



# The revival of Traineeships

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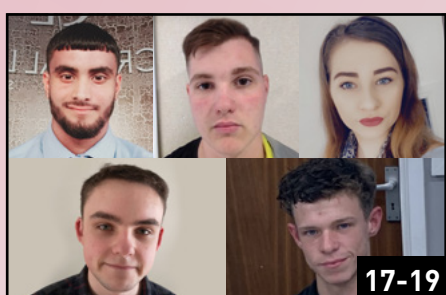
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# The great traineeships *resurgence*

FRASER WHIELDON  
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**A**fter very nearly becoming a forgotten programme, traineeships could now become a life raft for an economy still struggling against Covid-19.

In July, the chancellor of the exchequer Rishi Sunak announced £111 million would be invested in traineeships to triple starts on what he called a “proven” programme to over 40,000 in the 2020/21 academic year.

It was a surprising boost for the 16 to 24 pre-employment programme that, despite many successes, was scraping along the bottom when it came to starts, with less than 15,000 in 2018/19 compared to 210,000 16 to 24 apprenticeship starts.

That is despite that it has been proven traineeships deliver results: last year, it was revealed 75 per cent of learners move on to work or further study within a year of completing their programme.

So now an apparently effective programme has been given the resources it needs, this supplement will tell you what you need to know about the past, the present situation, and the future of traineeships.

First off, on **page 4**, we run through the history of traineeships, from Nick Clegg’s original proposal to Sunak’s revival.

Sticking with the historical theme, on **page 5** we look at how traineeships went through the doldrums between 2013/14 and 2018/19.

From **page 7**, you can catch up on all

the latest measures being bought in to boost the programme to employers, providers and potential trainees.

We also hear from skills minister Gillian Keegan on **page 10**, as to why the government is throwing money at the scheme.

To get you up to date on the rules, there is a speed read of the latest traineeship rules on **page 11**.

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers and the Association of Colleges say what their members want from traineeships between **pages 12 and 13**.

Then, between **pages 14 and 19**, we get the view from the ground, as a provider, employer and several young people who have been through the traineeship programme tell us what makes it so valuable.

## Are we doing enough? At NCFE, we’re determined that we will...



**DAVID GALLAGHER**  
Chief Executive,  
NCFE

**F**ew things are clear at the moment. It is clear that our economy, labour market and lives will be very different for a long time to come. The coronavirus will go much, much more slowly than it came. The social, economic and employment challenges we face will be with us for years. As we address those challenges, I wonder, are we doing enough?

In June, Government announced an ‘opportunity guarantee’ which will give young people ‘the chance of an apprenticeship or an in-work placement’ to help them develop their skills and find work. Since then, Government has announced incentives to encourage employers to recruit apprentices. A laudable ambition, the guarantee comes with questions about whether apprenticeships or placements can be meaningfully guaranteed.

The £2bn ‘kickstart scheme’ will cover the wages of young people on universal credit through a six month work placement. A serious investment, no doubt; the question here is whether placement will turn into jobs. Evidence from a similar scheme which operated in response to the 2008 crash would suggest perhaps not.

The other major plank in Government’s skills policy response to the pandemic is a substantial injection of money for traineeships. Traineeships are, in my experience and opinion, a potentially powerful intervention – but numbers have been fairly anaemic

since their introduction in 2013. This may be their moment.

Colleagues are right to wonder about how these and other measures designed to address the youth employment challenge will interact with each other – and, as above, whether the demand side will be willing and able to offer the engagement, placements and vacancies required for youth employment to grow in the months and years to come.

The economy shrunk by a quarter during lockdown. The OBR is forecasting that unemployment will peak at 12% before Christmas. Opinions vary widely on the shape and duration of the downturn. Many – me included – believe that the Bank of England’s prediction of a v-shaped recession is optimistic. More likely we will see a ‘Nike swoosh’ shape into 2023 or ‘24 before the economy regrows to the level it was at pre-pandemic.

Within that swoosh, it is already clear that different sectors will regrow to different timelines. Indeed it is quite likely that several have not yet bottomed out. As furlough support begins to peel away it is likely that we will see news of business failures and job cuts in parts of the economy which are still acutely impacted by the pandemic; retail and hospitality feel particularly vulnerable given the challenges which social distancing pose for them.

That acutely challenging context is one which colleagues across the further education sector will rise to: because that is what we do. In good times and bad, we work with those who need us most to help them improve skills, build confidence and improve their lives.

NCFE is determined to play our part, working with colleges, training providers and willing partners across the sector and beyond. We are clear that we can, and should, reach beyond the conventional role

of an ‘awarding organisation’ to work in close, open collaboration with providers to design and deliver programmes that really work.

That’s why we’re launching the ‘go the distance’ initiative – to help colleges and training providers design and deliver brilliant, employment and outcome-focussed programmes and support that will give learners the best possible chance of finding, staying and progressing in work during the most challenging times most of us have ever known.

Through the initiative, we’ll be:

- Conducting research and analysis to distil what works in employability provision, learning lessons from previous downturns and international experience;
- Preparing outline course overviews and schemes of work which reflect that insight, and which providers can use to develop their employability provision;
- Drawing together funding-optimised qualification bundles which reflect those course overviews and schemes of work;
- Preparing learning resources and activities which providers can use to support both online and face-to-face delivery of employability programmes; and,
- Deploying innovative new tools, like Peer Tutor, to support employability provision.

Our overarching goal for the ‘go the distance’ initiative is simple: help young people prepare for, quickly find, stay and progress in work such that they can develop their careers in spite of the impact of the coronavirus.

We don’t want young people to look back on the early 2020s as the period in which they lost their way. We don’t want to look back on the early 2020s and feel like we didn’t do enough. If you share our determination to act, we’d love to work with you.

Visit [www.ncfe.org.uk/gothedistance](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/gothedistance) or email [gothedistance@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:gothedistance@ncfe.org.uk).



# How traineeships have developed

## 2012



**June:** Nick Clegg is first to mention a traineeship programme is being developed

Introduced as a flagship pre-employability programme in 2013, traineeships are eligible for 16 to 24-year-olds. Training providers are funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency for 16 to 18s from the study programme budget and for 19 to 24s from the adult education budget.

They are designed help young people who want to get an apprenticeship or job but don't yet have

the appropriate skills or experience.

Traineeships are comprised of three mandatory components: a work placement, English and maths training, and work preparation training.

Popularity of the programme has been rocky, as we explore later in this supplement.

But first, let's take a look at the way traineeships have changed since they were first conceived.

