



**FE Week**  
**ANNUAL**  
**APPRENTICESHIP**  
**CONFERENCE**  
**MARCH 2015**



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# FE Week FE WEEK ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE

*FE Week* is the only newspaper dedicated to further education and skills

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**F**rom a little makeshift office at the back of the main room at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre on Monday and Tuesday (March 9 and 10), I witnessed first-hand the incredible success of our first Annual Apprenticeship Conference.

A packed room heard from an incredible line-up of speakers during what was a great way to see in the beginning of National Apprenticeship Week 2015.

In this 16-page supplement, you will find

our extensive coverage of the conference. We begin with an in-depth look at the breaking news of the conference — the education committee's report on apprenticeships and traineeships for 16 to 19-year-olds, which chair Graham Stuart launched at the conference on Monday.

See coverage of his speech and reaction on page three, followed by an interview conducted by FE Week reporter Rebecca Cooney on page four, along with a roundup of the report's recommendations.

We were privileged to have government apprenticeship ambassador Andrew Jones MP to open our conference, and extracts of his speech are set out on page five, along with an important update from Ofsted's Lorna Fitzjohn.

Pages six and seven follow the same theme as day one of conference — funding and quality — and include insight from Skills Minister Nick Boles, concerns from the AoC and AELP about funding reform and information from civil servants Sue Husband and Jennifer Coupland.

On pages 10 and 11, day two's theme of delivery, assessment and audit is presented, with the employers' perspective and bits and pieces from Ofqual's Julie Swan and government official Jayne McCann.

Page 12 is all about Labour's policy offer, including speech coverage and an exclusive interview with Chuka Umunna, and we hear from sector leaders David Hughes and Stewart Segal on 13.

The last two pages are all about you — comments collected by FE Week reporter Paul Offord on day two.

All that remains is for me to thank my colleagues who made it happen, our partners, sponsors and speakers, and on behalf of FE Week, all the delegates who joined us. We hope to see you all again next year.

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## CHARLOTTE BOSWORTH

Director of skills and employment at OCR

**Q**uality or quantity, employer-routed or employer driven, level three and above or the level needed by the sector? All these questions and more were discussed across the two days of the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference. In National Apprenticeship Week and on the eve of an election, there couldn't be a better time to discuss apprenticeships.

Why is that? Well it's because apprenticeships matter, they matter just as much as general qualifications, as vocational qualifications and just as much as higher education. All of these things matter because they're connected to a lifelong education system. We're often told that there are no more jobs for life and so, apprenticeships and the wider education and skills system need to prepare us for not just our next step but to also give us skills to help the next few steps of our journeys.

It was great to hear from both the Skills Minister and the shadow

Business Secretary, it's clear that Apprenticeships are a key talking point for all political parties ahead of the general election. But there are some key issues still to be addressed.

While there was general mirth in the room at Nick Boles's comments about Skills Funding Agency procedures, the message from him, and the civil servants in the apprenticeship unit, was clear, their plans were unchanged, employer routed funding is still government policy. The tendency to talk about the number of apprenticeship starts the sector has delivered over this parliament and the PM's promise of an even higher number in the next parliament if returned to office, the question must arise over whether quantity has overtaken quality.

The best apprenticeship programmes are those that deliver a transformative impact on the apprentice, those that enable the apprentice to progress beyond the job role they undertook during their apprenticeship.

The same could be said for the apprenticeship system as a whole, an apprenticeship system that utilises the best expertise of each stakeholder will be the one that delivers quality outputs.

From that quality the numbers will grow because all parts of that system will see the value they receive from it and former apprentices that progress onto business that have not previously engaged in apprenticeship programmes will demonstrate the impact that those schemes can have. We must engage employers, training providers and colleges, assessment agencies and critically the apprentice themselves.

For us, the key voice that has been missing from all the talk about apprenticeship reform is that of the learner. That's why we were delighted to be joined by Michael Tran on day one of the conference. Michael talked about his own experiences as an apprentice, how he had deferred university twice in the past in favour of apprenticeships.

He had completed a level two apprenticeship in retail and moved on to a level three apprenticeship in the civil service where he now works in HM Treasury after securing a permanent role. He also told of the poor careers advice he'd been given at school, where his head teacher told him he'd be poor for the rest of his life if he didn't go to university. This shows us how much

work we still have to do on effective careers guidance for young people.

The Shadow Business Secretary confirmed his view that he believed in continuity where possible and reform only where necessary. For a sector that has spent much of recent memory dealing with reform, this suggests light at the end of the tunnel.

There does need to be a pause on reform, not least because businesses tell us of their lack of understanding about the range of courses and qualifications on offer. Successive reforms exacerbate this problem. Although of concern is their plan to have apprenticeships start only at level three and re-brand level two into a different name. Given the vast numbers of level two apprenticeships and the number of sectors that have level two entry routes, any move in this direction needs greater consultation.

The power of apprenticeships is that they can prepare apprentices for the changing labour market. An apprenticeship is a job with training, but it also gives apprentices crucial interpersonal skills and business acumen that can support their whole journey rather than just the first step.

So while it's important to celebrate apprenticeships in National Apprenticeship Week, it's important that we celebrate them and their vital role year round.

# Stuart uses conference to launch key report

The success of apprenticeships “cannot and should not be judged on numbers alone”, education select committee chair Graham Stuart (pictured) has said.

Mr Stuart used his speech the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference to launch his committee’s report on apprenticeships and traineeships for 16 to 19-year-olds.

The report raised concerns about a focus on increasing the number of apprenticeship starts, raising fears such a focus could damage the apprenticeships brand. These concerns were restated by Mr Stuart when he took to the conference stage.

He said: “The success of the apprenticeship programme cannot and should not be judged on numbers alone; improved quality must go hand in hand with any expansion.

“We must make sure all apprenticeships are worthy of the name. An apprenticeship is a route into well-paid work, or it is nothing.

“During the committee session, I had an exchange of views with the minister, Nick Boles, who you will hear from later, about training to be a waiter or a shop assistant. They are worthy jobs; they require high quality training. But should they be apprenticeships? My feeling is they shouldn’t.

“An apprentice enters into a bargain with his employer; he will work and train on a relatively low pay for a long period in return for his employer and training provider transforming his market value through substantial and sustained training. That’s the deal.

“An apprenticeship framework which doesn’t provide major, measurable increases in earnings for its participants is



failing, and undermines public confidence in the round.

“So we asked the minister to add a fifth principle to the list of apprenticeship requirements the government already had, and that is that apprenticeships should lead to a significant increase in the market value of the apprentices themselves, measurably, in terms of their pay.

