



# THE BEST OF NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK 2019

 **Apprenticeships**  
National Apprenticeship Week  
4 to 8 March 2019

A supplement produced by

**FE WEEK**

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**CATH MURRAY**  
@CATHMURRAY\_

## THERE'S A CAN-DO ATTITUDE TO APPRENTICESHIPS

**F**inding inspirational stories about apprenticeships has not been a problem for this year's National Apprenticeship Week.

Everyone we've visited has talked about the challenges – whether that's end-point assessments that might not be ready in time, or employers who are wary about the new standards. But one thing they've all had in common is a "can-do" attitude.

Take Stansted Airport College (page 6). While working hard to convince employers of the benefits of taking on apprentices, this aviation campus has been training up a cohort of students on specially designed study programmes – to make sure that when the apprenticeship opportunities arise, they

will have all the skills the employers are looking for. Their head of college told me they are "bursting at the seams".

It's somewhat awe-inspiring when you realise that across the country, there's an army of providers doing the hard slog of educating employers about how the levy works and what they stand to gain from it.

One organisation that, as the country's largest employer, has a lot to lose if they get it wrong, is the NHS. They are still struggling with universities not being ready to deliver the new degree-level standards and end-point assessments that are up in the air. We went to visit one trust that's taking a proactive approach: University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (page 11) had 50 nurse degree apprenticeship starts in the autumn and is developing a strong regional recruitment strategy.

It's been quite a week for NAW-themed events. Several colleges pulled out all the stops this year, with London South East Colleges taking over a restaurant overlooking London's Tower Bridge, while Gateshead College organised a roof walk over the iconic Sage Gateshead music venue (pages 12-13).

Politicians also got stuck in. Skills minister Anne Milton was interviewed in her parliamentary office by an apprentice journalist (page 5), and education committee chair Robert Halfon MP hosted a reception in Parliament for the shortlisted nominees for *FE Week* & AELP AAC Apprenticeship Awards (page 14).

We look forward to seeing many of you at the *FE Week* Annual Apprenticeship Conference, in partnership with the Department for Education, later this month!



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## FE WEEK

*FE Week* is the only newspaper dedicated to the further education and skills sector in England.

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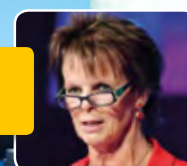
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## FE WEEK ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2019

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Minister for skills and apprenticeships



**KEITH SMITH**  
Director, Apprenticeships, ESFA



**HMCI AMANDA SPIELMAN**  
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted



**SIR GERRY BERRAGAN**  
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## APPRENTICESHIPS: IT'S A NO BRAINER

National Apprenticeship Week has been fantastic! It's been a chance to celebrate apprentices and the brilliant work being done by schools, the FE sector and employers across the country to promote the amazing benefits apprenticeships offer. There have been over 600 events held across the country and I would like to thank everyone who has been involved for making this a week to remember.

I've been to Bolton, Bristol, Devon, Cornwall, Bradford and East London, meeting apprentices of all ages and backgrounds as well as their employers and training providers and hearing their amazing stories.

I kicked off National Apprenticeship Week with a visit to the North West Ambulance Service, to meet apprentices in finance, digital, paramedics, call handlers and urgent care assistants who help deliver

urgent and emergency health care across their region.

The apprentices I met are trained to deliver the right care, at the right time, in the right place – giving them an excellent foundation to progress in their careers, whilst making a huge difference to the lives of others.

At Cornwall Council I met a range of apprentices including someone who originally went to university to train to be a teacher but then decided to retrain as a firefighter. At the University of East London, who offer some brilliant degree apprenticeship programmes, I also had a chance to catch up with FE Week.

On Thursday, I visited Bradford College for a tour of their state-of-the-art dental training facility. Then I rounded off the week with a visit to Invotra, a leading software company with over one third of its workforce being former or present

apprentices.

Wherever I went, there was a common theme: how apprenticeships can transform people's lives; the impact they make on people's futures; and the positive energy they bring to employers.

Whether it's a young person thinking about their future, someone who wants to get back into work after a break or looking for a career change, an apprenticeship is a really great opportunity, or as one apprentice I met recently said: "It's a no brainer!"

We reformed the apprenticeships system almost two years ago - working with employers to create new high-quality apprenticeship programmes to make sure apprentices learn the skills employers need. There are now 400 of our new high quality apprenticeship standards approved for delivery with more in the pipeline.

We launched our new apprenticeships



campaign and website 'Fire it Up' at the start of this year to help challenge outdated perceptions of apprenticeships and to raise awareness of the huge variety of options available for people of all ages and backgrounds across the country.

I am hugely proud of the progress we have made, but there is still more to do to make sure everyone knows about how great apprenticeships are. That's why National Apprenticeship Week is so important!

Let's continue to work together to spread the word and help change more lives for the better!

## DAVID GALLAGHER

Managing Director, NCFE Apprenticeship Services



## END-POINT ASSESSMENT – A NEW VANTAGE POINT

As insightful and diverse as my experience in the UK skills sector has been – from frontline delivery of employability programmes to strategy and policy roles – nothing has provided such rapid insights into the quality of programmes, as my first six months leading apprenticeship end-point assessment (EPA) at NCFE.

EPA has become the day-to-day acid test of whether the teaching, learning and development of an apprentice has met the expected standard. Unlike the infrequent visits of Ofsted, or external quality assurance that is one step removed from learners, EPA organisations stand at a new vantage point in the apprenticeship system. The impartiality and objectivity of EPA organisations, combined with their continuous, direct engagement with apprentices, offer deep insights for raising the value of apprenticeships.

As with any radical change, the early days of EPA have presented plenty of challenges and the system is going through a period of adjustment. At NCFE we've invested heavily in creating a programme of support that equips training providers and employers to ensure the success of their apprentices. Here are some of the things we've learned so far.