## 2015

**March:** Department for Work and Pensions removes hours restrictions on traineeships to allow them to maintain entitlement to their benefit

**April:** Restrictions on subcontracting are lifted

**August:** Aspects of 19-24 rules aligned with 16-18, so those with full level 2 prior attainment are eligible; the work preparation qualification requirement is removed

## 2014

**August:** The six-week minimum work placement is scrapped and extended to 24-year-olds

## 2013

**January:** Department for Education publishes a traineeship 'discussion paper', but the plan is only for 16-18s and Ofsted grade one and two providers

**June:** Government says traineeships will also be available for 19- to 23-year-olds

**August:** First traineeships start with only grade one and two providers



## 2020



**February:** DfE announce plans to cut adult traineeships budget from £20m to £8.55m from August 2020 to 'reflect current delivery levels'

**May:** DfE relaxes traineeship funding rules in light of Covid-19, including reducing minimum work placement hours to 70 and extending duration time from six to 12 months

**July:** Chancellor announces plan to triple traineeships with £111m to include £1,000 employer 'bonus'

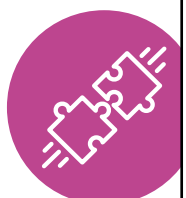
**September:** More flexibilities introduced into rules to last initially during 2020/21, such as expanding eligibility to those with a qualification up to level 3

**October:** Tender launched to widen the provider base for 19-24 traineeships

## 2019

**June:** After three years of silence on traineeships, DfE publishes research revealing 75% of learners move on to work or further study within a year of completing their programme

**June:** Then skills minister Anne Milton hails the success of traineeships and announces £20m in additional funding



# A programme in need of a revival

If anyone needs proof that traineeships are a flagging programme in desperate need of a new lease of life they need to look no further than the starts numbers.

Starts in the first year of the pre-employment programme took off slowly when 10,400 were recorded in 2013/14.

They continued to grow steadily over the next couple of years but peaked at 24,100 in 2015/16.

Numbers have been falling every year since then and plunged to just 14,900 in 2018/19.

Data for 2019/20 only currently covers the first three quarters of the year and show 11,000 starts.

But why have traineeships struggled to take off and what has caused a reverse in popularity? Poor publicity and restrictive rules are the two most common answers.

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers, which represents over 800 member training providers, was asked for reasons for the decline by the Education and Skills Funding Agency's director of apprenticeships Peter Mucklow – who also has responsibility for traineeships – in May this year.

"Publicity and public support for the programme has dwindled dramatically", the association said.

"Traineeships used to share the platform with apprenticeships as the government's flagship skills programmes but all the focus has turned to apprenticeships and now T Levels."

Since 2017 the number of providers nationally has grown, but "many will not even be aware of traineeships".

AELP added there is also low awareness of traineeships among young people and employers: "Providers can then find engaging employers difficult, ultimately a challenge around low brand awareness."

And even when there is publicity of traineeships it can and has deterred employers.

Major retailer Halfords, for example, used to offer traineeships but pulled out of the programme after a story was run in the national papers criticising them for offering unpaid work experience – bad PR that is likely to have put a lot of other employers off of taking part in the scheme.

When asked to comment, a spokesperson for

Halfords would only tell FE Week they decided to stop offering traineeships "over a year ago and this was based on a number of factors".

"Our programme at the time was designed to help young people get work-ready, particularly those who were unable to secure employment," they added.

AELP's concerns over poor publicity of traineeships were echoed by JTL, a training provider for the electrical and heating and plumbing sector which began offering the pre-employment programme in 2014 and has approximately 60 starts a year nationally.

Natasha Heritage, employability trainer at JTL, told FE Week: "As a training provider, one of the main challenges we face is the lack of awareness of what a traineeship is, both from a learner and an employer perspective."

"Additionally, the traineeship programme can be perceived negatively and regarded to be just for those learners who are unsuccessful when applying for an apprenticeship, however, this isn't always the case."

Heritage said that it has also historically been "challenging" to secure work placements – a core aim of the programme – with willing employers.

But she is "hopeful" that the £1,000 cash incentives for employers pledged by chancellor Rishi Sunak this year will "help businesses provide these important placements".

Heritage added that since the traineeship programme came into fruition, eligibility of the young person has been "restricted by funding guidelines", such as the rule that learners must be qualified below a full level 3 (which is due to change from September).

Restrictive rules have been a key issue that has narrowed the provider base for traineeships particularly for colleges, as previous FE Week investigations have found.

Two years ago, we revealed that colleges had delivered less than a quarter of traineeships in

2016/17 and nearly half across the country had no starts whatsoever.

Last year, FE Week reported on how less than a third of colleges were offering traineeships to 16 to 18-year-olds.

And new data obtained by this publication via a freedom of information request shows that more than two thirds (68 per cent) of all colleges in England did not offer a single traineeship in 2018/19.

Harrow College and Uxbridge College used to offer traineeships but pulled out of the programme in 2015.

The college previously told FE Week that their experience of supporting the programme across a range of sectors indicates that eligibility criteria and issues relating to extended unpaid work placements mean "other routes tend to be more accessible to learners and employers, as well as maximising integration with pre-existing college provision".

East Sussex College, which also doesn't offer traineeships currently, explained that until 2019/20 the funding rules for traineeships made the "English and maths requirement contained in the condition of funding unworkable, as it meant the very students that this would be targeting

would need to participate in GCSE programmes".

And a spokesperson for Capital City College Group, said they have found that traineeships "don't have enough flexibility to engage or meet the needs of pre-NEETS (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) and NEETs".

"We deliver similar programmes like pre-apprenticeships, which we have found

better meet learners' expectations while still providing a trained and educated workforce for employers," they added.

Anne Milton, who was skills minister from June 2017 to July 2019, summed up the reasons for low take-up of traineeships during an interview with FE Week last month.

She said Department for Education officials were "well aware of the benefits" of traineeships but that the programme has not had "very much attention" and was "poorly understood" outside the sector.

"It was the last area when I was a minister that I felt really needed grabbing hold of," she added.

"It needs to be understood by the parents of people who need traineeships," Milton argued, but there also needs to be a "clear pathway" from a traineeship to a job with progression opportunities. "Without a doubt we need incentives for employers."



Anne Milton

Traineeship starts	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20 (Q3)
16-18	7,000	11,600	14,700	13,900	13,100	11,900	8,500
19-24	3,400	7,800	9,400	6,400	4,600	3,000	2,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>19,400</b>	<b>24,100</b>	<b>20,300</b>	<b>17,700</b>	<b>14,900</b>	<b>11,000</b>

# Go the distance.

**Growing skills, confidence and careers.**

Through the 'go the distance' initiative, NCFE will work with providers and partners to design and deliver brilliantly effective employability programmes for young people.



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# Government announces £111m package to triple traineeship starts



**FRASER WHIELDON**  
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The flagging traineeships programme was given a new lease of life by the government over the summer with a major funding boost to help combat youth unemployment post-Covid-19.

Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a £111 million funding package with the ambition of tripling the number of traineeship starts to over 40,000 in 2020/21.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has also introduced a number of flexibilities into traineeship funding rules, which we cover on page 11.

So what will the £111 million package include? Here is everything you need to know.

