

National Apprenticeship Week 2018



#WORKSFORME

 **Apprenticeships**
National Apprenticeship Week
5 to 9 March 2018

A supplement produced by

FE Week

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LET'S CELEBRATE THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE APPRENTICESHIPS WORK



CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

Almost a year on from the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, FE Week is proud to bring you its annual National Apprenticeship Week supplement, featuring just a few of the apprentices, employers and training providers who make it all happen.

The skills and apprenticeships minister Anne Milton, keen to celebrate the wonderful things happening during NAW 2018, has written a message of welcome

to our readers (page 3). Before heading off on her whirlwind apprenticeships tour of Britain (page 10), the minister also tried her hand at reporting, interviewing FE Week's very own new apprentice on her first visit to Parliament (page 13).

FE Week kicked off NAW 2018 in inimitable style, with a parliamentary reception hosted by education committee chair Robert Halfon to celebrate the regional winners of our inaugural Annual Apprenticeship Awards (page 14). Organised in partnership with the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, the awards were set up to recognise excellence in apprenticeship provision, and the national winners will be announced at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference later this month.

Keen to represent all aspects of apprenticeship, we've asked training providers across the country how the levy is working for them, one year on, and what changes they want to see (page 4).

We also spoke to employer-providers both new and established to find out how they're developing their in-house training teams, which apprenticeships they're outsourcing, and how the levy has changed their approach (page 6).

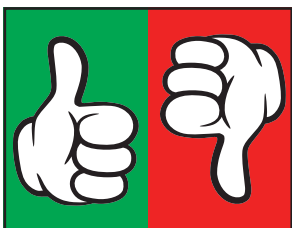
Last but not least, we heard from the apprentices themselves, chatting to this year's National Apprenticeship Award winners about what made them apply for apprenticeships, and what their chosen route means for them.

We trust you had a wonderful NAW 2018 – and hope to see you at this year's Annual Apprenticeship Conference!



FE Week

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



A year on from the levy - what do providers think?

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The rise of the employer-provider

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The skills minister interviews our very own apprentice

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Parliamentary reception for regional award winners

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FE Week

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Chair, Education Select Committee, House of Commons

Rt Hon Anne Milton MP
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ANNE MILTON

Minister for skills and apprenticeships



HOW WE CAN MAKE APPRENTICESHIPS WORK EVEN BETTER FOR EVERYONE

I am thrilled to kick off this very special edition of FE Week, celebrating National Apprenticeship Week. It's a chance for me to talk about the very real benefits and opportunities that apprenticeships provide for people and for business. It's also an opportunity to hear from people across the country about how we can make them work even better.

Apprenticeships are fantastic. They give people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to earn while they learn, and to get a job that's right for them. Apprenticeships also give employers the skilled workforce they need to make their

businesses grow from strength to strength.

We want more businesses to offer really good apprenticeships, it's as simple as that. Frankly, it's in their interests to get involved.

We've put employers at the heart of our apprenticeship reforms to make sure that happens. We introduced the apprenticeship levy to encourage employers to invest in training and fund apprenticeships across the board. This was absolutely the right way to go – because if employers are investing in apprenticeships, then it is firmly in their interests to help us drive up the

quality. That's good for them and good for apprentices.

Employers have two years to spend their levy funds and they are rightly taking the time to properly plan how they do it. It's great that over 90 per cent of the country's largest employers now have an apprenticeship service account, so they are ready to invest. We are also working directly with nearly 6,000 of the largest levy-paying employers to help them plan and grow their programmes.

And we've listened to businesses to make it easier for them to use these levy funds. From this April, businesses paying in will be able to transfer 10 per cent of their levy funds to other employers.

The Institute for Apprenticeships is getting employers together to design new standards, giving them a direct say in how apprenticeships are designed and assessed. That means businesses can be confident that trainees are learning the skills their employers need to get on. So



Anne Milton visits apprentices during lambing season at Askham Bryan College. See more on page 10

far, more than 220 new standards have been developed, with a further 300 in the pipeline.

To see the development and delivery of all this fantastic work is hugely satisfying. The fact that 3,000 higher and degree apprenticeships have been advertised recently, including apprenticeships in engineering, aerospace, cyber security, nuclear and financial services, is a real

achievement. And there's far more to come – across all levels and all sectors.

By 2019-20, the annual budget for apprenticeships will be double what it was in 2010-11. This underlines just how serious we are about making apprenticeships work – for the people doing them, for training providers, for employers and for the economy. And we want to keep hearing from all of you about how we can do that, so let's keep the conversation going.

ADVERTORIAL

NCFE APPRENTICESHIPS: LET'S GET TO WORK

Apprenticeships are changing, and we're here to help.

The Department for Education has paused plans to turn off apprenticeship frameworks, saying that it won't withdraw any more until 2020. This is welcome news after months of concern that reforms on content, procurement and funding are being rolled out too fast.

At NCFE we understand the importance of clarity and support when it comes to navigating reform and accommodating change. We're uniquely placed to support the most recent announcements from the DfE, with a range of qualifications for apprenticeship frameworks, and a growing range of end-point assessment (EPA) solutions for apprenticeship standards.

We're committed to helping learners achieve their potential through apprenticeships, which is why we've developed a range of full and part apprenticeships at higher, advanced and intermediate level, as well as our EPA solution. We also offer supporting qualifications which provide the flexibility to create bespoke progression-to-apprenticeship packages for learners.

Apprenticeship frameworks

Our high-quality apprenticeships provide everything needed to help learners develop the essential skills and experience to get on in work. We offer apprenticeships across a range of sectors including business, leadership and management and customer service.

To support our apprenticeship offer we've teamed up with partners such as Oxford University Press and ForSkills to develop a host of learning resources. These include qualification support packs which provide examples of how to prepare for delivering our qualifications and templates which can be adapted for different delivery contexts and circumstances.

All NCFE apprenticeship customers who register learners on our functional skills qualifications will receive free access to the ForSkills initial assessment and online diagnostic tool, as well as access to Oxford University Press' 'Functional skills progress' range.

End-point assessment

NCFE is one of the few organisations approved by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to deliver EPA, and we offer support in a variety of sectors and subject areas. EPA is one of the biggest apprenticeship reforms in recent times and stems from the 2013 government-commissioned Richard Review into apprenticeships. Its findings called for an end to continuous assessment in favour of an external assessment that more accurately reflects a learner's capabilities and readiness for a particular role.

NCFE is an approved EPA organisation for the following subject areas:

- Customer service
- Leadership and management

- Hospitality
- Professional services
- Retail
- Social care (offered under the CACHE brand)

What will NCFE provide?

Our service is flexible and responsive, allowing us to offer bespoke assessment services to meet our customers' requirements.

Preprogramed delivery support

Our customers have access to guidance and support on government policy and apprenticeship standards as well as our EPA end-to-end service. This includes face-to-face and over-the-phone support from our apprenticeship services team.

Sample resources

A comprehensive suite of guides will be available for each standard which will help apprentices (as well as employers and providers) prepare for EPA.

Detailed mock assessments will be available for individual standards and their components, ensuring apprentices have a full understanding of the assessment process and requirements.

