate the skills gaps in the wider economy by providing a pathway for young people not just into entry roles, but preparing them for a long term career at all levels.

BAE currently have a record 1,638 apprentices in training and are forecast to recruit another 693 in 2016, which should take the number in training to over 2,000. The company have been working to increase the number of degree apprenticeships and will this autumn take on just under 160 degree and masters apprenticeships as part of our overall intake.

BAE Systems is active in supporting the development of the new Apprenticeship Trailblazer Standards and across Aerospace, Airworthiness and Maritime Defence is involved in the development of over 20 new Standards with other employers, the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, our Professional Engineering Institutions and Semta. They will have over 80 apprentices starting on the new Standards in September.

The company is keen to use its apprenticeship programmes to help create a more diverse and inclusive workforce and as part of this to encourage more women to work in the sector. 18% of their 2015 apprenticeship intake were female and there is a target to increase this to 20% by 2020.

EAL - leading the skills debate



EAL is the leading specialist industry awarding organisation – helping to keep British business competitive, profitable and at the forefront of global trade.

Employers and learners continually remind EAL of the true value that qualifications bring to an apprenticeship – offering employers and learners validity, transferability and certainty in a fast changing skills landscape.

They are campaigning to retain them as a key, essential component of the ongoing apprenticeship reforms.

Closer to Industry – Closer to Education

EAL are proud of their work and passionate about partnerships, learners and the sectors that they serve.

More than 1.3 million learners have embarked on an EAL qualification during the last ten years. Many of their qualifications carry UCAS tariff points recognised by the Department for Education, offering a vocational route into higher education.

As sponsors of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships and founder of the Industry Apprentice Council (IAC) ‘the voice of apprentices’ – EAL ensure that skills are at the very top of the political and public agenda.

Our industry expertise, coupled with our commitment to quality and unrivalled service levels, means thousands of employers – from blue chip household names to small and micro companies – opt to use EAL services to develop the skills of their employees.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of everything EAL do.

Their long-term partnerships with employers, professional bodies and parent organisation Semta, help EAL to offer qualifications and skills solutions that are fine-tuned for the needs of multiple sectors.

For learners this allows social and economic mobility and underpins their careers and progression in industry – and the value they bring to the UK’s economy.

The Group heard from representatives of EAL, MBDA and the Careers and Enterprise Company about their experience of careers advice and how information about apprenticeship opportunities can be made more accessible.

The speakers all agreed that current careers advice does not demonstrate parity of esteem for the vocational route and academic route. University remains the default option for teachers and parents, and without recognisable, industry-approved standards it is difficult for students, teachers and parents to use the data currently available to make an informed decision about apprenticeship routes.

The perception of apprenticeships among parents, teachers and pupils is still largely negative, leaving schools reluctant to offer structured careers advice about apprenticeships to their pupils. The result is that a lot of apprentices fall into vocational career routes. A former apprentice told the Group that her parents, teachers and friends tried to dissuade her from doing an apprenticeship, leaving her to turn to an external careers service for information.

It was suggested that schools give greater weight to academic courses because the number of pupils going into higher education is a factor that is taken into account for school league tables. One solution might be to consider the number of pupils undertaking good quality apprenticeships when compiling school league tables.

The Group agreed that it is the duty of industry to promote apprenticeships to pupils, teachers and parents by highlighting good role models and sharing positive stories. In particular, promoting the “earn whilst you learn” benefit of apprenticeships helps to make young people more interested in vocational routes. One of the real benefits of apprenticeships when compared to university degrees is that young people do not accumulate a large amount of student debt.

In addition, by connecting schools to businesses with employer-led apprenticeship taster sessions, vocational career options can be “brought to life” for students. However, there is currently is “enormous” regional variation in the number of schools that expose their students to employers and non-academic career routes.

Disseminating Best Practice: Creating a careers pathway for apprenticeships



PERSPECTIVE

Gemma Gathercole
Head of Policy – FE & Funding
OCR

Politically, apprenticeships have never been higher on the government agenda, which is both a fantastic opportunity to raise their profile and a potential for concern if attention is focused too closely on one aspect.

Crucially, an apprenticeship represents first and foremost a job – a job with significant training – but a job nonetheless. Apprenticeships are a critical part of vocational pathways into and through careers; they provide an excellent starting point for new entrants to the job market to gain skills and understanding of a job. However, they are also equally useful for supporting progression within the workplace and supporting re-training into another career. The thing that remains central is a job that requires significant training for the acquisition of new skills.

Apprenticeships must also be seen in the context of the labour market of the 21st century. In an economic environment when no job can guarantee a job for life any more, apprenticeships can and must continue to deliver general workplace skills that can be transferred from one job to another and also one workplace to another.

OCR remains committed to recognising learner’s achievement at all stages, recognising those skills that support entry into the world of work, but also supporting career progression and broad employment skills. This broad commitment to developing the skills required on entry and to progress will help support the narrowing of the skills gap by ensuring that learners have developed skills that let them adapt to changing and emerging requirements.

Disseminating Best Practice: Apprenticeships in the creative and digital sectors

The Group heard from representatives of Creative Pioneers, the Institute for Practitioners in Advertising and the NextGen Skills Academy about their experience of apprenticeships in the creative and digital sectors.