Begin with the end in mind.

Training providers and employers

are not always clear what the "end" of an apprenticeship really entails. Even more worrying are the odd occasions where the apprenticeship standard and assessment plan have not been understood at all, until it's too late.

Imagine yourself for one moment as a learner driver, fast approaching the day of your test. Imagine you don't fully understand the manoeuvres to be undertaken, or even some of the most

### “ The challenge of maintaining up-to-date knowledge cannot be underestimated

basic laws of the road. How would you rate your chance of passing? It seems incomprehensible that one could be so ill-prepared for an impending test. But in apprenticeships, this does happen – something we're trying to change at NCFE.

To give apprentices the best possible chance of success, it's crucial that training providers, employers and

apprentices have a comprehensive understanding of what the EPA looks like. And while EPA organisations cannot teach providers or apprentices how to "pass the test", it's a core part of our role to provide all of the relevant information to inform programme design and delivery from the very beginning.

In such a rapidly changing environment, the challenge of maintaining up-to-date knowledge of the standard, assessment plan and the details of the EPA itself cannot be underestimated.

At NCFE, we care about the success of your apprentices as much as you do, while maintaining our impartiality and the integrity of EPA. We believe that training providers, employers and EPA organisations working together as trusted partners is key to delivering the benefits of the new system, which is why we're investing in building partnerships across the sector.

Based on our early experiences of providing EPA, we're already convinced that the greatest success will be enjoyed by the training providers and employers who design and follow a new type of "framework" for delivering apprenticeships. A framework that:

- Assesses the starting point of an apprentice's journey against the

knowledge, skills and behaviours from the standard;

- Maps out a detailed, personalised programme of delivery that recognises both the starting point and aspirational destination;
- Tracks and monitors progress throughout the programme while feeding back any "course corrections" required to give apprentices the best possible chance of success.

Our new apprenticeship system has great potential to deliver the economic and social benefits that were envisioned at the outset of the apprenticeship reform agenda. It is apparent to me that the key to realising these benefits can be found in a mix of time-served approaches and innovative new ideas, partnerships and the relentless pursuit of quality. As we gain further insight at NCFE, we'll continue to share our learning with our customers and the wider apprenticeships sector in the hope that we can play a big part in delivering a world class apprenticeship system that we can all be proud of.

To find out more about NCFE apprenticeships and EPA, visit <https://www.ncfe.org.uk/end-point-assessment>



# FASHIONING THE FUTURE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

BILLY CAMDEN | @BILLYCAMDEN

The number of apprenticeship standards approved for delivery topped 400 last month, but while the milestone was celebrated in style, sector leaders have warned it is time to “take stock”.

On February 15 the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education announced that the fashion studio assistant apprenticeship was the 400th standard to be approved in England, handily in time for the beginning of London Fashion Week.

The level three programme was developed by employers from across the UK fashion industry including Jasper Conran and Mulberry, and was led by the British Fashion Council.

“Inspiring more young people to work in the creative industries without necessarily having to take the university route will help to ensure that the fashion industry continues to attract the best talent,” was the message from Caroline Rush, chief executive of the British Fashion Council.

Her enthusiasm was, of course, echoed by the boss of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Sir Gerry Berragan, who said signing off on the 400th standard was “great news”.

And education secretary Damian Hinds said the milestone was proof of the “apprenticeship system in this country coming of age”.

Standards have been replacing the old-style frameworks since March 2016 as the government’s new

“high quality” apprenticeships, which are developed by groups of employers.

But other FE sector leaders aren’t so animated about their proliferation.

The number in England now greatly exceeds what is available in Switzerland (around 250) and Germany (330) – two countries that have highly reputable apprenticeships systems.

At the time of this supplement going to press, a total of 407 have been approved for delivery in this country across seven different levels, while a further 256 are at various stages of development.

The pace of approval has more than doubled since the institute launched its ‘faster and better’ programme in December 2017.

That initiative was billed as an assault on government red tape, and was specifically designed to streamline the approvals process, following complaints from employers that it was too slow and bureaucratic.

But Department for Education statistics for January showed that only 264 – or around two-thirds – of the standards currently approved for delivery actually had starts in the first quarter of 2018/19.

Tom Bewick, the chief executive of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, warned that as England surpasses Germany and Switzerland for the number of standards available it is “time to take stock”.

“We may be fast heading to a situation where just about any occupation could develop an apprenticeship standard,” he said.

“Increasing granularity of these standards may end up becoming a massive hostage to fortune; as both their maintenance and funding could become financially unsustainable over time.”

Mark Dawe, the boss of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: “Rightly or wrongly, we are in a very different system to any other in the world with different levels and quite narrow standards, so we shouldn’t be surprised if many more than 400 is the end result.

“However, there might be some scope for consolidation.”

Influential peer Lord Sainsbury called for a review of “all existing apprenticeship standards” at “the



Designer Bethany Williams poses on the runway during the finale of her show during London Fashion Week

earliest opportunity” in his report on technical education in July 2016, but this has yet to materialise.

A limited review of 12 standards in the digital sector began in September last year, the outcomes of which were promised “in the New Year”.

