Jisc and Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships- Public Affairs Position Paper

Political Scene Setting

Boris Johnson

On Wednesday 3rd June 2020, during a Coronavirus daily briefing, Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

“For young people in particular, for whom the risk is highest of losing jobs, I think it’s going to be vital that we guarantee apprenticeships.”

In his briefing, he committed to an ‘Apprenticeship Guarantee’, which he further re-enforced during a speech that he gave in Dudley on Tuesday 30th June. Details surrounding the Apprenticeship Guarantee are not abundantly clear and it has yet to be officially announced or detailed by the Government.

Robert Halfon

Robert Halfon MP is the mastermind behind the Apprenticeship Guarantee. Speaking to Tes before a speech for the Edge Foundation on the Tuesday 30th June, Halfon spoke about how an apprenticeship guarantee for young people could be implemented saying:

“with evangelisation from the prime minister, with detailed policy worked through by the government, think tanks and pressure groups, we must be able to come up with a really exciting apprenticeship offer for young people.”

Rishi Sunak

On Tuesday 7th July 2020, Chancellor Rishi Sunak in his summer statement announced a £111m Government scheme to provide £1k to businesses to support traineeships for young people (16-24) which could lead to an Apprenticeship (to tackle post-covid unemployment.)

In his speech, he highlighted the fact that the Government “know apprenticeships work” highlighting the fact that 91% of apprentices stay in work or do further training afterwards. Sunak announced short term measure to try to ensure that the numbers of young people taking up apprenticeships increases.

Over the course of the next six months, the Government are going to pay employers to create new apprenticeships. Businesses that hire young apprentices, will receive a new payment of £2,000 per apprentice. Sunak also introduced a brand-new bonus for businesses to hire apprentices aged 25 and over, with a payment of £1,500.

Gavin Williamson

On Thursday 9th July 2020, in a virtual speech to the Social Market Foundation, the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson, spoke of his delight at speaking after the Prime Minister’s unveiled of the ‘Opportunity Guarantee’ a week beforehand.
Williamson praised the scheme, saying that it would give “every young person the chance of an apprenticeship…so that they maintain the skills and confidence they need to find the job that is right for them.”

He went on to say that there will be a massive boost to apprenticeships as businesses sign up to employ new apprentices under the new incentives outlined by Chancellor Rishi Sunak above.

Gillian Keegan

On Tuesday 1st September 2020, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister encouraged employers of all sizes are being invited to apply for generous cash incentives to help them take on new apprentices and get more people into work.

Skills for Job’s Whitepaper

On Thursday 21st January 2021, The Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper was published and it said that the Government intends to focus on three ways to improve things:

1. Supporting more people to start apprenticeships, helping employers to recover from the coronavirus pandemic with the skilled employees they need to grow.

2. Continuing to respond to feedback from employers to improve the programme, including by making more use of apprenticeship funding, making it easier for levy-paying employers to transfer funds and making apprenticeships work in more sectors.

3. Raising the quality, ensuring that every apprentice has the best experience and reaches their potential

Jisc Perspective

Apprenticeships are at the heart of the UK’s drive to equip people with the skills that employers need to grow successful businesses. Jisc, therefore, welcomes the Government’s commitment to guaranteeing every young person with the opportunity to study for an apprenticeship.

Whilst this is a challenging ambition, alongside employer engagement, systems and funding reform, here at Jisc, we believe investment in existing and new digital solutions can support this ambition.

The current state of play

Jisc has long since provided support to eligible work-based and adult learning providers to help them to realise the benefits of digital technology in Wales. Being able to replicate this model in other parts of the UK would enable us to work with colleges to significantly improve the apprenticeship ecosystem with a considered and joined-up approach.

75% of Apprenticeships in the UK are delivered in Independent Training Providers (ITPs). Jisc provides connectivity to all publicly funded institutions that support Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships. Four years ago, Jisc ceased provision to the Work Based Learning Providers in England. ITPs are private providers but are partly Government funded but don’t have the same access to connectivity, curriculum or experience.

Jisc Support

All publicly funded colleges and universities that deliver apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships are members of Jisc, and therefore connected to the ultra-fast, secure Janet network. Members have access to a range services from professional advice to cloud technology consultancy to ensure they are supported by a robust and modern digital infrastructure Jisc has provided support as our members transitioned to online teaching and learning during lockdown.
As the not-for-profit, digital body for further and higher education, Jisc has provided direct support to colleges (which cover a quarter of the apprenticeship provision in the UK) in response to the COVID-19 crisis around the following key areas:

- **Providing free access to a wide range of vocational learning resources** via our negotiations with publishers.

