



Association of
Employment and Learning
Providers

AELP Submission: #80

**Call for evidence on improving
development opportunities for
workers**

AELP response to call for evidence on improving development opportunities for workers

The Learning and Work Institute has published a call for evidence on ways to identify employer approaches to improving workforce progression and development.

AELP acknowledges the importance of investing more money into further education and skills, having made the case on numerous occasions for greater investment in training to create good job opportunities for every cohort of learners while delivering the skilled workforce that the UK currently needs.

We face a number of external and internal challenges to plugging our current skills shortages across different sectors of the economy. On one hand, more than 40% of 16-year olds leave compulsory education every year without achieving a full level 2 qualification, a key entry route into the labour market which give individuals the necessary literacy and numeracy skills to progress onto long-term sustainable professional development. On the other hand, the rise of automation has left more than 1.5 million people at high risk of losing their jobs, thereby making digital skills provision for workers of all ages – but especially adults – a moral imperative.

AELP has tackled these challenges by studying the best ways to enable employers and training providers to help deliver a skilled workforce that is future proofed. We have produced several briefings, submissions, and research papers outlining policy recommendations that would help address these questions.

Importance of Level 2 skills provision

Level 2 skills attainment is crucial for UK workforce productivity, social mobility, and creating an economy that can rise up to the challenges posed by the UK's departure from the EU.

Several policymakers, however, have often questioned its true value and some of them believe that a Level 2 apprenticeship – even under the new employer-designed standards – does not deserve to be regarded as such.

AELP published a policy paper restating the importance of Level 2 skills provision, particularly during a time of considerable reform in further education, and making the following recommendations:

- greater acknowledgement among policymakers for the need to support Level 2 skills provision to grow the economy and increase social mobility;
- rebalancing the apprenticeship levy reforms to reverse the sharp fall in Level 2 apprenticeships, which many SME employers rely on, since May 2017;
- reviewing Level 2 apprenticeship framework funding rates that have been reduced without an equivalent standard approved and in place to deliver apprenticeships;
- a guaranteed annual apprenticeship budget for non-levy paying SME employers who offer Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships;
- ensuring equal funding for the learning of functional skills for English and Maths in the workplace;
- putting in place a set of Level 2 pathways for apprenticeships and as part of the introduction of T Levels;
- prioritise education and skills provision in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which will replace the European Social Fund, to tackle post-Brexit skills gaps.

[You can read the full AELP briefing on the importance of Level 2/3 skills provision here.](#)

A fully funded Level 2 / Level 3 entitlement for 18-24-year olds

AELP has proposed a fully funded entitlement for the circa 300,000 learners every year who choose not to pursue academic qualifications and have not yet achieved a full Level 3 qualification.

We believe that this cohort of learners should have the choice of either undertaking an apprenticeship or accessing a fully funded Level 2 or Level 3 alternative qualification. This would give young adults a wide range of choices for future career prospects, as well as increasing social mobility for many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The annual commitment for the Government would be £3.9bn, if these 300,000 young adults receive an account with the equivalent of two years of funding at £6,500 per annum for a total of £13,000 per learner.

[You can read the full AELP submission on a Level 2 / Level 3 entitlement here.](#)

Approach to commissioning in the Adult Education Budget

The devolution of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) in 2019/20 has resulted in major changes to the way in which the AEB is allocated across England, with unintended consequences for independent training providers (ITPs) where high quality and specialist skills provision could be removed from some areas, leaving gaps and negatively impacting social mobility prospect for learners.

While AELP has welcomed the move to devolve responsibility for adult skills, we have called for the entire AEB to be procured through a commissioning approach for all providers. This measure would allow for a fair and open, demand-led approach to the procurement of the AEB and address the issue of recurring AEB underspend and procure funding more effectively.

[You can read the full AELP briefing on the Approach to Commissioning for the AEB here.](#)

A blueprint to making the National Retraining Scheme a success

The Government's decision to establish a National Retraining Scheme (NRS) to help address the growth of automation in the workplace for adult workers was a welcome move. AELP thinks that the NRS has the potential to provide the vital missing pieces of the national skills strategy puzzle and create a more coherent skills strategy.

However, the NRS is far from perfect in its current inception and requires a clearer and more distinctive offer than a digital platform and signposting service, which ultimately duplicates the role of the national careers service and Jobcentre Plus.

AELP has therefore proposed to invest at least £250m per annum in additional participation funding for the NRS and redevelop its programme structure and delivery aiming to:

- turn the NRS into a "traineeship for adults" with clearly defined outcomes;
- enable the reskilling of workers whose jobs are at risk of automation;
- enable the upskilling of workers who need to improve digital skills to retain their jobs;
- help those people who are made unemployed due to automation;
- include the reskilling of prisoners;
- avoid duplication of resources;
- use training providers better for employer engagement.

[You can read the full AELP submission on the NRS here.](#)



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