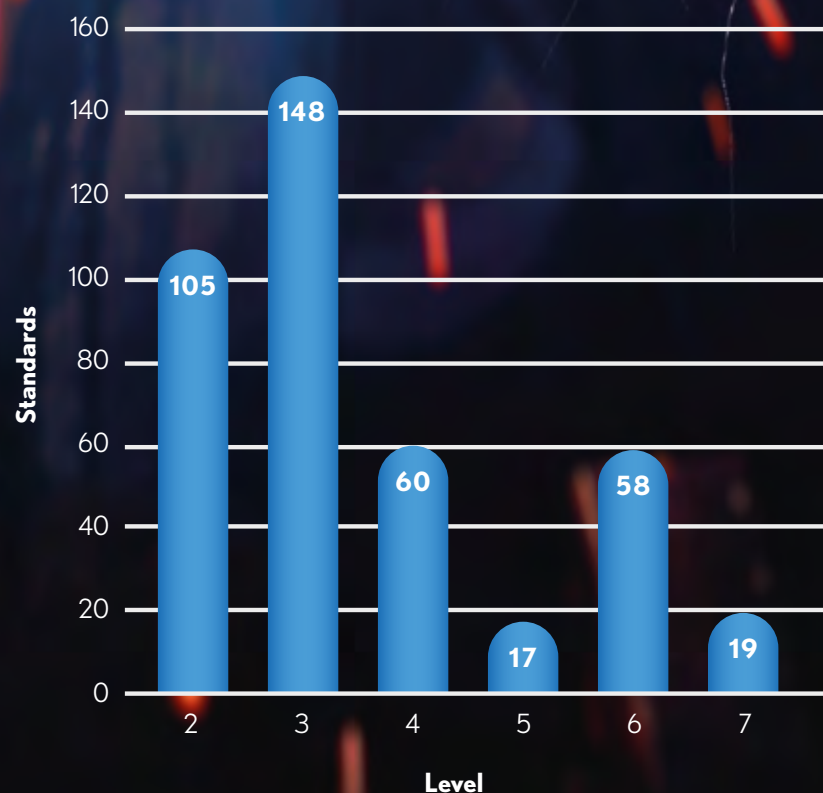
In a recent interview with *FE Week*, Sir Gerry said the institute has set itself a target of getting to 500 standards in the spring.

“The key then would be to make sure the standards we have are relevant, up to date, priced correctly, have the right content, and so on,” he added.



A model walks the runway at the Roksanda show during London Fashion Week

## 407 approved for delivery standards



Source: Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education



Sir Gerry Berragan



# BBC APPRENTICE GRILLS SKILLS MINISTER MILTON

MIRIAM O'DONKOR

**B**BC Academy apprentice journalist Miriam O'Donkor interviewed Anne Milton in her parliamentary office about what she's learned during her time as minister of state for skills and apprenticeships

## How has your time as skills minister been?

I've got the best job in government. It's changed dramatically from when I was first appointed; companies had only just started paying the levy and the Institute for Apprenticeships had only just been set up. It's been fabulous being in something from the very beginning. I've seen it change and grow over my time as minister.

## It must be hard to choose, but what's the most fun part of your job?

Meeting apprentices, without a doubt! Each one has a unique story. I spend my life meeting incredibly enthusiastic young and older people. I meet people who thought they would never get a job; I meet people who thought they would never get any qualifications. People who change careers who never thought they'd get the opportunity.

## What's been most challenging for you as skills minister?

When I first started, businesses were quite grumpy about the levy because if you take money off a business they're always going to be grumpy, and there was quite a lot of resistance. But as it's gone on I've seen that completely turn around.

Businesses will now say to me, "we weren't very happy about the levy... but now we're

using these fabulous young people who bring enthusiasm and passion to the job". Rather than seeing apprentices as a drain on their resources, they're actually seeing it as a really positive thing.

## So what has been the main lesson you've learnt in your role?

It's not what you do, it's the way you go about doing it. If I look back to the apprenticeship reforms, there wasn't enough preparation in the market. You've got to carry people with you to get people to change the way they do things. Suddenly, and it took them [businesses] a while to realise - they had a new way of getting a skilled workforce.

## What advice would you give to those who are unsure about doing an apprenticeship?

Do an apprenticeship. Without a doubt - go ahead and do it! Google "find an apprenticeship" and you've got a website where you can punch in your postcode and get all the details of the apprenticeships that are available. Another option is calling up companies and local businesses and saying, "I'm really interested in any apprenticeship with your company. Would you give me 15 minutes of your time?"

“

## I've got the best job in government

**For me, an apprenticeship seemed like the right choice as I knew how important experience would be for finding work as a journalist. Would you agree?**

In journalism it's work experience that's so valuable. I see quite a lot of journalists who are at university or at college who really want to get into the sector but their problem is finding work experience. But doing an apprenticeship, you're way ahead of anybody who followed an academic route.

**What are the misconceptions about the options available for further education?**

I think schools have changed a bit



but I think they have got a long way to go. Particularly if [young people] stay in between 16 and 18 to do A-levels or BTECs or the equivalent; the only option they tend to see is university. Young people's awareness of apprenticeship is rising rapidly but we need more people to be aware.

If you're going to university you go through UCAS so there's a file through which you go. An apprenticeship is a job, so there's not one single route of application.

We're trying to encourage employers to include a list of vacancies on their websites, but it's still a bit more work. In some ways that's why apprenticeships are so marvellous because they [apprentices] have all thought about it themselves so they're real self-starters.

## How had your previous roles prepared you for your current role?

There are a lot of similarities. Being a nurse is a very public-facing job and being an MP, a minister, and this job in particular is a very public-facing job. As a nurse you're faced with a set of problems that you try to solve for people and you also do that as an MP. As a nurse you deal with emergency situations and I deal with emergency situations [now]. Fundamentally both jobs are about people.

**In the future you may move on to a different role. How would you like to be remembered as the minister for skills and apprenticeships?**

That's a good question! As somebody who had



a positive impact on skills and apprenticeships. Not just me - all the officials in the Department for Education who are really personally committed to this. I would like this time to be remembered as the time where we changed public attitudes to apprenticeships in a very positive way. That suddenly people realised you don't just have to go to university to get on in life.