## Bidding process to grow the adult traineeship provider base

On October 7, the ESFA finally launched an "accelerated" procurement worth £65 million initially, to fund an estimated 20,000 new 19 to 24 traineeships between February and July 2021.

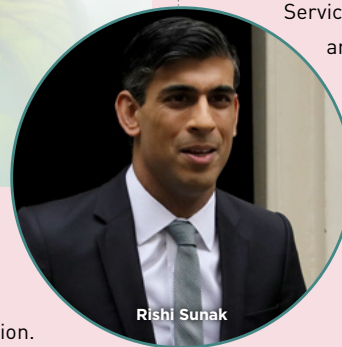
But providers only have until October 28 to apply. The ESFA is intending to award contracts in January.

The £65 million, for use in the second half of 2020/21, will be split between nine regions in England. London will receive the most,

£20.8 million, followed by the west midlands on £11.7 million. The south west will receive the least, with £2.6 million.

The procurement has contracts worth £233.5 million up until July 31, 2023, with the possibility of extensions of up to £380.5 million overall.

As it is expected to be a "very competitive exercise," and to mitigate against significant oversubscription and "speculative" bidding, the ESFA has set tender caps to "take into account the experience and potential capacity of potential contractors".



Rishi Sunak

These caps will be set at £1 million for brand-new providers, £2 million for those which are currently subcontractors, and £3 million for established, existing providers.

The ESFA has said successful providers will have to "demonstrate how they can quickly establish strong relationships with employers, Jobcentres, the National Careers Service, local enterprise partnerships and other local partners to recruit learners, including through referrals from Jobcentres, and to tailor the traineeship programme to real-time needs of the learner and local labour market".

On top of that, the funding rate for 19 to 24-year-olds has risen from £970 to £1,500 per traineeship learner.

## Providers could double their 16-18 trainee cohort

Providers with a 16 to 18 mainstream contract looking to increase their delivery of traineeships, will benefit from an 'in-year growth' mechanism for 2020/21, with the ESFA saying in September: "We will fund growth in traineeships at a 100 per cent rate

## 19-24 tender initial funding period budgets for each region in England

Tender Region	%	£
East Midlands	6%	£3.90m
East of England	5%	£3.25m
London	32%	£20.80m
North East	5%	£3.25m
North West	12%	£7.80m
South East	10%	£6.50m
South West	4%	£2.60m
West Midlands	18%	£11.70m
Yorkshire and The Humber	8%	£5.20m
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>£65m</b>





(i.e. funded in full) with no tolerance.

“We will even fund one additional traineeship student above the baseline.”

However, a provider will only be eligible if it is over-delivering against its overall 16 to 18 allocation.

There will also be a cap, beyond which providers will not be guaranteed growth funding. But the ESFA expects the vast majority of providers will be able to double their traineeship delivery without knocking the cap, and they will look at increasing the cap during the year, if the budget will allow.

To measure growth, each provider will be set a baseline, based on historic traineeship delivery. For most, this will be the 2018/19 delivery, as this was not interrupted by Covid-19. But if a provider increased delivery in 2019/20, this data will be used instead.

The growth cap will be initially set at the same level as the baseline, but for small providers with little to no levels of previous traineeship delivery, this will be increased to 20 students for grant-funded providers, and £100,000 for independent training providers (ITPs).

For providers at the other end of the scale, with high delivery levels, the cap will be 100 students for grant-funded providers and £500,000 for ITPs. In-year growth will be measured using these methods as well: students for grant-funded providers, and cash for ITPs.

The ESFA is also planning to launch a “market entry exercise” for existing 16-to-18

study programme providers to start delivering traineeships by the end of October.

#### **£1,000 incentives to entice employers**

Employers will be encouraged to take on trainees with a new £1,000 incentive payment for each trainee they place in 2020/21.

An overview of how incentive payments will be processed will be set out in a ‘Traineeships Framework for Delivery’, set to be released by the end of October.

This will detail how the agency will directly pay employers, once that is agreed with the Treasury. The ESFA has said it is expected that employers will be able to apply for the incentive from “late autumn” and can claim the funding

only “once they have completed the work placement”.

If a trainee has a work placement with more than one employer, each employer will be eligible for the full grant and significantly there will now be a revised cap of 10 incentive payments per employer per government region (i.e. a cap of 90 payments or £90,000 per employer across all regions on that basis) rather than the cap of 10 previously announced.

In a presentation to providers earlier this month, the ESFA said it is: “Important the employers see the wider benefits of traineeships and not just offer work placements to receive the incentive payment.”

The agency is planning on ramping up its engagement with employers on traineeships, after providers flagged concerns that firms’ have a “limited” understanding of the programme, on top of worries that employers’ engagement varies across sectors, and their capacity to support traineeships may be limited because of Covid-19.

To fix this, the ESFA has developed a “robust” communications plan to engage employers between this month and December, to raise their awareness and understanding of the programme.

A chart of how employers can benefit from different training programmes – traineeships, T Levels, apprenticeships and Kickstart – has been drawn up; and webinars will be run for employers, intermediary bodies, and trade bodies.

