

Tackling the Growing Barriers to Traineeship Success

July 2018

This paper provides background information to Traineeships, presenting useful statistics which paints a dismal picture of the current landscape as well as feedback from our Traineeships event in Parliament, followed up by a meeting with Government officials to voice member's concerns. Ultimately QAR was raised as a key barrier to increased Traineeship participation by our members and despite several years of lobbying, Officials have yet to reverse this decision. AELP strongly believes that Traineeships should be removed from QAR, and whilst Government has good intentions in the form of wanting to promote Traineeships, its impact will be limited unless this perverse barrier is immediately removed.

Background

In August 2013, the government introduced Traineeships for 16 to 24 year-olds in England. Traineeships are designed to enable learners to progress rapidly to employment, an Apprenticeship or progressing into further education. Traineeships are comprised of three mandatory components:

- A work placement
- Work preparation training
- English and maths

Lasting up to 6 months, traineeships are designed to help young people who want to get an apprenticeship or job but don't yet have appropriate skills or experience. Who are traineeships for? The target group for traineeships are learners who are:

- Aged 16-24.
- Who are not currently in a job and have little work experience, but who are focused on work or the prospect of it.
- Who are qualified below a full Level 3.
- Whom providers and employers believe have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment or an Apprenticeship within six months of engaging in a traineeship.

Performance data and trends

Experimental statistics on Further Education for Benefit Claimants in England covering the 2016/17 Academic Year shows 5,900 traineeships were started by learners on benefit, a decrease of 35% on 9,000 traineeships in 2015/16.

The most recently published Statistical First Release (SFR), which covered August 2017-October 2017 showed a decline in traineeship starts by 6.5% compared to the same period in the previous year. Due to the decline in apprenticeship starts, the headlines have been more focused on those figures than traineeships.

In July 2017, the DfE published an evaluation on the performance of Traineeships which can be [viewed here](#). Headline figures show a rate of 66% combined positive progressions in apprenticeships (20%), work (34%) or further learning (12%). This is stable on the previous year's figure of 67% but includes a higher percentage of trainees in employment. Meanwhile, 82% of trainees were satisfied with the programme overall, and 83% perceived the programme to have helped them improve their chances in future job applications.

Barriers identified inhibiting participation and success

In February 2018, AELP co-hosted a Traineeship debate in parliament with Gordon Marsden MP and invited along a substantial number of providers to discuss and debate the challenges in which are currently inhibiting the long-term success of this key programme.

Barriers for Providers:

- The need to address the ongoing perverse measures of the ESFA which penalise providers through their QAR data even when trainees are progressing into outcomes as defined as programme goals, such as employment, an apprenticeship or further education/training.
- A key challenge resonated around the need for flexibility of the current funding system on which Traineeships is based.
- Traineeships used to share the platform with Apprenticeships as the government's flagship Skills programmes. Publicity and public support for the programme has dwindled dramatically. We are not aware of a single keynote speech from the Skills Minister backing or publically promoting the programme. All the focus has been on Apprenticeships and now T-Levels.

Barriers for Learners:

- There is low awareness of Traineeships amongst young people, with starts also highly dependent on referrals from providers or Jobcentre Plus (JCP).
- Referrals from Jobcentre Plus are limited and issues still remain in regards being on a Traineeship impacting unemployed learners' benefits linked to the "16-hour rule."

Barriers for Employers:

- For employers, the case study of Halfords was provided at the event where Halfords had pulled out of the programme after bad publicity and PR relating to offering unpaid, but high quality and valuable work experience – a valid point which was also raised was this concern is just as valid as for the new work placements on T-Levels.

- There is low awareness amongst employers and providers can then find engaging employers difficult, ultimately a challenge around low brand awareness.