**Miriam O'Donkor is from Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, and started a level 3 digital journalism apprenticeship with the BBC in 2017.**

**Prior to this, the 20-year-old studied for her A-levels at The Broxbourne School, while running two blogs: one on music called "Parma Violets and Sweet Tunes" and "The Queen in The Mirror", a motivational blog for women.**

**Since starting her apprenticeship, Miriam has enjoyed learning new skills on the digital video team and has made videos for the BBC website and social channels.**





# AIRPORT COLLEGE IS

CATH MURRAY | @CATHMURRAY\_

**S**tansted Airport College opened in September 2018 as a partnership between London Stansted airport and Harlow College – the first of its kind at any airport in the country – offering courses in aviation, engineering, business, hospitality and events. We went to meet their apprentices and find out how their apprenticeship offer is developing.

Earlier this year, when a senior executive from charter operator Kearsley Airways was visiting Stansted Airport College, he noted in passing the quality of workmanship on an aeroplane access panel made by one of the pre-apprenticeship trainees. Head of college Wendy Martin encouraged the trainee, Sam, to follow up with the executive – an interaction that resulted in a work experience placement. Several months later, Sam has secured an apprenticeship with the company.

“This is a student who was disengaged with learning before he came to us, so it’s a real triumph,” says Martin, obviously thrilled.

It’s also an example, not only of the advantage of having a college campus located on a giant business hub, but also of the “clear line of sight” students have from their training to their future employment.

Martin is using the phrase metaphorically but as we discuss this, we’re sitting on the first floor balcony in a lounge area reminiscent of a mini flight gate. Floor-to-ceiling windows offer a wide vista of the runway with the airport tower in the distance, the RyanAir hanger in the



The first cohort of apprentices at Stansted Airport College

background and passenger jets launching into the blue February skies every couple of minutes.

In addition to being a major base for the low-cost carrier, several charter airlines are based at Stansted, with their hangars a stone’s throw from the college.

One lunchtime Martin was intrigued to see the students all rush out to the front of the building. It turned out someone had spotted a C57 – an iconic world war II US army passenger carrier – on the runway.

“They were all out there filming it. It was phenomenal to see it take off. It was absolutely huge. The noise it made, it

was crazy. But the fact that they are that inspired and that interested in aviation is very rewarding. They’ve got that clear transition.”

“**The fact they are that inspired about aviation is very rewarding**

expecting it to be a hard sell, but MAG jumped at the idea as soon as they proposed it, says Martin. The local area has low unemployment and the airport, which is the single biggest employer in the east of England, has up to 400 job vacancies advertised at any one time. In addition, they have significant skills gaps in engineering and aviation.

“They realised they had to grow a real local interest in working at the airport,” explains Harlow’s deputy principal, Louise Turner.

It was no problem filling the courses. The college capacity is 530 and they recruited about 300 for the first cohort in September 2018, leaving room for a similar number in their second year.

It’s surprising to discover, however, that only 33 are apprentices, with the rest on 16-18 study programmes.

Turner isn’t worried by this state of affairs, and sees a big part of the college’s role as preparing students for future apprenticeships in the industry. “The very nature of the industry is that a lot of them don’t want them until they have really good skills, because there’s no margin for error in the aeronautical engineering business,” she explains.

With this end goal in mind, their study programmes have been designed around requests from local employers.

Convincing employers of the benefits of



Students have access to a training jet, parked outside the college

That the college is a pipeline into the aviation industry is evident in everything from the location to the name – something insisted upon by Manchester Airport Group (MAG), which owns the airport and provided the land for the college, worth about £3 million. The South East Local Enterprise Partnership put in the capital funding for the building, bringing the total project cost to around £11 million.

Harlow College, the institution of which the airport college is effectively a campus, was



# A ROARING SUCCESS



taking on apprentices can be a challenge. One company was put off by the lack of a formal qualification attached to the hospitality apprenticeship and decided they preferred students with BTECs instead - despite having levy funds to spend.

"In the first year, companies are not going to dramatically change their recruitment processes," says Turner,

pragmatically - adding that they've done a lot of work to educate employers on the benefits of apprenticeships as well as helping them understand the levy.

The apprentices, who are learning aeronautical engineering and operations maintenance, spend five days a week in the college for the first year - combined with about 14 weeks of work placements. Their time on the job increases gradually through the second and third years.

There's flexibility within this structure, however.

Matthew Goddard has done some previous college study, plus a couple

“  
**We could fill another building tomorrow!**

of years' work experience in aircraft maintenance at a small charter airline, Titan Airways, which means he's well ahead of his course companions. He now



works two mornings a week, with paid overtime on the weekend (he's a qualified tug driver), with an arrangement that he can take time off the course if his employer is short staffed and needs someone.

"I think it's a really good set-up to have a college teaching aircraft-related courses at an airport," he says.

"Because there's a pool of employers and everybody's got jobs, you feel a little bit more connected to all your classmates. Last year at my other college, there was myself and the in-flight apprentices and four people who weren't employed and doing goodness knows what, so it was quite hard for the tutor to teach us all.

"In here because we've all got our jobs,



Wendy Martin

we're focused, we want to keep our jobs."

Goddard is complimentary about his tutor, but recruiting good staff isn't as easy as it might appear, when aeronautical staff can earn around £60,000 as a bay manager or aircraft maintenance engineer, says Martin. "It's very difficult trying to entice individuals from industry for maybe half their salary."

She has ambitions to expand beyond the level 3 courses they currently teach. "We could fill another building tomorrow!" she exclaims. They've already had tentative conversations with EasyJet about the pilot degree apprenticeship that's currently in development. But to add any higher level courses to their offer, they'd need about £6 million in capital investment in order to expand.

