

General Election 2017 Special Edition:

AELP Manifesto for Skills and Employment

The Importance of Skills in Context of Brexit

When the UK voted for Brexit in 2016, it underlined the need for taking bold steps towards a new future skills landscape for our country. The Industrial Strategy spells out a further imperative to ensure the country's workforce is equipped with the right skills through a comprehensive approach to workforce development which will improve productivity and support social mobility. This requires investment in work based learning and technical education to achieve not just increased productivity, but also stability and long-term sustainability. We believe that Apprenticeships and the associated reforms can be the driving mechanism in achieving these skills based outcomes, but only with the wholehearted backing of government.

The AELP Manifesto at a glance

AELP believes the new government should make clear commitments to the following 7 themes:

- 1) High quality Traineeships and Apprenticeships as the preferred flagship routes for skills training
- 2) Absolute parity of opportunity in education and training, driving social mobility and supporting learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- 3) Ensuring good *applied* English, Maths and Digital Skills across learners of all ages, plus abandoning the GCSE resits policy
- 4) Skills and employability policies to be fully integrated nationally and locally
- 5) High quality, independent careers guidance and advice for learners of all ages
- 6) A single and simplified approach to assuring quality in skills training
- 7) A fair and a transparent skills funding system, regardless of actual programme, provision or type of provider or institution of that training.

Ensuring Apprenticeships are the heartbeat of tackling our country's skills needs



AELP believes we need party manifesto pledges that secure and clearly support:

- 1) Level 2 Apprenticeships that provide a vital starting point for many learners to get on the ladder of opportunity
- 2) Guaranteed funding of at least £1bn a year for non-levy paying SMEs for their Apprenticeships needs and aspirations
- 3) SMEs joining large employers on The Apprenticeship Service (TAS) funding system from 1 January 2018, thereby freeing the programme of government funding agency control of the provider supply market so that employers are fully and truly in the driving seat
- 4) Apprenticeship funding rates that make taking on 16 to 18 year old apprentices still attractive to employers
- 5) Apprentices not starting on a new Apprenticeship Standard unless there is an approved assessment process in place
- 6) Greater flexibility on the new requirements for 20% of an Apprenticeship to be off-the-job training. This will allow providers to respond to the needs of each employer and apprentice regardless of sector and level.

Removing the shackles on the Traineeship programme

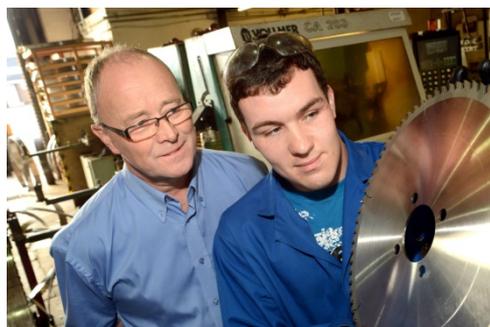
Traineeships place many young people often from the so-called NEET group in apprenticeships, sustainable employment or further education. But start numbers have fallen in the first two quarters of 2016-17 and uncertainty surrounding the future funding of the programme means that high quality training providers are holding back from investing in it.

AELP wants the new government to agree to four essential proposals that will enable Traineeships to take off, namely:

1. The government's funding system needs to be more responsive to evidenced demand for the programme
2. The removal of uncertainty surrounding proposals to devolve the programme to the LEPs
3. Making further progress on the benefits system not acting as a barrier to young people taking up a traineeship or apprenticeship
4. Retention and use of progress to an apprenticeship, sustainable employment or further education as the official measure of a successful Traineeship.

Technical and Professional Education (TPE) Reforms for 16 to 18 year olds

AELP has previously welcomed the production of a much-needed strategy for post-16 technical education in the form of the Sainsbury Review and Skills Plan, offering clear routes through to work or progression in learning with links between classroom and work-based routes. AELP wants the new government to agree to two essential proposals that will enable Technical and Professional Education ensuring an effective and successful implementation and offer, namely:



1. All occupations covered are by the Post-16 Skills Plan
2. The structure of the routeways to allow flexibility of movement for learners between technical & professional and academic routes at any point.

180,000 work placements at levels 2 and 3 and another 64,000 for 16 to 18 year olds in an initial 'transition year' are likely to be needed which can only be delivered by training providers and colleges with close links to employers. The total number of placements required expands to 564,000 when over 18's are added - a huge challenge. A new government must also be open to independent training providers being leading partners in the proposed new Institutes of Technology. The current policy to limit one Awarding Organisation licence per occupation at lower level learning should be abandoned because of the dangers of monopoly pricing and lack of innovation.

A New Approach for English and Maths

The new HMCI at Ofsted has rightly questioned the current government's insistence on young people being forced to retake English and maths GCSEs. The government has commissioned reviews of Functional Skills and there is no doubt that they are fit for purpose and recognised by the employers designing the new Apprenticeship standards. To gain better recognition and as equivalent to GCSE, Functional Skills should now be rebranded at level 2 as Applied English and Applied Maths. While the option to resit GCSEs should remain open to young people, mandatory retakes for English and maths should no longer be government policy. At the same time, all English and maths delivery for apprentices should be properly funded.

Reducing the Benefits Bill

In areas like Manchester, the cost of in-work benefits is now larger than the cost of unemployment benefit. The bill for both could be reduced if the teaching of *applied* English, Maths and Digital Skills was made available to learners of all ages. As the Commons select committee has recommended, there should be much earlier referral by jobcentre Plus of unemployed people to contracted-out employment and skills programmes – from Day One if appropriate. While LEPs and local authorities should have a say in commissioning, the Work and Health Programme should remain a centrally contracted programme. Strong local provider networks are vital to ensure that national and local agendas align with each other and if necessary they should receive financial support from central and local government. Full transparency and accountability should apply to the commissioning of any devolved programmes and the city regions/LEPs should abandon grant allocations to institutions in favour of procurement.

About AELP

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is the leading trade association for vocational learning and employment providers in Britain. The majority of its 800+ members are independent private, not-for-profit and voluntary sector training and employment services organisations. Our members support employers in the delivery of over 75% of apprenticeships in England. Contact AELP CEO Mark Dawe (markdawe@aelp.org.uk) or Aidan Relf (m. 07710 305182). Web: www.aelp.org.uk Twitter: @AELPUK