AELP recommendations:

1. A review of how growth requests are managed, with a move to a flexible monthly process, rather than a lagged model to meet specific demand and help support the growth aspirations of providers.
2. More public support and backing from Government about the value and role for Traineeships in the FE system.
3. More engagement and access to direct funding for Traineeship subcontractors who are being stifled by funding routed through prime providers.
4. Removal of perverse provider success measures to take account of early non-achieving leavers progressing into positive destinations as per the outcomes of the programme. Tackling the disjoint between the recognised and accepted aims of the programme and how provider performance is currently being measured.
5. Greater clarification on a number of the ESFA funding rules is needed for some providers, especially around the requirements on English and maths.
6. Allow employers greater flexibility to engage with Traineeships thus countering the fall in starts we have seen in two successive quarters.

OVERVIEW

Following our Traineeships Event Parliament, AELP held a meeting with Officials to highlight barriers that prevent Traineeships from being the successful programme the sector and employers want it to be. The most vocal concern from members is the fact that the biggest barrier to Traineeships is its inclusion in QAR- therefore **AELP calls for its removal from QAR and unfortunately cannot support anything else until this has been achieved.** This meeting concluded with four actions for follow up. **ACTION:**

1. **Officials to confirm if and when this is going to happen.**

RESPONSE: (Awaiting)

Funding- blockers and challenges of different contracts/ages need to be removed to give providers access to funding. This is being caused partly by confusion, partly by rules / contracting that prevents delivery. **ACTION:**

2. **ESFA has requested feedback on specific funding rules related to Traineeships if this is causing confusion in the sector.**

RESPONSE:

- A target was set for Jobcentre Plus (JCP) of 10,000 Traineeship starts between August 2014 and July 2015 to encourage referral from local JCP to Training Providers; this

followed criticism from across the sector that JCP was discouraging potential learners from joining the programme. The research report "[Traineeships: Year Two Process Evaluation](#)" published by the Government Social Research on behalf of the Department for Education in July 2017 confirmed that one in four Traineeship learners stated that they had been referred by Jobcentre Plus to the programme, highlighting the importance of JCP as a referral source to the Traineeship programme.

- One primary barrier to the successful adoption and promotion of Traineeships by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff is the perception that the programme itself is educational and not linked to employment which is the primary objective of JCP at individual Work Coach level through to regional management. JCP can alternatively refer to Sector-based Work Academies (SBWA) that provide much of the same preparatory support as a Traineeship but in a shorter time (6 weeks maximum); these being pre-employment training, work experience, and a guaranteed job interview. In a number of JCP offices, Skills Training UK has been asked to shorten their offer and remove core elements of the Traineeship programme (English and Maths being a common example) so that it better suits the SBWA model which is not restricted by age. As a direct contract holder with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, they are unable to offer this.
- Learners must be on placement by week 4 – we feel this needs to be reviewed as our members have lost some learners from their Traineeship simply due to the fact that they were not yet quite ready to start placement and needed further classroom training.
- Traineeship should be a minimum of 6 weeks – this is a blocker for us as providers, case study details:
‘Learner B started her Traineeship in Childcare, her apprenticeship applications were being declined as she needed support with her CV and needed to build her interview confidence. She started her Traineeship and blossomed within the classroom sessions, after starting her placement the employer saw something special and offered her an apprenticeship shortly after starting her placement, however; this meant her Traineeship was less than 6 weeks thus not meeting funding requirements although we view this as a positive outcome.
- The work placement is fundable only if the full 100 hours are completed – if as above, the learner only completes part of this aim, part funding should be granted as per the employability aim etc based upon actual hours completed as if a learner completes early and if offered an apprenticeship or employment only completing part of the hours, no funding is awarded.

Concerns were also raised around some JCP’s preventing participation in Traineeships contrary to its benefit to learners. **ACTION:**

3. Both ESFA and DfE would welcome specific examples/case studies of JCP preventing potential learners from participating in Traineeships.