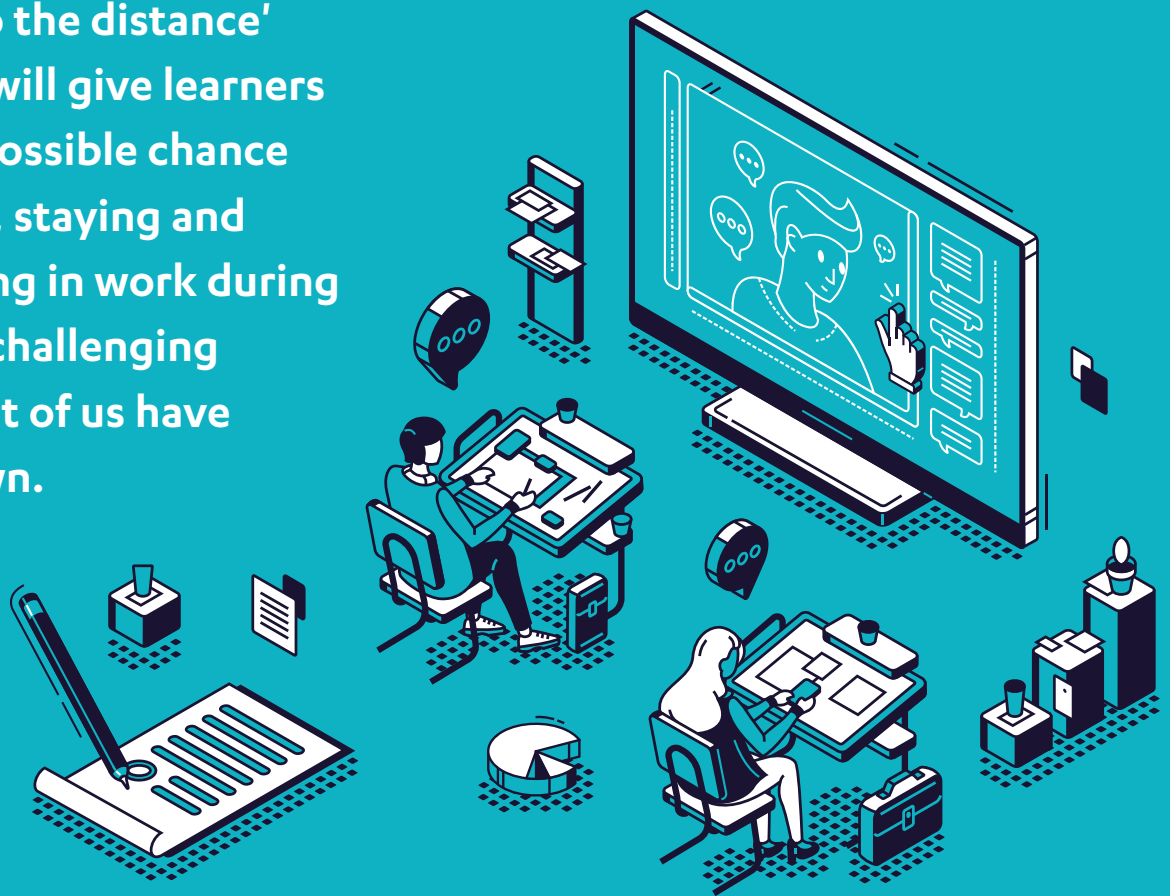




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**GILLIAN  
KEEGAN****Apprenticeships  
and Skills Minister**

# Why we are investing in the largest-ever expansion of traineeships

**Now, more than ever, we need to make sure the next generation can develop the confidence they need to succeed in the workplace. Traineeships are a brilliant way to do this, writes Gillian Keegan**

We all remember our first foray into the world of work, the nerves, the excitement and the unknown. Taking those first steps can be difficult, especially for young people, who may need extra support.

Take Holly for example, she felt unconfident and unsure what to do next when she left sixth form. After meeting with a careers adviser, they suggested a traineeship with Derby City Council, which would allow her to gain work experience and help rebuild her confidence. Since finishing her placement, Holly has gone on to do an apprenticeship and has now been offered a job working for the council providing emergency care support to local people.

Holly is just one of many thousands of trainees we have already helped to get their first job and go on to have successful careers in exciting industries such as data science, business management, engineering and banking.

Now, more than ever, we need to make sure the next generation can develop the confidence they need to succeed in the workplace. Covid-19 has and continues to have a huge impact on the sector, on business, on individuals, and in particular young people at the start of their careers.

As education and training providers I understand how difficult the past few months have been and I have continued to be amazed at the lengths you have gone to support your students by switching learning online. You will all continue to play a vital role helping

shape the lives of young people.

Traineeships are a brilliant way to give young 16-24-year-olds (25-years old with Education, Health and Care Plan), the opportunity to learn the skills, and gain the experience and confidence they need to enter the world of work. They not only provide on the job experience, but young people also receive personalised support. This includes how to ace a job interview to how to write a CV that stands out.

**“If we want to  
get our economy  
moving again we  
need to get more  
people into work”**

This year we are investing an additional £111 million to triple the number of work placements available across England – the largest-ever expansion of traineeships. This new funding will cover the increased take up of the programme, giving providers more money for each trainee.

Employers of all sizes offering new work placement opportunities will also receive a £1,000 bonus per trainee they take on, up to a maximum of 10. We hope this will encourage more employers to expand their work experience offer, so more young people have access to high-quality training and work experience, giving them a head start in a wide range of rewarding careers.

We have expanded the eligibility to those young people who have a level 3 qualification, so they can take advantage of the programme, and we are also

reforming the traineeships programme to ensure trainees receive the best training and work experience possible.

Our new high quality programme will involve trainees receiving a tailored assessment, matching their skills and ambitions with employment opportunities across a variety of sectors. It will also give providers and employers more flexibility to include training in key areas, such as construction, health and care sectors.

If we want to get our economy moving again then we need to get more people into work. So, it is great news that our own research shows that over 75 per cent of trainees go on to secure a job or pursue further study within 12 months. This clearly highlights the crucial role traineeships can play in delivering the skills that employers need and that will support our economic recovery in the future.

It has been a difficult few months for everyone and this will continue. But we are taking unprecedented steps through our Plan for Jobs to protect, support and create jobs with a clear focus on ensuring young people have the right skills they need to progress. As well as our new traineeship offer, we are investing significantly to create more high quality apprenticeship opportunities, and providing a further £101 million to support school and college leavers at risk of becoming unemployed to do a fully funded optional extra year of study.

We remain absolutely committed to levelling up opportunities across the country, so more people have the chance to learn new skills and get ahead. So please do look out for further announcements about how you can get included in this work and help us make sure more young people like Holly get a head start.

# SPEED READ

New reforms and new cash will of course mean new rules on how that funding can be spent.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency has released new guidelines for traineeships as part of its ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB): funding and performance management rules 2020 to 2021.

Here is our run-through of the key findings from the new rules...



## Level 3 learners allowed

**L**earners with qualifications as high as level 3 are, for 2020/21, being allowed to complete a traineeship. The Treasury, in its Plan for Jobs 2020 released in July, said this would "ensure that more young people have access to high quality training".

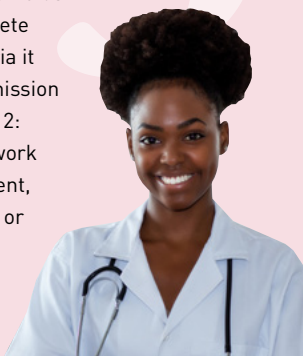
Before now, traineeships were limited to learners whose highest qualification was at level 2.

## Duration of traineeship increased

**W**hereas previously, the traineeship programme could be completed between six weeks and six months, now it can last between six weeks and 12 months.

## Funding criteria remains the same

**T**he ESFA will fully fund 16 to 24-year-olds with level 3 qualifications to complete traineeships using the same criteria it did for when the programme capped admission at learners with qualifications up to level 2: if they are unemployed; have little to no work experience and are focused on employment, an apprenticeship or prospects of either; or if they have been assessed as having the potential to be ready for employment or an apprenticeship in 12 months.



## Work placement changed

**T**he minimum number of hours a trainee needs to spend on work placement has also been reduced, down from 100 to 70.

Also, the Education and Skills Funding Agency has announced trainees can split work placements across two employers. Each placement must last at least two weeks with each employer, "with each placement supporting progression linked to their learning plan".

Previously, trainees could only split their work placement across multiple employers "in exceptional circumstances". As of 2019/20, they had to last at least two weeks with each employer and meet the then-100 hour minimum threshold.

For learners receiving Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit work placements can now last between 70 and 240 hours, or be extended if the learner is offered an apprenticeship place.

However, the rules for 2019-2020 do not specify a minimum hour threshold, saying instead that placements can last up to 240 hours.