“We were delighted that, during the course of the enquiry, the minister accepted the notion that income transformation should be a principle of apprenticeships.”

Mr Stuart said his committee’s report also called on the government to improve data collection so the principle of income transformation could be enforced, and called for apprenticeship reforms to be “progressed quicker so there isn’t uncertainty in the market”.

He added: “The trailblazers scheme has been widely welcomed too, but we say that more needs to be done so that the voices of small employers are heard within the process.

“On careers advice and guidance, we’re pretty clear: the central problem is the

lack of incentive for schools to fulfil their statutory duty. Those with sixth forms have a reverse incentive on top of that to fill those seats rather than provide their pupils with impartial, comprehensive advice, including about apprenticeships.

“Coupled with schools’ perhaps understandable bias to the academic, there is a real problem. Ofsted’s report in 2013 found that four out of five schools were failing to provide good careers advice.

“We recommend that all schools should have to publish a careers plan for scrutiny on their website, and they should have to seek and then keep the quality in careers standard which the government itself has helped fund.”

He added that the committee was “not convinced” about Labour’s proposals to “re-badge” apprenticeships below level three.

## David Corke

Director of education and skills policy at the Association of Colleges (AoC)

“With participation by 16 to 19-year-olds currently remaining low, we need to ensure that young people are offered impartial information about the options available for them when they leave education. If, as a country, we are going to increase the number of young people opting for professional and technical education and choosing apprenticeships then we must improve careers education in schools.

“In addition, we agree on the importance of retaining level two apprenticeships in the cases where they are respected by employers. It is too early to conclude on the success of traineeships as they are still in their infancy. We’d like to see two year level two pre-apprenticeships established to help 16 and 17-year-olds prepare for a full apprenticeship.”

## Stewart Segal

Chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP)

“For at least a year, the government’s funding priorities have been on growing apprenticeships for the 16-24 age group and the official starts data has reflected this. Therefore we can’t agree that funding should just be directed towards 16 to 19 – this is too narrow – and AELP believes apprenticeships should be an all age, all sector and all level programme.

“On the current reforms, the committee is right to recommend that SMEs should have a choice on whether they should be directly funded or opt for the funding to go to their chosen training provider. We also agree that the trailblazers should be taking on board the views of smaller businesses and we know that the government is seeking to address this.”

## Toni Pearce

President of the National Union of Students

“I was pleased to see the report offered some positive recommendations on how government should secure quality apprenticeships as opposed to just focusing on quantity. It’s also good to see an emphasis on how careers advice in schools is inadequate, with a particular bias away from Further education and apprenticeships which is good.

“However the report had some disappointing recommendations around pay, particularly the apprenticeship minimum wage. We know that apprentices are struggling to reach their place of study or work because they can’t afford the travel and can’t afford to take time off sick because they don’t earn enough to claim sick pay.”

## Tom Stannard

Deputy chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace)

“Niace firmly believes that apprenticeships are about someone’s stage in their career rather than their age.

“At a time when there are huge skills shortages and skills gaps which are threatening the sustainability of the economic recovery and when there are expected to be almost two vacancies for every new labour market entrant, now is the time to be supporting people already in work, as well as those young people coming into employment for the first time.”



# Committee report - chair talks to FE Week

**W**hile MPs of all political parties seem to be calling for more apprenticeships, Education Select Committee chair Graham Stuart has called for fewer.

Launching the committee's report on apprenticeships and traineeships for 16 to 19-year-olds, Mr Stuart questioned whether all the frameworks which currently exist should be available as an apprenticeship.

Mr Stuart told FE Week careers such as retail service and table-waiting should not be apprenticeships.

"These are valid and excellent professions, they offer real opportunity and earning opportunities as well," he

said.

"But if they don't require genuinely substantial and sustained training of more than 12 months then they don't fulfil the criteria and they should not be apprenticeships.

"It is training that raises professionalism and standards in an industry and makes it as aspirational career — there's lots of first class excellent training available which does not fit within the apprenticeships descriptors and it shouldn't stop, it just shouldn't be called an apprenticeship."

However, Mr Stuart dismissed Labour plans to scrap level two apprenticeships or

re-brand them.

"If the Labour Party really is talking about getting rid of level two they need to think again," he said, adding the issue had not been a source of conflict between committee members of different political stripes.

"My committee, I'm pleased to say, has been unyielding in making criticism of this government when it thought it appropriate — and my Labour colleagues had no problem in agreeing unanimously they should be maintained."

Mr Stuart also called for an extra requirement to be added to the government definition of an apprenticeship, that

it should be sustained and substantial training, with a job, lasting at least 12 months.

"An apprenticeship should really significantly boost the earnings of an individual who undertakes it," he said.

"And as far as I'm concerned the most important thing to come out of the report is data.

"The government needs to ensure it is getting the data to ensure apprenticeships are pushing earnings up."

This, he said was how apprenticeship should be presented, but echoed the report's warning that apprenticeship were in danger of being seen as "some kind of unemployment avoidance exercise rather than an upskilling exercise".

"An apprenticeship is not some low-end option for people who are struggling," he said.

"Apprenticeships are typically taken by people in the third quartile of academic performance, not the bottom quartile."

However, he added: "Many young people in the lowest deciles of performance at school think their future might be an apprenticeship, but actually it isn't — not without a great deal of help to turn that around."

He also warned companies helping such youngsters up to an apprenticeship level through the traineeship programme needed to treat traineeships responsibly.

"I'm sure in the hands of a big employer with the right intentions they're first class, perhaps in the hands of some others they will be less so," he said.



## Key recommendations from the committee report

- We recommend that the government review the benefits provided by funding adult apprenticeships and apprenticeships for young people respectively and assess whether more or all of the money would be better spent on 16 to 19 year-olds.
- We recommend that the government expand the existing matched administrative data sets on apprenticeship outcomes with information on the occupation and industry in which individuals are employed. This would help prospective apprentices make informed comparisons between different frameworks and would aid in evaluating the impact of apprenticeships policy.
- We recommend that the government review the data collected on apprenticeships to allow assessment of the effect on income of different apprenticeship frameworks.
- We recommend that the government

urgently review the incentives for schools to provide good quality careers advice and recognise that the mantra of "trusting schools" does not work when the interests of schools and young people are not aligned.

- We recommend that the government require schools to publish a careers plan and work towards the quality in careers standard.
- The government should encourage schools to incorporate work experience into the 14 to 16 curriculum.
- We recommend that the government look at reviving the young apprenticeship programme or developing a model that replicates its core academic and work-based components for this age group.
- We recommend that the government review, and come forward with proposals to strengthen, the involvement of SMEs in the trailblazer scheme, accepting that most will be unable to give as much time as larger employers.