RESPONSE:

- The [Government Social Research Report](#) highlights the concerns of providers with the referral process and, in particular, Jobcentre Plus (JCP) understanding of the eligibility criteria of the programme and how this fits in with claim conditionality rules set by JCP. The original rule that learners had to be studying less than 16 hours a week was successfully changed on 3rd March 2014. In spite of this National policy change there remained confusion at a local level which has taken time to disseminate fully through to Work Coach level – an issue which was only resolved with the publication of revised funding rules by the then Skills Funding Agency in March 2015 and subsequent clarification from the Department of Work and Pensions in the same month regarding all age Traineeship learners. This mirrors Skills Training UK's early experience with Jobcentre Plus where learners were not referred to their programmes because Traineeships would make the learner ineligible for Jobseekers Allowance – thus leading to the potential suspension of benefit if the learner chose to participate in the programme.

Even with these changes for Traineeship learners, the mandatory requirements regarding attendance and availability to take work for both Universal Credit and Jobseekers Allowance have created restrictions to the effectiveness of the programme. Once on the programme learners will often need to leave scheduled sessions or not attend the centre on specific days to allow them to attend mandatory appointments with JCP which has caused disruption in the delivery of the programme and disincentivises the learner from continued attendance. Further barriers concerned the use of unpaid work experience which discouraged referral to the programme though this appears to be based on individual Work Coach discretion rather than through directive. Work Coaches have significant autonomy to make decisions regarding claimant activity and this has in some cases left learners unable to take up the course because their Work Coach is unaware of the programme or has elected to maintain them on their caseload.

- Aspiration Training has had some difficulties with a number of JCP, some will not support travel at all for 19+ learners, and some will not exempt the learner from signing on/JCP appointment during the programme meaning students miss valuable sessions and placement days. Some JCP has commented to the learner that these programmes are pointless.

JCP will only support travel, interview clothing etc. if they refer the learner to Aspiration Training themselves who feel learners should be praised for sourcing this opportunity themselves as it shows they are motivated to change their path. JCP referrals are minimum compared to employability just a few years ago.

Washwood Health JCP – Birmingham – told one learner that had sourced this opportunity herself that it was a waste of time and there would be no progression, that the training provider just wanted her to complete her 100 hours. This was told to her when she requested they support her travel costs. Since this comment was made, coordinators have worked hard to show the benefits of the programme showing them case studies of learners

that have progressed, 2 learners from this JCP have now progressed into an apprenticeship or employment so this JCP is now working more effectively with Aspiration.

Despite there being challenges with the programme and its delivery, DfE is keen to see where delivery of Traineeships are working well. **ACTION:**

4. DfE would like case studies highlighting the good practice of Traineeship delivery from AELP members.

RESPONSE:

- Skills Training UK has forged strong relationships with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) in West London, the West Midlands, and Brighton and has been successful in explaining the purpose of Traineeships well, involving meetings with Managers, Work Coaches and other operational staff to explain the purpose of Traineeships and how they can positively impact on the individual moving into employment. This has helped to address concerns regarding the suitability and duration of the programme and allow Work Coaches to directly influence the programme design and delivery to suit specific vacancies they may be recruiting for.

Skills Training UK's Traineeship programme is linked to specific job and apprenticeship opportunities which means that Jobcentre Plus can equate the benefit of the programme to their own targets and objectives and by focusing on improving overall employability. Many of the candidates from Jobcentre Plus come with multiple barriers to employment including low attainment levels; particularly English and Maths which is in contrast to a number of employer-led programmes where vocational and academic ability is significantly higher. In spite of these barriers to employment, 58% of their learners move into a positive destination of education, employment or further education with a conversion rate from unemployment into work significantly higher than equivalent Department of Work and Pensions programmes including the Work Programme. This has helped to sell the benefit of the programme and its impact on the employability of the individuals participating in it.