Centre guidance and invigilation requirements

We provide all of the relevant guidance and information to help with planning

and coordinating EPA activity within an organisation.

Apprenticeship reforms

We believe in being open and honest with our customers and always take care to communicate changes and developments as soon as possible. To make sure that we can support our customers with the ongoing apprenticeship reforms, we are part of various trailblazer groups in which we share knowledge, advice and support to employers and training providers.

We're here to support and guide our customers through the changing landscape of apprenticeships and provide a range of solutions to ensure that learners are getting the very best training to prepare them for, and support them in, their chosen industry and profession.

Whichever path learners choose, framework or standard, NCFE has the solution for you.

Find out more about our apprenticeship offer at www.ncfe.org.uk



ONE YEAR ON: HOW WEL

FAITH FADES FAST IN THE GOVERNMENT'S 3M STARTS TARGET

BILLY CAMDEN
@BILLYCAMDEN

Less than one in 10 people now believe we will see three million apprenticeship starts by 2020, according to FE Week's third annual survey.

Confidence in the policy has been plummeting in the past year as the government's own statistics show it continuing to slip away.

Of the 343 people who took part in this year's survey, 297 said they had no belief the

target would be reached.

It means that confidence has tumbled from 45 per cent this time last year to just six per cent.

In January, halfway to 2020, the number of starts in the 30 months since the pledge was made in May 2015 hit 1,234,000. This left the nation 266,000 starts below the 1.5 million it would need to be halfway to the target – or 18 per cent.

The biggest barrier to apprenticeship recruitment is, according to those we surveyed, the contentious 20-per-cent off-the-job training rule.

Of the 286 people who answered this survey question, 76 said the rule needed changing or scrapping altogether.

"Abolish 20-per-cent off-the-job training," wrote Michelle Martin, the business and partnerships manager at DN Colleges Group.

"This is putting levy- and non-levy paying employers off using funds to upskill existing members of staff as they cannot 'lose' them for that amount of time."

Dianne Travis, the director for workplace skills and guidance at Babcock Training, said employers in many sectors "can't afford an apprentice who is non-productive for one day every week".

She added that even levy-paying employers are "making a choice to see the levy as a tax, and not take on apprentices in order not to incur further costs related to the off-the-job requirement".

Despite this, the skills minister has insisted the rule is a "protected characteristic" and won't be changing – even at the lowest levels.

"Twenty per cent is really important, because an apprenticeship is about earning while you're learning, so if you don't have time off from the job you're not learning anything," Anne Milton told FE Week at a National Apprenticeship Week event.

"It's disappointing if we see learning as just confined by the end-point assessment."

Other findings in the survey include the fact that the vast majority (83 per cent) are still concerned that quality will suffer in the effort to focus on the three-million target, down from 86 per cent last year.

Meanwhile, 55 per cent believe funding apprenticeships via a levy is a good idea – somewhat down from 61 per cent in 2017.

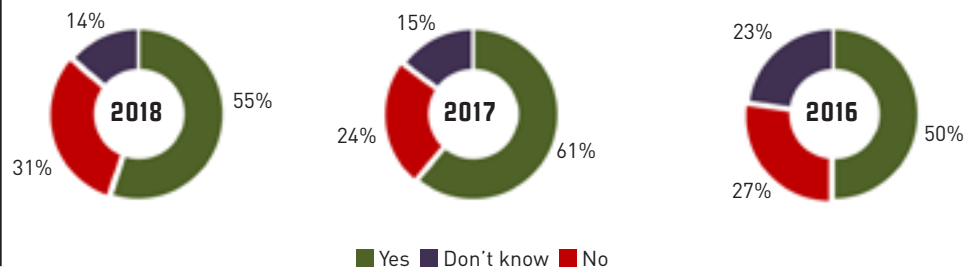
The majority think levy-paying employers will care more about quality provision.

Just over a quarter of respondents believe the impact of the levy will be "big" – down from 36 per cent.

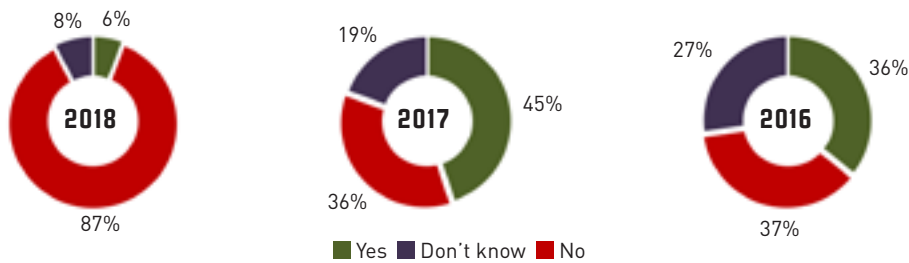
And the vast majority, 86 per cent, are still concerned about funding and demand from small businesses.

FE WEEK'S ANNUAL SURVEY: APPRENTICESHIP LEVY REFORM

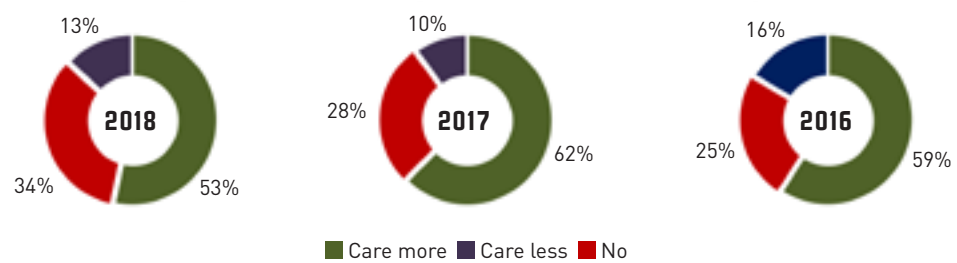
Do you think funding apprenticeships via a large employer levy is a good idea?



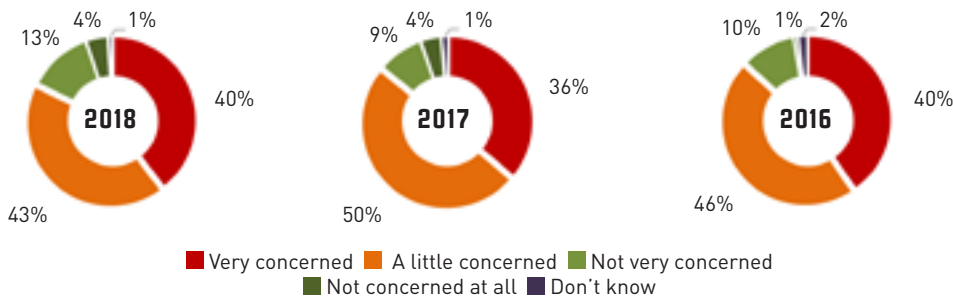
Do you think the government will achieve the 3m apprenticeships starts target by 2020?



