



APPG on Apprenticeships: Apprenticeships and Lifelong Learning

Tuesday 14th December, 3-4pm via Zoom

Chair: Baroness Garden of Frognal, Officer of the Apprenticeships APPG

Speakers:

- Laura Burley, Apprenticeships Ambassador at the Open University
- Charlotte Morris, Corporate and Regional Affairs Manager, University of Salford
- Anne Ashworth, Head of Employee Apprenticeships at Pearson
- Emma Noble, Early Careers Development Manager, KPMG

Baroness Garden of Frognal opened by saying that for many years, apprenticeships have been associated with youngsters starting out and as a pathway for school leavers but of course they can also be a valuable and attractive qualification for older workers. She shared that the age profile of people starting apprenticeships changed between 2018/19 and 2019/20, with a higher proportion of starts from apprentices over the age of 24. 47% of the apprenticeships started in 2019/20 were by people aged 25 and over. She said that apprenticeships for older workers can be particularly useful in plugging the skills gap in the economy. She then introduced the first speaker, Laura Burley, Apprenticeships Ambassador at the Open University.

Laura Burley began by sharing a video of a recent graduation ceremony for apprenticeships at Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust.

She said that it demonstrated the impact that later life apprenticeships can have on a person's life. She said there's older people getting the opportunity to upskill in policing, nursing, social work, digital and they might have worked their way up in their sector but are now able to gain skills to become managers. She said that as the largest degree apprenticeship provider in England, she wanted to share some key observations.

Firstly, she said that it is crucial to ensure there are no barriers in place to people accessing apprenticeships. Where possible, employers and providers should not put any qualifications or entry requirements on their programme, because this helps to cast the net as wide as possible and doesn't exclude talent. Secondly, she said that ensuring there is as much flexibility as possible is critical for older workers who may need to work around family commitments. Thirdly, ensuring that apprenticeships reach every community, which can be facilitated through flexible delivery. Fourthly, she highlighted the need to always ensure we are talking about all types of disadvantaged learners and ensuring apprenticeships are accessible for those with disabilities. And finally, she said is to ensure that apprenticeships continue to be employer led. She said that employers know where their skills gaps are and they can help to identify opportunities with this information.

Baroness Garden of Frognal thanked Laura and agreed that older apprenticeships are crucial. She then introduced Charlotte Morris, Corporate and Regional Affairs Manager, University of Salford.

Charlotte Morris began by saying that the University of Salford has been providing degree apprenticeships since 2016 and there has been rapid growth of these over recent years.



In the first year, they had less than 20 apprentices and today they take on over 1700. The programmes operate across a range of industries from nursing, to biomedical science and they work with 450 employers, large and small in both the public and private sector.

She went on to outline why lifelong learning is important. Firstly, we're all getting older. In Greater Manchester, the over 50s population is set to grow by almost a quarter of a million people by 2041 and the region has a low average economic activity rate for the over 50s, a problem which she said is likely to worsen since the pandemic. Secondly, she mentioned that technology is changing the nature of jobs. The OECD estimates that 14% of existing jobs will disappear as a result of automation in the next 15-20 years and 1/3 are likely to change radically. She said around 40% of the UK population will need to completely retrain within the next 10 years as a result of technological advancements.

She went on to speak about the University of Salford, where she said that their current strategy centres around industry collaboration. She said that of the apprentices at Salford, 2/3 of the total apprenticeships starts are people over aged 25 and around 1/4 are over 40. She highlighted nursing in particular as a popular pathway. Over 200 of 600 apprentices were nursing associates and most were aged between 22 and 45. This programme in particular, she said offers those working in the NHS a clear pathway to progression that wasn't previously available to them. She said that she often sees apprentices that may have been working in a sector for many year but have always felt that without additional qualifications they don't have a clear route to a promotion or the next role, so apprenticeships become that ladder of opportunity.

She also highlighted that for degree apprentices, they have the cost of tuition covered by their employer, which is absolutely critical for older learners who perhaps have family or caring responsibilities.

Baroness Garden of Frogal thanked Charlotte and introduced Anne Ashworth, Head of Employee Apprenticeships at Pearson.

Anne Ashworth began by sharing that she began her career as an apprentice and used it as a route into the education sector. She said that apprenticeships are a fantastic way to bring disadvantaged and wider communities into a business. It gives an opportunity as an employer to demonstrate that we have a commitment to them which is broader than just the job and apprenticeships really demonstrate that. She said the return on investment is phenomenal and easy to demonstrate for a business. She said that the benefit is of course as big employers pay the apprenticeship levy, we can support other employers. She said that at the minute, Pearson are supporting 14 other businesses develop over 40 different apprenticeship programmes, and that is the benefit of corporate social responsibility supporting small businesses to also do well.