To aid with increasing referral numbers, and in particular the 19-24 age group, Skills Training UK have set up referral hubs in larger JCP offices including Hounslow, Ealing, and Wembley to help provide information advice and guidance to individuals considering a Traineeship opportunity. This has had the effect of improving understanding of the product among Jobcentre Plus staff who remain the primary source of referrals for this age group, but this also helps potential learners see the benefit of the Traineeship programme and the opportunity to build/develop employability skills. Where a hub agreement is not in place Skills Training UK has allocated time/day slots where referrals can meet with their staff to discuss the programme and join voluntarily with the approval of the learner's Work Coach.

Skills Training UK has published their [Traineeship Impact Assessment document](#) which demonstrates the impact of their Traineeship programme; recognising the starting point of

our learners and the high percentage (over 50%) moving into a positive destination following training.

- Quotations below are from local Jobcentre Plus offices where Skills Training UK have established referral hubs:

“I’ve been working with Skills Training UK for many years – it’s important to work together to help young people into employment, and to remove any barriers that they may face. When a young person comes to us and they need help gaining qualifications, I always know Skills Training UK is there to support.”

Maya Shah – Employer Adviser, Hounslow JCP

“Skills Training UK is always a first choice for the excellent delivery of training with hands-on tutors: location is very important and the failure to attend rate (on your courses) is very low. Many of our claimants have now secured employment as a result of participating and training in your courses.”

Sonia German, Lone Parent Team

“Thanks to Skills Training UK, the Traineeships are a great win-win. Not only does the candidate get great experience and the chance to see what it’s like to work for us, with an opportunity to move into a permanent role, we also see greater loyalty and, as a result, we have greatly improved our retention rate.”

Marsha Myles, Apprenticeship & Traineeship Manager, [Halfords](#)

- **A partnership between Skills Training UK and BT has been highlighted by the Government as part of its [best practice Traineeships guidance](#) which is made available to providers of the programme and employers. The ‘Traineeships Framework for Delivery 2015-2016’ is published jointly by the Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.** The partnership between Skills Training UK and BT, featured in the Framework, offers Skills Training UK’s young trainees the opportunity to gain an insight into new technology, the media and communications networks during a two-week work placement at a BT centre.

Damian Brown, Ready to Work Programme Lead at BT, said:

“We recognise that it’s tough at the moment for young people to find jobs which is why we are delighted to be partnering with Skills Training UK to help their trainees gain the valuable experience they need to progress to employment. BT has a number of programmes across the UK that help school children and adults prepare for work as well as recruiting hundreds of apprentices and graduates each year.”

- Furthermore, Middleton Murray delivers traineeships across multiple locations including Sidcup, Sandwich, Canterbury, Ebbsfleet, Romford, Greenwich, Enfield, Wandsworth and Birmingham with plans to expand in Manchester, Harrow, Luton, Nottingham and Stratford. They give learners six weeks in the classroom followed by up to six weeks of work experience which turns into a job or apprenticeship. Middleton Murray has incredibly high achievement rates, with one class of 13 learners having an 85% placement rate into sectors including accountancy, business administration, digital marketing and many more.
- Oldbury JCP – Birmingham, refers learners to Aspiration Training on a regular basis, requests feedback and progress updates on those they refer. If a learner progresses they ask for a case study so that this may be displayed in their office to show other clients what is possible. The Traineeship team at Aspiration provide regular progress updates to referrers and case studies celebrating success – an excellent example of a strong JCP partnership.
- Lone parents- Aspiration are working closely in partnership with a specific JCP that has requested flexibility for delivery models to accommodate lone parents, we have responded offering a bespoke cohort that takes in to consideration timing to fit around school/nursery hours and JCP are also looking at supporting childcare costs for those that wish to participate. This bespoke cohort will also include workshops surrounding managing work and family commitments as a lone parent with guidance on managing finances.
- Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)- Aspiration's Traineeship team is a very diverse team and encourages students of all abilities and backgrounds, who have successfully progressed a number of learners with SpLD into apprenticeships who previously thought that they would be unable to pursue their dream careers. One student commented 'I feel so much more confident now about maths even though I have Dyslexia' – Learner NM 2018.
- Social Services- Aspiration values multi-partnership working, accepting students from a variety of challenging backgrounds to aid them to move forward in life, those students under social services benefit from a strong partnership between Aspiration's Traineeship team and their social worker to ensure that all social and emotional needs are being met, not just their academic needs. Aspiration has supported specific students in crisis who have been empowered to follow their dreams in terms of their career goals and overcome many barriers in the family and home life to do so.