- **Making a larger range of free e-books available** (a further 66 titles) to FE students during the coronavirus lockdown until the end of July 2020. A number of our vocational learning resources are also being offered for free until the end of July.

- **Providing free cloud consultancy advice** to help upgrade critical digital infrastructure.

- **Professional advice, guidance and training** to support specific COVID-related issues including the digital wellbeing of staff and students.

- **Practical tips** to maintain teaching, learning and business operations for those staff or learners unable to physically spend time on campus

**Establishing a Coronavirus Community of Practice** for university and college staff, which provides support on issues around the pandemic. There are circa 1,000 members of this **new community**.

**CASE STUDY: Jisc in Wales**

Jisc is funded by Welsh Government to provide support to ITPs in Wales. In Wales, the ITPs are part of WBL network and Welsh College network, as well as adult community learning e.g. via Digital 2030 framework. Co-ownership in FE and Skills for their digital vision and deliver for Wales in the next 10 years. Jisc are funded by the Welsh Government to support eligible work-based and adult learning providers to realise the benefits digital technology can bring, particularly in relation to Digital 2030.

Each eligible provider is offered:

- Access to a dedicated digital delivery subject specialist and **account manager** to discuss your organisation's strategic direction, current usage of Jisc services, explore appropriate digital solutions and resources, as well as updates on any new services and funded initiatives

- Access to practical support for the development and implementation of Digital 2030 as well as this **interactive guide** and supporting resources

- Access to **guidance, training and resources** that can be used across a range of priority areas including strategy, infrastructure and digital practice

- Opportunities to exchange ideas, solutions and stories with colleagues from other organisations facing the same challenges

**Welsh Government** say that learning providers have been asked to use available technologies (e.g. platforms like Zoom and Microsoft Teams) to work with learners on a virtual basis; where it is possible to do so. Where such tech isn’t the right match/it isn’t feasible govt should fund research into or provide financial support for innovators to come up with new ways of working. Education provision must continue to improve and adapt to the current circumstances to in to ensure that the UK’s world leading sector can continue to thrive.

**The strategic opportunity for the workforce of now and tomorrow**

Winston Churchill once said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste.”
What is becoming increasingly clear is that Covid-19 pandemic came in like a bolt, accelerating digital adoption across the global education sector and leading to, what some have described as, the world’s largest experiment in rapid digital transformation.

The pandemic has given training providers and colleges the opportunity to truly understand the benefits and possibilities technology affords. Here at Jisc, we believe the rapid adoption of online/blended delivery and remote and technology enabled assessment, will lead to a new hybrid model of apprenticeship provision, with significant benefits.

Indeed, the model of assessment in this sphere has completely changed for the better in a few short weeks. Special measures that have led to more than 100 apprenticeship standards gaining permission to carry out end-point assessments remotely during the pandemic. We believe this approach to innovation should be commended and expanded and it will enable more efficient and effective assessments.

In addition, as assessors have not had to make trips to businesses to assess their apprentices, they have been able to spend more time supporting them and assessing their skills remotely.

Here’s how the Further Education sector is well placed to adapt and thrive, with the right investment:

1. **By providing a programme of quality online training opportunities** that can simulate the workplace environment- that Further Education colleges could deliver (especially when some employers remain closed)

2. **By providing an increased amount of quality online content** for a range of vocational training needs that respond to workforce requirements and that can enable ongoing up/reskilling for anyone out of work as a result of Covid-19.

More broadly, simulated content created for key in-demand sectors which can support virtual learning and assessment based on modelled scenarios to test knowledge and application of skills (problem solving/analytical skills), as observed in gaming environments. Digital transformation could likely enable assessors who can enter the scenario and observe/assess activity e.g. virtual welding, customer service, childcare etc.

**Apprenticeships, Education and Industry 4.0**

The concept of the Apprentice for Industry 4.0 is aimed at apprentices from the second and third year of apprenticeship in the industrial-technical area. The offer is optional and intends to create acceptance for digital technologies at an early stage, as well as providing young people with crucial specialist and media skills to meet the needs of Industry 4.0. The future skilled workers learn to recognise the potential of networked systems in their own company and to participate in the conception, implementation and selection of suitable methods and technologies.