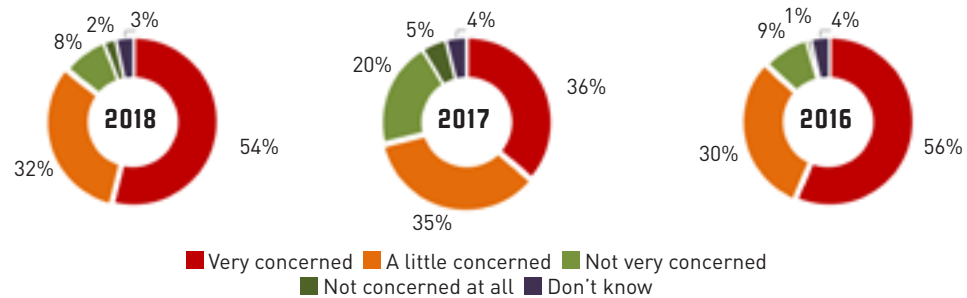
Do you think levy paying employers will care more or less about quality provision?



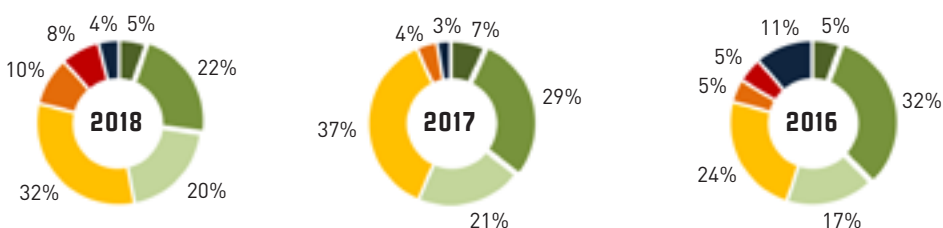
Are you concerned quality will suffer in effort to increase quantity?



Are you concerned about funding and demand from non-levy paying companies (SMEs)?



What do you think the impact of the levy policy will be?



- Big impact: Levy-paying employers will use all their vouchers as well as existing training budget
- Big impact: Levy-paying employers will use all their vouchers instead of existing training budget
- Medium impact: Levy-paying employers will use some of their vouchers as well as existing training budget
- Medium impact: Levy-paying employers will some of their vouchers instead of existing training budget
- Little impact: Only a few levy-paying employers will use some of their vouchers
- No impact: Levy-paying employers still won't do more apprenticeships unless forced
- Don't know

IS THE LEVY WORKING?

NEIL CARBERRY: THE CBI DOESN'T HATE THE LEVY, BUT IT NEEDS TO CHANGE, FAST

There is a "big groundswell of support" for technical education amongst businesses, the Confederation for British Industry believes, but the apprenticeship levy is "insufficiently flexible" to unlock high-value training for their learners.

The CBI has made no secret of its view that the apprenticeship reforms have been "ineffective", particularly where the levy is concerned.

Speaking to FE Week nearly a year after the levy was introduced, the CBI's director for people and skills, Neil Carberry, has insisted that significant additional reform is needed imminently to make it a success.

He also wanted to press home that businesses are looking to help with the government's ambitions.

"Businesses believe in apprenticeships," he claimed. "There is a big groundswell of support for technical education and we need to harness that."

The idea of a levy as a way of funding training is "widely established around the world" and he believes it can work in the UK.

It gives businesses the opportunity to have a strategic discussion inside their company about training, for instance.

"The CBI has always said this needs to happen – the people plan you use needs to be as important as your financial plan," he added.

Another positive is the way the levy has encouraged businesses to "build partnerships in their sector around the trailblazers".

"We're big supporters of the standards, we are starting to see where employers have choice with their levy money, people go for those higher quality standards often at higher skill levels and that is a good thing," he said.

However, Mr Carberry has made it clear that neither his organisation nor its members are fans of the way the levy has been introduced.

"The levy in its current form has been designed by Whitehall. It is ineffective and insufficiently flexible to genuinely unlock high-value training for learners in companies across the country," he insisted.

"For us the critical thing is enabling more pooling of levy money to enable companies to get together and support new standards and build partnerships with providers that are really robust.

"Point two is we need a way of engaging SMEs more with the system. More flexibility helps with that."

He explained that it is "very difficult" at the moment for training providers to serve small businesses which only have one or two apprentices a year unless there is "clustering".

One way around this would be to allow larger firms to "collaborate and pool" their levy in a multiyear deal with a provider, investing in capital and setting up a "centre of excellence", which "can allow for a small business in that sector to take part".

Finally, he believes that the process of approving standards simply needs to "speed up".

In February, the Institute for Apprenticeships announced a raft of reforms to make this process faster and better.



Neil Carberry

"Right priority; time to deliver," he said. "Part of that is making sure the IfA is the pre-eminent regulator in this area. Making sure the institute is independent, challenging and quick.

In order to make the levy a success, the Department for Education "needs to realise it doesn't have a year or two" to make these changes.

"The DfE needs to act now on the levy, otherwise businesses will start to see it just as a tax, and we won't get the advantages that we might have on training."

AELP LIKES THE LEVY - BUT THE PROGRAMME ISN'T PERFECT

The apprenticeship levy is "potentially a game-changer" for Britain's productivity, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers believes – but the way it is being implemented is "damaging" the social-mobility agenda.

The AELP has been trumpeting its members' concerns ever since the apprenticeship reforms were introduced last year, particularly on the three-million starts target and the controversial 20-per-cent off-the-job rule.

Speaking to FE Week during National Apprenticeship Week, its chief executive Mark Dawe discusses what he sees as the positives and negatives of the levy.

"In yielding a billion pounds more for the programme's budget, the apprenticeship levy is potentially a game-changer in the efforts to boost Britain's productivity, as a vehicle for improving social mobility and for growing our own people to fill post-Brexit skills shortages," he says.

"The introduction of new standards has given us an opportunity to improve the quality of apprenticeship training."

process for approving standards and the end-point assessment arrangements which accompany them, he explains.

The fact there are more apprenticeships at higher and degree level as a result of the levy is "giving young people a fantastic choice over whether or not to go to university, knowing that apprenticeships mean no student debt and that the apprentices are earning while learning".

On the flip-side, Mr Dawe admits that his chief concern is the damage inflicted on the social-mobility agenda in the way the levy is being implemented.

"There has been a massive 38-per-cent fall in apprenticeship starts at level two, which for many young people is the first rung of the ladder towards progression to higher-level skills," he says.

Those aged 16 to 18 have seen a 20-per-cent fall in opportunities available to them, he claims. The 50-per-cent

cut in the funding available to train apprentices at non-levy-paying smaller employers is another issue the AELP is worked up about.

"This makes no sense at all, and all registered providers should immediately be given

access to funding for all employers," he says.

Mr Dawe wants a guaranteed £1 billion annual budget for non-levy employers to "ensure that there are apprenticeship opportunities available across the whole of the country and all



Mark Dawe

sectors".

Lastly, any decision between now and April 2019 which backtracks on the government's promise that the levy reforms are about giving employers "more of a say over use of funding" would be a "big negative".

Commenting specifically on findings from FE Week's survey on page 4, which shows faith in the three-million starts target is evaporating, he insists his association has "never believed" that there is a policy tension between the target and maintaining good quality.

"We can understand why the survey has shown that concerns about quality remain high, but the threat to quality is not quantity but inadequate funding of many frameworks and some standards, some of which are in sectors critical to the economy," he claims.

