

Spotlight

SKILLS AND APPRENTICESHIPS: EDUCATING BRITAIN

Anne Milton / Layla Moran / Amanda Spielman / Gordon Marsden





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The costs of qualification



Reviewers of the recent ITV drama *Cleaning Up* called the series' plot, in which a cleaner at an investment bank uses information from people's desks to conduct insider trading, "absurd" (the *Telegraph*) and "nonsense" (the *Guardian*). But in a recent episode of the Bloomberg podcast *Trillions*, the hosts interview Sarah Newton, who began picking stocks at age ten on behalf of a family friend. With her classmates, she made tens of thousands of dollars. A few years later, while still at school, Newton was among the earliest investors in Google. In her early 20s, as a full-time carer for her mother, Newton took up her hobby again. She has now been trading, unqualified but successful, for six years. She is not the only one. Herbert Wertheim, a 79-year-old optometrist and former encyclopedia salesman profiled in this month's *Forbes* magazine, is not a trained banker either, but he has been investing since he was 18. He is now worth \$2.3bn.

There are some jobs for which a very clear set of qualifications is absolutely necessary – surgeons and pilots must clearly be qualified. But if we're completely honest, a lot of jobs in the modern economy are not nearly as hard as the people who do them say they are. If people were paid according to the difficulty of their work the economy, and the qualifications needed to take part in it, would look very different.

At the same time, however, the cost of training for any job has risen enormously. University now costs so much that ministers are suggesting ditching a whole year; some management apprenticeships cost £22,000; professional training can cost over £1,000 a day. And as qualification becomes more expensive, remuneration becomes more important. The jobs for which people increasingly wish to be qualified are those that can pay off the debt incurred during training. Is this creating a vicious regress in which people are incentivised to train for well-paid work rather than gaining more specific expertise? Is the UK becoming a nation of managers? If so, we should be cautious. Because who knows when a smart cleaner will arrive to call our bluff?

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Spotlight is the British Society of Magazine Editors' 2017 Launch of the Year.

First published as a supplement to the *New Statesman* of 1 March 2019.
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Shortage of skills driving up wages

Augusta Riddy

A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has found that inflation and skills shortages are starting to push up private sector pay. Pay has risen at a steady two per cent for six years, but this year employers are expecting to increase annual basic pay by 2.5 per cent on average.

Over 70 per cent of surveyed employers said they were struggling to fill some of their vacancies, and two thirds of private sector firms reported increasing starting salaries in an attempt to attract talent, up from

56 per cent. Meanwhile, in the public sector market, expected pay growth has dropped from two per cent to 1.1 per cent, and only 27 per cent of public sector employers are increasing starting salaries.

Jon Boys, labour market economist for CIPD, warned that Brexit could make it even harder to recruit staff. “With fewer EU nationals working in the UK at the same time last year, it’s vital that the government recognises the need for a flexible post-Brexit migration system.”

Halfon: scrap “pointless” GCSEs

Rohan Banerjee

Robert Halfon, chair of the House of Commons’ Education Select Committee, has suggested that GCSEs should be abolished and replaced with a baccalaureate-style qualification which covers vocational skills and personal development.

The Conservative MP for Harlow, appearing at an event in London run by vocational education charity Edge Foundation last month, said: “Get rid of GCSEs, which seem pointless to me. Instead there should be some kind of assessment to show how far you’re progressing. I would rather that all the concentration should be on the final exam before you leave [school].”

Halfon’s proposed replacement qualification, which would be assessed at the age of 18, is a hybrid of traditional arts and science subjects alongside vocational training in computer and technology-related fields.

Edge Foundation chief executive Alice Barnard added: “Technology is moving at such a rapid pace and change is happening so quickly, we are failing young people if we do not enable them to develop the adaptability and the critical skills they need now and in the future.”

Ex-cons receive life skills training

Augusta Riddy

A controversial scheme has been launched that will teach convicted sex offenders basic life skills such as cooking, and help them to make friends. The Corbett Centre for Prisoner Reintegration is a joint project between the Safer Living Foundation, Nottingham Trent University (NTU) and HMP Whatton,

which houses adult male sex offenders.

The centre will offer support with employment, education, housing, and social skills to individuals carrying convictions. Professor Belinda Winder, head of NTU Sexual Offences Research Unit, said the initiative would "support our existing research to understand and prevent sexual abuse so that we can have a real impact on improving ... safety."

The scheme, which is expected to work with 100 people in its first year, has attracted criticism from some survivors of sexual abuse; one victim told *Nottinghamshire Live* it was "a slap in the face".



Govt announces AI investment

Rohan Banerjee

The government has partnered with several industry-leading companies to commit £110m to funding post-graduate courses in artificial intelligence. Up to 200 specialist master's degrees and work placements will be made available across universities in the United Kingdom, sponsored by high-profile technology firms, including DeepMind and Cisco.

Some 1,000 PhD programmes will also be supported at 16 dedicated UK Research and Innovation AI Centres for doctoral training. The announcement of new funding coincides with the

publication of a report by Tech Nation, which found that venture capital investments in the UK's AI sector have grown by 17 per cent in the last year.

Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, said of the fresh investment: "The UK has long been a nation of innovators. This AI skills and talent investment will help nurture leading UK and international talent to ensure we retain our world-beating reputation in R&D."

Labour announces education plans

Augusta Riddy

Jeremy Corbyn has announced that the next Labour government will create a National Education Service, intended to offer "cradle-to-grave" education, free at the point of use.

The service will overhaul the whole education system, reforming it at every level from early years through to adult education. As part of this, Labour will cease schools cuts and introduce a "fairer funding formula" to try to redress "historical underfunding" of some schools. It will also provide free school meals to all children, funded by scrapping the VAT exemption of private school fees, and will make further education courses free, to enable people to "upskill or retrain at any point in life".

Chris Keates, general secretary of teaching union the NASUWT, welcomed the announcement. "The NASUWT has identified the need for greater investment in and focus on professional development and learning opportunities for employees throughout their working lives." He criticised the "absence of any strategic direction for the education system under the current government's academisation programme".

The Learning and Work Institute recently found that adult learning is at its lowest level in 20 years.



Mental health support for drivers

Rohan Banerjee

Lorry drivers in Scotland are being given specialist mental health training in order to help them cope with the pressures of working long hours by themselves.

NHS Grampian and Aberdeen-based lorry firm Dyce Carriers have partnered to launch the Wellness on Wheels initiative, which includes workshops for drivers, overseen by mental health experts, covering therapy services and mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

According to a study by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, almost a third of work-related illness across the continent's transport sector is caused by stress, anxiety and depression.

Jason Moir, the managing director of Dyce Carriers, explained: "Many workers don't have a reason to leave their truck for long periods of time and are alone with their thoughts." Susan Webb, director of public health at NHS Grampian, added: "Drivers can end up being excluded from many opportunities to increase knowledge and improve their wellbeing despite working in a safety-critical industry. It's really important to us as an organisation to support people to be in the best of health at home and at work."

Q&A:

Anne Milton

The Minister of State for Skills and Apprenticeships talks to Will Dunn about the changing numbers in, and types of people using, the apprenticeship system

When you look at the latest apprenticeship statistics, what do you think is going well?

There's a rise of 15 per cent in the number of starts from this time last year. When I started this job over a year ago, businesses were very grumpy about the levy. What I've seen over the last year is a big shift, with employers realising that apprenticeships can't be a bolt-on to your business. You've actually got to embed apprenticeships in your workforce.

If you look at people like Royal Mail, Ernst & Young, Channel 4, GSK, Virgin Media, Airbus, and a few public sector employers – Leeds NHS Trust is the real shining example – they've now got apprenticeships in their workforce planning.

But that rise is since the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, which dramatically reduced the number of starts – the total number has still not recovered, has it?

I'd say it's like comparing apples and pears. Pre the reforms, what was called an apprenticeship wouldn't be called an apprenticeship today. That's a big

change. Now we say that they've got to be a minimum of a year, we've produced new standards – there are 390 of them now – and you've got to have 20 per cent off-the-job training.

What do you see in apprenticeships now that concerns you?

I don't think I'm concerned. I think what we've been doing has obviously been working. And I think there's a moment where employers see the light, and then will run with it themselves.

I was up at Virgin Media recently, and they're really thrilled. The woman I met said to me: "It's been fantastic for us as a business, realising how much more we can do with the local, particularly young, but not only young, workers in the area."

The number of 19-24 year-olds going into entry-level apprenticeships in 2017/18 – the last full year for which data is available – was half what it was three years previously. That doesn't concern you?

I reject the premise of your question; I don't think you can compare what went on before 2017. Level 2-3



[apprenticeships] account for about 87 per cent of all starts, but you're right that the number of Level 2s is quite low. We're looking into that at the moment, to try and see why.

There have been a number of other factors that have gone on in the economy that may have had an impact. For instance, there's been quite a big retraction in the retail sector. [Fact check: according to Full Fact, while retail work always involves seasonal dips, these have not got worse in recent years and "the number of people employed in retail is relatively stable".]

I think the retail sector accounted for quite a lot of Level 2 apprenticeships in the past. Added to which, we need to see if more 16-year-olds are staying on in full-time education. So, we're digging into that, because we want to make sure everybody has the opportunity.

Over the same period, the number of people aged over 25 taking higher level apprenticeships has more than doubled. Is that good news?

Anybody doing an apprenticeship is a success story, if you sit where I am. And



“I have yet to meet an apprentice who feels they’re not paid enough”

we know that there is a shortage of Level 4-5 skills, so that’s really important.

So a rise in the use of apprenticeships to train managers is a good thing?

There was an employer skills survey done a few years ago, and when employers were asked which areas they had the biggest shortage, interestingly they said management and team leader, that sort of level – that’s three fifths of employers. I was quite shocked. [Fact check: the most recent Employer Skills Survey published by the DfE found that “the most prevalent reported skill shortage was a lack of specialist skills or knowledge” and that “employers were most likely to have experienced skills-related difficulties when recruiting for Skilled Trades positions”.]