## New digital skills requirement

**T**hese new rules also introduce a requirement for providers to support trainees aged over 19 to improve their digital skills if they are assessed as being below level 1.

As well as supporting learners who have not achieved English and maths grade 4 at GCSE or level 2 functional skills qualification, providers should also support learners to develop any digital skills which are part of an occupational standard published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, which is being linked to in the vocational learning element.

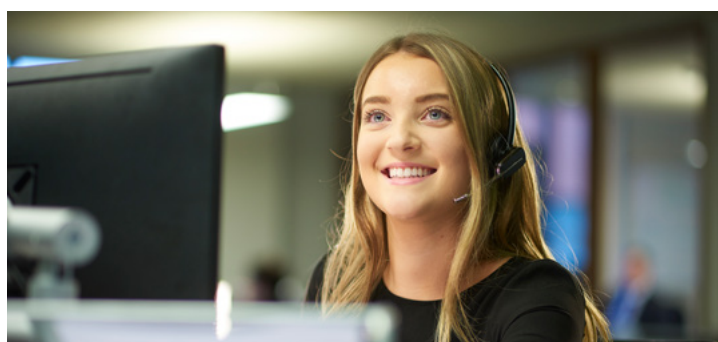
The Association of Employment and Learning Providers' chief policy officer Simon Ashworth said they "firmly" believe the digital skills element "adds further value to an already successful programme and along with maths and English should form the golden triangle of essential skills for everyone".

"As 19-24 traineeships are part of the adult education budget, there is joined-up synergy with the new digital legal entitlement which started this month."

Providers will still have to support learners who have not previously achieved an English or maths GCSE with at least a grade 4 (equivalent to a C), or level 2 Functional Skills qualification to improve their skills and progress towards them.

## Changes to how work placements are recorded

**P**roviders have been given up to 60 days of the traineeship start date to record the employers' details in individualised learner records and the placement does not need to start within 60 days and can be recorded as a future start date. Previously, providers had to record the employer's details within four weeks.







JANE HICKIE

Managing Director of  
Association of Employment  
and Learning Providers

# Traineeship funding competition will be fierce for providers

**Not everyone is going to end up happy in such a competitive scenario for traineeships funding, but the government has probably struck the right balance, writes Jane Hickie**

On my visits to the confessional box in my younger days in Cork (probably too many that I would like to admit to), I was often reminded that patience is a virtue but until last week's Official Journal notice, the patience of a saint would have surely been stretched by the wait for the tender details for the expansion of traineeships. AELP has been reliably informed that at the most senior levels of government, frustration was evident about how long publication of the invitation to tender (ITT) took following the chancellor's £111 million injection of funding into the programme in early July.

Half of a year during a pandemic will have passed by the time delivery commences in February under the new contracts which is hardly ideal when we know that young people are hit hardest by recessions. In the meantime, existing contractors will do their best to support them into apprenticeships and employment. With a 79 per cent completion rate, they do this rather well.

When AELP welcomed Rishi Sunak's announcement, we expressed hope that the fresh investment wouldn't be a one-off and thankfully the ITT has seen the comprehensive review outcome arrive early – at least for traineeships with £380.5 million pledged for the programme between February 2021 and July 2023. That's the equivalent of £152 million a year which should give providers a degree of confidence to

invest capacity into the programme. In the meantime the funding should enable young people to benefit from 20,000 new opportunities between February and August next year which is almost double the number of the annual starts now. And don't forget that the ITT is for the 19 to 24 age group with market entry opportunities for 16 to 18 still being planned.

Providers will be pleased with details on the new employer incentives of £1,000 per trainee to offer work placements. If a trainee has a work placements with more than one employer, each employer will be eligible for the full grant and significantly there will now be a revised cap of 10 incentive payments per employer per government region (i.e. a cap of 90 payments or £90,000 per employer across all regions on that basis) rather than the cap of 10 previously announced. The other good news is that the ESFA is keen to avoid possible displacement of trainees who started a programme before September 2020 and a further announcement is expected on this.

With talk of government lawyers crawling all over the draft procurement, we wondered what was holding up the tender and an obvious area of speculation was which providers would be allowed to bid. As it turned out, there is nothing in the documents about provider eligibility and this means that the competition will be very fierce. There are regional lots and a successful 'established provider' will have a maximum reward of £3 million. The documents include references to providers who do not have an existing 'contractual arrangement' with the ESFA and after our bruising experience at the

start of the lockdown with the provider relief scheme when the DfE declared that providers only delivering apprenticeships for levy paying employers did not have a contract with the government, we now have confirmation from the agency that these providers will be treated as an established provider.

## “But just like 2017 and the non-levy procurement, be warned!”

If a shell company can bid in this very short procurement exercise which closes on 28 October, there has to be a robust marking system to decide on the winners. On the face of it, AELP believes that the proposed sifting should work well as the process is based on demonstrating quality, employer engagement and engaging young people, i.e. looking at a provider's track record across skills programmes. But just like 2017 and the non-levy procurement, be warned! ESFA will implement a pro-rata if demand exceeds supply and with a minimum contract award of £250,000, a provider could lose out completely if the process takes it under this value.

Not everyone is going to end up happy in such a competitive scenario, but the ESFA has probably struck the right balance between the total initial awards totalling £65 million and holding funding back for existing contractors and new entrants who perform well during the 30-month period which starts next February.



**TERESA  
FRITH**

Senior Skills Policy  
Manager, Association  
of Colleges

# Colleges will need reassurance on system issues before expanding into traineeships

**There are some very active and able colleges who could make a success with traineeships as an alternative to apprenticeships – but they will need reassurance on system issues first, says Teresa Frith**

Traineeships have been around since Matt Hancock was our skills minister. I can remember working with officials and being concerned that the target learner was quite ‘specialised’ – around six months or less from employment ready, prior attainment at level 2 or less – and that there were quite a few restrictions on the programme content when compared to Sector Based Work Academies (SBWA) – heavy on the work experience (100 hours), English and maths in the mix. None-the-less a nice idea. Officials were pretty relaxed over the ‘niche’ nature of the programme and weren’t envisioning rapid growth. The programme sort of fell between the more agile SBWA and the richer study programme or full time level 1 or level 2 vocational programme. It always felt like a programme that could do more given a bit of a push and some greater levels of flexibility. There was also the problematic nature of a six-month programme at its longest when viewed against the annual study cycle culture of classroom based FE for the younger cohorts.

Skipping to the here and now, traineeships do offer an opportunity to effectively engage with what we could call the ‘aspiring’ apprentices. Those who wish to start an apprenticeship but fail to gain employment in a recession hit world. Our college members are seeing a continuing stream of young people signing up to become an apprentice, but a severely reduced number of employment opportunities to place them in. We know (hope?) that this is a short-term issue, but we need to ensure those who cannot get a placement are not left to wait, but are provided with a viable – and appealing –

alternative that allows them to progress towards their ambition. The challenge then is to try and create a programme that has a direct line of sight to employment (ideally with training) and doesn’t feel like a ‘back to the classroom’ course.