Education must reflect the need to prepare students for Industry 4.0 and ensure that skills training is making steps in the right direction. Recognising that automation and digital technologies are transforming UK workplaces, most of the apprenticeship providers that Jisc meets want to see bold, positive change to ensure that training is fit for the future.

At Jisc, we talk about **Education 4.0**, which is technology-enhanced, future-thinking, and ready to meet the needs of Industry 4.0. Digital skills are central to this, our role is to support post-16 learning providers with their strategic approach to digital delivery.

Across the UK, apprenticeship providers are moving forward, with many using the apprenticeship toolkit that Jisc has developed to help learners grow their skills both in and out of the workplace. It’s all about ensuring that what learners learn and how they learn it is fit for the jobs of the future.

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1 Esther Barrett in ‘**What will the apprenticeships of the future look like?** ’ for TES on 08/08/19
This means the learner is supported by the strategic approach to digital delivery. England has a programme which supports essential digital skills. Research shows that digital skills have become as important in getting a job and being part of society as English and Maths. An estimated 90% of all jobs in the next 20 years will require some form of digital knowledge, but one in five adults still lack these skills.

**Government work on Digital Skills**

The Government understand that skills are as important to employability and participation in society as English and maths, yet an estimated one in five adults lack basic digital skills:

To address this, from 2020, alongside the existing legal entitlements to English and maths, the Department for Education have introduced an **entitlement to fully funded digital qualifications**. Adults with no or low digital skills will have the opportunity to undertake improved digital qualifications based on new national standards that set out the digital skills people need to get on in life and work. The entitlement will help providers support adults at risk of being left behind by an increasingly digital world.

**Digital Functional Skills Qualifications** (Digital FSQs), which form a part of the government’s plans to improve adult basic digital skills. The new qualifications will be available from September 2021 and will replace the existing Functional Skills qualifications in ICT. The purpose of these qualifications, set out by government, is to provide reliable evidence of students’ achievements against demanding content that is relevant to the workplace and real life. They also need to provide a foundation for progression into further study or employment.

The question remains regarding how technology is going to support their acquisition and assessment of skills. Indeed at the crux of any recommendations for policymakers is the need to support innovation and embrace new ways of teaching and assessing. **Technology, if used well, has an opportunity to expand and enhance the learner experiences and help to produce well rounded individuals that are ready for the modern workplace.**

**PROPOSAL: Five Key Things That The Government Should Consider**

1. **Digital Functional Skills** ensuring new qualification has a positive impact on apprenticeship provision and preparing the apprentice for the digital workplace.

2. **Digital entitlement scheme** for every apprentice – bundle package of device and data through increasing provider apprenticeship funding rate (+£300.)

3. **Remote digital assessment** tools (e-proctoring) deployed in support of end point assessment.

4. **Voice transcription** tools to aid formative assessment in the workplace. Authentication of recorded speech to text for inclusion within assessment portfolio.

5. **Remote access** to provider resources through VPN dongles/equivalent this supporting always on access for apprentices and assessors*.

**The Future**

The best way we can ensure apprenticeships play an important role in our economic recovery is by focusing on apprenticeships in sectors where jobs will thrive in decades to come. Sectors are being
disrupted by the emerging 4th industrial revolution technologies and roles are being displaced by automation.

As artificial intelligence develops apace, soaking up many manual tasks, the type of skills and competencies that will likely be in demand are those demanding creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, cooperation, resilience, communication, complex reasoning, social interaction and emotional intelligence. Therefore, apprenticeships need to focus on these humanistic skills while also incorporating the up to date industry relevant digital vocational skills required in the changing digital workplace. The key question that remains is- how all can be supported from a fiscal perspective?

We are calling on the Government to use the funds from the 1.4 billion Apprenticeship levy needs to be invested in a better digital experience for the learner.

When all is said and done, investments into digital infrastructure will pay dividends when Apprenticeship programmes produce individuals that are well equipped to participate and contributed to the UK economy, ensuring that our nation continues to be a world leader on the global stage.

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Further Information

Appendix 1: Statistical Information from External Bodies

REPORT: The Sutton Trust/COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #3: Apprenticeships

- Learning providers are encountering significant challenges.

A quarter (24%) of employers surveyed reported that a learning provider had closed, with 16% reporting that a learning provider had been unable to continue provision for other reasons

- Apprentices themselves are encountering significant challenges.