There is a feeling that you can get people in at Level 2 and 3, but businesses are looking to extract the people who can supervise and lead that team. It’s a demand-led programme, which is the advantage – employers are using the levy to get the skills they feel they’ve got a shortage in.

I heard a really good story the other day from an employer who has completely changed how they do their graduate programme. They’re now pulling in a lot more degree apprenticeships, reducing the number of graduates. And in order to do their bit for the local area, they’ve now set themselves a target for the number of apprentices they’ll have who are care-leavers. So I think companies, once they’ve got their apprenticeships system up and running, then the next thing is: Is there something we could do that helps people from other, more disadvantaged backgrounds – people who wouldn’t normally have access to this sort of opportunity?

Isn’t it the state’s job to ensure people from all backgrounds have that sort of opportunity, rather than relying on businesses to offer opportunities as a form of charity?

I think I’d always welcome the fact that companies are doing this without being

forced to do it. It’s good to see business operating in a responsible way.

You’ve previously said that you would bring in a system to get feedback from apprentices.

We’re phasing it in, so we’ve got it up and running for some employers, and it’s really good to see what they’re saying about training providers. The next stage is to start bringing it in for apprentices.

When that happens, will you get feedback from apprentices who don’t complete their apprenticeship?

In my ideal world, this is all up and running, and that would obviously be useful to find out – did they quit because the employer was not good, did they quit because they didn’t get the training they should have done? All of that will be really important data.

Why are apprentices paid so little?

When I meet apprentices, and I have literally met hundreds, the first question I always ask is: are you paid enough? And I have yet to see or meet an apprentice who feels that they’re not paid enough. They say “good” or “okay”, or “I’d always like more”, but I don’t hear “actually, it’s terrible”. And that’s what I’m looking for. Apprenticeship minimum wage for a 16-year-old feels like quite a lot of money.

£3.70 an hour feels like a lot of money?

If you’re 16, yes it does, actually, because you’re not earning anything, you’re at school. So, you’re living at home, you’re probably not being charged for living accommodation, so it feels like quite a lot of money. But obviously you had a wealthy background, if £3.90 an hour doesn’t seem like very much – somebody was giving you a lot of money at 16! [Fact check: apprentices are not at school. The current minimum wage for an apprentice is £3.70, rising to £3.90 in April 2019. This can be paid to any apprentice aged under 19 or in the first year of their apprenticeship. This amounts to a gross salary of £8,112 per year for a 40-hour week.]

Apprenticeships are the lifeline of our economy

**Layla Moran,
Liberal Democrat
Spokesperson
for Education,
explains what the
government is
getting wrong on
apprenticeships,
and why she
believes FE colleges
hold the key**

Theresa May has certainly talked the talk about the importance of vocational education and enhancing the prestige of non-university-based qualifications. But what her government has actually achieved in this area tells a very different story.

I'm very proud of the work the Liberal Democrats did in the coalition government to expand and promote apprenticeships – creating nearly two and a half million between 2010 and 2015. Quality of training also improved, with 90 per cent of apprentices saying they were satisfied with their training and 75 per cent of employers saying apprenticeships had increased productivity.

But I fear much of this progress is now being undone. For starters, there has been a dramatic decline in new apprenticeship starts in 2017-18; 290,500 starts in the first three quarters of the 2017-18 academic year, compared to 440,300 and 384,500 reported at this



time in 2016-17 and 2015-16, a decrease of 34.0 and 24.5 per cent respectively.

And of course, numbers tell only part of that story – the quality of that training is more important still. Ofsted's deputy director for further education and skills told the House of Commons Education Select Committee last year that “about half” of the provision it had inspected this year required improvement or was inadequate.

Apprenticeships, when they are delivered well, have the potential to offer massive benefits to our employers and our economy as a whole by upskilling our workforce, and offer a vital alternative to those who feel that a more academic route is not the right one for them.

To me it is just common sense that we should be making apprenticeships readily available to every young person who wants to go down that route – and encouraging people to consider taking this path just as readily as we would encourage someone to look into a



The work of Lib Dems is being undone

SHUTTERSTOCK / PRESSMASTER

university degree.

However, we must not just throw people into average apprenticeships with a lack of direction and training. We need to focus on making sure we have high-quality courses and the right training, or we will squander time and money and deny people what should be a great opportunity.

My party is committed to saving and revamping the apprenticeship sector, and it is something I'm personally very passionate about. We should demand the highest-quality provision, and equivalent levels of accountability, as we would when it comes to any other form of education.

This is by no means an easy task and I would be the first to admit that even when the apprenticeship sector was booming, there was still a lot more work to do to ensure no apprentice was let down by poor-quality training.

While there may be no silver bullet to solve this, there are some steps the government could commit to today if they want to make their supposed commitment to technical education a reality.

Firstly, we have a duty to fund our colleges properly. FE colleges provide a huge number of apprenticeships; 313,000 people are doing apprenticeships in colleges currently and nearly half of all apprenticeships in construction, engineering and manufacturing are provided in colleges.

Yet FE colleges have had their funding decimated in recent years. Over the last ten years colleges have sustained, on average, a 30 per cent funding cut and the University and College Union estimates that 23,000 staff posts were lost between 2010-2017.

Colleges provide other benefits too; they are a vital part of the education ecosystem for so many reasons. Colleges train and provide education to 2.2m people, 72 per cent of them are judged to be good or outstanding, and they reach students from diverse backgrounds and of all ages. The repercussions if the government continues to neglect them

will be devastating.

This is to say nothing of the positive impact they have for businesses too. By allowing many adult learners to retrain and upskill throughout their careers, colleges provide expertise for key sectors.

Neglecting them risks creating a huge skills gap in the future, which leads me to think: how can the Conservatives claim to be the party of business when they are undermining a sector that is so crucial to the future of so many businesses across the country?

Secondly, we must put the apprenticeships scheme on a more sustainable financial footing by reforming the apprenticeship levy. Since its introduction in April 2017, it has run into difficulties and is increasingly unpopular with businesses, who see it as bureaucratic and too restrictive. It has particularly contributed to a reduction in new starts in small and medium-sized businesses – precisely the sorts of businesses we should be doing most to support.

Thirdly, in the interests of boosting the quality as well as the quantity of apprenticeships, we should drop the target for a specific number of new starts and instead focus on building on the work of the Institute for Apprenticeships and regional bodies to set standards and frameworks for the full range of apprenticeships across all sectors and through all levels. We should also reinstate the requirement for a recognised qualification to be part of an apprenticeship.

Apprenticeships and further investment in FE aren't just a good idea in theory: in the face of fast-paced technological change (which will mean more and more of us need opportunities to retrain and bolster our skills throughout our careers) and the skills gaps that Brexit threatens to open up in many sectors, they should be seen as a necessity by any government that is serious about maintaining a highly skilled UK workforce and a thriving national economy.

The state of education

Head teachers have their say

Jonny Ball surveyed 267 head teachers from across the country, asking for their views on the state of education in the UK

Funding and resources

82%

said their schools had less or a lot less money to spend on each pupil than it did in 2010. Only 21% of independent schools said the same.

54%

said there were fewer teachers or many fewer teachers per pupil in their school than there were in 2010.

42%

had bought food for pupils.

40%

had cleaned or maintained non-classroom areas of their school, such as corridors or toilets.

38%

said they have had to make support staff redundant.

41%

said they have had to ask parents to contribute or donate to the school.

Politicians and policy

75%

thought that Damian Hinds was not listening to teachers' concerns.

66%

thought state-funded schools should be accountable to local authorities.

72%

thought that free schools had not improved the state of education in the UK.

Respondents' last Ofsted rating



84%

thought that their Ofsted rating was fair...

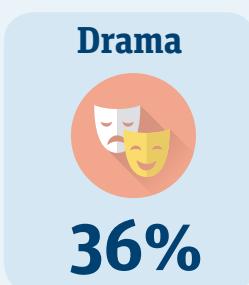
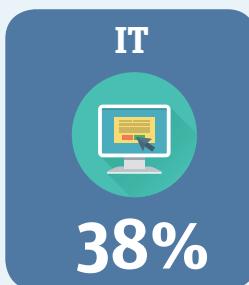
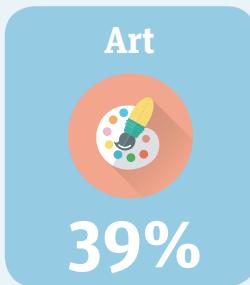
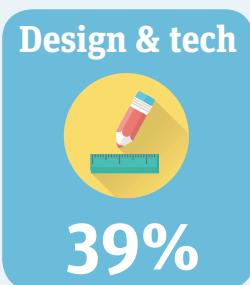
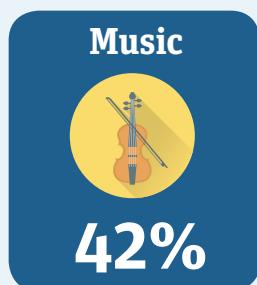
24%

...but only 24% said Ofsted's inspection framework was fair and helps drive up standards.

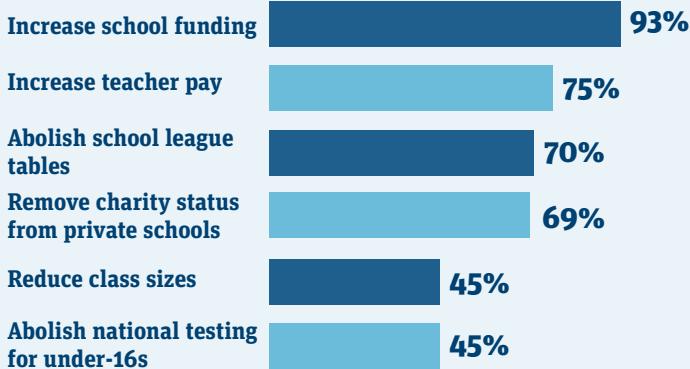
54%

said it was necessary to reform Ofsted.