It is "no surprise" to the AELP that the surveyed providers most want to see a change to the 20-per-cent off-the-job funding rule, because it is "encountering huge resistance from employers of all sizes and it offers no indication that quality training is being delivered".

THE INEXORABLE RISE OF

CATH MURRAY
@CATHMURRAY_

Since the Register of Apprenticeship Training providers opened last May, 263 organisations have been accepted into the “employer-provider” category.

Members of this club include firms with established apprenticeship programmes such as Rolls Royce, organisations working to develop their own, including the Salvation Army, and companies which lack a plan but bagged a place on a just-in-case basis.

Most employers use independent training providers for at least some of their apprenticeship training. Virgin Media, for example, has been delivering apprenticeships since 2008 but still only runs 32 per cent of its apprenticeships in house. Fifty-seven per cent are subcontracted and 11 per cent run externally.

But now, with the “greater flexibility” that apprentice standards offer employers, Virgin is looking to subcontract the management of some of its established programmes, in order “to focus on the

learning and development aspect of the apprenticeship and free up time previously spent on compliance”.

The Salvation Army, which is about to launch its first centralised scheme for 150 to 200 apprentices, has partnered with a training provider for the first two years, but will develop its own in-house programme.

Many bodies see apprenticeships as part of their strategic workforce replenishment plan and recruit strictly to demand. The NHS is one, as is the National Grid, which insists apprenticeships are vital to “grow their own talent pool”.

Virgin Media takes a similar approach, offering all its apprentices “a permanent contract from the outset”, as does Rolls Royce, which prides itself on a 90-per-cent retention rate for one-time apprentices after five years.

Superdrug is taking a high-volume approach, with a plan to recruit 500 apprentices this year, and to have an apprentice in “every other store across the country” by the end of 2018.

We asked three large employers to tell us more about how they’re developing their in-house training.

Rolls Royce: ‘Definitely not

For Rolls Royce, which considers its 100-year apprenticeship tradition as one of its “crown jewels”, the apprenticeship levy is not altering its approach – and according to its apprentice development leader David Campbell, it’s “definitely not chasing the funding”.

The landscape is changing, however; where the company traditionally ran more engineering and practical apprenticeships, there is now “a lot more appetite” for business support functions.

Higher and degree apprenticeships are also growing in popularity, seen “as a credible entry route into some of the roles that traditionally people thought only graduates would have done”.

Another big shift is in its catchment area for apprentices.

“Where people would have moved to go to university, they’ll definitely move now to do an apprenticeship,” Campbell says. “There’re a lot of people who are sitting with an offer to go to university and

an offer to join Rolls Royce and they’re having to make that decision between the two.”

The main training centre is in Derby, with some apprentices spread across their other manufacturing sites.

The company recruits apprentices to demand, by asking each of their local businesses to predict five years ahead.

“We’ll work with the [local Rolls Royce] business to understand what its needs are, then we’ll design a programme for that particular business,” explains Campbell.

Government funding for apprenticeships “falls significantly short” of what is required for a quality programme, so Rolls Royce provides additional courses such as financial awareness and driving safely to work.

“We really invest in the personal skills and a lot of the behavioural skills,” he adds. “We’ll take them to outward bound centres and do a lot of personal development with them.”

NHS: Apprenticeships ‘double whammy’

The shift from nursing bursaries to degree apprenticeships has been a “double whammy” for the NHS, according to the apprenticeship lead for the Central North-West London NHS foundation trust, Jane Canavan.

“When they took away the bursary last year, the scheme [where healthcare assistants were seconded to train as nurses

at universities] stopped as well,” she says.

“Everyone hoped that by supplying the nursing degree-apprenticeship it would take the place of the salary support scheme. But then suddenly we all had a rude awakening when we realised that not only would we have to pay for somebody’s fees – £27,000 to train each nurse from the apprenticeship levy – but we would also

have to pay their salary while they trained. It was a double whammy for trusts.

“It went from everyone being very excited – I was on the group that developed the nursing degree-apprenticeship standard and we were really excited about it – and then we suddenly realised the consequences.”

She is nevertheless upbeat about the opportunities the

levy provides.

“There are challenges all over the place but in the end this is a system that is shining a spotlight on work-based learning – and that ultimately has to be a good thing, doesn’t it?” she suggests.

The main impact of the levy has been on structure rather than substance: “It’s not that we weren’t doing the training, I think we weren’t doing it in such an organised fashion.”

The trust runs a “mixed economy” of in-house and external training. The nursing degree, for example, has to be delivered externally by an NMC-accredited teaching organisation – effectively a university.

Delivering in-house, such as for team leader and healthcare support worker apprenticeships, allows them to tailor programme content, control quality, and make the best use of their funds.

“If we can do it, why wouldn’t we do it and pay ourselves rather than pay somebody else? We were very clear that as a trust, we hadn’t engaged that well with apprenticeship before the levy came in, and the levy focused our minds. It’s a large amount of money we’re paying into the levy – and it’s public sector funding effectively – so we are obliged to use it in the most effective way possible.”

Specsavers: Y

Optical retail giant Specsavers have “invested significantly” in its in-house training operation, to the degree that it could scale operations up to handle twice its current volume, should demand from stores increase, its head of apprenticeships Mark Corden estimates.

“I’m not sure all employers are looking at the investment as well as what they’ve paid in the levy. We’ve recognised we have to put even more money in to do this properly,” he says.

Most of its workplace trainers are hand-picked from throughout the retail network, and over the past couple of years a dedicated internal team has been developed, putting them through their assessment qualifications, teaching qualifications and functional skills qualifications, as well as Prevent and safeguarding.

“They effectively can own the apprentice journey fully when they’re out and about working in the stores,” explains Corden. “That’s worked quite well for us.”

There are 280 in-store apprentices, mostly on the level two optical assistant programme, with about 30 on the spectacle-maker advanced apprenticeship. Sixty apprentices are studying to be spectacle-makers in a manufacturing environment,



Apprentices at the CNWL NHS Foundation Trust

THE EMPLOYER-PROVIDER

‘t chasing the levy funding’



Apprentice at the Rolls Royce Apprenticeship Academy in Derby

The number of Rolls Royce apprentices “peaks and troughs” but averages out at around 200 per year over time.

It would be “a false economy to try and spend all your levy,” says Campbell,

explaining that the maximum volume of apprentices under the levy is “a number that you would never reach – because of the significant gap between the level of funding and what we actually spend”.

You have to invest for quality

but Specsavers depends entirely on specialist training providers in these cases.

“Our strategy has been to play to our strengths, through our internal team,” explains Corden. “But saying ‘where there are opportunities that would meet an apprenticeship-delivery model really well, let’s work with other expert parties in those areas, so we’re not trying to create a big internal empire at things we’re not good at’.”

The levy has made Specsavers strategise and “look a bit differently” at how it was using apprenticeships across the business. In addition to investing time in the optical assistant trailblazer, it has rolled out customer service apprenticeships, retail apprenticeships and team leader apprenticeships to its stores.

“I don’t know if we’d have done that if the levy hadn’t come into existence,” Corden admits.