- We recommend that the government set out its expectations about what will happen following the conclusion of the trailblazer scheme. This should cover ongoing ownership of new apprenticeship standards, how new standards will be developed or existing standards revised in response to future needs, and who will provide oversight and leadership of these processes. Provision for a meaningful involvement from SMEs in the post-trailblazer environment should form part of these expectations.
- We recommend that the government set out how it intends to evaluate the success of the trailblazer programme in the longer term, particularly identifying how the quality of new standards should be judged.
- We recommend that the trailblazers be allowed to choose which level two qualification in English and maths is required to be studied as part of their apprenticeships. The government should

encourage trailblazers to work with the Education and Training Foundation project looking at English and maths qualifications.

- We recommend that the new apprenticeship funding regime offer SMEs a choice between taking a lead on administering the funding or contracting it out to a provider.
- We recommend that the government clarify what role training providers, local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and others may have in assisting employers with the administration of apprenticeships under the new funding arrangements.
- We recommend that the government set out in advance the criteria by which the value for money and broader success of the new funding approach can and will be evaluated.
- We recommend the government explore the most effective measures to encourage more employers to take on apprentices.

# Ambassador Jones opens #AAC15

I have been apprenticeship ambassador for the government for the last few years. My job has been to promote apprenticeships, and I have to say, as political jobs go, that has been one of the easier ones, because there is huge momentum behind it, and I am trying to sell something that people want to buy.

One of the things I have been doing is trying to change the perceptions of the apprenticeship brand. I did 25 years in marketing before becoming an MP, so I'm perhaps a little tuned in to the fineries of brand marketing. I think for some years, apprenticeships have been considered by some, incorrectly, as a second-class choice.

I think that thinking is out of date, I think it reflects old-fashioned British snobbery and is based on old perceptions. What I have been trying to do is boost the aspirational element of an apprenticeship, and use the assets of Parliament and government to change that perception.

That means taking apprentices into the House of Commons, hosting events there for businesses to celebrate their own apprenticeship programmes, taking apprentices into Number 10. Basically recognising the work that they do and saying if this is recognised in Number 10,

this is right at the heart of government, and you should be very proud of all you have achieved.

The best advocates are clearly the apprentices themselves. They communicate with such energy and enthusiasm, it's been great to meet them. As we look ahead, I think we have now reached the point where the main political parties are competing over who can be more supportive over apprenticeships. I think from the perspective of the sector it's absolutely fantastic because I think it shows the progress which has been made over the past few years.

We have had significant progress. Two million starts, more of them outside London and the south east than within it, more women than men taking them, business taking more of a role in defining the skills they need. But we still gave an enormous amount to do.

Far more businesses do not offer apprenticeships than do. That is particularly true among SMEs. We have to continue to drive up the quality. It is not a quantity issue, it is a quality and quantity issue, and the two have to work in parallel together.

We have to work on methods of funding,

and also build on the promotion of the apprenticeship brand. The key thing is, I think, we are building on success, and much of it is due to the people in this room and the organisations across the sector. It is a very exciting time, I think, for the sector.



Now, the reason why this matters, and why we need to promote apprenticeships using all possible opportunities including National Apprenticeship Week and this conference and events up and down the country is that businesses are still reporting a lack of skills holding them back, in some cases very seriously.

A few years ago the main comments I would hear from businesses in my constituency in North Yorkshire was that they had challenges accessing capital. Not anymore. It's all about accessing skills. They have vacancies and they are struggling to fill them because they don't have enough skills in the workforce. I hear that from colleagues up and down the country.

What we have in front of us as an opportunity is both urgent and it is exciting. If we can't get excited about taking businesses forward, getting opportunities for younger people, seeing all that they can do as an ingredient in our economic recovery, but also fantastic opportunities to start people's lives, if you can't get excited about that, get excited about absolutely nothing.

**Andrew Jones MP, government apprenticeship ambassador**

# Fitzjohn latest to question 25+ funding

The value of apprenticeships for the over 25s has been questioned by Ofsted director of FE and skills Lorna Fitzjohn (pictured).

The issue was one of many discussed by Ms Fitzjohn when she addressed day one of the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference.

In her speech, she focused on elements from Ofsted's latest annual report and spoke about the new common inspection framework (CIF), which the education watchdog will implement from September.

On apprenticeships for older learners, she echoed concerns raised by the education select committee about whether they provided good value for money.

She said: "My concern is the quality of training for those over 25. I fully agree that this may well be the option for some people in employment who don't have qualifications and need further training to develop their skills for work.

"However, many 25+ apprenticeships we come across are existing employees who may not be gaining substantive new skills, just getting a qualification for what they already do. Is this really a good use of public funds?

"Getting more young people onto apprenticeships remains a substantial



challenge. Our inspections of schools clearly show that schools are not doing enough to promote apprenticeships. Vocational training is still seen as the inferior route to the academic route by parents as well as teachers, and therefore of course by young people."

In an unusual swipe at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Ms Fitzjohn said one of her other concerns was the lack of an "effective skills strategy".

She said: "I know there are plenty of documents that tell us that there is a skills strategy, but I'm talking about points of reference for providers.

"How can we say there is an effective skills strategy if employers struggle to find the right people with the right skills to fill

their vacancies, and while there are about three quarters of a million young people who are unemployed?"

She added: "We are still concerned that apprenticeships are not fulfilling their potential. A recent concern has been in the decline in success rates, especially in the service sectors. Perhaps the minimum 12 months quality standards requiring substantive new skills for an apprenticeship, that may be part of the story?"

"The differences between good and weak provision still remain — employer involvement in planning each individual apprenticeship's training and viewing their progress remains key."

On the new CIF, Ms Fitzjohn sought to

re-assure delegates about the impact for FE providers.

She said: "You will not be inspected by school inspectors, you will not have a school handbook — it will be an FE and skills handbook.

"So things perhaps won't change that much throughout the process, we are introducing some frequent, shorter inspections for FE and skills providers that are good, and those will happen approximately every three years.

"There has been some concern that those that are good — and in fact the annual report last year would have told us — that 44 per cent would have dropped from 'good' to either 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.

"We want to stop that happening. We want to visit good providers more frequently as a check to see whether they are maintaining the judgement of 'good'. So it's about the right sort of inspections at the right time, it's about quality of provision being sustained, and it's about a professional dialogue — and it's about identifying decline early.

"In the consultation, many of you supported that move. In fact, the most controversial issue was why isn't it going to be available to outstanding providers."