Which, if any, of the following subjects have suffered from decreased attention being afforded them due to budget constraints or curriculum changes since 2010?



Which of the following education policies would you like to see adopted in the UK?



95%

thought teachers' work was undervalued in the UK.

ACTIVITIES UNDERRATED

53%

said their school does not have the human or financial resources to run extracurricular activities.

91%

said that secretaries of state for education would benefit from having some experience of teaching or working in state schools.

“Academisation was a poor move and has been very divisive for schools.”

“School funding is in true crisis, the profession is not respected as it should be and schools are being run on goodwill and commitment to a vocation – this is not sustainable.”

“I will be retiring in July because I don’t think I can stomach any more.”

“Michael Gove has taken our education back decades”

Which political figure has caused the most damage to the UK’s education system this century?

**Michael Gove
80%**

**Other
14%**

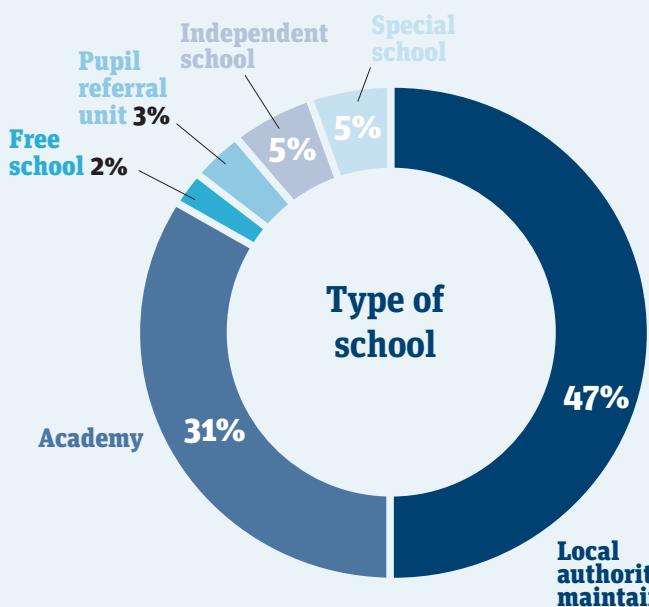
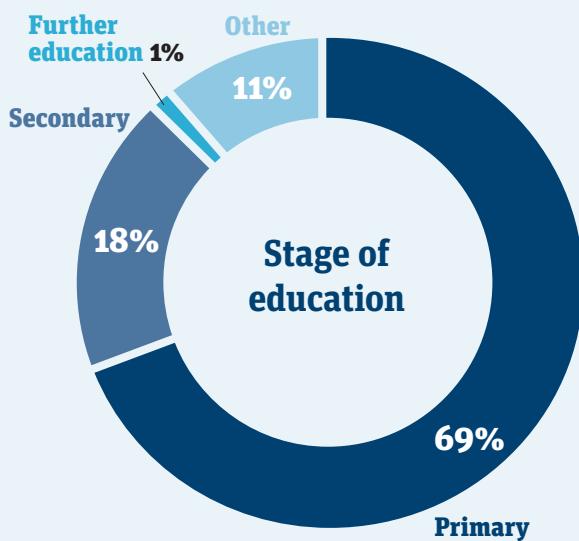
**Nicky Morgan
1%**

**Ed Balls
2%**

**David Blunkett
3%**



Makeup of respondents' schools



Earning, learning and a head start on the competition

Sue Parr, director of apprenticeships, WMG, University of Warwick, discusses the benefits of starting work earlier

The national interest in degree apprenticeships has grown rapidly – providing young people with an opportunity to earn and learn rather than bearing the burden of student debt. There is an observable trend of more schools and parents, as well as young people themselves, asking universities about degree apprenticeship programmes at open days.

They represent a paid job, a head start on a professional career, and an opportunity to study for a degree without a loan. The blend of skills and experience make apprentices very employable and the appeal of apprenticeships understandable to those with a practical mindset that might not want to take the conventional route to higher education.

Combining a challenging job and a rigorous degree, naturally, requires a lot of careful time management and determination, but for the young people who prefer to apply their learning in an immediate way, the degree apprenticeship programmes provide an exciting opportunity. By the time many of their contemporaries will be entering their first job, apprentices will have already been recognised for their capability and achievements and be progressing within an organisation.

Industry and academia partnerships

Many of the degree apprenticeships now available have been developed through strong partnerships between companies and universities. They

truly embody a balance between academia and industry, incorporating both the skills and behaviours expected by an organisation and the technical and academic knowledge required for that level of expertise.

Bringing young people into a company early to learn and develop alongside experienced staff helps them hone the professional skills and behaviours they need for their own personal development, and the future growth of the business. Apprentices who can think creatively, have good problem-solving capabilities and have a sound underpinning academic knowledge should be viewed as valuable assets by their employers.

Skills for the future

Degree apprenticeships work best when there is a very close partnership between employing organisations and HEIs that ensures that all aspects of the programmes are well integrated and that the apprentices get the support they need.

A close working relationship also provides a chance for the partnership to continually review content of the degree and experience of the apprentice. In many areas where degree apprenticeships are popular – engineering and digital technology, for example – things are changing rapidly and the necessary knowledge and skills need to be continually updated. When there is a close partnership in place courses can be amended quickly and effectively.

“The skills gap” is often cited as an ongoing challenge for British industry. Degree apprenticeships can be used to ensure that young people have the appropriate skills, as well as upskilling existing staff, ensuring that they have opportunities to develop the new skills required in this ever-changing environment.

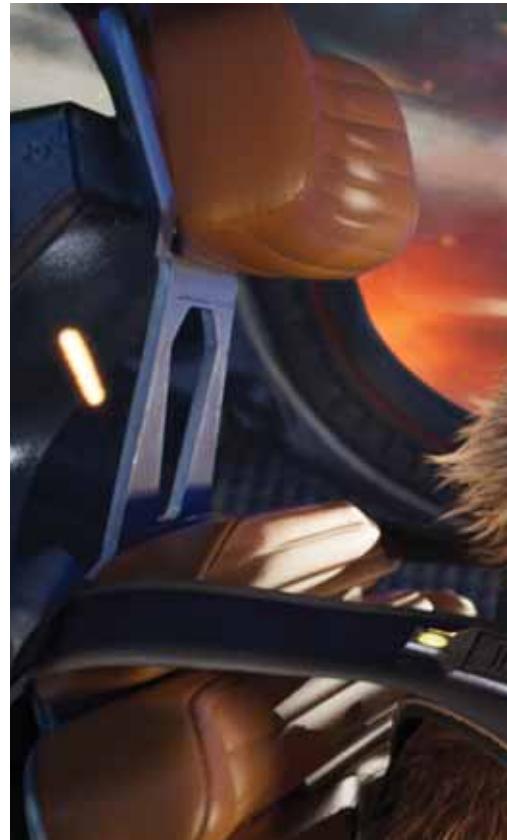
For more information, please visit:
[www.warwick.ac.uk/
WMGdegreeapprenticeships](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/WMGdegreeapprenticeships)

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



The art of apprenticeships

Neil Hatton, chief executive of UK Screen Alliance and chair of the Creative Industries Council Apprenticeships and T-Levels Group, discusses the role of apprenticeships in the creative sector



IN ASSOCIATION WITH



Journalist, publishing assistant, digital marketer, architectural assistant, bespoke tailor and cutter, visual effects compositor, creative venue technician and broadcast production assistant. What do these roles have in common? They are all among a selection of the apprenticeships available now within the creative industries, and several more are in the pipeline.

Employment in the creative industries has increased by 28.6 per cent since 2011 with more than two million jobs in a sector that makes up 5.5 per cent of the UK economy and generates more than £101.5bn in GVA.

Since creative apprenticeships were introduced to the cultural sector in 2008, there have been more than 7,000 starts with a growing number of employers valuing apprenticeships, not only for training new skilled workers,

but also as a tool for encouraging greater workforce diversity. Within the screen industries, visual effects apprenticeships have doubled since 2016 with apprentices receiving credits on several Hollywood movies; an enviable CV when you are not yet 20 years old.

However, the Creative Industries Council estimates that there are 77,000 positions that are vacant, or where stronger skills are needed. Employers across all creative sectors have been working to increase the supply of home-grown talent for several years now, but in some parts of the creative industries, the imminent ending of free movement of labour is adding pressure to accelerate this.

April 6th marks the second anniversary of the apprenticeship levy and signals the beginning of the month-by-month expiry of

Framestore visual effects apprentices worked on Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy 2*



24-month-old unspent contributions as these payments are absorbed into the Exchequer and employers will have missed their chance to spend them on apprentice training. Research by ScreenSkills and Creative & Cultural Skills predicts that creative industry companies will spend at most 27 per cent of their estimated £75m total levy contributions. Therefore £55m will be lost for creative industry training and the take-up of apprenticeships will only be a quarter of what it could be.

One barrier to the upscale of apprenticeship placements cited by employers is a lack of relevant apprenticeship standards for specialist core roles. Trailblazer groups of employers who formed to create new standards found the process long and arduous, struggling with the unfamiliar vocabulary of the education world and without financial support to engage the

necessary expertise. In the Creative Sector Deal published last year, DCMS agreed to fund the development of around 20 new standards. The Creative Industries Council Apprenticeships Group has since collated a list of priority standards and will liaise with DCMS and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), to fast-track these new creative apprenticeships.

Existing apprenticeships in management, leadership and support roles could be made more attractive to creative industries employers by contextualising the course content to be more relevant to their needs, while still retaining compliance with the agreed generic standards. Sector trade bodies could play a role here in bringing together employers to commission providers who could provide these tailored apprenticeships.

Strong employer engagement and the rigour of the IfATE's processes have led to high-quality industry designed apprenticeship standards that will be key to filling skills gaps. However, both employers and training providers have often identified the individual funding band allocated to an apprenticeship standard as being insufficient to ensure the high quality of delivery to which they all aspire. Specialised apprenticeships with small cohorts struggle to achieve the economy of scale to fit within the allocated band, and outside of London it can be even more challenging to assemble a viable cost-effective cohort. There also doesn't appear to be sufficient weighting given to the funding of standards that require the challenging blend of creative and STEM skills.

