



## Benefit rules acting as a barrier to training

### Introduction

This note provides an insight into how current benefit rules act as a barrier to the take-up apprenticeships and traineeships. AELP are concerned that the benefits system intended to support the most disadvantaged in society is, in fact, working against those seeking to improve their social mobility.

### Apprenticeships

Families cannot claim child benefit after a child turns 16 if that child starts an apprenticeship. This is because the government does not define an apprenticeship as a form of 'approved education' for benefit purposes. Training providers report that this makes many parents/carers reluctant to allow their child to pursue an apprenticeship for fear of losing some of their benefits. This was an important issue raised in the Education Select Committee's inquiry into the 'Quality of apprenticeships and skills training' earlier this year. Responding, the Skills Minister said that it was primarily a DWP matter.

Looked-after-children are at risk of losing their housing benefit should they become apprentices. The removal of housing benefit also applies to young apprentices who often have a family. AELP are concerned that the current funding mechanism under the levy does not properly support notions of social mobility or address issues of disadvantage. Consequently, we are calling for a system of funding for the disadvantaged that will properly support the needs of such apprentices and encourage employers to recruit them.

**ACTION NEEDED:** Government should define an apprenticeship as a form of 'approved education' for benefit purposes.

### Traineeships

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. Traineeships are classified as 'approved education'.

There is low awareness of Traineeships amongst young people, with starts also highly dependent on referrals from providers or Jobcentre Plus (JCP), but referrals from JCP are limited. While the 16 hour rule was relaxed for traineeships there are still reports of inconsistent application of the rule across by local offices which can create unnecessary barriers.

Furthermore, the mandatory requirements regarding attendance and availability to take work for both Universal Credit and Jobseekers Allowance have created restrictions on the effectiveness of the Traineeships 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 concern the use of unpaid work experience which discourages referral to the programme though this appears to be based on the individual Work Coach discretion rather than through directive.

### **About AELP**

Members of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) support employers in the delivery of 75% of apprenticeships in England and they deliver other publicly funded skills and employment programmes. The majority of AELP's 980+ 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.

Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

A: 9 Apex Court, Bradley Stoke, Bristol, BS32 4JT

T: 0117 986 5389 E: [enquiries@aelp.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@aelp.org.uk) or [markdawe@aelp.org.uk](mailto:markdawe@aelp.org.uk)

W: [www.aelp.org.uk](http://www.aelp.org.uk)