The need for creative apprenticeships is clear, as the sector is rapidly-expanding - one in every eleven new jobs created in the UK is in the creative sector. In addition, developing new apprenticeships targeted at skills gaps, particularly acute in the digital sector and the games industry, will ensure a “skills pipeline” exists to fulfil the industry’s future workforce demands.

Apprenticeships are a good way to begin a career in the creative and digital industries because the sector is a meritocracy and “rewards do-ers”. Competition for places is “fierce” with lots of applicants, but a large proportion of applicants come from disadvantaged backgrounds so apprenticeships can help increase social mobility in the creative sector.

However, there is genuine concern across the creative sector about the use of unpaid internships undermining genuine apprenticeships programmes. It is clear that young people are increasingly savvy and are aware of their worth and value of their time. Consequently, the promotion of best practice apprenticeship schemes that offer a real job with a real wage is essential.

One problem for apprenticeships in the creative and digital sectors is that a significant number of employers in these industries are SMEs, which may face a reduction in funding with the implementation of the apprenticeship levy. There are also concerns amongst SMEs about the financial cost and bureaucratic burden of operating an apprenticeship scheme.

There is a pressing need to publicise more positive case studies detailing the opportunities experienced by young people in the creative sector. The speakers also agreed that it is vital to utilise apprentices as ambassadors who can promote the benefits of their experiences to students, parents, schools and employers.



AAT and apprenticeships

The Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) is the UK's leading qualification and professional body for vocational accountants. More than 16,000 of our 80,000+ students are apprentices. They have a proud history of providing accountancy apprenticeships designed to give apprentices the practical tools to work in a finance role together with the opportunity to progress to chartered status.

The AAT Accounting Qualification is used by employers to ensure that apprentices develop the knowledge and skills to support the financial systems of any organisation. As a result, they work with employers large and small, public and private, to ensure our qualifications meet their needs.

AAT offers the opportunity to develop professional skills in the workplace. Once qualified, apprentices enjoy generous exemptions from chartered accountancy study too. This can be considerably more cost effective than going to University first. Apprenticeships, especially an AAT apprenticeship, can also be a successful vehicle for social mobility.

Future apprenticeship policy should be centred around the apprentice, not just the employer needs, important though they are. Real learning, real development opportunities and ultimately real jobs. Motivating and retaining an apprentice is integral to the success of any apprenticeship programme. To really understand the impact of the apprenticeship programme, Government needs to better measure destinations and understand apprentices progression.

The development of Trailblazer standards needs to reflect the views of a diverse range of organisations ensuring future policy works equally well for both levy and non-levy paying employers. There needs to be sufficient incentives for SMEs to employ apprentices too.

Microsoft and apprenticeships

Microsoft is all about empowering people to achieve more. Most of the time, this is done through their technology and services. They also put empowerment at the heart of their corporate citizenship work; by empowering young people to connect to the opportunities technology provides for their futures.

Within the digital tech sector alone it is estimated that over 138,000 new Tech Specialists are required by the sector each year in the UK. And this does not include those roles in other sectors where digital technologies are a key skillset. However, in order to meet these requirements there is a need to widen the available talent pool.

In 2008, Microsoft identified apprenticeships as one of a number of viable options to address this skills gap for their 24,500 UK channel partners and increasingly customers too.

Since then they have seen the 'branded' Partner Apprenticeship Programmes grow hugely. Since 2010 over 11,000 young people have started their digital tech careers in over 7,500 Microsoft Partners and Customers through a Microsoft Partner Apprenticeship. This has not only provided new routes into tech careers for young people but has helped businesses acquire the skills they need to grow.

Apprenticeships are now also a growing part of Microsoft's internal early in careers strategy where they have used our learnings from the Partner Apprenticeship to develop an award winning programme that has produced some truly exceptional and valued staff.

Case studies

APPRENTICE CASE STUDY

Jenny Mercer
Heathrow Airport



Engineering at Heathrow is unlike engineering at any other organisation. The sheer scale and scope of airport operators means that Heathrow is a city within a city. Over 200,000 passengers arriving and departing each day, four active terminals – the largest of which covers 353,020 square metres and literally thousands of colleagues – all striving to achieve one thing: making every journey better.

With so much going on at any one time, it's vital that everything runs smoothly. And that's why Heathrow engineers are so crucial to the airport's success. Maintenance, successful integration of projects and facilities management, rail and infrastructure assets - engineers work on all the things that help the airport to function from ensuring the runways are in top condition to heating the terminals.

Jenny Mercer is currently a third year apprentice and she has attended an off-site training college for her first year gaining a broad range of engineering skills. Now placed at the airport she has worked in a number of departments during her training including track transits and terminal engineering. All apprentices achieve an NVQ level 3 in Engineering Maintenance and a higher level qualification through day release study. All training is paid for and apprentices earn whilst they learn. 50% of the engineering workforce is ex apprentice, with over 70% (since its inception in 1977) of all former apprentices still working at Heathrow.



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please contact the secretariat Connect Communications
on ApprenticeshipsAPPG@connectpa.co.uk or call 020 7592 9490.

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