Freelancers make up 35 per cent of creative industry workers, compared to 15 per cent across the entire workforce. Many project-based creative freelance engagements are shorter than the minimum 12 months required to complete an apprenticeship. One possible solution is Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs), who could employ apprentices and loan them

out for multiple short projects, where they gain the necessary on-the-job experience. The ATA could be funded by transfers of unused levy from large employers, but this requires a significant increase in the amount of transfer allowed. This is currently set at 10 per cent of a company's annual levy contribution and is soon to increase to 25 per cent. It needs to be raised to at least 50 per cent to make the ATA business model viable. It also requires changes to the current rules so that an apprentice's wages can be covered by the ATA from the levy, whilst they are not attached to a paying project.

In addition to apprenticeship levy contributions, many employers also fund their own internal and industry coordinated training and outreach schemes. For instance, film, high-end TV and animation producers contribute £3m to their respective voluntary levies administered by ScreenSkills, which funds upskilling as well as entry-level training. The Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre also have their Inspiring Future Theatre and Theatrecraft programmes to attract and develop fresh young talent.

Access: VFX champions inclusion in recruitment through outreach to students in all levels of education and all socioeconomic backgrounds right across the UK. These schemes designed to inform and inspire new entrants compliment the Creative Careers Campaign, also funded by the Creative Sector Deal.

Apprenticeships are steadily gaining traction in the creative industries, but they are not the only tool that is needed. The current levy rules should be relaxed to allow funding for an array of training methods from short courses to CPD that can be deployed to target specific critical skills gaps. The promised review of the apprenticeship levy must take into account creative employers' wishes to make the most flexible, appropriate and effective use of their payments to build the skilled workforce that the creative sector needs to continue to grow and thrive.

Amanda Spielman, the chief inspector of Ofsted, talks to Rohan Banerjee about the education watchdog's changing approach to assessment

Ofsted's new plan for a more rounded education



The criteria by which nurseries, schools and colleges in England are assessed are about to undergo a huge overhaul, with new measures installed by Ofsted, the government's education watchdog, aiming to shift the focus of its reports away from exam results, as of September. "There is a limit to what you can do with quantitative measurement," says Ofsted's chief inspector Amanda Spielman. "You can get to a point where if you try to hang too much weight on any quantitative measurement then you will start to buckle under the strain." Ofsted's role, according to Spielman, is "not to reinforce or put additional pressure on teachers to achieve certain numbers." Rather, it is to "provide insight into how education is delivered."

Spielman, a Cambridge maths graduate, is unlike her predecessors. She

has never been a teacher – something that was criticised by trade unions at the time of her appointment in January 2017. But she does have a master's degree in comparative education from the University of London, and spent 20 years in the financial sector, before becoming part of the founding management team at Ark Schools, a network of 39 academies. Between 2011 and 2016, she served as the chair of Ofqual, the government's exam regulator.

Spielman says she does not need to have been a teacher, though, to appreciate how "challenging" the job is. An over-reliance on "data-driven" assessments of schools, she adds, has led to box-ticking approaches to education, at the expense of delivering a "rounded" experience. "We know that for all sorts of reasons, some of which have been to do with Ofsted, that school management





“Data-driven” assessments have led to box-ticking

SHUTTERSTOCK/ANNA LURKOVSKA

conversations have been about tracking data over time, identifying gaps between groups and sub-groups. But let's look at whether a school is delivering a rounded education rather than immediately diving into the data to find out if the five free-school-meal Polish boys are doing better than the four non-free-school-meal Somali girls.”

Spielman says that Ofsted wants to discourage schools from “teaching to an exam”. She suggests that the weight attached to results has led to a “narrow” curriculum. “What we often see is teachers telling students to ‘learn these seven statements’... That’s what you need to learn in order to check off the essay about Chartism, for example. That’s not to say that exams aren’t still important, but actually, you could probably teach a far more interesting series of lessons about Chartism than

lessons designed simply to teach those seven points.”

Given class sizes, budget constraints and the need for a healthy work-life balance, how much can teachers realistically be expected to cover? “You don’t necessarily have to say that we’ll do a much broader sweep of 19th century British history. You can just do more to make the bits you are teaching full and satisfying, to illustrate what goes in before, and after, and alongside, the history. I don’t think this is necessarily saying make the job of schools something that is impossible.”

Spielman says she favours more fluid approaches to learning and more freedom for students. She wants to see “contexts” for lessons broadened. So does that open the door for a return to coursework – which is usually project-based – informing a proportion of students’ final subject grades? “Absolutely not,” Spielman says, shaking her head.

But Adam Seldon, a history teacher from north London, suggests that an absence of coursework is “ethically and educationally dubious”. Seldon says: “Many of my students sat well over 20 exams last summer and had their mental health negatively impacted by a pressure that schools don’t currently have the capacity to support students through. Judging a student’s two or three years of learning in such a format doesn’t give a useful indication of their intelligence or potential. It’s a format that doesn’t reflect the world of work. Having no GCSE coursework means a key part of A-Level and degree preparation is missed out on and it’s the disadvantaged students who are most likely to lose out.” Spielman counters: “I understand that it’s an attractive prospect, but it consistently breaks down in practice. What we have seen in many schools is that coursework turns year 10 and 11 classes into a treadmill of repeating the same pieces of work, until the child has finally ticked off enough boxes on the mark scheme.”

Could coursework be reformed? If it was more flexible, and say, research-led,

as most university courses are, then students would arguably have the opportunity to study things they chose, and were therefore more engaged with. Spielman disagrees. “Then you have real problems with validity and comparability. The chances of you being able to meaningfully compare someone who has chosen some meaty, historical tome [for an English assignment, for example], and somebody else who has chosen the thinnest, lightest book on the list of options... It would be virtually impossible to get fairness across students in that regard.”

If not exams and grades, then, what does Ofsted propose the new priorities for inspections should be? Spielman says assessments should be “holistic”.

Ofsted’s four main criteria for inspection are: school leadership and management; students’ behaviour, personal development and welfare; the quality of teaching; and, finally, outcomes or results. “Only one of those criteria,” Spielman points out, “is remotely quantifiable. And even with that one, we don’t just pick it up and say a high number equates to a high score.”

Spielman says the perceived quality of outcomes should depend on how capable students are to “use” what they’ve learned, rather than “their ability to answer a particular type of question”. She stresses a need for “skills” and the “long-term” application of learning.

Spielman acknowledges that as a national body Ofsted must be sensitive to “regional inequalities”, and adds that schools should be prepared to bridge gaps in “cultural capital”. She says: “I think it’s fair to say that we don’t know whether the next Albert Einstein is going to walk into a reception class in Chorlton-cum-Hardy or the back end of Brighton next September. So our education system has to set out to provide a really good opportunity for everyone, wherever they are. But we accept that some schools, in some areas, may have a harder job than others.”

Cultural capital, Spielman explains, “is the knowledge that many people would take for granted. It’s what you



would expect someone of a certain age to know. For a four-year-old, it might be something really basic, like types of food or animals. When you meet a four-year-old, who doesn’t recognise a potato, except in chips, then you think that’s a bit of cultural capital that’s missing.”

Spielman says that “progressive” initiatives such as the government’s pupil premiums – designated funds introduced in 2014 for state schools with disadvantaged students – need to be “used effectively”. Pupil premiums are additional funds of between £935 and £2,300 provided by the government, depending on whether schools have a type of student that qualifies for them. As examples, schools may receive pupil premiums for students adopted from care or who have left care, or for students eligible for free school meals.

Ofsted, Spielman says, is “absolutely in favour” of extracurricular activities to “complement” the curriculum. “That’s part of why the pupil premiums were brought in, to make sure that the overall experience was there. Where the extracurricular side and the behaviour side both broadly sit, they’re being pulled together into a holistic judgment.”

While pupil premiums appear, at least at face value, a good idea, are they enough? That is a question, Spielman says, for the Department for Education. “[At Ofsted], we don’t provide or allocate

education resources. Our job is to report on what’s there, but we can make recommendations [on how the funds could be used].”

Another priority for Ofsted is a crackdown on “off-rolling” – that is the exclusion of pupils who are badly behaved or not as academically capable, without due process. “There have been instances of parents removing their children from schools, not because they genuinely want to home educate them or because they’re moving to another school, but because the school has made it clear that they no longer want them.”

Spielman clarifies: “I’m not sitting here in cloud-cuckoo land, saying that no child should ever need to be excluded.” But there is a temptation, she says, for schools to cast aside “the children they consider to be the biggest headaches. We’ve started doing some data analysis as part of our inspections to flag some schools that have unusual patterns of departures.”

Indeed, Ofsted’s inspectors will be told to give an “inadequate” rating to schools that are found to have off-rolled pupils unfairly under its new framework. “If a child does need to be excluded, then it needs to happen properly, justifiably, and done with consultations with the local authorities. But certainly no child should ever be shunted out of the back door.”

Building the network of the future

**Kevin Brady,
HR director at
Openreach, outlines
the company's
ambitious targets
for full fibre
connectivity and
diversity in the
workplace**

As the United Kingdom's largest digital infrastructure company, Openreach supports more than 680 communications providers such as BT, Sky and TalkTalk, in connecting their customers to landline, mobile, broadband, TV and data services across the country. Over the last decade, we've built a fibre network which covers almost 28 million homes and businesses, connecting thousands of schools, hospitals, banks, mobile masts and large businesses. So it's no exaggeration to say that our network touches virtually every aspect of daily life in some way.

We're committed to building the infrastructure the UK needs to stay ahead in the global digital economy and I believe that our heavy investment in an ultra-fast "full fibre" network will help to future-proof the UK for generations to come. We're making great progress in reaching our target of upgrading three million homes and businesses to full fibre by the end of 2020.