Enter traineeships with their work placement element, the need to have employers engaged in the programme. The crisis presents an opportunity to flex up the traineeship as a key response to the drop in apprenticeship opportunities during a recession. The mission is to maintain a volume of learner starts (annually there are around 100,000 16 to 24-year-olds who start an apprenticeship) across apprenticeships and traineeships, so all who aspire to earn and learn feel they are on a path to this end. Clearly a traineeship is a ‘poor cousin’ to an apprenticeship but feels like a much better fit (for learners and for the apprenticeship delivery staff that we need to keep employed) than a fully classroom based course or nothing at all!

**“Perhaps we can re-visit the content of college-based programmes with a much clearer focus on employment?”**

Our challenge is to make sure the transition from traineeship to apprenticeship is as simple as it can be. Providers need to maintain their relationships with employers, try and involve them in the traineeship, with an intent to try and convert the learners into employed apprentices at the earliest opportunity. AoC, with some of our members are working closely with the construction sector to provide just such a route within the measures announced by the Chancellor and

it is hoped that this model can be adapted to suit delivery within other sectors. This closer alignment between traineeship and apprenticeship also provides us with an opportunity to improve the process of transition from class to work readiness – an area where employers are clear that we ‘could do better’. Working together – providers and employers – alongside government officials, perhaps we can use this crisis as an opportunity to improve class to work transitions and develop a more effective ‘plan B’ for the next recession cycle? Perhaps we can re-visit the content of college-based programmes with a much clearer focus on employment? And perhaps we can redevelop our FE funding and success structure in support of this?

We can’t do any of this work without funding and traineeships present another issue here – the programme spans 16 – 18 and 19+ (to 24) with the two age ranges being funded differently. Traineeships remains a national programme (not devolved like other AEB funded activity), so 19+ traineeship funding will be subject to procurement and 16 – 18 will be lagged funding (so no money until next year) unless changes are made. So, a provider could find themselves able to run a cohort, but unable to access funding to do so. Or able to access funding for one age range and not the other. The original Ofsted grade threshold (requiring providers to have a grade 1 or 2) proved to be an obstacle and, then, some colleges who did try the programme out found negative impacts on their funding calculations. There are also some very active and able colleges who could make a success with the traineeships as an alternative to apprenticeships but who will be looking for reassurance on system issues. The path is not without challenge, but the reward for success is great for our young people. There are more issues on the list – access to learning space within Covid restrictions for example but working together we could just find a way...



**JACQUI  
OUGHTON**

Chief Operating Officer,  
Shaw Trust Group

# Why more organisations should be supporting 'valuable' traineeships

**Traineeships create not just model employees, but people better prepared for adult life, writes Jacqui Oughton**

As an organisation that has delivered traineeships over the last six years, I have always questioned why many organisations have avoided using this essential funding stream to provide such a valuable support for young people.

A traineeship, as we have known it, has been a vital lifeline for many of the young people we have worked with.

Due to the structure of the programme, we have found that many young people thrive and grow though the different routes and flexibilities in the programme and when planned effectively, dovetails into an apprenticeship programme that enabled the continued vital learning of essential skills and qualifications.

A typical programme not only starts with initial and additional needs assessment to plan the individualised journey however, but also continues with a skills assessment based on life skills. The volume of young people we support who are referred from youth agencies, who are care leavers, and who need extensive support is increasing. We are finding that these young people not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) have increasingly complex needs which all need to be supported. We are seeing an increase in the NEET age range and in as much as some of these young people leave schools with qualifications, they are not ready for work and in many cases, independent life.

As we work through the traineeship programme, and in partnership with employers, we find that many of the young people we support do not have bank accounts or any form of income.

This means they often do not have basic life skills to manage money and therefore budget and safeguard themselves from financial abuse. This leaves them open to many other types of safeguarding risks and we have to support them to identify risks, and keep themselves safe at all times. Personal development, behaviour and attitudes activity is essential to support this and open up varied topics in safe environments. In these sessions we often discover the curiosity, empathy and compassion that many young people have and we provide the opportunity to shine and grow.

**“Never has it been so important to ensure young people have a fighting chance”**

As a not for profit, we use our surpluses to support young people. We ensure that every young person who comes onto a traineeship with us receives a training allowance for their work placement element. We believe that to ensure young people can gain employability skills, confidence and start their employment journey, they deserve to be treated with respect as young adults and future employees and therefore we support them with their training allowance at the rate of the apprenticeship minimum wage, to support them to get used to working life and the advantages that work offers.

Using a bank account, embedding maths through teaching budgets and

embedding English through completing their bank applications, supports them to gain in confidence and use skills they would have never thought possible. Embedding the theoretical concepts of the functional skills programmes, including ICT and digital skills, into their work-based learning qualifications and settings supports them to use and understand these vital skills effectively. Staff are supported through pedagogical development to ensure the effective embedding of these concepts to provide the most value to every course and support successful outcomes.

By the end of the programme, we are already preparing trainees to transition into an apprenticeship or into employment or further education. They are able to work together, shop, plan their meals together to ensure the most cost-effective way of planning for groceries and bills, cook and share meals with each other, with improved communication skills. Their new found employment skills are tested in their placements and parents and carers often comment on the changes, noticing how much their young people have grown.

Never has it been so important as it is now to ensure young people have a fighting chance to access the skills required to progress into sustainable employment in a post Covid world. The traineeship route is an ideal route to prepare to progress into work with sector, life and employability skills and qualifications. Government must continue to ensure that employers are supported with the necessary stimulus to support the volume of new traineeships required for young people, so that they can progress into becoming our future skilled workers to enable the UK to remain competitive and grow in a post Brexit global economy.





**SARAH  
ROACH**

Co-owner, Game On Retro

# An employer's perspective on how to get the best out of traineeships

**To get an understanding of what traineeships mean to employers, we asked one business owner about how their business has helped trainees and how trainees have helped business...**

**Sarah Roach is the owner of Game On Retro, a gaming café in Stockton-on-Tees, which has been offering traineeships with the help of training provider Ixion Holdings for four years.**

## **Tell us about Game On Retro**

We are a small, independently run gaming café where people can come in and buy, or play, a wide variety of retro computer games, card games and board games whilst enjoying a drink and bite to eat.

We have traditional loose-leaf teas, specialty flavoured coffees and some really indulgent hot chocolates.

## **Why did you start providing a work experience placement for trainees?**

Where we are located on the high street, we see a lot of youths strolling around, throwing traffic cones, firing fireworks – helping them get life skills is one of the main motivators for us. We get the help, but we also get the opportunity to make a difference.

Trainees provide a fresh perspective on business and they can be really helpful with events, window displays, we use them to bounce ideas off as we're a different generation so what we would consider cool or entertaining isn't necessarily what they would.