Offering advice on the Specsavers shop floor

PROFESSOR EWART KEEP

Director of SKOPE, Oxford University



Employers as trainers are a missing piece of the puzzle

Generations of skills policies have left most firms as passive consumers in their own staff development. It’s time to change that, says Ewart Keep

It is no surprise that employers failed to blow the whistle on Learndirect – most don’t understand their own training schemes and could not spot poor quality. All too often, firms are passive recipients of a package of learning designed by other people and delivered by external providers. This is because most have limited in-house training capacity, a situation that needs to change.

National policy is almost completely indifferent to the state of in-house training capacity. By contrast, most EU countries have an investment programme that aims to upgrade the skills and abilities of in-company trainers in order to support better quality apprenticeships and adult on-the-job learning. Germany’s “meister” training for supervisors is one example.

Other countries reason that without a strong internal capacity to structure work in ways that can support “expansive” workplace learning environments, both the volume and quality of learning in work will be suboptimal. Skilled company trainers also ensure that the on- and off-the-job elements of apprenticeships are closely integrated and that theory and practice can be acquired in a blended fashion. UK research, not least that by Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin on expansive and restrictive learning environments, confirms that the way the workplace is configured has a massive impact on how well all types of on-the-job learning can be delivered.

Those with a long memory may recall that one of the key programmes run by the Manpower Services Commission was training of trainers. Today there is nothing of this left, and the ETF has no remit in the field. We also know very little about firms’ training or human resource development functions. We do have data on employers’ spending patterns on skills, and some knowledge concerning the different types

of training. What we don’t know is much about the people who design, manage and deliver training inside companies in terms of their qualifications, prior experience, levels of expertise in different aspects of training, and how and with what effect they interact with senior and line management. Our understanding of companies’ training strategies is weak.

This situation reflects two problems. The first is a policy model that is obsessed with creating a training marketplace in which skill creation is an outsourced service that employers can buy in from external providers (like office cleaning). Train to Gain was an example of this, apprenticeships another. The second is the belief that policy needs to treat employers largely as external customers of the education and training system, not as an integral part of the system itself. As a result, too many firms have become passive, detached and often rather grumpy consumers rather than behaving as partners and co-producers.

These models have negative consequences for the quality of apprenticeships, and even some very large employers subcontract the design of their off- and on-the-job delivery to outsiders in a way that would deeply puzzle German or Swiss firms. It also helps explain our weakening performance on adult workplace learning, and it adds to the danger that the work-placement element of the T-levels will end up being designed, managed and delivered not by employers, but by external training providers.

All those involved in skills policy need to think how they can involve employers more closely in their work, and how to better integrate what happens inside a firm with what happens inside a college, for a seamless offer that’s more than the sum of its parts. There is potential for major business opportunities at colleges to help firms develop their in-company training capacity, and this activity could help fulfil some of the promise in CAVTL’s two-way street model. Joint staff exchange and staff development would be a good starting point.

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SELECTION OF #NAW2018 EVENTS THAT

The BBC gives NAW 2018 its seal of approval

SAMANTHA KING
@KINGSAMANTHA_

A host of big names from the world of TV and education were at BBC Broadcasting House this week to mark the launch of the 11th National Apprenticeship Week.

Among them were the BBC's director-general Tony Hall, the education secretary Damian Hinds, and Sue Husband, the director of the National Apprenticeship Service, who marked the start of a week of celebrations across the UK using the theme "apprenticeships work".

Hosted by the BBC's home affairs editor Mark Easton, and its director of leadership development and new talent Claire Paul, the event was held in partnership with the Sutton Trust, the education charity.

A number of apprentices from the BBC, the RAF, Barclays and engineering consultancy Troup Bywater + Anders were also present, talking to delegates about their decisions to take an apprenticeship route and their experiences so far.

"Apprenticeships play a crucial role in helping people realise their potential as they learn and earn, and are providing employers with the skilled workforce our country needs," said Mr Hinds.

"The government's target for apprenticeships by 2020 is three million. We know that young people from low and moderate income backgrounds are much

less likely than their peers to take up the most prestigious apprenticeships," added Sir Peter Lampl, the founder and chairman of the Sutton Trust.

"To make sure apprenticeships fulfil their potential as a vehicle for social mobility, it will be crucial to improve access to those

that offer real alternatives to A-levels and degrees."

The BBC also announced its own new apprenticeship programme, which it has developed with the Sutton Trust, and which will support 50 school leavers from socially diverse backgrounds in the creative sector.



BBC director-general Tony Hall hosts apprentices and industry leaders to launch National Apprenticeship Week

The spring in Anne Milton's step

The skills minister mucked in on a land-based learning experience and even got to handle a two-day-old beltex lamb during a visit to Askham Bryan College.

Anne Milton was visiting the college to see the work of its 800 apprentices, who are studying subjects including veterinary nursing, agriculture and land-based engineering.

As well as meeting the new-born, the minister was given a tour of the college's on-site farm, where students and staff were busy with lambing season, and dropped in on apprentices at the agri-tech building.

"At a time of significant skill shortages and low productivity, technical education, particularly in land-based

subjects, is ever more relevant, and I am sure it was helpful for the minister to see for herself the benefits of the education and learning we provide," said Catherine Dixon, chief executive of the college.

"The college provides excellent hands-on training and offers a range of exciting courses from levels one to six," Ms Milton added. "The apprentices clearly felt real enthusiasm for what they are doing."



An un-baa-lievable visitor: Milton with apprentices Harrison Hampshire, left, Becky Collins, right, and Catherine Dixon

Exeter trials its new level two apprenticeship in escapology

Apprentices at the University of Exeter have had their teamwork skills put to the test in an immersive problem-solving task. The group of 10 visited 'Mission Escape', a local attraction which challenges teams to solve puzzles in order to escape a room against the clock.

Accompanied by the university's head of apprenticeships Jonathan Cresswell, the group was divided into two, and tackled a range of mental and practical puzzles in jungle and chemical factory-themed settings.

"The games challenged and encouraged apprentices to further develop teamwork, communication, outside-of-the-box-thinking and initiative," Mr Cresswell said. "We were delighted to see the apprentices working together, listening to each other and tackling each problem in a

calm and collaborative way."

"My job can get demanding at times, so it's important that my team works together to complete tasks that are particularly complex or urgent," added Amber Bassett, a level two business administration apprentice at the university's business school. "Practicing teamwork at an event like Mission Escape is a fantastic opportunity to build on those skills, as well as to have fun with my fellow apprentices." Sadly the teams didn't manage to escape their rooms, but they "left with a sense of achievement", Mr Cresswell said.



Apprentices prepare to enter the Escape Room

WHAT TOOK PLACE ACROSS THE COUNTRY

When three towns go to war

Three Suffolk towns are competing to see which can create the most apprenticeships in 100 days. Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Newmarket are taking part in the '100 in 100' challenge, which launched on Tuesday during National Apprenticeship Week. The aim of the challenge is for each town to create at least 100 new apprenticeships in 100 working days, with the winning town announced at the end of July and presented with a trophy. Towns will host job fairs for young people, opportunities for local businesses to learn more about apprenticeships, and networking breakfasts to help boost their apprenticeship numbers, as well as using

social media and mailshots to target potential employers. A running total of apprentices successfully placed in each area will be logged online at 100in100.co.uk. The challenge is run by West Suffolk College, and supported by Bury and Newmarket BID, One Haverhill Partnership, New Anglia LEP, Greater Cambridgeshire Greater Peterborough LEP, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, and the St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath district councils. "We have 3,500 applications for apprenticeships but only 500 suitable job vacancies," explained Phil Stittle, the director of business development

at West Suffolk College. "Companies in these three towns can help create jobs and opportunities for so many people and improve and grow their businesses. It's a great chance for apprentices to find employment in their own towns."