We're already building in 14 towns, cities and boroughs, and recently announced an additional 11 locations where we'll build over the next 12 months. As we continue to grow and expand our network, we need to grow our team of highly skilled engineers ready to deploy these new technologies across the country.

In 2019, we'll be hiring 3,000 new trainee engineers. This is in addition to the 3,500 new trainee engineers we hired last year – the biggest

recruitment drive in our history. Openreach is a people business, where we'll offer you a genuine career and the opportunity to thrive.

Trainee engineers start on around £21,000 p.a., rising to £28,000 after just 12 months on completion of their traineeship. Engineers working in London will also receive a London weighting allowance of either £3,380 in inner London or £1,670 in outer London. They'll be given an attractive package of benefits, world-class training, and will join us at a really exciting time as we invest heavily in our network and people to keep driving the UK's digital revolution.

A great example of the investment we're making in high-quality training comes with the opening of our second training centre in Peterborough – one of 12 similar regional centres being built or upgraded across the country. The 100,000 square foot facility includes an "Open Street" – a meticulously designed mock-up of a typical suburban street – giving new recruits and existing engineers the opportunity to develop and enhance their skills in an authentic, immersive and controlled environment.

We're looking for the aspiring engineers of tomorrow and we're committed to building a workforce that reflects the hugely diverse communities we serve. We're working hard to attract more women into our workforce, and last year our intake of female engineers was higher than previous years. Also, the number of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people we have recruited has increased nationally from 11 per cent in 2017 to 17 per cent the following year.

Becoming an engineer can be an incredibly rewarding career; we're looking for people from all walks of life, and we want to attract and keep the best engineers in the business.

For more information about our trainee engineer scheme, please visit: www.openreach.co.uk/trainee

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John Holland-Kaye, chief executive of Heathrow, presents the case for education and training with vital employer input across the business and industrial community

“It takes a village”: shaping the workforce of tomorrow



Much of the debate about the future of work has focused on automation and the impact of artificial intelligence, as well as looking at globalisation and other changes to our society. These shifts will have a huge impact on the careers of the future, and how we perform those roles. This means changing the way we train our young people, as well as re-skilling our existing workforce, to give them the skills they need to succeed.

As chief executive of Heathrow, I have a responsibility to ensure our airport is contributing to closing the skills gap in the UK. Heathrow is one of the biggest single sites of employment in the country, with about 76,000 people across more than 400 companies working together to deliver for our passengers all year round. As we progress through the planning process for our airport's expansion, these

numbers can only get bigger.

To continue building Britain, we need to accelerate our efforts to support wide groups of people into employment and build a large pool of talented people for the future. Businesses have a crucial role in driving this change – so they need to make sure they have the suitably skilled workforce they need in order to deliver ambitious projects with nationwide benefits.

That's why at Heathrow we established our Employment and Skills Academy, now in its 15th year. We are very lucky to have a rich talent pool in our local communities, but we recognise that some people need a bit of help and training to access employment and career pathways. Our Academy, working hand in hand with local people, has helped unlock opportunities in and around our airport for over 8,000 local residents so far.

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Heathrow
Building for the future

Atkins, one many businesses supporting Heathrow Expansion



Another focus of ours is to help local people understand the huge range of opportunities at the airport and use our scale to bring others with us. Now in its 12th year, we hold an annual jobs and career fair at Heathrow with over 50 airport employers, helping young people learn more about taking their first step on the career ladder with us.

At the heart of our expansion plans is our ambitious aim to double the number of apprenticeships at the airport and through our supply chain to 10,000. Some of these will be part of the 40,000 new jobs for the local community that are estimated to be created by expanding our airport.

We know that our responsibility towards local communities goes beyond providing jobs. As a major infrastructure hub, our success depends on having the right people with the right skills and developing our

colleagues to thrive. That's why last year we launched several higher-level technical apprenticeships and degree apprenticeship, including a Master of Business Administration.

There is lots more we can do – and we need to make the most of the opportunity of expansion to contribute further to closing the UK skills gap. It's why we asked Lord Blunkett to establish the Heathrow Skills Taskforce almost two years ago. The Taskforce has advised us on how to maximise the employment and skills benefits an expanded Heathrow is expected to create. In their recommendations, they were clear that a step change in our approach to skills and apprenticeships is needed to do so.

In the coming months, we will set out a roadmap as part of our new Skills Strategy so that we can be held to account on our pledge to double apprenticeships at the airport and through our supply chain to 10,000 by 2030. This will also draw on Heathrow's ongoing work to widen the range of apprenticeship standards currently on offer beyond Level 3. Because of the leadership role we have as a major employer, that will involve working closely with our supply chain, business partners and local education providers.

We are already taking joint action. We recently launched Britain's first airport-owned Shared Apprentice Scheme in construction, which will place Heathrow apprentices across our construction supply chain. Major companies including Mace, Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall, Dyer & Butler and Ferrovial are set to participate.

In 20 years when we look back on the Heathrow Expansion project, I want us to have delivered a legacy for this country. Not just in the infrastructure we have built, but in the skilled workforce we will have trained and prepared for the future.

They say "it takes a village to raise a child"; delivering a better workforce for our communities and the country follows that same message.

IN FOCUS

Karis Francis

**Support Team Services Leader
at Heathrow Employment
and Skills Academy**

"My life has completely changed since I started as an apprentice at the Heathrow Employment and Skills Academy more than three years ago. Growing up, it was my dream to work in fashion design and I focused my studies on art and textiles, but I did not get into university. I took this as an opportunity to make my own path, spending four years working in the creative sector.

"Over time, I realised I wanted to dedicate my work to helping other people and I wanted more career progression and training opportunities than what was on offer.

"At 22, I decided to apply for an apprenticeship. It was not an easy road to take but I knew I had made the right decision when I walked into the Heathrow Employment and Skills Academy for my interview. I started as a business administration apprentice, supporting the Academy's work managing Heathrow's apprenticeship programmes. I later moved on to the recruitment team, helping Heathrow's supply chain and business partners recruit apprentices. I am now continuing my apprenticeship as a team leader working across all workstreams.

"I have not looked back. Learning on the job can be transformative and help people discover their passion for a career. I wouldn't be the same person without this programme, and I know others will say the same.

"That's why I am excited to see us move forward with our plan to double apprenticeships at the airport and through our supply chain to 10,000 by 2030. Not only will this open up opportunities for young people in my community, but I hope it will help change how we view careers."

Leading the sector from the street

Chris Jones, chief executive of the City and Guilds Group, champions practical, on-the-job training



I'm a big believer that apprenticeships, with their unique combination of theoretical knowledge and on-the-job training, can play a huge part in helping organisations give employees opportunities to develop the skills that both the individual and business need for the future.

Four years ago, we established the Princess Royal Training Awards (PRTAs). We wanted to honour outstanding and innovative training and skills development programmes that had a substantial impact on employees, and ultimately business performance. We receive many exceptional applications for the awards every year from organisations who have seen the transformative power of apprenticeships – Openreach being one such example.

In order to achieve its ambitions to

ramp up the build of fibre networks and recruit the right talent, Openreach is overhauling its approach to developing its people – putting practical, real-life training at its heart. On a recent visit to “Openstreet” (a replica of a street for apprentices to apply what they learn) in Bradford, I saw first-hand how a creative and goal-oriented approach to training is having a positive impact on its flagship trainee engineer programme.

If there's one piece of guidance I could give anyone about developing an apprenticeship programme – or any type of work-based training – it would be to focus on the impact it will have. Whether that's on the bottom line, increasing productivity, supporting talent management, or improving employee retention, you need to have an aim and a means of measuring its success.

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Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, **Amber Rudd**

COMMENT

Skills Minister, **Anne Milton**

"Openreach are leading the way and helping to create engineering apprenticeship opportunities for thousands of people across the country. I congratulate them on the huge progress they have made and I look forward to hearing more about their fantastic work."

Jamie Hepburn, Scottish Government Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills

"The Scottish government is committed to improving the country's digital infrastructure, encouraging inward investment and employment opportunities for inclusive growth, so we welcome this long-term investment in the Scottish workforce by Openreach, and the capital investment being undertaken at its Livingston training facility."

CASE STUDY



Name: Hannah Hargreaves
Job title: Trainee engineer
Employer: Openreach
Age: 30
Hometown: Accrington

What did you do before working for Openreach?

I worked in a call centre for six years. I spent most of my time on the customer complaints team, but I did a range of roles during my time covering billing, orders and sales. I've always been interested in progressing my career and spent some time as a sales coach and a trainer.

Why did you choose a career in engineering and why Openreach?

After the birth of my daughter, Meredith, I felt like I needed to make a change, but I wanted to stay within the telecommunications industry. I saw that Openreach were recruiting in my area and thought I'd give it a go. Openreach has always been somewhere I'd wanted to work and the trainee engineering role seemed to offer me this great opportunity.

What do you do?

I am a trainee service delivery engineer. Most of my day is spent installing and repairing phone and broadband lines to residential and small business customers. You'll probably see me working at a roadside cabinet or even at the top of a telephone pole.

What do you like most about the job?

I enjoy meeting people face-to-face

after being behind a computer screen for so long! I love being out and about and I really do think the fresh air does you good. I also think the hours are great as I get to spend evenings with family which I wasn't able to before.

What do you like least?

I thought I'd lose more weight doing this job but I think I've used it as an excuse to eat more chocolate! I'm not a huge fan of the great British weather but I've adapted a lot better than I thought I would.

You've become a bit of a celebrity on social media – LinkedIn. What does that involve and how did it come about?

A lot of clicking!! It all started with a post about becoming an apprentice at the age of 30 and after just becoming a mum.

The connection requests came flooding in after that and once they stopped I just decided to add everyone. You can't have too many connections.

I then decided to promote women in engineering because it's a job I never thought I could do and I think a lot of women will feel the same. I'm basically trying to give more women the confidence to do things way out of their comfort zone.

What are your future plans?

In terms of future plans, I'd love to be a project manager or work in a business improvement role – but I'm not in any rush!