The current facility is designed to acclimatise students to the workplace. Rather than looking like classrooms, the learning spaces are designed to look and function like board rooms or airplane cabins. "It's brilliant having a blank canvas because you can revolutionise education," says Martin, who was involved in designing the building as well as the curriculum.

She thinks the airport college is a "fantastic model" that could be replicated elsewhere.

"From the feedback from the trainees and employers - I can't explain how positive it is.

"We're meeting recruitment needs and skills gaps from employers and the partnerships we have with these companies gives the young people a clear sight to employment."



Apprentices learn machining skills in the college workshop

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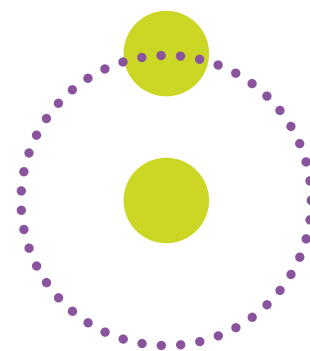
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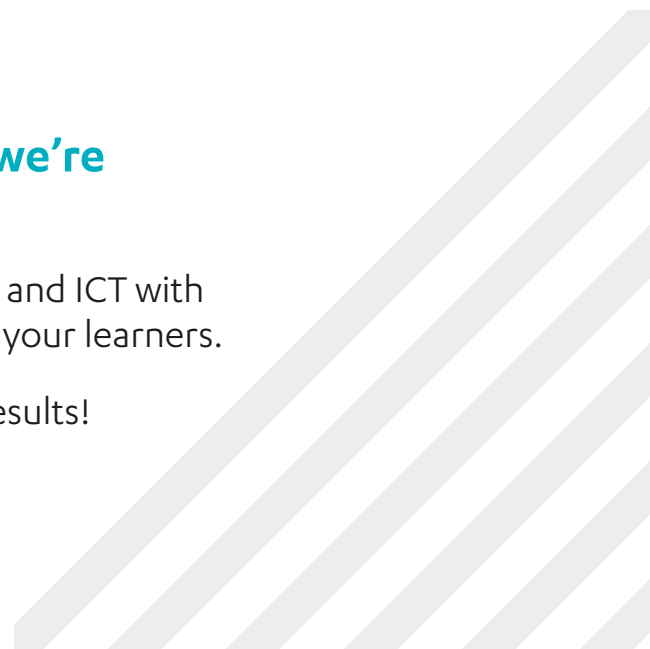


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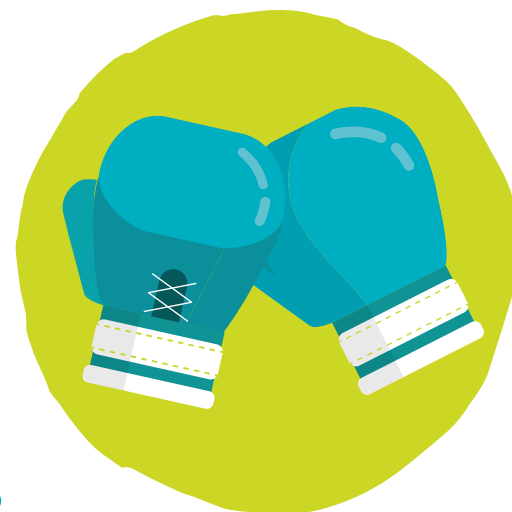
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# APPRENTICES GET TRAINED IN THE GREAT OUTDOORS

FRASER WHIELDON  
@FRASERWHIELDON

Every-paying charities face a particular challenge – if they fail to spend their pot, they will be letting donor funds leave the organisation for which they were intended. With this in mind, *FE Week* went to see how one large charity, the Scout Association, is using theirs.

Steering a canoe across a lake or abseiling down a wall sounds more like a commando mission than an apprenticeship.

Yet it's all par for the course when that apprenticeship is the outdoor activity instructor and it's managed by the Scouts.

This year, there are eight apprentices on the level three standard who have been employed by the Scout Association to work at its outdoor activity centres and be taught by Channel Training, a Somerset-based provider specialising in outdoor apprenticeships.

Another thing that makes this apprenticeship a little different is that apprentices do not just learn traditional occupational skills (in this case the canoeing, archery and abseiling) but also how to teach those skills to others.

Asa Gurden, the head of Scout Adventures, the organisation that runs the

Scouts at Hawkhirst outdoor activity centre in Northumberland canoeing across a lake



centres, said: "They are working on how to deliver outdoor experiences, predominately to young people. That includes the soft skills, how to teach and coach, as well as hard skills such as working on water with canoes and high ropes courses.

"The outdoors is an interesting tool as a lot of what they are delivering is the skills they are gaining themselves. There are a

lot of transferable skills with the teamwork and communication. It's really valuable from our perspective."

The managing director of Channel Training, Jim Whittaker, calls it the "ultimate prize": developing the apprentices' ability to teach those activities.

"It's such a steep learning curve for those individuals, but one that's really exciting and motivating."

Whittaker has found the new apprenticeship standard more flexible than the old system of statutory qualifications, in terms of fulfilling the dual aim of preparing people for a specific job role while still preparing them for a broader career in the sector.

"The outcome of the apprenticeship is the same: the individual is capable of running a safe, enjoyable session of outdoor activity.

"But, free from the constraints of the NVQ and the prescriptive qualification, we can tailor the course to the employer's own situation and include the kind of skills development that the employer needs, while keeping an eye on what the wider sector expects in terms of moving on after their current role.

"The standard allows our trainers and employers to look at the training as a route to competence, rather than a set of slightly abstract steps in another qualification. It's

very liberating."

Gurden summarised the change by explaining that before the reforms, the Scouts would send an apprentice on a course to learn a new skill, but that course would not count towards their learning at college.