Preparing for battle

Laying down the law

Legal professionals had a crash course in apprenticeships this week at an information session hosted by The Law Society.

The 'Apprenticeships in the legal sector' event took place on Chancery Lane, the home of the legal profession in London, as an opportunity for law firms, partners, HR professionals and representatives from academic institutions to meet training providers and discover the benefits of hiring an apprentice.

A panel of apprenticeship experts including Petra Wilton, the director of strategy at the Chartered Management Institute, and Claire Tunley, head of employability at the City of London Corporation, discussed the latest trends

in apprenticeships and the support that is available to employers.

Halima Khanum, an apprentice solicitor at Withers LLP meanwhile told delegates about her own experiences, explaining that training without incurring a lot of debt from university had been one of her main reasons for pursuing the vocational route.

"I was conscious that following the traditional route, work and studies are separated so you don't end up doing any actual legal work for years. When you eventually end up in a firm, you may find that you don't enjoy it. An apprenticeship dealt with all this head on," she said.

"As the membership organisation for solicitors we are keen to help participating firms with a range of resources," said Joe

Egan, the president of the Law Society. "As part of our role in representing the profession and offering support on education and training, we will be extending our activities relating to apprenticeships in 2018."



Off on a legality: Halima and Jaya from Withers, with Claire Tunley and Christina Blacklaws

Style and substance

BL Hairdressing Training kicked off its corner of National Apprenticeship Week by arranging a professional photoshoot for six of its apprentices to help them show off their work to future employers.

The hairdressing apprentices, who work at salons across Teesside, came together at BL Hairdressing's Stockton-based academy, which was transformed into a photographic studio for the occasion.

Professional photographer Marie Harkness and her team were on hand to help with makeup, and capture the apprentices in action as they worked on creating a range of bold hairstyles on models that demonstrated their technical ability.

"It's important we celebrate young apprentices' achievements and give them a platform to demonstrate the skills it takes to be a qualified hair stylist," said Gail Dalton-Ayres, director of BL Hairdressing. "Many ex-apprentices are salon owners who now employ the next generation of apprentices, keeping the talent pool flourishing."

The photos will form



part of the apprentices' portfolios to help them gain full-time employment following completion of their courses, as well as being used in the training provider's future marketing campaigns.

"I loved the photo shoot as it was something different, and I enjoyed getting creative," added apprentice Emily Grant.



Photos from the shoot

Stories of Britain's top apprentices

JUDE BURKE
@JUDEBURKE77

Three young people were recognised as the top apprentices at their level in England at the National Apprenticeship Awards in January.

Shannon Green, Heeran Basi and Charlotte Hughes, all 21, were named intermediate, advanced and higher apprentices

of the year at a ceremony in London.

Organised by the National Apprenticeship Service, the awards, now in their fourteenth year, showcase what apprenticeships can bring to businesses and careers.

Along with six categories for employers and an apprentice champion award, three prizes are reserved for apprentices.

These are 'the Unilever award for intermediate apprentice of the year', 'the PeoplePlus award for advanced apprentice of the year', and 'the Nuclear Decommissioning Site Licence

Companies award for higher or degree apprentice of the year'.

The victorious apprentices had to fend off tough competition at regional heats, demonstrate how they have benefited from their apprenticeships, and prove their contribution to their employers' business objectives.

FE Week spoke to each of the winners to find out what inspired them to take up an apprenticeship, how it has helped them with their careers – and what it felt like to win!



Not content with taking just one apprenticeship, 21-year-old Shannon Green is now on her fourth – and she's not stopping there.

"I want to go higher," the intermediate award-winner admitted. "I want to go for a level four and onwards within the business sector, so that I can become a manager. I definitely want more. And I'll keep fighting for more, because that's just me."

Shannon's apprenticeship journey started when she was just 16 and fresh out of school.

Keen to pursue a career in the travel industry but unsure how to get started, she spotted an advert for a travel apprentice in the window of her local branch of Althams Travel in Farnworth, near Bolton.

She applied immediately: "I thought it would give me an entry into the travel industry because it's so hard to get into."

She started her level two travel apprenticeship in 2013, followed a year later by the level three.

She then moved onto a level two team leader apprenticeship – for which she won the award – and is now working her way through a level three management course.

Along the way she was promoted to assistant manager, at the age of just 19 – two years ahead of her five-year plan.

"For me that was phenomenal. I'm 19 years old. Most people are still in college or university," she said.

She was encouraged to enter the NAAs by her mentor Andrea Fielding, the director of TrainingStation, which delivers the training for Shannon's apprenticeships.

She describes the awards ceremony as "the most emotional night of my life".

Her award now has pride of place in Althams Travel – the same shop where she started her journey.

She has no immediate plans to move on from the company, but that doesn't stop her from dreaming big. Setting up and running her own multinational travel company is "definitely on the cards, 100 per cent!"



Chance encounters can sometimes be life-changing. That was certainly the case for Heeran Basi, the winner of the advanced apprentice of the year award.

After finishing his A-levels in 2015, the 21-year-old was ready to enter university to study accounting in the autumn, and was in the meantime helping out in his mum's newsagent in Derby.

One day a workman from Severn Trent water company came into the shop, and Heeran got chatting to him.

"He briefly mentioned the apprenticeship scheme that they do, so I went online later that night and had a look at it, and watched some videos of apprentices," he says. "That's what made me apply – it was completely out of nowhere!"

He began his three-year level three instrumentation, control and automation apprenticeship in August 2015.

His day-to-day tasks involve "software and lots of programming, and dealing with communications". On top of that, he's done a lot of project work, looking at process improvement and innovation.

"I've really explored those areas as that's where I see myself in the future," he explains.

Heeran had already been put forward for about "five or six" awards by his employer, which inspired him to enter himself to the NAA "in order to give something back".

"And when it came back that I'd won, it was unbelievable," he says.

The judges told him they were impressed by how proactive he'd been in his role, and that he'd "looked at the wider business as opposed to my own role, and really gone above and beyond what you'd expect from an apprentice".

Heeran is equally proactive when it comes to telling other young people about the benefits of apprenticeships.

"I've always been passionate about going and talking to students and telling them that these are the opportunities available," he says. "University isn't the only option."

Heeran is now in the final year of his apprenticeship, and with his sights set firmly on Severn Trent's business leadership programme, it's clear his future won't be left to chance again.



Women might be in the minority in science, but that didn't stop Charlotte Hughes dreaming of a career in the field from when she was a small child.

The 21-year-old, who is now a full-time associate scientist at pharmaceutical giant GlaxoSmithKline, won her award for her level five biology laboratory apprenticeship.

"I've always loved science – I remember loving it in primary school," she says.