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions,
Amber Rudd

"Apprenticeships and trainee programmes are vital to making sure growth happens and they are an effective way to make good jobs available to people from all backgrounds. Recent record employment levels have been shown to benefit people from disadvantaged backgrounds the most and with opportunities like these with Openreach, that trend is set to continue."

The reform of Britain's education system over the past ten years has been expensive and controversial. As parents and teachers continue to fight the changes, Will Dunn asks if academy policy has achieved its aims

Has academisation worked?

The school system is not being privatised", declared the Department for Education in April 2016, when it published an article on its website to "dispel some common myths" about academisation, the project that has now dominated education policy in the UK for a decade. "Instead," the DfE continued, "heads and teachers are being given greater freedom to run their schools".

Freedom is the stated aim of academisation. It is a policy designed to give schools more autonomy in spending, teaching and organisation. Brought into law by the Academies Act 2010, academisation is the process by which publicly funded schools are moved out of the control of local education authorities and into the control of private organisations called charitable trusts. These trusts can run multiple schools, and are free to choose



what they teach (without having to follow the National Curriculum), who they appoint as board members or teachers, and how they spend their budget, which comes directly from the Department for Education. They are not allowed to make a profit.

Are schools made more free by academisation, and does freedom lead to a better education for children?

These questions have become the subject of fierce debate as academisation has swept through the UK's education system. When the Conservatives came to power in 2010, academies were a specialist solution – there were 203 in total. By the beginning of last year nearly 7,000 schools, including 72 per cent of all secondary schools, had been converted into academies. These conversions have involved hundreds of protests by parents, teacher strikes, and legal challenges.

One school that has resisted the

Parents and teachers protest outside the John Roan school in London



Over 70 per cent of secondary schools have converted

process – twice – is the John Roan school in Greenwich, south-east London. It is one of the oldest state schools in the country, having been founded in 1677. Elizabeth Gould's son is a pupil at the John Roan, and she has another child who she says "would go there this year" were it not for the prospect of academisation, about which she has "extreme reservations". Gould is one of a group of parents who questioned the need for the John Roan to convert to an academy. "I became an accidental activist," she says.

Gould became concerned when the school's head teacher left abruptly, and parents were told that the school would be "getting support" from an academy chain called University Schools Trust, or UST. "We weren't sure why we needed support," says Gould. "We thought we were a good school. But we were told we were getting a 'support package' from

the UST. Not much information was given – they were just 'coming in to help'. So they were brought in in September 2017. Around the same time, we had a visit from the DfE, and they said they felt the school was doing well."

The following March, however, the school was inspected by Ofsted. A teacher from the John Roan, who spoke to *Spotlight* under condition of anonymity, described the inspection as "cursory". The teacher claims to have been asked "leading questions" by inspectors. "They asked 'do you agree that the corridors are unsafe', or 'do you agree that the behaviour in this building is unacceptable'. It was certainly my sense that they went in with an agenda."

There followed an unusual delay in releasing the results of the visit. Ofsted reports are normally issued within two weeks, but the John Roan waited for three months. This delay, the teacher says, "was unaccounted for, and still hasn't been explained. A lot of people were confused by that." The John Roan was found to be inadequate, and was issued with a forced academisation order.

Parents and teachers were surprised and dismayed. Ofsted's portrayal of the John Roan, says Gould, "wasn't a school that I recognised... my son's English teacher – the report on her is not anything that I as a parent would recognise". The teacher agrees that "most people were surprised by the severity" of the report. Much faster, and perhaps less surprising, was the news that a sponsor had been found to academise the school: University Schools Trust, the academy chain that had been brought in six months earlier to "support" the school.

Mistrust of academisation is widespread, for a number of reasons. Foremost among these is that it involves moving control of state schools to organisations that are not part of the state, a fact that supporters of state education oppose on principle. And while these companies are not allowed to make a profit, their spending – particularly on pay for senior managers – has been controversial. In other schools

in south London, one academy chain head paid is over £500,000 a year, while another received a severance package of £850,000.

There is, too, a sense that academisation represents not only the privatisation but also the politicisation of education. Multi-academy trusts (MATs) certainly appear to have greater access to central government than local authorities; DfE records show that Lord Agnew, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the School System, met with MATs or their representatives 25 times between July and September last year. No meetings with local authorities are recorded over the same period.

MATs are also more likely to have a government minister as a trustee. Lord Agnew is himself the founder and former chair of a MAT, the Inspiration Trust, which runs 13 schools in Norfolk and Suffolk. His predecessor, Lord Nash, founded Future Academies (five schools) with his wife, Caroline; their daughter, Jo, was a teacher in a Future school despite having no teaching qualifications. Richard Pennycook, the DfE's lead non-executive board member, is a former CEO of the Co-operative Group, the country's largest corporate sponsor of academies. The businessman David Meller, who was a non-executive board member at the DfE until he resigned in January 2018 in the wake of the Presidents Club scandal (Meller was the club's joint chairman) established the Meller Educational Trust (two schools).

Below the ministerial level at the DfE are the National Schools Commissioner and the Regional Schools Commissioners. These officials decide which MAT gets to take over a school. They, too, have strong links to MATs; Sir David Carter, the National Schools Commissioner until last year, founded the Cabot Learning Federation, a MAT that now runs 16 schools. And of the eight Regional Schools Commissioner positions, at least six have seen the holder leave the department for a senior role in an academy chain.

Connections can also be drawn not only between MATs and politicians, but between MATs and the people who fund



politicians. Lord Harris, sponsor of the Harris Federation (which runs 47 schools in the London area) has been a Conservative Party donor since the 1980s. The Conservative Party donor Lord Ashcroft sponsors the Ashcroft Technology Academy in London. The businessman and Conservative Party donor Sir Peter Vardy was involved in the creation of the first City Technical College under Margaret Thatcher and chaired the Emmanuel Schools Foundation, which ran four academies until 2010. Yet another Conservative Party donor, the Carphone Warehouse tycoon David Ross, chairs the David Ross Education Trust (35 academies). Ross also chairs the New Schools Network (NSN), the organisation that promotes free schools. The NSN is part-funded by the government but also accepts private donations; its most recent accounts credit its most generous benefactors as the Garfield Weston Foundation, which is also a major donor to the Conservative Party, and the Blavatnik Family Foundation, headed by Len Blavatnik – who has, through one of his companies, made significant donations to the Conservative Party.

While no suggestion is made that any of those named above have acted

improperly, it is not hard to see why people who oppose academisation feel uncomfortable about the potential conflicts of interest in a system that has been stocked with those who support the policy and the party behind it, and who in many cases have some financial involvement in its implementation. And in some cases, the cosy associations made possible by academisation have become very controversial indeed.

Last September, BBC *Panorama* visited schools in Essex and Cumbria that were run by Bright Tribe, a multi-academy trust that ran ten schools. The programme alleged that the trust had taken public money for building work and improvements – including fire safety work and structural repairs – that were not carried out. Companies owned by the founder of Bright Tribe, Michael Dwan, were paid £8m by Bright Tribe for services, although Dwan has claimed that these services were offered at “a substantial loss”. Bright Tribe is now in the process of closing, but “related party transactions” – contracts awarded to companies connected to the board members or trustees of academy trusts – are another major factor in the public mistrust of academisation. Some 40 per cent of academies engaged in related-

party transactions in 2016, accounting for £120m in school spending. The DfE has announced that trusts will soon need permission from the Education and Skills Funding Agency for any transaction with a company run by its own members or their families, but it remains to be seen how effective this will be when more than ten per cent of UK companies fail to disclose persons of significant control.

Back at the John Roan school, the immediate concern of the teaching staff was that their working lives were about to change. The UST, the teacher says, “refused to guarantee the hours and jobs of support staff”, meaning teaching assistants, learning mentors, cleaning staff, catering staff and others. The teacher *Spotlight* spoke to said this would have had very serious ramifications for children at the John Roan, especially those with special educational or language needs.

Elizabeth Gould, who is also a teacher, says her experience of having worked at a school that was academised made her deeply apprehensive of what was to come. “We were told that we had to cover other people’s lessons, in subjects we didn’t teach.” As at the John Roan, support staff became a bargaining chip; “we were told that if we didn’t do it, they’d have to sack the lunchtime supervisors.” The result was “a Spanish teacher teaching science, a French teacher teaching geography... What really alarmed me was that certain teachers were put into the autistic unit, with no specialist training.” High-achieving students, says Gould, were told that they were “not allowed” to study art, music or drama. “The ones that are probably going to get good GCSEs, have been told they have to focus on Progress 8 [league table] subjects.”

Concerned that the same would happen at her son’s school, Gould and others contacted another London school that had been taken over by UST. They were told “horror stories... parents spoke out about serious safeguarding issues, the turnover of teachers was really high, 21 to 25 per cent.”

Both Gould and the teacher say that

they were attracted to the John Roan by the fact that it offered a chance to teach, or to learn among, children of all abilities and from all walks of life. A regular criticism of multi-academy trusts is that the pressure created by league tables and other performance measures leads to the “off-rolling” of children who aren’t expected to do well academically in order to raise the average grades achieved at GCSE. At another Greenwich school run by a large multi-academy trust, says Gould, “something like 25 per cent of their Year 11s” won’t sit GCSEs, while another nearby academy has its weaker students study for a “Certificate of Personal Effectiveness” rather than GCSEs. “So then they can say to the outside world, look! When we were with the local authority, we only got 40 per cent pass rate, and now we’ve got 80 per cent!” As a parent, Gould says she is now “very suspicious” of exam performance as the measure of a school. “Low outcome doesn’t bother me.”

Related-party transactions reached £120m in 2016

One problem multi-academy trusts present for parents and teachers who question them is that the decisions they make are not as transparent as those made by a local authority. Anne West, professor of education policy and director of the Education Research Group at LSE, points out that “with maintained schools, minutes of meetings of the governing body are publicly available. Single academies and MATs don’t have to do that... you don’t get anything like as much information as to how decisions are made.”