“

## No-one comes to work in the outdoor centres to be rich

Now, the apprenticeship standard allows for the course to count towards an apprentice's qualification.

The Scouts look to recruit people with a big emphasis on people skills and a real passion for outdoor activities.

"No-one comes to work in the outdoor centres to be rich," Gurden says.

"When a kid gets to the bottom of an abseil and gives you that smile, that almost is the payment.

"If you get that, you have a real future in working outdoors or with the Scouts."

## What is it like being an outdoor apprentice?

*FE Week* spoke to two apprentices, Domitrius "Dom" Brooks and Amy Phillips, about what it's like on the outdoor activity instructor course.

Despite both being employed by The Scout Association, the pair come from quite different backgrounds: Dom was involved in the Scouts from the age of 10 before taking jobs in retail, whereas Amy never had anything to do with them, instead coming from a career with horses.

She said: "It's completely new to me. I have a lot of support around me at the different centres, it's very different to what I'm used to, but because of the support and training involved, it's become fairly easy to pick up.

"It's still challenging, but it's worked out really well.

"It's completely new to teach people. As outdoor activities are not what I'm used to, it's been a challenge, but a very good one and I've been looking for this since I'm very young and I'm happy to have found a career like this."

Dom, despite his previous experience, concurred that it was a challenging role. Both of them agreed that seeing their pupils develop, especially the more challenging ones, is the best part.

Amy said she was looking to go into seasonal work after completing her course, while Dom said the important thing for him was having multiple doors open up.



# THE NHS TRUST THAT'S AHEAD OF THE GAME

**FRASER WHIELDON**  
@FRASERWHIELDON

Apprenticeship reforms have been a challenge for a number of providers – arguably none more than the NHS.

As the country's largest employer, it faces losing a fortune when unspent apprenticeship levy funds begin to expire from May; has to manage apprentice nurses who need 60 per cent time off-the-job for training, and is still facing delays over approval of university-based training.

There is also a recruitment problem: to meet the target of making 2.3 per cent of its workforce apprentices, the NHS had to achieve 27,500 starts in 2017/18; but it had just 13,800 – down from 19,820 two years previously – representing 1.2 per cent of the total headcount.

Starts on nurse apprenticeships also decreased by 2.6 per cent from 2017.

One problem, says Lucy Hunte, the national programme manager for apprenticeships for Health Education England, is training provider readiness, especially with the degree-level programmes. "Some of the universities are quite slow to adapt their programmes, so that's been a challenge as we need national coverage and some areas have not got everyone in the standards they need," she said.

"But I think a part of it is the reforms have been so rapid and I think universities

weren't ready for that. We had nine degree programmes approved in October and that's a lot to adapt for."

Another sticking point is end-point assessment on the nursing associate and nursing degree apprenticeships, which Hunte describes as a "ticking time bomb".

"We and the trailblazers were confident we would get an integrated EPA and at the last minute, the Nursing and Midwifery Council said no. They said they don't believe in EPAs, so that's been a big challenge. We're hoping to get a resolution in the next couple of weeks."

*FE Week* first exposed the crisis of apprentices being left without end-point assessors in multiple industries in April of last year.

Hunte also says the NHS expects to lose "huge amounts" this May when levy payments begin to expire. Funds become unavailable to the employer if they remain unspent after 24 months. *FE Week* reported in October that the NHS was struggling to spend their £200 million pot.

However, some trusts have bucked the trend: University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHSNFT) had 50 nurse degree apprenticeship starts in the autumn.

The hospital's apprenticeship lead, Anita Esser, said the key was to view apprenticeships as workplace development rather than money that needed using up.

USNFT asks potential apprentices to first apply to be healthcare support workers, so they get on the payroll, and then enrolls them

on low-level apprenticeship courses. Once they've completed those, they are moved on to higher level courses.

Ms Esser said: "We have had people starting as support workers and are now working as senior nurses.

"They've been working with us many years, a decade sometimes.

"We try to look at apprenticeships as workplace development, so we're not just trying to use the levy just so we can use the money.

## End-point assessment is a ticking time bomb

"We're not just trying to hit the public sector apprenticeship target; what we're saying is we're trying to make sure when we're doing apprenticeships it is about us being able to have a workforce that's properly skilled. We try to focus where we know we need the hotspots for recruitment – things like nursing are quite important."

Another means of tackling the recruitment and training problems, she says, is through increasing recruitment at a regional and local level.

"We're taking a much more proactive approach, looking at doing regional procurement so employers get the best choice, universities get viable courses and the bonus will be the peer-to-peer learning of the apprentices: they'll get to be training with apprentices from different trusts and we think that's going to be positive and what we've been focusing on in the last few months."

Ms Esser added: "We know from doing support worker development in the past that if you upskill your staff you usually have good retention on the programme and at the end.

"That's because they're local – they're living locally, their lives are local, their jobs, their support network. They want to stay within the organisation and progress within it."

Such is the case with nurse apprentice Sam Peña Warner, who has lived in Southampton for four years.

He started at the trust on a low grade and is now on a level 4 course; then every year after he achieves that qualification, it goes up another level.

"I absolutely feel there is a chance to progress and I feel encouraged to stay at the trust," he said.

"By the time you finish, you have gone around and had your placements in all the different areas over the trust's hospitals; you have a feel for the trust. I think most people would stay on and work for this trust.

"There is no nurse bursary now, so I would not have been able to support myself at university without the apprenticeship.

"The fact they brought this in was a dream come true for me as I wanted to be a nurse my whole life."

Asked for the secrets of UHSNFT's success, Ms Esser said: "It's about putting together a business case to explain what you need to do that you can take through to your senior management team.

"The organisation needs to see how it fits in the financial envelope."