'Case of Learner K, from a strict Muslim family who believed that women are not to work, learner K was determined to pursue a career in childcare. She attended a Traineeship when Aspiration staff supported her wishes and offered support with communicating to her parents the benefits, after a challenging Traineeship experience due to parents' wishes the NEET team were asked to support and this learner is now happier in her home life and has started an apprenticeship in childcare, she thanks Aspiration for supporting her and empowered her as a young woman.'

Learners benefitting from Traineeships



Learner Name: Jake Sharpe

Date: 2015

Qualification and level: 16-18
Traineeship

City: Nottingham

There are few young people who have faced as many 'barriers' to employment as Jake Sharp. Born and raised in Nottingham's Meadows neighbourhood, Jake was adopted and, from an early age, was raised by his adopted family who, allegedly physically abused him. Jake is diagnosed with the disruptive behaviour disorders ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder) – a condition marked by chronic anger – and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) which impedes his ability to concentrate. As a consequence, Jake couldn't attend secondary school and was 'educated' at home. With no qualifications, little prospect of getting work, and no stable home (he has found himself homeless on numerous occasions) Jake turned to crime to pay his way. He has been arrested for robbery and drug dealing and was once kidnapped as a result of mistaken identity linked to these.

Jake secured a place on Babington's traineeship programme with their employer Streetwise. His determination to succeed was immediately obvious, he had to start work at 7am in the morning and was supported with this by Babington and by the Youth offending team. Jake struggled with the education part of the programme as he hadn't had a very positive experience with education and he has very low levels in his Math's and English. Babington supported Jake with giving him short sessions of work and lots of break out time when needed. Jake had continued support from the Youth offending team and Babington worked very closely with them to support Jake in the role.

Jake struggles with change and often voices his opinion's in a negative way, he has been supported by the Youth offending behaviour team and is receiving help with his anger problem. The employer has often struggled with this and has asked for support from Babington at times to manage Jakes behaviour in work, his behaviour in work is sometimes unacceptable and the employer has needed the support of both Babington and the Youth offending team to manage this.

Despite all the barriers after 8 weeks his employer offered him employment. With the securement of a paid job, Jake was able to move out of the hostel into his own flat. Jake was supported by the Housing Aid department to obtain his flat in Nottingham. Streetwise was so impressed with him that they have helped pay for his flat to be refurbished and for him to get a driving licence to be able to purchase a moped to travel to work. Against the odds, he's settled down with his girlfriend, has become close to his birth mother and is beginning to enjoy family life. "One of the things I most enjoy now is being invited to family Sunday lunches".



Learner Name: Khudeyfy Daud

Date: 2017

Qualification and level: 16-18
Traineeship

City: Leicester

Khudeyfy Daud also known as Daff was referred to Babington by a friend who has progressed onto a Babington Apprenticeship (and warned him about the lively staff!) He had been removed from school, college and all other city provisions. Daff described himself as someone who 'self-sabotages' but he knew that he would succeed, he just couldn't see how.

One of the brightest most challenging young people we have worked with (yet). Colleagues have consistently but firmly supported him to develop healthier ways to express and manage himself. Success proved to be a good motivator and with his tutor's support, Daff achieved his Level 2 English Functional Skills within 8 weeks.