The opaque nature of academy management extends to other areas, too,

West says. “The DfE sets hardly any requirements as regards the constitution of the board of trustees. Although academy trusts should publish the content of the curriculum this is not a requirement. There is little transparency regarding expenditure and procurement. Although trusts have to file their annual accounts with Companies House and publish the annual accounts, these don’t give much information. They don’t give anything like as much detail as the accounts provided by maintained schools to the local authority, and that’s all set by statute... It’s like what would happen with a private company.”

After an organised campaign of strikes and protest and petitions signed by over a thousand parents, teachers and carers, the John Roan has resisted academisation, for now. But neither Gould nor the teacher think that this is the end – three more multi-academy trusts are thought to be preparing bids for the school.

The teacher in particular gives a grim prognosis for a fully academised education system: “Certain schools will become places where there’s an increasingly high concentration of students with more serious needs, whilst other schools boast about their exam results because they’ve got rid of that responsibility. I didn’t become a teacher to help students who are already well supported do even better, at the expense of students who need a bit more support.”

Has academisation worked, then? As a policy it was designed to offer schools freedom – to choose what they teach, how they spend their budgets, and who they employ – and to varying degrees this has been achieved. But in doing so, politicians made the damaging assumption that these freedoms would be created from nothing – that they did not already belong to someone else. As academy trusts were given the freedom to spend and appoint as they saw fit, the people for whom schools are most important lost the freedom to know about the people running their schools, to question them, and to have a voice in the decisions that affect them at the most important time in their lives.

Quality costs: why cuts are not an option for construction

Top-level apprenticeships can't be delivered on the cheap, warns **James Wates**, past president of the Chartered Institute of Building



The construction industry plays a dynamic, yet too often understated, role in the growth of the United Kingdom's economy. The built environment is exactly that; it is literally the world shaped around us. The quality of housing, for example, is crucial to people's physical and mental health. Physical infrastructure and public services – such as roads, railways, hospitals and schools – are essential to our quality of life. And making them a reality requires a thriving construction sector.

A thriving construction sector, in turn, relies on a steady flow of recruitment, and apprenticeships are central to that. Since the introduction of the government's apprenticeship levy – a tax on companies with an annual pay bill of more than £3m used to fund new apprenticeship programmes – a total of just £370m (as of 30 September 2018) has been paid out of the central fund to pay for apprenticeships. Despite the levy remaining in credit, there are

murmurs within the industry that funding for construction-based degree apprenticeships could be cut, making high-quality vocational training harder to deliver. The apprenticeship levy is set at 0.5 per cent of the value of an employer's pay bill, while construction employers are also required to pay the pre-existing Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) levy – which is 0.35 per cent on PAYE and 1.25 per cent on sub-contractors.

The construction industry already faces long-standing challenges with recruitment, independent of any cuts. A survey carried out by the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA) found that over a third (34 per cent) of UK-based contractors experienced difficulties in identifying and recruiting building trade supervisors. One in five firms said that there were severe shortages in these positions. A further 42 per cent of respondents claimed they were having problems in hiring project managers.

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The quality of construction can determine quality of life

The trope of hard hats and muddy boots and the idea that it is a last-resort career have continually clouded the judgment of many would-be workers in the construction industry, especially young people, and this has seriously hampered our recruitment efforts. While manual labour is an aspect of construction that will endure, more needs to be made of roles that are at the cutting edge of science, technology and management fields.

The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) is alarmed by a dip in degree-level apprenticeships in the construction sector, as well as the likely damaging impact that a cut in funding would have on the wider economy. Construction-based apprenticeships, especially those relating to site management, which are validated by the CIOB, are funded by the apprenticeship levy, paid for by businesses themselves. It is important that firms realise a tangible return on their contributions, in terms of the

quality of apprentices taken on, and the length and funding of these apprenticeship programmes.

As UK universities appear unwilling to lower their tuition fees – typically £9,000 per year, which also applies to degree-level apprenticeships – there is an implied expectation for employers to counter any shortfall. But this expectation is unrealistic for the construction sector tithed to both the apprenticeship and CITB levies. The additional expense would certainly pose questions as to whether the sector was actually getting value for money in terms of its investment into both levies. High-quality apprenticeships cannot be sustained on less money, and any cut in funding would contravene the recommendations of the Richard Review of 2012, which called for “meaningful and relevant” training.

The construction industry is arguably emblematic of the conversation which surrounds apprenticeships in general. While there is a growing acceptance that the bias of the UK’s education system towards traditional school-university pathways has caused imbalance in the employment market, enthusiasm for apprenticeships as an alternative route is also on the rise. But neither clarity nor consensus on what apprenticeships are or how they should be delivered has been achieved. Successive governments have tried to find better balance between technical, vocational and educational training, but there is still work yet to do.

Apprenticeships which are employer-informed are paramount to improving the UK training backdrop. The Institute for Apprenticeships (IFA) is an executive offshoot of the Department for Education, set up by the Apprenticeships, Skills and Learning Act 2009 and amended by the Enterprise Act 2016. Naturally, apprenticeships which are updated according to ongoing industry trends and developments are worth investing in. But this is a tall order for the IFA to manage on its own.

The CIOB, armed with close to two

centuries of insight and expertise, wants to consult with the IFA on new and responsive standards for apprenticeships specifically within the construction industry. What skills do construction employers need and want? What timescales should these apprenticeships operate on? These are the questions the CIOB is able to answer with unparalleled precision to help the IFA establish degree-level standards that will translate to value for the industry.

The rollout of apprenticeships is vital to the rebalancing of the UK’s education system and economy, but the success of the vision for vocational education depends on its capacity to be elevated above being the “other” option. Apprenticeships must be viewed as equal to a university education and to achieve that status depends in part on making the on-the-job experience rewarding. Apprenticeships are an investment of time as well as money for employer and apprentice alike, so ensuring that the programme is of the highest standard and with the most benefits to both parties is in the interests of everyone.

The UK’s workforce should not be viewed solely within the context of the 18-21 age bracket. As well as the chance to “earn as you learn”, free of soaring university tuition fees, the flexibility of apprenticeship programmes opens them up to a wider range of people. As well as skilling and upskilling the nascent employment market apprenticeships can also be used to re-skill members of the existing workforce.

Construction is an exciting, interesting, high-tech and progressive sector. Apprenticeships are not a silver bullet for all of the challenges facing the construction industry, but modernising and diversifying the paths into the profession is certainly a giant step in the right direction. The CIOB hopes to work closely with the IFA to establish the highest possible standards for apprenticeships, and delivering on those standards cannot be done on the cheap.

For more information, please visit:
www.ciob.org

Deborah Hargreaves, director of the High Pay Centre and former business editor of the *Guardian*, argues that companies can and should spend more money on staff training

Does high CEO pay harm a company's skills?



By the fourth of January this year, Britain's captains of industry had already pocketed more money than the average earner will have taken home by the end of the year. The median worker in the UK earns £29,574 per year, but on £3.9m, the median FTSE 100 CEO earns more than that in three days.

What's more, top chief executives have seen their pay rising sharply in recent years. Their median pay rose by 11 per cent last year while their average pay rose by 23 per cent, to £5.7m (the fact that the average is higher than the median means even within this group, the richest are becoming better off). Meanwhile, much of the workforce faces stagnating wages and insecure employment conditions. For many in the UK, wages have not yet returned to levels reached before the global financial crisis in 2008.

The rapid rise in income for those at

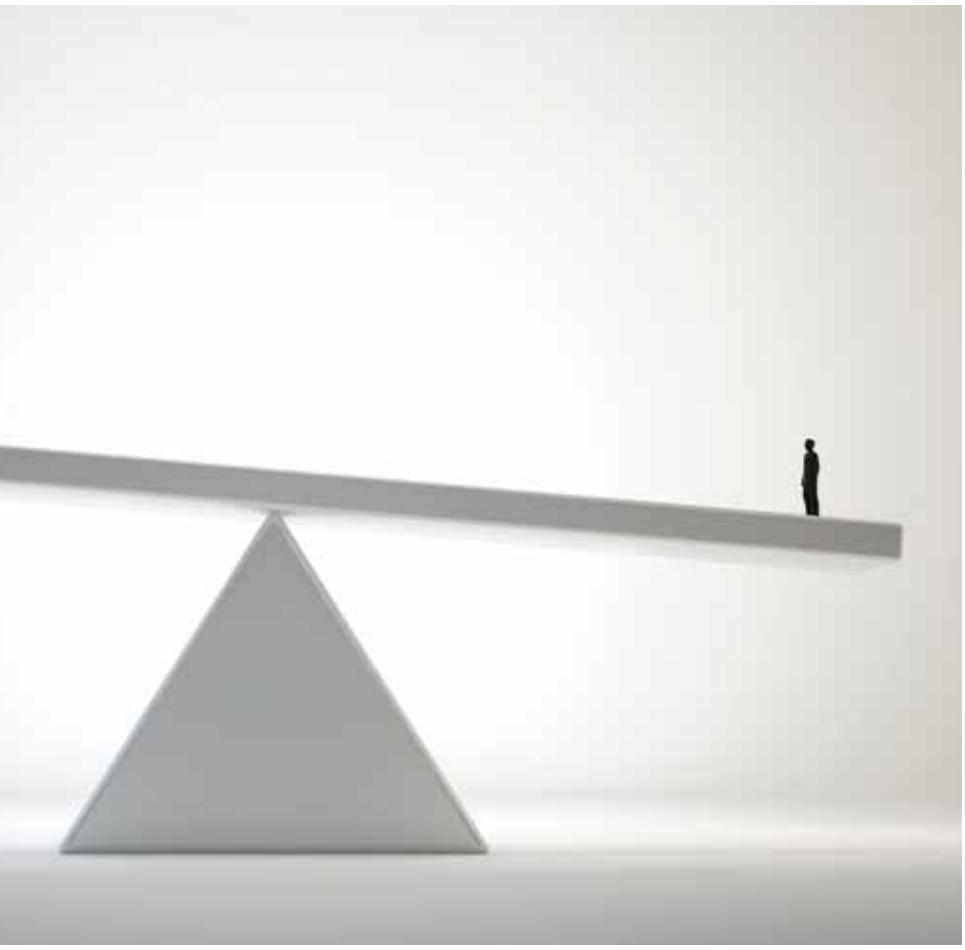
the top of the scale and the suppression of pay for everyone else has driven a gulf through our businesses and society, and bred resentment among working people. On top of this, high-quality jobs that offer rights and benefits have diminished to be replaced by zero-hour contracts, self-employment and agency work.