# Funding and quality: don't put off SMEs,

Concerns that the complexity and cost implications of new apprenticeship funding reforms will put small businesses off providing apprenticeships have been raised by the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

AoC senior skills policy manager Teresa Frith and AELP chief executive Stewart Segal joined a panel on day one of FE Week's Annual Apprenticeship Conference to discuss the funding reforms, which will see employers made to pay for a proportion of training costs upfront and could see businesses take control of funding.

Following a speech from National Apprenticeships Service (NAS) boss Sue Husband, Ms Frith raised concerns that the upfront costs for businesses proposed under the reforms could discourage smaller companies from taking part in the programme.

She said: "One problem with the new system is that with the funding being negotiated, the unique costs of a smaller company, a micro company, which is only employing one and is perhaps very new to apprenticeships is going to be much, much higher than a very well-established larger company which has the infrastructure to support apprenticeships.

"We are very concerned that the very way of negotiating on price will actually put a lot of SMEs out of the market because providers won't want to engage because of the unit cost being so high."

Mr Segal raised concerns about the complexity of the proposed system, which is supposed to simplify the process.

He said: "We have always said we support the principles behind where we are trying to get to. Improving quality, driving up the numbers, encouraging the involvement of SMEs. But we've got to be at a point where we're looking at the evidence, and all the evidence suggests to us you really do have to make it simple and I have sat today and it didn't sound simple.

"Yes you can describe the rates on a single page, but there might be a different rate for every single apprentice. You might have 10 different employers and they might all have a different rate depending on what is agreed. This is not a simple system. It may be what the government wants but it is not simple and that is what we continually hear from SMEs."

In her speech, Ms Husband said: "Today, we all stand at a critical moment in time; apprenticeship reform, the skills funding letter for 2015/16 lets providers know about their allocations. Employers having a greater influence on the skills system. A general election.

"It is a time of rapid change, and my role is to make sure that we build the most effective, impartial and trusted National

Apprenticeship Service (NAS) that serves everyone in the FE sector. We want to do more for you.

"The NAS offers high-quality advice, we will provide that quality even more. We want to make employers better informed, we will then increase demand. We want to help employers get the outcomes that they need, we will then persuade employers to invest more in skills. We want to increase uptake from learners, we will aim to offer more than the 25,000 vacancies available online at any time.

"And we want to strengthen the ways we connect employers and providers together and cement better relationships for everyone, not limited by geography, sector or commercial interest — so when you need us, we are here."

She added that the skills funding letter demonstrated that priorities for government investment remained "firmly fixed on both apprenticeships and traineeships", with a national apprenticeship target "focused on 16 to 24-year-olds".

She said: "Higher apprenticeships, particularly at levels six and seven, priority sectors, including STEM, for higher apprenticeships, and small businesses.

"Traineeships have made an excellent start — a total of 10,400 young people participating in the first year. We also have commitments from household names including BT, Barclays and Jaguar Land Rover. In the 2015/16 academic year there will be greater flexibility for providers to deliver preparation training.

"There will also be greater consistency to the offer for 16 to 18 and 19 to 24, and on both apprenticeships and traineeships, we need to work closely with all the key players in the sector to make both programmes a success, so it is vital to reinforce that in an employer-led skills system, the voice of both FE colleges and training providers remains hugely important. Not only do both groups have a significant role to play, but now is the time to step up and influence the future.

"The sector needs your expertise, knowledge and effort to make the skills system work, and the NAS is more than ready to continue to play its part. It has a challenge to face, and working with SMEs in particular to take on more apprenticeships."

She said every business had the potential to "use apprenticeships to fill skills gaps and to boost growth and productivity", and adding that £3.17m was available in 2015/16 for more than 100,000 incentive payments through the apprenticeship grant.

She added: "That statistic alone demonstrates that growing the number of apprenticeships is a business critical mission. Therefore, it is absolutely critical that apprenticeships are responsive to the needs of employers."



From left, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal, Association of Colleges conference host and broadcaster Kirsty Wark, Lsect director and former FE Week editor Nick Linford and National

## Grading plan 'bumped again'

Plans to have all apprenticeships graded were scrapped after the policy "bumped up against reality", the head of the government's apprenticeships unit has revealed.

Jennifer Coupland (pictured), the deputy director in charge of the joint apprenticeships unit at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Education (DfE), addressed delegates on day one of the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference.

Ms Coupland defended the government's trailblazer programme, which involves employers working with civil servants to design new apprenticeship standards, against critics who had questioned why the idea of universal grading had been mooted in the first place.

She said: "When the trailblazer process





# AoC and AELP warn

## Labour L2 plan 'madness' - Boles



senior skills policy manager Teresa Frith, apprenticeship Service director Sue Husband.



It is “madness” to plan to remove the “bottom rung” of apprenticeships, Skills Minister Nick Boles (pictured) claimed as he launched a scathing attack on Labour skills policies.

Speaking during the afternoon of day one of the conference, Conservative Mr Boles criticised Labour plans to outlaw apprenticeships below level three and those lasting less than two years.

He also deflected recent criticism from Labour that growth in apprenticeships had been most rapid in the 25-plus age group, claiming that allowing older learners to “realised their potential” was not a waste of government funds.

He said: “I see apprenticeships as a very old-fashioned ladder, and I agree that the ladder needs to go higher than perhaps apprenticeships traditionally did, which is why we have introduced degree apprenticeships in digital areas and a range of other areas, and you’ll be hearing more about degree apprenticeships later this week. And it is right that we have rungs to the top of the ladder.

“But it is madness to take away the bottom rung, which is the level two apprenticeship. By taking away that bottom rung, or by using weasel words — re-designating it as something else, it is a wholly retrograde step, and a Conservative government, or a government with Conservatives in it will not do it.”

He added: “There is another thing the opposition has talked about, and they have not yet had a very clear policy statement on it, but again I want to be very clear about where I disagree.

They have questioned the growth of apprenticeships for people over the age of 25.

“Is it a bad use of taxpayers’ money? Is it a bad thing that somebody can discover in themselves a potential, a desire, and then go on and with the help of a great British company like BAE, realise that potential? No I don’t think it is.

“I am delighted if someone who is 30, 35, or 40, young women who perhaps take time out from a career to have a family and then want to do an apprenticeship? Great. You will get our support. I do not believe we help apprenticeships by limiting them.”

Mr Boles said he “did not support” Labour plans to cut university tuition fees to £6,000 a year, a policy which will cost £2.7bn, set to come from the same budget as FE.

He said: “I do not believe it is right to take money from taxpayers, many of whom didn’t go to university and won’t go to university, many of whom may be apprentices. I do not believe it is right to take money from them and invest it in cutting the repayments of better-off graduates. That is not the choice that we will make.