It gives them focus – prior to learning with Ixion, they have the wrong focus, they're putting too much emphasis on hanging out with the friends they made as kids. For example, friends I've made outside of school are the ones that I spend more time with, I'm not the same person I was as a child. Through experiences in the workplace, you develop new friendships, people with similar mindsets

– those are the people you hold close for much longer than childhood friends, you move on from that childish friendship into something that represents who you are as a person. The trainees are never going to change their circumstances or make friends by hanging out with people at bus stops. People with qualifications don't sit on street corners causing trouble, generally speaking.

We want the trainees to have fun, but it's also about changing their direction, from some with backgrounds of no discipline and being destructive, setting them on a new path – helping them when they need help, providing them with role models when before they might not have had any.

## **What skills do they develop?**

Trainees develop customer service skills, communication skills from talking to people, face-to-face interaction, and problem solving – they need to find answers to customers' questions for one. For me, it's behaviour I learned at school but trainees didn't, on account of not going or not feeling comfortable so they learn it here and at Ixion in the classrooms. Teamwork is another skill they develop, learning to work with people outside of their friendship group. We'll teach trainees how to do something gradually in the café – for example, we'll be working together and I'll do half and they'll do the other half – it might be the food and drink order or keeping the counters and tables clean. Working together I know what they're supposed to be doing and if it's been done to the best of their ability.

As soon as they've learnt how to do something in the café, like make a specific type of coffee, I'll order it, they bring it over, we discuss it. For example, a latte macchiato: It's a layering of milk, coffee, foam, and layers in between

caused by pouring the coffee through the milk. It might not sound much, but it's about developing the skill set and taking pride in your work. The first latte is generally always an absolute nightmare, at the end of it it's pristine, and it's that continual practice and reinforcement, combined with praise and showing that we care (and I have high standards when it comes to making coffee!) – and then we get that smug smile from the trainee and it's looking gorgeous and they know they've done well and it's an achievement and a confidence-booster. It's the tiny successes, learning to do something and then we can build on that. We'll take a photo at the beginning and we can say look, you've gone from this to this.

**“We want the trainees to have fun, but it's also about changing their direction”**

## **How do you measure their progress?**

While they're in here doing their placement, some are absolutely silent, so we try to bring them out of their shells. Others are noisy as anything, super chatty and really engaging and get on with everything, learning and trying. We teach them how to do new things and can see their progress that way. The quiet ones – they'll have this one moment of blinding brilliance and it's that one moment that changes them. It's that one moment we wait for.

We speak to Naz and Adam at Ixion's Middlesborough office a lot too, when they do the reviews, and as we're chatting, we

ask them 'what changes have you guys seen?' I only ever see the development of one side, so we get updates from class, the changes that Adam and Naz are dealing with - it's their opinion that makes a difference, getting that development feedback as it's a different environment.

### What's the biggest change you see in the trainees on their placement?

Some we see a change of being chatty and communicative with just us, to being chatty with everyone. We can see that confidence growing - as they get more comfortable with us the interactions are less serious, there's a lot of laughing and chatting with us and customers - it's personal experience rather than experience in a classroom setting and this what builds their confidence.

With Adam and Naz at Ixion, that's the classroom element - what we do is give them that interaction with the general public, conversation and implementing new skills. If you find a conversation too stringent, you'll walk away, if you enjoy having a conversation with someone, it's friendly and relaxed - 99 per cent of the time that's what keeps people coming back. It doesn't work for every situation, but it's how we communicate with our customers.

We get a lot of customers with social anxiety issues. What we do is a gaming café and it's difficult for those sorts of people to remove themselves from their consoles and comfortable spaces and walk into the world as it's the generation who live life in front of a screen, so trainees interacting with our customers is fantastic to see.

When a group of trainees start, you can see the difference between where they are in the programme and the development of people from week to week. The changes are consistent. You can tell what they've been studying at Ixion, say if it's income and expenditure or health and food, they'll come in one day looking at things slightly differently - they won't throw their money away on chocolate bars and crisps. So, we can plot where they are on the programme - it's not the same for everyone, but it does impact a lot of them!

### What impact does it have on the trainee and their life?

They're moving on as a person; developing, growing, and their friends are still stuck in the same situation. If you're strong enough to move away from that it's



really, really rewarding to see - you can see they are still friends with the same people but they're better a version of themselves, and working and being put into a placement and the effort that has been put in with them - it's the bolstering that makes such a massive difference.

Quite a fair amount have gone back into education, a couple have even left part-way to go onto other things. I'm a massive advocate of education so I'm always saying how supremely important it is - that's the drive for me. Graham usually leans more towards the work side, his conversations usually entail "think about this opportunity and that option, what about doing an apprenticeship" and so on. If it's suitable I'll try and get them back into education, to get a qualification. Now, with anything less than a degree, you're lucky if you even get looked at. A lot of people are leaving school before they get to that point, before they even do A-Levels.

Our trainees generally come back quite regularly to visit, we build relationships with the people we place and encourage them to keep us updated. Our first transgender trainee we ever had still comes in two or three times a week and he's a friend and we know this is a safe place for him and we pride ourselves on that.

### What advice would you give to prospective businesses looking to hire a trainee?

It definitely depends on the type of person you hire and possibly the area you're in,

but the young people we work with are usually quite excellent - we work with Ixion and tend to take on young people that have more barriers than the average young person. We get to find out what they want to achieve and work with them, which for us is always the first step.

As soon as you start pushing them and asking them what they want you'll start to get somewhere - the minute you start trying to dictate is the minute you've lost them. So work with them.

Our first day is us sitting with them at the back, we have a private conversation and we'll ask them "what is it that you struggle with, what experience do you have, what do you want to get from this" and so on. At first they'll say what you want to hear, and then the rest of the day we prod, asking them what it is they want, is this what you need, what do you actually struggle with, and so on. You push, just gentle pressure to get them to respond openly, as they're not going to be honest - they're terrified! It's a high-stress situation and they don't want to embarrass themselves, so they're not always 100 per cent honest with you. Once you really see where they want to be and what they want, from there you can move on. You can't just take what they say at face value, and they can get themselves into a state and it's stressful for them - so you need to be willing to put the effort in. Some of the young people aren't used to having someone that takes an interest or cares - so it can take a little getting used to. Once you've passed this stage, it is very much worth it.



## Learner success stories



**MUSA  
ALI**

If you want proof a traineeship can lead you places, look no further than Musa.

After completing a three-month programme with training provider Babington and law firm Crystal Law, he was offered an apprenticeship by the employer and is now working as a business administration apprentice.

He calls the traineeship "a good footing," adding "even if they didn't offer me the full apprenticeship, I think just by doing that traineeship I could include that I had worked three months placement at a law firm".

After already achieving his GCSEs in

maths and English, Musa only had to attend Babington for a day a week, spending the other four at Crystal Law.