That love grew as she got older – thanks to some "really great teachers" at secondary school who cemented her decision to pursue biology as a career.

But while she was sure what she wanted to do, she was less certain about the route.

The traditional university route was "a lot of money to spend and be in debt", plus she knew people who had been through it and were still struggling to find a job.

An apprenticeship with GSK, which she started in September 2015, offered an alternative.

Throughout the two years of the course – which also saw her earn a foundation degree from the University of Kent – Charlotte worked on medicines in development, testing new molecules for stability and flagging any safety risks.

The experience was a "huge learning curve", but one that let her learn new techniques and use equipment that she wouldn't have had access to at university.

Charlotte is part of a wave of women starting to change the gender balance in science, and her current department is about 60-per-cent female.

"You can see there's a lot of women coming through," she says.

Winning the award was "overwhelming" – although Charlotte admits she's still "baffled" about her victory.

She's now using her experiences to inspire others to follow in her footsteps, giving talks to other young people.

"If you see someone who's done an apprenticeship and got recognition for their performance, you think 'I could do that'," she laughs.



Evie Hayes, FE Week's office administrator apprentice, with skills minister Anne Milton



Everyone's learning in NAW: Anne Milton turns reporter

ANNE MILTON
@ANNEMILTON

This National Apprenticeship Week, the skills minister Anne Milton picked up a new skill of her own as an apprentice reporter. She interviews FE Week's new apprentice, Evie Hayes

Anne Milton: Would you start by telling me about your school?

Evie Hayes: I absolutely loved secondary school [Harris Academy Falconwood]. I loved all the teachers and I'd been involved with drama and the productions. I did GCSEs and was really, really happy with them. Sixth form was a bit difficult for me because of the transition.

AM: What subjects did you do at sixth form?

EH: I did government and politics, psychology, and sociology.

AM: What do you think didn't work for you?

EH: It was the subjects really, because when I was applying, they had drama and economics and that's what I had chosen. Two weeks later, they said they were dropping them. So when I went into it, I

wasn't doing the subjects that I actually wanted to do.

AM: So you started on the wrong foot?

EH: Yes, I had no passion for it, and having to do all the work for something I didn't like doing was really hard. So I wanted to jump into something I had a passion for.

AM: Did you stay the whole of sixth form?

EH: No, I was only there for four months and then I got the apprenticeship.

AM: What made you think of an apprenticeship?

EH: I wanted to kick-start my career. I wanted to jump into it and get as much experience as I possibly could. As much as I think university is an amazing thing, my brother was there for three years studying history, got a degree, and he was really struggling to find work afterwards.

AM: Was he?

EH: Yes, because all the places wanted him to have experience and he didn't have it. So, I personally think apprenticeships are amazing because you get all the experience. I've only been an apprentice for a week and I've already got so much experience in finance and business, so I'm

really happy.

AM: Oh good! Did you talk to your family about it when you weren't happy in those four months at sixth form?

EH: Yes, it was quite sad. I'd come home after school and I'd be really upset and not myself. It was affecting my mum and dad – they weren't happy to see me like that. My mum said to me "you need to do something about it" so we went on the gov.uk website for apprenticeships and found this one.

AM: What did you do to apply?

EH: I had to fill out the application form online and then I sent out about 15 to lots of different companies. I had three interviews and got all of them, then I chose this one.

AM: You chose very well. Were your parents happy with you doing this?

EH: My mum and dad just wanted me to be happy and they didn't want me to be at school doing nothing, because that's what I was doing. As they're not doing AS levels any more there was no point me carrying on for the year.

AM: Quit when it's not going well, that's right. What level are you doing?

EH: I'm doing level two in business admin.

AM: What a fantastic story. What's next?

EH: I don't know. I just want to give it my all in this apprenticeship, get the best that I can possibly can and you never know,

this might be my dream job. I might want to carry this on for the rest of my life.

AM: The nice thing is, it's a good stepping stone. With your level two apprenticeship in business admin you can go on and do all sorts of things. And they're looking after you well?

EH: I couldn't have wished for a better company.

AM: Paying you enough?

EH: It's good, it's one of the best ones I'd seen. The average was £3.50 an hour, and this one is very good.

AM: The average actually is about £6.50 – the minimum wage for 16 to 18-year-olds is £3.50 – but a lot of organisations pay a bit more. Somebody like you had the offer of other jobs. If they want the best, they've got to pay for the best! It's fantastic. You're going to do very well, I can feel it in my bones. Your mum and dad must be so proud of you.

EH: When they found out about today they rang my whole family up. They were so happy. They're very supportive and I'm just thankful for everything.

AM: Well, you're the girl that did it! It's quite brave to say "I don't like what I'm doing". All your friends stayed on, what did they all say?

EH: A lot of my friends don't like sixth form. I'm not really independent, I like being with people, so this was a big step for me to say "no, I'm leaving and doing what's best for me". It was a massive shock for them. But they were very happy for me. Since I've left, a lot of people are saying they want to get an apprenticeship now, because they are in the same boat I was.

AM: For some things you absolutely need a degree, for example if you want to go into medicine or law, but if you're not enjoying what you're doing and it's not going to give you what you want then you're better to cut your losses and find something that you do want.

EH: I honestly don't think you can go far if you don't enjoy what you're doing.

AM: You're absolutely right, and that applies when you're 60 as well!

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGE AT THE

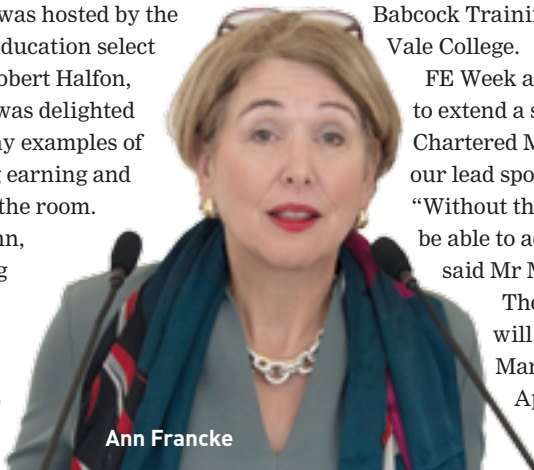
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The regional winners of the inaugural FE Week and AELP Annual Apprenticeship Awards have been announced at a ceremony in the House of Commons.

The categories included ‘apprentice employer’, ‘apprenticeship provider’ and ‘promoting apprenticeships campaign’, and winners will now head to the national finals on March 22.

The event was hosted by the chair of the education select committee Robert Halfon, who said he was delighted to see so many examples of “outstanding earning and learning” in the room.

Shane Mann, the managing director of LSEct, the group that runs both FE Week and



Ann Francke

the awards, said: “Our panel had a rigorous process for drawing up the shortlist, and identifying the best of the best. It was extremely difficult to do this because we had so many fantastic entrants. Well done everyone.”

The regional winners are reported in detail below.

Other regional finalists included EDF Energy, BL Training Ltd, NOVA Training, the Home Office, Specsavers, Lookers PLC, Derby Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Greene King, the Cornwall Colleges Group, Barnsley College, Nova Training, Babcock Training Ltd, and Cardiff and Vale College.