In terms of barriers and things to watch, she mentioned the recognition of higher loans and said when it comes to higher apprenticeships it can become worse. One of the other areas is the way that mature apprenticeships are taught. Teachers are used to working with students at 18-24, and older workers are likely to have a different way of learning and this needs to be built into the delivery.

Baroness Garden of Frogal thanked Anne and introduced Emma Noble, Early Careers Development Manager, KPMG.



Emma Noble began by stating that she has been part of the apprenticeship team at KPMG since its inception in 2018, initially on the school leaver side but more recently in the upskill/reskill focus for the non-student population. KPMG launched their upskill/reskill programme in 2020, based on research on their existing internal training options. She said they have now launched 5 upskill programmes in data analytics, project management, improvement specialist, cybersecurity technologists, DevOps engineering and software development. So far, 216 have gone through these to date, with data analytics being the most popular. She said being able to offer them has allowed the business to remain agile in an ever-changing landscape.

She said the impact has seen employees feel valued within the business. She said the business benefits from the skills learned, including the ability to fill the skills gap quickly, as well as cost saving through retention of staff. She said that she is now the go-to data analyst in her team and that has been enabled by upskilling. She then finished off by sharing some quotes from apprentices.

Q&A

Baroness Garden thanked Emma and said she made some key points, that having confidence in learning is incredibly important. She then opened the floor to questions.

David Cowdrey came in to say that one of the recent discussions across the Commons and Lords has been on upskilling our workers to install heat pumps and shared the details of their Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS).

Anne Kiem came in to say a few years ago there was a huge amount of prejudice towards older apprenticeships, and she is delighted that norms have changed. She asked the panel how we are going to prevent the societal perception from changing?

Charlotte Morris said that as a representative of a university that offers apprenticeship, the issue is pertinent. She said its about the levels of education and the qualifications a person wants to achieve. On prejudices, she said in her experience, there is a real diversity of people that end up on apprenticeships. She said that there are 18-year-olds that are high achieving that take up apprenticeships as well as those later in life without any qualifications that choose them. She said that being honest about what going to university is and what options there are help to show the mix of provision.

Becca, Wessex Water came in to say that they are utilising degree apprenticeships and one of the biggest challenges they have is that there aren't that many universities that offer degree apprenticeships and finding universities that offer delivery they can access. She asked the panel, how do we support the universities to look at their delivery styles as well as the programmes they are offering.

Laura Burley, Open Universities responded that she is right, and a lot of other university providers are innovating. She said a broader point is that we need funding and policy stability which is starting to come through for providers to innovate. She said that hopefully now and once the Skills Bill goes through, she hopes that it will incentivise other providers to continue to innovate but it has been a tough 18 months. She highlighted the research



by St Martins Group on the return of investment on apprenticeships so this might be something to point towards when thinking about innovation.

Tania Bowers came into to talk about APSCo, a trade association supporting recruiters placing candidates in professional skilled sectors. They know their employers are all struggling to find talent but many employers particularly SMEs don't have the capacity or bandwidth to set the apprenticeship schemes up. She asked if there are organisations out there that can actively support employers to work through the process - whether as a voluntary organisation or as a commercial arrangement?

Lewis Tibbs, Sutton Trust asked the panel about the use of apprenticeships to plug skills and asked what role apprenticeships can play in the industrial towns that suffer from low supply of jobs?

Stephen Ram Kissun, London Progression Collaboration came in to say that he focuses on supporting SMEs in London in the healthcare, construction, hospitality and retail sectors. To date, they have created over 650 new apprenticeship starts through unspent levy by larger corporations and are keen to support SME's particularly during a period of uncertainty. He said he was keen to engage with anyone who wants to help.

Baroness Garden thanked everyone for their engagement, comments and questions and asked each member of the panel for a closing comment.

Emma Noble came in to say that at KPMG, they talk about lifelong learning, so why shouldn't an apprentice come in to this bracket?

Anne Ashworth came in to say that she is looking forward to working with international companies to expand apprenticeships around the world.

Charlotte Morris came in on the levelling up point and said that we've heard the Government talk about what it means, it's the idea that you should never have to leave home to access opportunities and apprenticeships do have a role in fulfilling this.

Laura Burley agreed with Anne that apprenticeships are a great success story. She said that the one tweak or improvement that needs to be made is making sure apprenticeships work better for small businesses, which will in turn help with the levelling up agenda.

Baroness Garden thanked the panel for their time and closed the discussion.