“We will be taking £300m from the benefits bill, specifically housing benefit for people under the age of 21, and the benefit cap being cut from £26,000 to £23,000 and we will be investing it directly in expanding the number of apprenticeships. So after a parliament in which, with your help, we have created 2.1m apprentices, we will next time create 3m. That is a clear choice.”

## st reality’, admits Coupland

started in 2013, I was very clear with people at the time that this was about genuinely testing what an employer-led system would generate, and using that experience of real life bubbling up against the policy idea to shape the policy, to inform the next phase of reform.

“The reaction to that has been fascinating actually. The levels of employer engagement in the trailblazer process has proved that it was a success, but the process has not been without challenge.

“Working with employers, providers, assessment organisations and regulators in an open way gives a broad range of stakeholders the opportunity to shape policy from the inside, but it does mean that people need to be prepared that the policy parameters will change, and that on occasion things will be a bit rough around the edges.”

She added: “A good example of this is on grading, where we began the policy intent with all apprenticeships should be graded — but then reality bumped up against that policy ideal, and we have shifted the position, we have shifted the policy parameters to enable employers designing apprenticeships to grade the end point assessment as a minimum.

“But where employers felt that that doesn’t work for them in their industry, they can request a grading exemption.

“Critics of the reforms were saying: ‘That’s a ridiculous idea for a start, why did we start there?’ but I prefer to see it as a testament to open policy making and the approach that we adopted. In short, if you want to be in the policy tent, influencing policy, you have to put up with the fact that some of it is quite iterating. The seating in the tent is not plush.”



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# Delivery, assessment and audit: employ

Concerns over plans for employers pay up to a third of the costs of training apprentices “almost derailed” the new trailblazer standards process, National Hairdressers’ Federation (NHF) chief executive Hilary Hall has revealed.

Ms Hall told day two of the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference that the timing of announcement over proposed apprenticeship funding reform, just as employers were working with government on developing new standards, had risked the process.

The conference also heard from Energy & Utility Skills Group chief executive Neil Robertson, and both he and Ms Hall expressed support for a Labour Party plan to set a two-year minimum duration for apprenticeships.

Speaking about funding reforms, Ms Hall said NHF members, already pre-occupied with other financial pressures felt by small businesses across England, had not welcomed the proposals to make employers pay towards training.

She said: “There is competition, the margins are getting lower and although we are coming out of recession it’s very patchy, with some areas of the country recovering quicker than others.

“When you’ve got additional costs like pensions auto-enrolment, you can see why the concept of employers contributing a third of the cost hasn’t gone down well.

“To an extent it has almost de-railed the trailblazer process because we were working on standards at the time that funding reforms were being outlined and it got quite hard to focus on the standards.”

When asked about whether she supported Labour’s proposals to “re-brand” anything below level three and lasting less than two years as something other than apprenticeships, she expressed some support on behalf of her members.

She said: “I think what it’s called is a bit of a red herring, it’s about what is going to get people into employment in the hairdressing and beauty industries.

“I do understand the sense of having a longer and higher-level apprenticeship.

“For us, employers were really adamant that two years was the minimum duration and there were quite a few saying that, actually, to be fully competent, it should actually be three years.”

Mr Robertson also urged delegates, who had earlier expressed widespread concerns about Labour’s proposals, to consider the fact many employers agreed with the opposition that the apprenticeships brand was damaged by lower-level and shorter frameworks.

He said: “I think some of our employers would make it 10 years if they could. They are very concerned about what they perceive as a dilution of the brand and

would probably instinctively support some of the statements that have been made about level two because they don’t think, from their point of view, that it’s a proper apprenticeship. I think we have to understand that that view is out there.”

Both Mr Robertson and Ms Hall, whose organisations have been involved in designing new trailblazer standards, spoke of the benefits of being involved in the government’s new employer ownership of skills programme.

Mr Robertson said: “I think the most important point I would offer you in terms of this is that the general feeling was people come out of the FE system work-ready rather than job-ready, which is a bit of an indictment of the current and the past qualifications system you are working to I think. We want more than that.

“We are delighted that we have the opportunity through trailblazers and employer ownership to align assessments with trade tests. The good news is we have tripled the size of the training market, but the facilities the employers have cannot cope. To grow the supply-side, we have been working what we call affiliates to quality-assure them on behalf of the sector.

“We have set up a new body to do that which has some independence from the core system called the Energy and Efficiency Independent Assessment Service and the focus there is on quality, but it’s not around tick-boxing, it’s around saying ‘let’s see the programmes, let’s see your staff, how up-to-date they are, and let’s explain how the assessment is going to work’.

“We’re helping providers into that area. There is scope for more. As the new trailblazers come on board, very few of the companies have their own training centres, and very few of them have direct contracts with the SFA.

“One interesting by-product of that is that they were quite shocked when they saw the levels of funding that providers were getting for the apprenticeships, relative perhaps in some cases to the service they were getting. They’re perhaps a more informed consumer than they were.”

Ms Hall said: “As employers, we really welcomed being in the driving seat of developing standards. It has been an issue, getting small businesses around the table, and that’s where the trade associations like ourselves can help.

“Some of the things we like about trailblazers is the emphasis on the end assessment. The concept of independent assessment at the end of the programme and grading are things we have welcomed.

“What we haven’t welcomed, unsurprisingly, is the funding issues.



From left, Energy & Utility Skills Group chief executive Neil Robertson, conference host and broadcaster Kirsty Warwick

## Apprentice assessment

Assessment at the end of apprenticeships is a key part of the government’s reforms, and civil servant Jayne McCann (pictured) was on hand at the conference to explain why.

Ms McCann, from the DfE and BIS joint apprenticeship unit, gave a speech on day two which explained the rationale behind the new assessments and gave some tips on the way the tests should be conducted.

She said: “The big main change as part of the apprenticeship reforms is the introduction of an end-point assessment. Many employers really like this idea.

“It is actually a recommendation of the Richard Review and based on feedback that they had that in some sectors, some occupations, some industries, apprentices could collect all the constituent individual qualifications that might have been specified in the apprenticeship framework,

but that didn’t mean that they finished their apprenticeship as a job-ready, fully competent, fully-rounded individual.

“In some cases something was missing and people were less than the sum of parts, so this policy has been brought in to introduce an end-point assessment to ensure that at the end or near the end of a reformed apprenticeship, there is something which brings together all of the learning and work experience that the apprentice has done to make sure they really are job-ready.”