37% of surveyed employers reported that some of their apprentices were not able to work from home due to a lack of equipment, or because their role was not suitable for such work. A further 14% said some apprentices could not access learning from home due to a lack of internet or devices.

While 16% said apprentices had been redeployed to other ‘keyworker’ roles in the business, 29% reported that their apprentices did not yet have the skills for such redeployment.

PRESS RELEASE: The Association of Colleges/September Promise

The Association of Colleges estimates that there are:

- 30,000 16 and 17 year olds in England who would usually expect to start an apprenticeship or work-based learning programme in the coming academic year who will now need alternate provision

- 70,000 18 and 19 year olds in England who would usually be headed for employer-based training, or the labour market who will now need alternative provision

- Other pressures on available state-funded 16+ education places, including a rising population of young people, potential increases in transfers from private to state provision, and the inevitable space constraints created by social distancing.
PRESS RELEASE: Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education

On 16th October 2020, The Department for Education announced two new non-executive board members for the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education, starting on 1 November 2020 and lasting for three years.

The two new members will be Dayle Bayliss and John Cope. There prior work and experience are featured as part of their declarations of interest here.

REPORT: Ofsted 2019/20 Annual Report

- Amongst the top findings of this paper it was said that "apprenticeship providers were the least effective provider type, with 10% judged inadequate – problems in the sector worsened during the pandemic, as 36% of apprentices were furloughed; 8% were made redundant; and 17% had their off-the-job learning suspended"

GUIDANCE: Education and Skills Funding Agency- Financial incentives

On 17th December 2020, it was announced that the Education and Skills Funding Agency had extended the period of eligibility for financial incentives from taking on an apprentice.

Employers are now eligible if they take on new apprentices from 1 August 2020 to 31 March 2021. Originally, this was only running up to 31 January 2021.

Full updated guidance can be found here.

The report’s key findings are as follows:

- 66% of employers that have embraced apprentice programmes during the pandemic report that they have been able to recover more quickly
- Nearly three quarters (70%) of employers held the belief that apprenticeships and work-based learning would be vital to their organisations’ recovery from pandemic disruption – this is compared to just half (50%) of business in August 2020
- Nearly three quarters (72%) now plan to hire more apprentices over the next year, up from less than two-thirds (61%) polled last summer
- The most hard-hit sectors are still aging behind when it comes to work-based learning – 63% of employers in hospitality, real estate, travel and tourism and the arts are planning to hire more apprentices over the next year
- Sectors that have experienced a boom during the pandemic are set to see a further boost – as 81% of employers within the information and digital services sector currently plan to increase their apprenticeship cohort
- Two-thirds of English companies (66%) report that apprenticeships have enabled their organisation to bounce-back form the economic fall-out of the pandemic more quickly
- Nearly three quarters (69%) of employers have started to hire candidates without degrees, or lower educational attainment in order to build up skills

PRESS RELEASE: DfE Apprenticeships and traineeships Stats: March 2021

On Thursday 25th March 2021, the Department for Education have published the latest round of statistics for apprenticeships and traineeships, and for further education and skills.
Apprenticeships and traineeships*

- Apprenticeship starts were down by 18.5% to 161,900, compared to 198,600 reported for the same period in 2019/20
- Learner participation decreased by 8.3% to 575,900, compared to 627,700 in 2019/20
- Apprenticeship achievements were up by 0.3% to 59,400, compared to 59,200 in 2019/20
- Since May 2015 there have been 2,373,100 apprenticeship starts and since May 2010 this total stands at 4,750,700
- Higher apprenticeships accounted for nearly a third of starts (31.7% or 51,400 starts)
- Intermediate apprenticeships accounted for a quarter of starts (25.6% or 41,500 starts)
- Under 19s accounted for 23.9% of starts (38,800)
- Starts supported by Apprenticeship Service Account (ASA) levy funds accounted for 57.4% (92,900)
- Apprenticeship standards made up 98.3% of starts (159,100)

* The publication contains apprenticeship and traineeship statistics for England, reported to date, for the first 2 quarters (August 2020 to January 2021) of the 2020/21 academic year.

Further information can be found [here](#).

REPORT: APPG on Apprenticeships 2020/21 Annual Report

On Wednesday 21st July 2021 today published it’s annual report. Findings from the report reveal that apprenticeships have the potential to drive the UK’s recovery from the pandemic, but they are currently being underused.

The report also sets out 10 recommendations to avoid mass unemployment and deliver job creation at this pivotal moment for our economy.