Khudeyfy came into Babington's centre 2 weeks ago, suited and booted looking very dapper to tell them about his new marketing role. Obviously, he got the obligatory cheer/whistle/football chant and there were lots of very proud and happy people. The last word from Daff – "Thank you, I really appreciate everything you have done and all the effort you have put in. I'll never forget you."



Chloe came to us almost hidden beneath her hair and clothes and painfully shy with zero confidence. Throughout her programme, Chloe turned up to every single class early, completed every task that was given, overcome her fear of public speaking and successfully achieved her Level 2 speaking and listening.

Chloe blossomed in front of our eyes, made friendships within the group and acted as a mentor and positive role model for others within the cohort. Chloe dived straight in to 12 hour shifts at her work placement, we did advise to start slowly but she was determined to gain a real feel for the work environment and the routine of the role. The feedback from their host employer was truly outstanding and they offered Chloe a full time role to complete her apprenticeship as soon as she had completed the traineeship.

Chloe is now settled into the apprenticeship and is making a lasting positive impression on all of her colleagues and the service users. I have never met such a genuine and kind hearted young person who has truly blossomed. We couldn't be more proud within the department. Chloe has demonstrated what a traineeship is all about and the positive impact it can have. A huge well done- I know you will continue onto great things and become the amazing qualified nurse you are aiming to be.



Learner name: Sophie Murphy

Qualification: Traineeship

November Learner of the month

It may be early on but Sophie has shown true compassion for others and is clearly serious about her learning. Sophie hasn't previously achieved any qualifications and came to us as she heard about us through her friend. Since starting not only has Sophie engaged with every task but has encouraged the entire group to build relationships and has supported the confidence and engagement of others. When others are struggling Sophie is the vision of positivity and this has an amazing impact on the entire group.

Sophie may sometimes struggle with the tasks but does not let this get her down and asks questions and carries out independent research to seek answers and guidance. Sophie was one of the most nervous I have seen going to interview with the employer, however, she did

not let this stop her and the employer is a difficult one to impress. Despite her nerves, the feedback we had regarding the employer's impression of the learner was excellent and they cannot wait to have her to start.

Sophie takes on board all feedback, positive and constructive and has really shown commitment and true determination to succeed. Sophie has had some health issues recently and had to attend some appointments, however, she has let us know in advance and asked permission to attend showing respect to the learning environment, she is also keen to make up the time as does not want to miss out on anything. I have never seen someone so passionate and determined to succeed, not only for herself but the way she is with others, it can be clearly seen that the success of her classmates is equally as important to her as they are on this journey together, an absolute pleasure to have on our learning programme. Sophie really does deserve this recognition!

Learner name: Ruth Hamblet

Qualification: Traineeship

Learner of the month

Where do I start? In all my years I have not met such a determined and dedicated young person. This learner came to us determined to change her life yet had so many barriers to overcome. This person struggled to get out of bed in the morning and anxiety was rearing its head on a regular basis preventing this person from moving forward. Since starting her programme she has turned up on time every day despite a huge battle with her anxiety each morning and little sleep. She has engaged fully in class and wowed her host employer, the feedback we have received is nothing short of outstanding.

When in class, a task was to write a letter from her 30-year-old self to her current self with advice. The letter she produced was honest, motivational and heartfelt. She took such pride in writing and could not wait to take it home to show her dad how far she had come already. This learner has shown respect and integrity, also supporting other students in her cohort by sharing her story and her own fears. The learner has now been offered a full-time early years Apprenticeship with her host employer and is waiting to be signed up.

This person continues to grow each time she is in and I have no doubt that she has begun to overcome her demons and will make an absolutely amazing early years professional in the years to come.

About AELP

Members of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) support employers in the delivery of over 75% of apprenticeships in England and they deliver other publicly funded skills and employment programmes. The majority of AELP's 900+ members are independent private, not-for-profit and voluntary sector training and employment services organisations with employers, universities, FE colleges, schools and end-point assessment organisations joining AELP in increasing numbers.

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