She added: “With all of these changes we’re really trying to do two things. The first is to free up the delivery and be less prescriptive about what the apprentice journey needs to look like, so the training providers have got more of an opportunity to innovate, so different apprentices might be trained in different ways but



# Employers have their say



and National Hairdressers' Federation chief executive Hilary Hall

# Ofqual role unclear



The role of Ofqual in regulating the assessment and qualification elements of apprenticeship trailblazer pilots remains unclear, the watchdog's head of regulatory development Julie Swan (pictured) told delegates at the conference.

Ms Swan used her speech on day two to explain that Ofqual would only have a role in the trailblazers if their involvement was requested, and that other existing or new sector bodies might be brought in to assess whether qualifications and assessments that form part of the new standards were up to scratch.

When pressed by conference host Kirsty Wark on what would happen if "no-one wanted Ofqual", Ms Swan said: "If we're not wanted we have plenty of other qualifications to regulate. We do have an established set of rules. We do have a reputation for putting challenges on assessment providers. It shouldn't be a consideration but we do so with no charge.

"I think for certain people we might not be the most appropriate body to regulate, and that's why the system has been designed to be sufficiently flexible for other bodies to be able to come in."

Ms Swan said that, in contrast to GCSE and A-level reform, where Ofqual was on hand to ensure "commonality between the assessments", the regulator would look for "fitness for purpose for a particular sector" in the trailblazers and would therefore be "looking for difference as opposed to standardisation".

She added: "That being said, formal assessments are going to be an important part of apprenticeships going forward, they are important but we also don't want to see them being the tail that wags the dog. We don't want to see a system emerging in which it is assumed that the only thing that matters are the things

that are assessed. We all need to be cautious about that.

"But Ofqual's role going forward will be to make sure that any regulated qualifications that are taken by apprentices as they progress towards the final assessment, or if qualifications are taken as the end-point assessment, where Ofqual is the regulator, we will be focusing on making sure they are good and they are valid, just as we do with all the other qualifications that we regulate.

"We have been asked to regulate the end-point assessment, any qualifications taken on the route to that assessment, where the trailblazers wish us to do so. Ofqual isn't going to be the only show in town. You have been hearing this afternoon there may well be professional bodies which take on the role of regulator/quality assurer or established sector-owned agencies which will take on the role that Ofqual might otherwise have. There will be choice."

She added: "We expect that some, particularly awarding organisations which are familiar with our rules and our ways of working, our requirements and the expectations we would place on them might be quite comfortable to have their products regulated by Ofqual, but it wouldn't be their choice. It would be the choice of the trailblazer, it will be the choice of the sector as a whole.

"It remains to be seen just how many trailblazers, how many sectors Ofqual has a role in. What I can say is that for higher level apprenticeships, where there is a degree involved, we will not be playing a part in regulating those. We are not allowed to, even should we wish to.

"We will be ready to regulate those qualifications and assessments which form part of the trailblazers models as they develop. At the moment we are not planning to put in place any additional regulatory requirements which will be specific to apprentice assessment."

# Points: Whitehall's view

all apprentices will be doing a common, robust, end-point assessment.

"Of course, as with all of the reforms, leading to increased employer confidence in apprenticeships."

She said the test needed to "look across all the skills and the knowledge that's in the apprenticeship", bring them together and "really test the individual in the round".

She added: "Assessments and assessment plans should try to use a range of assessment methods, and that means we expect plans to have mixed methods and that's really just because if you're trying to assess the whole individual at the culmination of what might be a two or three year apprenticeship you might need more than one test in order to get a realistic picture. "Ensuring independence means there



shouldn't be anybody who is involved in the delivery of the apprenticeship, particularly if they have got a financial incentive in the outcome of the apprenticeship, that person shouldn't be making the sole judgement of whether the apprentice has passed the test or not."

# Umunna faces audience scepticism on party plans

The FE sector “will do better” under a Labour government, Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna (pictured) insisted after he faced a sceptical audience.

Mr Umunna made the comment during a Q&A session with delegates following his speech on day two of the FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference.

He said Labour would have to make tough choices about funding, and he called for the help of delegates in securing the best deal for FE.

He said: “I’m not saying there aren’t difficult decisions. My argument to you would be that I think this sector will do better under a Labour government.

“When the spending round comes up, I am going to be making the case for this sector, but I’m going to need your help.”

Mr Umunna outlined Labour’s plans for vocational education and criticised the Conservatives and their coalition government for failing to deliver quality apprenticeships.

He said: “Under our apprenticeship guarantee any school leaver who gets the grades will have the right to do an apprenticeship. By 2025 we want the same number of school leavers starting apprenticeships as going to university.

“But to ensure genuine parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways, we can’t sacrifice quality for quantity. Expansion must be based on a relentless commitment to excellence.

“I worry that under this government, policy on apprenticeships has become a numbers game. And those numbers are not always what they seem.

“One-in-five of the government’s apprenticeships don’t include formal training. Four-in-ten employers the government counts as providing apprenticeships don’t think they do. Nine-in-ten apprentices over 25 already worked for their employers.

“We need apprenticeship numbers we can believe in, the apprenticeship brand a



trusted gold standard.

“That’s why Labour will introduce a new universal gold standard for apprenticeships — working towards a system where all apprenticeships are Level 3 and above, focused on new entrants to the labour market, and last for two years as a norm.

“In a world of change, we also need opportunities to adapt and develop, train and retrain throughout our working lives.”

He said he understood “what a difficult time” it had been for the FE sector, claiming it had fallen victim to a government “without an understanding or a vision for FE” which had “hollowed out provision”.

He added: “Last week’s cut in the adult skills budget will make a tough situation tougher. I am concerned about the impact of this on vital provision, including the viability of some colleges.

“We have shown our commitment to supporting the sector and investing in skills by protecting the budget for 16 to 19-year-olds within the education spending ring fence, meaning that it will not be cut under a Labour government.

“This is something the government have failed to match. In fact, the Conservatives are planning extreme and unprecedented cuts which would take spending back to the level of the 1930s.”

Mr Umunna said a Labour government would still face difficult choices over funding, but added it would begin its efforts to improve the FE sector by providing “clarity of purpose” for colleges.

He said: “For too long FE colleges have had to be all things to all people. We will bring purpose and focus to the role of FE colleges in delivering our new Tech Bacc and the college-based component of apprenticeships, by offering the opportunity to become an Institute of technical education, delivering the high quality specialist vocational training our country needs to succeed.”

## ‘Ruffled feathers’ over reform proposals

Labour plans to remove apprenticeships below level three and those lasting less than two years enjoy “huge support” among employers, Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna has claimed.

In an exclusive interview with FE Week following his speech to the conference, Mr Umunna acknowledged that the policy had “ruffled feathers” in the FE sector, but called on providers to work with him to implement the proposals.