FE Week and AELP would like to extend a special thanks to the Chartered Management Institute, our lead sponsors.

“Without their support we wouldn’t be able to administer these awards,” said Mr Mann.

The national winners will be unveiled on March 22 at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference in Birmingham.



(l-r) Mark Dawe, Robert Halfon and Shane Mann

Shortlist for the national awards

Apprentice Employer of the Year		Sponsored by City & Guilds ilm digitalme A City & Guilds Group Collaboration
BT	London and East	
Clarkson Evans Ltd	Midlands	
Sheffield City Council	North	
Capgemini	South	

Digital Apprenticeship provider of the Year		Sponsored by Jisc
Digital Skills Solutions		
Firebrand Training		
Engineering & Manufacturing Apprenticeship Provider of the Year		Sponsored by City & Guilds
Gen2		
Babcock Skills Development & Training Limited		

Construction Apprenticeship provider of the Year		Sponsored by nocn CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)		
Thermal Insulation Contractors Association		
Business and Administrative Apprenticeship Provider of the Year		Sponsored by City & Guilds
Derby Business College Limited T/A DBC Training		
Coventry University		

Apprenticeship Provider of the Year		Sponsored by ncfe.
Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)	London and East	
Walsall College	Midlands	
Bridgend College	Nations (Scotland, Wales & NI)	
Gen2	North	
Abingdon & Witney College	South	

Promoting Apprenticeships campaign of the Year		Sponsored by SMARTAPPRENTICES Innovative Technology for Apprentices www.smartapprentices.com
Just IT Training	London and East	
Newcastle & Stafford Colleges Group	Midlands	
Sheffield City Council	North	
Kent County Council	South	

Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Apprenticeships (Employer or Provider)		Sponsored by CMI Chartered Management Institute
MiddletonMurray Learning Curve Group		

Outstanding Contribution to the Development of Apprenticeships (Individual)		Sponsored by CMI Chartered Management Institute
Jacqui Canton, Deputy Principal, Abingdon and Witney College Phil White, Head of Learning and Development, United Utilities		

ANNUAL APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS

APPRENTICE EMPLOYERS OF THE YEAR

Winners were recognised for embracing change, and for their commitment to excellent training standards and increasing their number of trainees.

Sheffield City Council took the title of regional winner for the north.

In its entry it stressed how it had embraced the apprenticeship levy, putting emphasis on increasing starts and “the high percentage” that stay with the council after completing training.

“We have been absolutely committed to apprenticeships for a long time and have got a wonderful bunch of staff to ensure our young people in Sheffield achieve great things through this,” said a delighted councillor Jackie Drayton at the ceremony.

Gloucester-based electrical specialists Clarkson Evans Ltd, winners of the midlands, employs around 800 staff nationwide, including around 230 apprentices.

“Our training model is unique for a business of our size, with all electrical apprentices trained in house by our own lecturers and assessors,” it said.

Capgemini, a multinational corporation which specialises in professional services and business consulting, was the winner for the south.

The judges recognised its commitment to apprenticeships over more than a decade.

The company is “incredibly proud to have reached a significant milestone in 2017 with our graduates from the degree apprenticeship being the first in the country to complete programme”, a spokesperson said. Sixty-four per cent achieved a first-class degree.

BT, the winner for London and the south-east, said its training programme covered almost 60 apprenticeship standards and frameworks at levels two to seven.



Bill Twigg from City & Guilds with Capgemini's Danielle Nelder

APPRENTICESHIP PROVIDERS OF THE YEAR

The regional providers of the year included three colleges which were thrilled to have been recognised.

“It’s an honour to have been chosen for this award,” said assistant principal James Norris of Walsall College, the winner of the midlands.

It was recognised for engaging more than 2,000 employers and for success rates 16 per cent above the national average.

“We make sure our apprentices are supported all the way through their programmes in order that they can be a real asset to the businesses they work with,” added Mr Norris.

“It’s fabulous to be here among so many good providers today, at a very exciting time for apprenticeships,” said Di Batchelor, the principal of southern region winner Abingdon and Whitney College.

Judges recognised how the college works closely with its local enterprise partnership, to ensure its apprenticeships truly meet the needs of local employers.

Bridgend College was picked out for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It claimed to be “the apprenticeship provider of choice for many of the

most strategically important and largest employers in the south Wales region”, including Tata Steel and Ford.

The panel opted for Cumbria-based Gen2, part of the City & Guilds Group, for the northern region.

Originally starting with just three training centres and 71 learners, it has “grown significantly” and “now provides training for around 1,350” to the highest standard.

The Construction Industry Training Board, chosen as the winner of London and the south-east, is the largest provider of apprenticeships in the construction sector.

“CITB works across all sectors of the industry, engaging with employers of all sizes, across all occupations, to ensure they have access to the provision they require,” a spokesperson said.



Julie Hyde from NCFE/Cache with award winner Gillian Cain from CITB

PROMOTING APPRENTICESHIPS - CAMPAIGNS OF THE YEAR

Local councils fared particularly well in this category for their outstanding efforts in spreading the word about apprenticeships to employers and their local communities.

“We think apprenticeships are really important to the future of the county,” said Daniel Ratcliff, employability project officer at southern region winners Kent county council.

“What we have tried to achieve is bringing young people, employers and providers together, to discuss all the opportunities out there.”

Its ‘Made in Kent’ campaign brought together colleges and private providers to promote apprentices to local employers, school students and care leavers.

Sheffield city council took the title for

the north. It was recognised for a range of programmes helping to link employers and schools more closely.

These included ‘Apprenticeship ready’, which “provides impartial advice, training and guidance to school and sixth-form students”.

Just IT Training, which won in London and the south-east, was recognised for its “proactive focus” on promoting diversity.

“In 2016, 52 per cent of our apprenticeships were apprenticeships were from a black, Asian, and minority ethnic background – a near-exact match to our surrounding area, showing how effective we have been in engaging all groups with their potential,” it said.

In its application, midlands winner Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group



Fiona Hudson-Kelly from Smart Apprentices with Rachel Crowder and councillor Jackie Drayton of Sheffield city council

entered both its annual apprenticeships marketing campaign plan, and specific campaign activity for last year’s National Apprenticeships Week.

“The paid digital element of the

campaign drove 115 new enquiries – 20 of whom went on to begin an apprenticeship,” it said. “We also met over 3,500 school pupils on the American school bus roadshow.”

Navigate your apprenticeship opportunity

We're at the cutting edge when it comes to apprenticeships, from end-point assessment (EPA) solutions to advice and expertise, we can support you in navigating your apprenticeship journey.

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- Leadership and Management
- Hospitality
- Professional Services
- Retail
- Health and Social Care.



We offer a clear and transparent pricing structure with no charge to the provider until learners go through Gateway.



Our dedicated Apprenticeship Services team are on hand to answer your questions and help navigate you through your journey.



Contract with us and we can supply you with a large range of support materials, as well as sample resources to help apprentices, employers and providers prepare for EPA.



Our purpose built platform manages every aspect of end-point assessment and will work with any e-portfolio for your on-programme delivery.

Contact our Apprenticeship Services team to find out more.

Visit: www.ncfe.org.uk/epa

Email: epa@ncfe.org.uk

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