University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust nurse apprentices presenting the posters they made to present an aspect of public health.



# EVENTS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY

JESSICA FINO | @JESSFINO

## Damian Hinds starts NAW with visit to WSP apprentices



Damian Hinds and WSP apprentices

Education Secretary Damian Hinds kicked off National Apprenticeship Week with a visit to apprentices at engineering professional services consultancy WSP.

Hinds met with eight apprentices at WSP's London offices on Monday morning, who shared their personal experiences and perspectives of apprenticeship programmes.

He joined WSP CEO Mark Naysmith for a roundtable with apprentices, and took on the challenge to play chess with them.

Hinds said: "It was fantastic to visit WSP to kick start this year's NAW. We have transformed apprenticeships in this country and this wouldn't have been possible without companies like WSP, who are leading the way by creating a wide range of high quality opportunities for thousands of people across the country.

"It was great to meet all the staff and apprentices and I congratulate them all on the huge progress they have made and I look forward to hearing more about their work."

Naysmith said during Hinds' visit that

WSP has received a record number of applications this year, totalling 1500 across a variety of roles. It is currently recruiting apprentices in civil engineering, building services, project management, transport planning, business administration, geo-spatial and quantity surveying.

"We are delighted by the growing interest in our apprenticeship programme. Attracting future talent and skills into our industry is an ongoing challenge, however with the government's support and the industry's enthusiasm to promote exciting career opportunities, we are starting to witness success," he said.

"Initiatives such as NAW, as championed by the government, are a great opportunity to celebrate the positive contribution our apprentices are already making."

The apprentices told Hinds that they enjoy visiting their former schools to talk about the positive impact of apprenticeships, as they believe that sharing personal stories is the most powerful approach to attracting those considering a STEM apprenticeship.



L-R: Emily Mahoney (Learning & Development Specialist, WSP), Daniel Legg, Lois Medley, Kai Selwood, Daniel Gomez, Callum Kantounas, Mark Naysmith (UK CEO, WSP) Damian Hinds, Alex Gleave, Philip Lewis, Grace Itam, Jane Grant (UK Head of Learning & Development, WSP)

## Hospitality students take over Blueprint Café

Blueprint Café has been taken over by 20 hospitality and catering students during a day shift at the central London restaurant.

The London South East Colleges students were given the opportunity to create the lunchtime and afternoon menus of the day for the café that boasts views of the iconic Tower Bridge.

After spending a month preparing themselves for the shift, the students' skills were put to the test by Head Chef Joseph Albina and General Manager Carla Amaro on the Wednesday of National Apprenticeship Week.

Some of the students were based in the kitchens, while others worked front of house and some ran the bar.

Back in February, they visited the kitchens and main dining area and were made clear of the café's expectations, rules, regulations and health and safety procedures.

Tania Sumner, head of the hospitality at the Food and Enterprise Career College, said: "This really is huge. The students are relishing the takeover and I've noticed a big change in them since D&D invited them to take part. An experience like this is so valuable and we are lucky to be situated so close to London's booming hospitality sector. I'd like to thank everybody at the Blueprint Café for stepping up and offering to give our students this chance. I know it will be a



Lsec students receive instructions in the kitchen

great success."

Emily Scothern and Billy Bingham, two of the students who took over the restaurant, were recently accepted onto hospitality, food and beverage apprenticeships at the five-star O2 InterContinental hotel in London after completing a Catering (Culinary Skills) Level 2 Certificate/Diploma in the Hospitality, Food and Enterprise Career College.

The 17-year-olds studied professional cookery, front-of-house and restaurant management as part of their training at the college's student-led BR6 Restaurant and Bakehouse for the past 18 months. They will now begin their level 3 apprenticeships with the hotel giant and work towards achieving full-time positions during the year-long training programme.



Lsec students and future InterContinental apprentices Billy Bingham and Emily Scothern serve FE Week's Cath Murray in the Blueprint Café takeover



# Creative apprentices walk over roof of Sage Gateshead



Creative apprentices Emma Dowson, Emma Louise Gorman, Holly Blythman, Harriet Ingram and Rachael Grieve take part in a roof walk at Sage Gateshead to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week

**A**pprentices from Gateshead College's Creative Apprenticeship programme have climbed the iconic music venue Sage Gateshead to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week.

Emma Louise Gorman, who now works full-time in Sage Gateshead's marketing and communications team, as well as Emma Dowson, Holly Blythman, Harriet Ingram and Rachael Grieve walked over the roof of the building, where they got a chance see the city from above.

The Creative Apprenticeship programme, delivered by Sage Gateshead, was launched in 2008 in partnership with Gateshead College, and 100 apprentices have come through the scheme since.

Designed by Normal Foster, the building has a curbing roof that weighs 750 tonnes and has 3,000 panels made from stainless steel and 250 made of glass.

The apprentices and Sage employers then attended an event inside the building where they heard about future plans for scheme, which includes opportunities for apprenticeships in community arts, cultural and heritage venue operations, live events and promotions and technical theatre, including lighting, sound and rigging.



Ivan Jepson, director of business development at Gateshead College, said: "The partnership between ourselves and Sage Gateshead has been really successful and on the back of this, we're really delighted to be working with them on their new creative industries apprenticeship programme."

## Sergeant Katie Stock named Army Apprentice Champion of the Year



Sgt Katie Stock, Royal artillery

**R**oyal Artillery's Sergeant Katie Stock has been named Army Apprentice Champion of the Year in the second ever British Army Apprenticeship Awards.

On Wednesday, Sgt Stock from the 12 Regiment, won the highest award, which celebrates the apprentice who has inspired or enabled others to achieve apprenticeships.