Recommendations:

- The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill should be used as an opportunity to improve overall apprenticeship provision and support the delivery of quality apprenticeships.
- UCAS should continue its expansion of its existing portal to service further education, apprenticeships, and T-levels.
- The Department for Education should continue to promote the work of the Apprenticeship Ambassador Scheme and support the delivery of a mentoring scheme which could be undertaken with each regional network.
- The APPG reiterates its recommendations for IfATE to ensure continued flexibility at all stages of the apprenticeship process, most notably including end point assessments and using online provision, to provide a nuanced approach so that schemes can be tailored to different workplace sectors whilst apprenticeship quality is maintained.
- The Government should mandate statutory training for both employers and providers to safeguard apprentices’ mental health as it brings forward an Employment Bill. This should include a mental health toolkit to be provided to new apprentices as part of their induction process, which includes signposts for support.
• The Department for Education should establish a Government-run advice and one-stop-shop for small businesses providing support to take on an apprentice and assisting them with the process.

• The Government should increase the flexibility of what the Apprenticeship Levy can be used for and when. The Levy should sufficiently allow businesses to transfer or pool their resources to improve provision of apprenticeships.

• Businesses and providers must invest in a suitable virtual learning environment, suitable office workspaces and staff training to ensure apprenticeship provision is of the highest quality both online and offline.

• The Department for Work and Pensions should extend Kickstart schemes into 2022 and the Department for Education should provide bespoke guidance to providers and employers on how T-levels, Kickstart and apprenticeships can provide benefits and complement one another.

• To ensure parity of esteem, HM Treasury should raise Apprentices’ Minimum Wage to be in line with the National Minimum Wage.

• IfATE’s funding band review must ensure sustainable and long-term funding for apprenticeships to ensure that employers have the confidence to invest in their workforces and support the UK’s recovery from Covid-19.

PRESS RELEASE: Labour pledge to create 100,000 new apprenticeships

On Tuesday 17th August, Labour pledged new opportunities for young people to earn and learn, with a plan to create 100,000 new apprenticeships across the country. The plan would see a wage subsidy boosting the capacity for employers to take on young apprentices aged between 16 and 24.

Under Labour’s new plans, £377m of the apprenticeships levy would be spent to help employers cover the wages of 100,000 new apprentices in their first year in the job. In 2020/21, around £1.3bn of levy funds are set to be returned to the Treasury.

According to a press release from the Labour Party, apprenticeship starts for under-25s have declined by 40 percent in five years. It says there are also some 188,000 fewer apprenticeship opportunities today compared to 2010.

Kate Green, Labour’s Shadow Secretary of State for Education, said:

“The Government has overseen a decade of decline in apprentice numbers and has no plan to reverse this trend. Apprenticeships should be a gold standard training opportunity, but they have been neglected by successive Conservative governments which have entrenched inequalities and denied young people the opportunities they need. Labour is committed to helping every young person make a strong start to their working lives with quality training and employment opportunities helping them to develop the skills our economy needs.”

Appendix 2: Further ideas worth considering

There are many more options worth Government consideration- please find them below.

• Digital apprenticeship matching service: matching current skills and career ambitions to apprenticeship opportunities ( an ‘Apprenticeship Explorer App’) We propose that the Government funds every apprentice with a device by raising the apprenticeship funding to provider (ring fenced.)
This could then be loaned (with insurance) and if the apprentice stays the course, they can keep the laptop. The same could be mirrored by the Scottish and Welsh Government.

- **Simulated content** created for key in-demand sectors which can support virtual learning and assessment based on modelled scenarios to test knowledge and application of skills (problem solving/analytical skills), as observed in gaming environments. Assessors can enter the scenario and observe/assess activity e.g. virtual welding, customer service, childcare etc.

- **Digital Resources Skills content** accessible and mapped to Apprenticeship standards.

- **Industry experts as a service**: Digital access to industry experts to support real world learning scenarios.

- **Data Science** sets available to support modelling and scenarios, testing decision making and analytical skills e.g. engine failure and diagnostics, economic modelling etc.

- **Provider diagnostic service**: Baseline assessment of provider digital infrastructure, security and capability to ensure apprenticeship training providers can effectively adopt digital to support the apprenticeship journey – a Digital Leadership programme.

- **Provider capital investment**, devices for assessors/staff supporting apprentices thus reducing existing workload burden and inefficiencies associated with assessment capture and delivery of learning.