At Babington, his tuition focused on helping him polish up his CV with some structure and help his letter-writing skills, while Crystal Law helped him put those skills into practice by answering calls and speaking to clients, sending emails and learning how to draft letters.

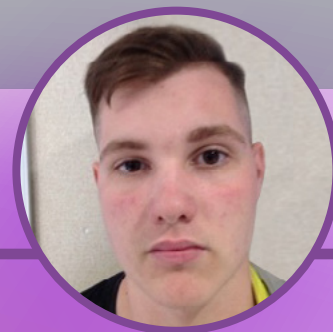
He would "100 per cent" recommend the traineeship programme, saying: "The work experience is what makes you stand out from everybody else and also the functional skills you do learn at Babington as well."

"I'm quite a hands-on learner so an apprenticeship and a traineeship it was quite a good option for me.

"I don't think a lot of people know about it so definitely something more people could get exposure to I think a lot of people would benefit more from it."

He does not have any firm plans for the future, but is looking into completing a paralegal apprenticeship and then moving up to complete the solicitor apprenticeship at level 7.

"If I'm fully committed by then and decided that I want to become a solicitor I will hopefully pursue it."



**JORDAN  
TAYLOR**

The experience gained on a traineeship can be a key factor in securing employment, according to ex-trainee Jordan Taylor.

Before he took the course with JTL between last November and January, he says he was "going for interviews left right and centre".

"Because I didn't have any experience in electrics so going to places and putting in an application anywhere, any other lads that have got experience were going to get in over me."

He says he felt "stuck" after he could not carry on to do A-levels at his school once he completed his GCSEs.

"I didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew a trade would be good to get into. I did want to do A-levels, but that never happened.

"Because I had nothing, my mum said there was this traineeship in plumbing and electric, and why didn't I see if you like it.

Far from liking it, Jordan said he "loved it": "I loved the work experience and got stuck in. I made a good impression and I've excelled ever since then."

He has been taken on by the employer he completed his four-week work placement with, DJ Wright electricians in Birmingham, and is now training to become a fully-qualified electrician.

"If you screw your head on and actually get stuck in, it's something you can be rewarded from," he says, following a course involving health and safety training and CV preparation.

"They basically show you how to find employment the easiest way, and how to make your CV the best," he explained.

"A lot of people who work on site aren't really the academic type. So, they can come out of school and get into something that's good and pays as well and it's just a good job to have."

"I think it's spot on," he said of the three-month course, adding: "I wouldn't be where I am now without that traineeship."





## Learner success stories



### CHARMAINE WHITE

**W**hen the pandemic struck, Charmaine White found her traineeship had prepared her well to handle it.

The Halifax-based 18-year-old is currently completing a social care apprenticeship at Lee Mount Care Home in the town, having done a 12-week traineeship there.

Once COVID-19 hit Britain's shores, she said staff had to take a lot more precautions: "A lot more washing hands constantly, wearing masks.

"We can't have many visitors, only nurses if necessary."

After having left school a couple years ago and having tried learning at both a college and a sixth form, she was told about Qube Learning's traineeship programme by a local careers service.

"I just liked the idea of it," she explained, citing the learning potential of a traineeship.

When she first started at Lee Mount, Charmaine was first assigned to do an administrative role, rather than care.

"They put me onto social media so it involved taking photos of the residents and posting them on social media.

"Then they asked me if I wanted to start doing a care role and I said yeah, because I enjoyed being around the residents."

She was tasked with caring for the home's residents with dementia, so had to learn how to speak with them and provide personal care.

As for her learning with Qube, they provided her with additional English and maths support and helped scrub up her CV.

While she found the traineeship hard, she did agree it had prepared her for the extra stresses caused by the pandemic.

And in June, she went from having been a trainee with the home and Qube to being an apprentice with them both.

Asked what she put that down to, Charmaine simply said: "I worked well with people and I got on with my job and everything they asked me to."

She called the traineeship a "good experience" and said she would recommend it to others.



### JACK DOYLE

**F**or some young people on traineeships, it is a second shot at getting an education and employment. As it was for Jack Doyle, whose GCSEs were ruined by bad health.

A type one diabetic, Jack said: "When I came out of high school, I had had a rough time with health so my GCSE grades weren't that great.

"Body changes threw everything out of whack and I couldn't get a grip on it."

"I had been trying to find work for a while but I hadn't really been managing so I'd been looking around for something and I heard about traineeship so I looked into it and it kind of seemed right up my alley."

The 19-year-old, at the time of

speaking with FE Week, had finished his first day of work placement at retailer The Range in Yeovil the day before.

"It was half 12 until 9. It was what I expected from work. It was good, structured sort of work and they told me how to work certain systems.

"For a first day on work experience I think it was definitely a positive."

Despite having started his course in February, due to the pandemic, Jack's placement was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, he has completed most of his work with training provider Qube Learning already, though he is still working on his functional skills qualification in English.

The course has had to be adapted for social distancing: his interview was carried out over the phone, and his weekly meetings with his tutor are carried out the same way, or via a video call.

Asked for how he has benefited from the course, Jack said: "There's one thing I've noticed is that my self-confidence has improved.

"Obviously coming out of school with bad grades made me wonder if I was a good student or if I had any aptitudes in any areas.

"Getting approval, having done the work correctly and in a timely manner has helped very much with my confidence."

## Learner success stories



### MORGAN WARDLE

**F**or Morgan, traineeships opened up a whole range of opportunities for him.

Before starting the programme last Spring, he had been working as a plasterer apprentice for a company which then went bust. He then went on Universal Credit and says he struggled for work.

He was directed by the Job Centre to The Legacy Project, a 10-week traineeship programme run by mining, energy and construction company The Banks Group, with training by provider Ixion.

The 19-year-old from County Durham spent his six-week work placement rebuilding two classrooms for Banks, installing insulation, painting and furnishing both rooms, which are now

used for school visits.

During the traineeship, which focused on construction skills and health and safety, Ixion also taught him skills like interview techniques and how to build a CV, but what Morgan found positive about the tutoring was: "We were treated like we were in the workforce, not like children in college."

He said the staff from Ixion "helped us out in every way possible. They kept the morale so high during the Legacy Project I kept wanting to come back, I was upset when the legacy project ended".

"For me and the other lads, a lot of us had no experience in construction, and afterwards myself and everyone we had a lot more experience and we were a lot more positive about coming into work."

After the project, he was interviewed and accepted for a labourer's position, and is now completing a level 2 plant operator apprenticeship with Ixion and Banks, as well as a level 2 functional skills qualification in English.

He recently went to Scarborough to rebuild a rare drag engine – used to excavate gravel from a river – and said it was "amazing" to see his hard work get it moving again.

"I would definitely recommend the course, 100 per cent. I'd recommend it to all my friends, family who are struggling for work or qualifications, to come and take part and experience what I did as there are job opportunities out there."

**"I'd recommend it to all my friends to experience what I did, as there are job opportunities out there"**



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