In her submission, her Commanding officer explained Sgt Stock was the "principal reason" why the 12 Regiment has succeeded in delivering telecommunications apprenticeships last year, after she identified a shortfall in CAVA qualified assessors. The regiment went from one of the weakest to one of the best telecommunications regiments within the Royal Artillery, according to her superiors.

"Her strength of character, networking prowess and drive is astonishing; she is the consummate professional in her field and is supporting the wider regimental community. I wish I had more soldiers of her calibre," said Lt Col Charlie More.

Meanwhile, Private Rebecca Gould, 22 Field Hospital, Royal Army Medical Corps was named the Army Advanced Apprentice of the Year. Sapper Luke Hudson, 24 Commando, Royal Engineers was awarded the Army Intermediate Apprentice of the Year.

The British Army's Apprenticeship Awards celebrates those who have overcome difficulty or performed exceptionally during their apprenticeship programme.

Lieutenant General Tyrone R Urch CBE, who presented the awards to the winners, said: "The nominees for these awards represented the most outstanding apprentices and apprenticeship champions from across all our programmes. People are our greatest asset and investing in their development is key to ensuring we remain relevant and credible in a fast-changing world."

The British Army said 95 per cent of new soldiers take up the offer of an Army Apprenticeship.



# 2019 AAC APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS

**BILLY CAMDEN | @BILLYCAMDEN**

The national finalists of the AAC Apprenticeship Awards 2019 were recognised and celebrated at a special reception at the Houses of Parliament on Monday.

Around 150 people packed into the Terrace Pavilion for the event, which was sponsored by the chair of the education select committee Robert Halfon, who received last year's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Addressing the finalists, he said: "There's a massive amount of work to be done and policy changes to be had but having an event like this isn't just a nice event in the Houses of Commons, it is unbelievably important for apprenticeships.

"What this does is say we believe in the prestige of apprenticeships in our country. We want to build a skills nation and make sure every young person can climb the education and skills ladder of opportunity.

"All the award nominees are change makers, so thank you to all the providers and organisations who are here today."

Mr Halfon added: "If we do this together and carry on it won't just be a few small steps it will be a giant leap for apprentice kind."

More than 350 entries were submitted from colleges, training providers and employers for the awards, which are in their second year and run by *FE Week* and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers.

There are now two types of awards: Route Apprenticeship Provider of the



Representatives from In-Comm, Gen2 and Abingdon and Witney College receive their finalist certificate

Year and National Awards.

The former will celebrate excellence in 13 individual apprenticeship routes, and winners will be named 'apprenticeship provider of the year'.

Organisers have also introduced an award to recognise employers and providers work with SEND apprentices and increasing diversity.

During the event Sue Pittock, the chief executive of Remit Training, a finalist for the SEND award, told *FE Week*: "It's has been brilliant to come down here with so many great people.

"Our team is super excited to see if they win on the

**"If we do this together and carry on it won't just be a few small steps it will be a giant leap for apprentice kind"**

night. SEND is a huge part of Remit with a national team who operate it. We're hugely proud of them."

And Andy Bates, chief financial officer at Gloucestershire College, up for the outstanding contribution award, said: "It's great to be talking all things apprenticeships here. We're really proud to be shortlisted. At Gloucester College apprenticeships go right back to our heritage and now we're there trying to change the perception of apprenticeships, they're open for everyone whatever business or sector."

On stage, managing director of *FE Week* publisher Lsect, and chair of the judging panel, Shane Mann, said: "The majority of you here today are individuals celebrating the very best in the apprenticeship sector in the UK.

"Today is about celebrating and recognising your achievements."

And Mark Dawe, chief executive of the AELP, said: "We've got the best of the best here when it comes to apprenticeships so it really does feel like a launch of National Apprenticeship Week.

"This is what it's about. It's about celebrating providers and recognising their excellence."

Winners of all awards will be announced at a glittering ceremony during the Annual Apprenticeship Conference Gala Dinner on March 28 at the ICC in Birmingham.

Shane Mann, managing director of *FE Week's* publisher Lsect



# ARDS CELEBRATED IN PARLIAMENT

Agriculture, Environmental & Animal Care Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Business & Administration Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Key Training Ltd

Care Services Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Qube Qualifications and Development Ltd

Paragon Skills Ltd

Catering & Hospitality Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Lifetime Training

Umbrella Training Ltd

Construction Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Fareham College

Telford College

Digital Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Arch Apprentices

Just IT Training Ltd

Education & Childcare Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Interserve Learning & Employment

Academies Enterprise Trust

Engineering & Manufacturing Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Uniper Engineering Academy

In-Comm Training

Hair & Beauty Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Milton Keynes College

HAHA Training

Health & Science Apprenticeship provider of the year

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Pearson

Gower College Swansea

Coventry University

Legal, Finance & Accounting Apprenticeship provider of the year

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FNTC Training

CILEx Law School

Transport & Logistics Apprenticeship provider of the year

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INNOVATE

Outsource Training and Development

Performance Through People Training Limited

Apprenticeship Diversity Award

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Sheffield City Council

Lookers Plc

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SEND Apprenticeship Champion Award

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SMARTAPPRENTICES

Interserve

Remit

Weston College

Promoting Apprenticeships campaign of the year

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SMARTAPPRENTICES

Aston University

Umbrella Training Ltd

Performance Through People

Outstanding contribution to the development of apprenticeships

Employer

Provider

Individual

Eddie Stobart

Thatchers Cider

Blanchard Wells

Gloucestershire College

Interserve Learning & Employment

Skills Training UK

Steve Williams  
Gower College Swansea

Debra Woodruff  
Oldham College

Jenny Pelling  
CILEx Law School

Apprentice employer of the year

Royal Air Force

BT

Wessex Water

Apprenticeship provider of the year

In-Comm Training

Gen2

Abingdon & Witney College



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