Mr Umunna also said he “didn’t have an issue” with the principle of higher employer contributions towards apprentice training, but hinted that a future Labour government might make it optional,

instead of the compulsory contributions being explored by the current government.

Speaking about the level three, two-year minimum policy, he said: “I believe, certainly among the employers, there is huge support for the changes we are trying to affect and the outcome we want to achieve. I believe that the young people who want to go and get these qualifications will also welcome our absolute determination that the qualifications that they acquire are seen in a good light.

“And of course, those perhaps who will find it most challenging because they will be most impacted by the changes that we’re proposing, of course there is going to

be some disquiet in the sector, but I have been very clear that we want to work in partnership with them to deliver what we are seeking to do.”

He added: “I am happy to acknowledge that where you propose change you are going to ruffle feathers, and we have done that in a number of sectors where we believe things need to change.

“In a way, when you’re putting yourself forward as an alternative government, you’re not only pointing to things which will stay the same because you believe they’re working well but you’re also going to challenge people by trying to achieve a different result in areas where

we need change.”

On funding reform, Mr Umunna said a Labour government, if elected in May, would continue with the spending plans it inherited for the first year, and said it wouldn’t be appropriate to comment on whether the current reforms would be scrapped until his party had completed its “zero-based review”.

But he added: “I don’t have an issue necessarily with the principle, and in fact some sectors have been arguing for that in their sector. If employers in a particular sector want to contribute more in and raise money to fund training collectively, then I am not going to stand in the way.”



# Employers can ‘settle consciences’ by paying trainees

Employers who don't want to face accusations of exploitation over traineeships should pay their trainees expenses or a salary, Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal (pictured) has said.

Mr Segal focused on the traineeships during his speech on day two of conference, and called on delegates to help build employer confidence in the scheme. He claimed some businesses were put off by concerns the work placement part of the framework might be seen as “free labour”.

He said: “I have talked to a number of employers, some won't touch this with a barge pole — they don't want to be accused of free labour. They don't want to be accused of undermining their recruitment processes, so they have got a big job to do to build the confidence of employers.

“And these are some of the things that I think will be important. What they need to understand is they're not just giving work experience, they are being part of a development programme for a young person.

“It has to be a real investment in training, they are making an investment in training similar to the apprenticeship plan. As soon as you allow someone to come through your

doors you are making an investment in training, you are making an investment in those individuals.



“I think it's important that you are building the confidence of employers to understand how they can reward trainees. They can pay expenses, so all this stuff about not wanting to be seen to be using free labour, well pay their expenses. In fact, pay them a salary. It's tucked away on page whatever of the rules that somebody can be earning a salary.

“I understand that that gets you into all sorts of employment issues, but they can be earning a salary. So when it comes to expenses, I think the employers might be able to settle their consciences. We should be at the forefront of that, having those decisions up front. And the one thing they can provide are the skills, knowledge and experience that they need.”

Mr Segal warned that there was a danger that other initiatives similar to traineeships would confuse people further, and said it was the job of providers to build the profile of the programme.

He said: “We do need to reduce the number of initiatives. I have a fear that we are soon going to have, inevitably, ESF programmes to some extent, and Leps, could we have 39 different traineeship programmes? What's that going to look like?”

“We need to be really careful about competing programmes. I read this month that a job training plan, things like 10,000 more traineeships, does it mention in there, so if you are a 16 to 24-year-old, unemployed, what does it mean? We've got to get DWP to really be behind a programme.”

He added: “I think it's a programme that has been well-designed if you take away the restrictions they put on at the beginning, so I think we can make it happen.

“We need to make traineeships the programme of choice for young people. When you look at the 16 to 24-year-old sector you've got this crazy environment now, it's not easy to see where you're going.

“I do think there is a balance between saying traineeships is this, this and this to these type of people, or you make it an over-arching programme, and that would be my view — to try and incorporate all of the various initiatives into what we call traineeships, because I think they can deliver almost anything within the current programme design.

“So we need to promote the programme, and we need to improve understanding from employers, young people and frankly understanding from training providers — but we would need to lead that.”

# Apprenticeships: politicians missing the point

Apprenticeships “will not and cannot” deliver what politicians want them to, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (Niace) chief executive David Hughes (pictured) said as he warned against an apprenticeship “numbers game”.

Mr Hughes launched a damning attack on politicians of all parties in his speech, which came shortly after an appearance from Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna.

He said politicians were “missing the point” of apprenticeships and pleaded with them not to ignore the rest of the FE sector.

Mr Hughes said: “Of course apprenticeships are really, really important. They've got a fantastically important part to play in the whole education and skills system, but they will not and cannot deliver on all the things that ministers and politicians want them to deliver — so I think that puts us in a really dangerous place.

“I think that means that at some point they will wake up and realise that all of that focus, all of that mania, all of the headline-grabbing commitments on numbers just can't be delivered, and actually, you know what? They shouldn't be delivered, because it's not the most effective way to support young people and adults who want to transition into good work, and it's not the

only way that you support good workforce development and training, because actually it's got to be much more narrow. So I want to talk a little bit about that.”

Mr Hughes said Mr Umunna's speech was a good example of politicians not understanding apprenticeships, but said it wasn't just Labour that was getting it wrong.

He said: “I think the last hour or so has proved that with our prospective secretary of state for business, because he doesn't really understand fully, I think, quite what an apprenticeship is, and quite what they stand for on apprenticeship policy.

“I say that very carefully, because I suspect that would be true if Vince Cable was here, and I suspect that would be true if Nick Boles was here, or any of the other parties — because not very many of the political parties would get it.

“Just on definition to start with, if you look at what all the political parties are saying, all they are really interested in is a headline-grabbing numbers game which says: ‘We're investing in young people who don't go to university,’ and missing the point completely in my view.

“The idea that apprenticeships will solve all evils in terms of education policy and business policy seems to me to be a really



dangerous place to be.

“Over the last few years, we have had various politicians saying, ‘We are going to solve youth unemployment. We're going to achieve quality. We're going to achieve social mobility. We are going to get productivity up and achieve business growth. We are going to get economic growth. All through the apprenticeship programme which we are spending one and a half a billion quid on.’ It's complete madness.”

Mr Hughes also used his speech to launch Niace's “apprentice charter” policy document, which can be read at

feweek.co.uk.

He said: “There are lots of issues. Big issues, by definition. A big issue about promises on the apprenticeship programme that I don't think actually measure up. Big issues about quality, big issues about how you measure success in programmes, and really big issues on access.

“We just launched an apprenticeship charter concept paper. It's very short, with the very simple aim of saying, ‘We've got to get all apprenticeships up to the best quality. We've got to give a guarantee to the individuals that they're going to get very good return on their own investment’.”


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 ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE


**ADELE LEE**

GROUP SKILLS COMPLIANCE MANAGER FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROVIDER (ILP) THE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS GROUP

"The key word has been 'change'. We all know it coming after the election and we just have to work out how to adapt to that.

"Future funding is obviously going to be a big issue along with the content of apprenticeships. It's been obvious how trailblazers are being lined up as the big agent for change."


**DAVID ALLISON**

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PRIVATE FIRM GET MY FIRST JOB WHICH HELPS PROVIDERS FILL APPRENTICESHIP VACANCIES

"Most people have been very positive about apprenticeships here and a lot of speakers have committed to helping increase numbers.

"However, while there has been a lot of talk about growth, we haven't really been told how it will be achieved. I think people are concerned that we are going to achieve growth just by talking about it."


**CHRIS DAVIES**

EDUCATION CONSULTANT FROM POST-16 LEARNING CONSULTANCY FIRM FE ASSOCIATES

"The main message from the conference is that the potential for apprenticeships is magnificent, but the reality is quite different.

"I do think we are coming to a crux point. There was a lot of expertise at the conference in apprenticeships but the politicians make it difficult to weave all that knowledge together into a successful whole."


**JESSICA REXWORTHY**

MARKETING AND MEMBERSHIP MANAGER FOR FAIR TRAIN AWARDING ORGANISATION

"There been a lot of announcements which people aren't happy with regarding apprenticeships.

"People were probably most interested to hear from Chuka [Umunna] on Labour's plans to scrap level two. I can understand why Labour wants to drive up apprenticeship quality, but I don't think they are going about it the right way. A lot of people would miss out on apprenticeships if they scrapped level two."


**EMILY HUGHES**

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF JOHN LEGGOTT (SIXTH FORM) COLLEGE, IN LINCOLNSHIRE

"We have only just got a Skills Funding Agency contract to start training apprentices, so it was really good timing for the conference.

"The message I got from it was that there are a lot of positivity from employers about taking on apprentices, but uncertainty over the policy surrounding it. Having said that, I think more sixth form colleges will be looking to take on apprentices in the future."


**KATY QUINN**

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AT EASTLEIGH COLLEGE, IN HAMPSHIRE

"These are obviously really interesting times because we are coming up to a general election, but I didn't really hear any new messages over policy from the people who spoke here. I think we will have to wait until we get a new government for that.

"Having said that I think apprenticeships will remain a priority whichever party wins, that much has been made clear."


**FIONA PETHICK**

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION CONSULTANCY FIRM FH PETHICK CONSULTING

"What I will take away from this conference is that we need longer to bed in all the change that have already been enforced on apprenticeships.

"That is far more desirable than politicians creating more uncertainty with yet more changes.

"Trailblazers could really work if they were developed properly over time and attention was paid to assessment methods and standards, but they shouldn't be rushed through."


**GRAHAM HASTING-EVANS**

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NOCN AWARDING AND ASSESSING ORGANISATION

"Virtually everybody at the conference understands the importance of apprenticeships to the economy and learners, but there has been considerable confusion over how you move that forward.

"People definitely don't agree with what Labour is saying about scrapping level two. My background is in construction and 80 per cent of apprenticeships in that sector are level two. People don't believe that the government's trailblazer scheme is implementable either."



# E - WHAT DID THE DELEGATES THINK?

# AAC | 2015

## LYNDSAY LOWES

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION PUBLISHER CIA TRAINING



"There has been a very positive vibe among conference delegates.

"People know that all the parties are backing apprenticeships so there will hopefully be a good future for providers and learners.

"From a publishing perspective, it's clear that there are a lot of teaching resources out there for maths and English but not a lot for information and communication technologies"

## SARAH JOHNSON

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE COUNCIL FOR AWARDS IN CARE, HEALTH AND EDUCATION



"It became obvious that there's something of a communication breakdown between the sector and policy makers.

"The current obsession of with levels and academic entry requirements for apprenticeships is just wrong. The most important thing is whether candidates have the personal qualities to do the job well not how many GCSEs they've got. You can often only really find that out about them on the job."

## MARY PAYNE

DIRECTOR OF EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AT YEOVIL COLLEGE, IN SOMERSET



"There is obviously cross-party support for trailblazers which gives you confidence that they are here for the long-term.

"I will come away from here with the message that my college is right to pursue a strategy of getting involved with trailblazers early but in a limited way to start off with."

## SEAN PURCELL

NATIONAL OPERATIONS DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH EAST ESSEX TECHNICAL COLLEGE



"The main feeling among people here is uncertainty surrounding apprenticeships — about things like trailblazers, apprenticeship levels and the concept of technical degrees.

"There are lot of statements flying around from the political parties about what they want to do with apprenticeships but not a lot of explanation of how they will make those ideas work."

## JILESH KACHA

FUNDING AND PLANNING MANAGER FOR ILP 5E LTD



"There has been a lot of uncertainty among delegates about where apprenticeship policy is going.

"I think level two is quite an important part of the apprenticeship brand and there was a lot of support for retaining it.

"People are also unclear how we are going to hit the [Conservative Party] target of 3m apprenticeship starts."

## SIMONA POPA

CONSULTANT FOR THE UNLTD FOUNDATION, CURRENTLY DEVELOPING A LEVEL THREE TRAILBLAZER IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP



"I wanted to come here to get a good view of what people in the sector are thinking about apprenticeships at the moment.

"I've learned that we are right to be pitching our trailblazer at level three, as that's the way things seem to be going [towards higher level apprenticeships].

"There has also been concern among delegates that it's going to be hard to convince small businesses to pay for something [apprenticeships training] that they previously got for free."

## RUTH SPARKES

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION MARKETING AGENCY EMPRA



"What has been nice to see is that the politicians have taken apprenticeships seriously enough to turn up here and talk about them, even if that meant Labour's Chuka Umunna [Shadow Business Secretary] getting a telling off from delegates.

"The main feeling that I have got from the conference is that people feel very strongly about keeping level two apprenticeships [which goes against Labour's plans to scrap them]. They don't want to lose them."

## VIC FARLIE

CHAIR OF PROVIDER REPRESENTATIVE BODY THE LONDON WORK BASED LEARNING ALLIANCE



"The message that I have got is that apprenticeship funding should be left as it is, please don't change it.

"The principal of how you manage the flow of finance to providers should be the key. Stability and growth will come from helping providers understand better how best to use the available public funding and get access to it."





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\*On-screen results available within 2 days.