As a nation we are also becoming less smart, as investment in skills and training for adults declines.

According to a report by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), the percentage of 16-65-year old employees participating in learning activity has been on a downwards slope since 2000. With Brexit looming, employers are becoming increasingly concerned that they will not have access to skilled workers from the European Union once we leave.

However, I would argue that





Employers are part of the problem

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employers are part of the problem themselves and that is partly to do with the way we pay them. Chief executive remuneration has evolved into a complex business in the past 20 years. Top bosses are now rewarded for their work in a number of different ways – only one of which is salary and that is usually the smallest part of the overall package.

The rest of their pay usually comes in the form of shares in their company or share options (more common in the US). Much of this is tied to performance conditions that the bosses have to meet. These performance conditions often include a reference to the share price, or a measure called total shareholder return. This is the increase in value of the shares plus dividends – the total benefit that will go to the owners of the shares.

Top bosses have huge incentives, then, to boost their own shares – they are big

shareholders themselves (from accumulated shares gifted to them over the years) and they are required to perform in a way that increases the returns for investors. Their own incentive plans run over three to five years, which – although they are called “Long-Term Incentive Plans” – is not a long time in the life of a company.

There are not many reliable options for a CEO to influence the share price in the short term; they are hostages to world markets, economic trends and national political developments. But one thing they can do is to hold down costs at the company. This will increase profits and, therefore, share value. One of the biggest costs is workforce wages, which is one reason for stagnating pay for the average worker. Another expense is the training and skills budget, and investment in capital equipment.

British industry has a very poor track record of investment in both the training of its workforce and in new equipment. This is one theory as to why our productivity has been so low in recent years.

Andrew Smithers, the respected City economist, argues in his book *Road to Recovery* that the change in management pay in recent years has stifled productivity through a lack of investment. “The arrival of the bonus culture has therefore shifted the decisions of management away from investment. The fall in investment has caused a dangerous decline in the rate at which productivity improves,” he wrote in a recent paper on corporate governance reform.

The UK’s productivity has fallen dramatically behind the rest of Europe and economists have long been debating the causes. Of course, a skilled workforce can be a company’s biggest asset and many a captain of industry will extol the virtues of their employees in the company’s annual report. But the reality is that short-termism among British bosses, driven by their focus on the share price, has seen training programmes pared to the bone.

The apprenticeship levy was aimed at improving the state of vocational

New staff often have to pay for training themselves



training in the UK and employers with a wage bill of more than £3m annually are required to put 0.5 per cent of their payroll costs into a training fund. But many businesses say they have no faith in the training system and expect much of their funds to go unspent.

While more young people are going to university, the further education and training sector has been starved of funding in recent years and many working in the sector are disillusioned. The NIESR report also showed a rise in the number of people doing very short training courses and a decline in the number of those working towards a vocational qualification.

“The changing pattern of skills investment is indeed reason to be concerned because employers looking to fill technical and associate professional roles, for which intermediate technical qualifications are needed, are seeing a decrease in training in the relevant skills,” said the report.

We are all expected to be working a lot

longer than previous generations, but over a lifetime of rapidly changing technology and business practices, our skills can swiftly fall behind. With labour so cheap, employers often prefer to hire new people rather than to invest in and update the skills of existing employees. If training is available for new workers, they often have to pay for it themselves.

It is short-sighted and could well leave businesses without the requisite skilled workforce to compete in a global world, particularly once we leave the EU’s single market. The current system of performance-related pay for chief executives and their share price fixation has helped to drive this trend. It is yet another reason why we need urgent reform of pay at the most senior level.

Deborah Hargreaves is director of the High Pay Centre and addresses the issue of top pay in her book, Are chief executives overpaid? Available now from Polity Press.

Embracing the apprenticeship economy boom

Apprenticeships represent value for apprentices and manufacturers alike, according to Nikki Jones, director of the University of Sheffield AMRC Training Centre

There's no question that apprenticeships bring big benefits to the young people who choose this alternative route to higher and degree-level education. Our employed-status apprentices can progress from their training to become debt-free graduates with a fulfilling career ahead of them.

Since 2014, the AMRC Training Centre – a creation of the elite, Russell Group University of Sheffield – has been leading the way in doing apprenticeships differently, opening the door to degree-level education to youngsters from disadvantaged districts abandoned during the years of deindustrialisation.

Apprenticeship learning is the win-win meeting of a rigorous academic education with the real-life industry experience which produces work-ready, highly-skilled graduates with the potential to transform the UK's manufacturing industry. We are currently working with over 275 companies who understand the economic impact apprentices can make – apprentices like Oliver Marsh.

Oliver, 22, helped his Rotherham-based company MGB Plastics – one of Europe's leading manufacturers of wheelie bins – shave a six-figure sum off its costs through improvements in productivity, brought about by the application of lean thinking learnt with us, and nurtured by his forward-looking employer. His talents earned him British Plastics Federation Apprentice of the Year and the Yorkshire and Humber Apprentice of

the Year 2018 awards.

His training advisor at MGB, Ian Cosgrove, said: "Working closely with the AMRC Training Centre we developed Oliver's higher-level programme, integrating a polymer diploma to run alongside his mechanical qualification. It was refreshing to work with a team with such a 'can do' attitude."

Our courses are designed in collaboration with industry to ensure our apprentices have the engineering skill sets to add value to their employer's business; at a time when demand for talented, enthusiastic young people has never been higher, and from an industry searching for ways to address a looming skills gap.

To bridge this gap, the AMRC Training Centre has teamed with Primary Engineer Programmes to educate primary and junior schools about the breadth of career opportunities in engineering. This programme helps teachers introduce STEM activities into the classroom and engage pupils at a younger age to challenge misconceptions about engineering and manufacturing.

In 2017, the government's Education and Skills Funding Agency released statistics showing that over the course of their career, both advanced and higher apprentices boost their earnings, with advanced apprentices alone having the potential to earn up to 16 per cent more than their peers with equivalent Level 3 vocational qualifications.

The Department of Education's 2017 Apprenticeship Evaluation also showed that 86 per cent of employers say apprentices helped them develop relevant skills for their organisation, with 78 per cent saying that they improved productivity.

Here in the heart of the Northern Powerhouse we see the impact of this new generation of apprentices. We must continue to champion and promote them as a vital resource for the businesses we support in the Sheffield City Region.

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How apprentices bring together the best of both worlds

Leidos employees and apprentices reflect on the opportunities of a lifetime

Leidos's UK HR team is creating an end-to-end early careers programme



Leidos is a Fortune 500 information technology, engineering, science solutions and services leader, aiming to tackle some of the world's toughest, enduring challenges in the civil, health, defence and intelligence markets.

The company has 32,000 employees worldwide, supporting vital missions for government and commercial customers. In the UK alone, Leidos has more than 1,200 employees servicing clients such as the Home Office, The Ministry of Defence and the Scottish government.

A real driver in Leidos's growth is its wealth of apprenticeships – on-the-job training programmes lasting up to four years, blending practical placements with academic tuition. Here, members of Leidos's staff have shared their thoughts on the benefits of this attractive earn-while-you-learn approach to developing personnel...

Tracy Greenfield, VP for human resources, Leidos

"Leidos aims to attract and retain professionals whose own ambitions align with ours – to strive to make a significant impact and perform work that it is important to the world we live in. At Leidos, we provide a flexible and dynamic working culture offering meaningful and engaging careers. Indeed, a supportive, collaborative approach ultimately leads to a healthy work-life balance.

"The UK HR team is creating an end-to-end early careers programme with apprenticeships at the core. Our apprentice programme has been enormously successful and we are rolling this out to more UK locations and to more clients. Our staff and clients want to engage with emerging and creative talent and ideas, while at the same time relying on Leidos to deliver the most mission critical transformation programmes."

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Leidos UK, making the world a better and safer place, through science, engineering and technology



Colin Jack, software development team lead and apprentice manager, Leidos

"We hired our first apprentice in 2013. We thought he might be lonely but needn't have worried. He questioned things, added a fresh perspective and we learned a lot from that.

"All of our apprentices earn well-paid salaries on our four-year programme and study for undergraduate degrees from universities such as Edinburgh

Napier and Strathclyde. We are actively involved in helping shape the courses to ensure that there is a win-win-win situation for employer, student and institution. We now have one client where close to half of the current workforce is made up of apprentices or former apprentices."

Cameron Rooney, second-year apprentice software developer

"I was at college before but it just wasn't for me. On leaving secondary school, I went to college to study software development with the intention of going to university. After just over a year at college, the terms, though short, became repetitive. The prospect of facing the same rigidity and routine over three more years in lectures at university was off-putting.

"I wanted to work on issues that affected the real world; I wanted a practical side to my learning. I recognise that a high-quality education will

improve my future employability and so attending university alongside an active role in industry represents a perfect blend. I retain the benefits of a university lifestyle and resources – the social scene and gym, for example – while gaining valuable and applicable work experience."

Vickie McArthur, business management apprentice

"I suppose my story is a little less traditional – I joined Leidos in my late 20s as a business management apprentice. I would not have been able to go through full-time education myself and was worried that the lack of a formal tertiary qualification may have held me back in some ways. Fortunately, the Leidos apprenticeship has provided me with the opportunity to bridge the gap. I now feel confident that I can build a career, with no glass ceiling, in the world of technology, equipped with the experience and expertise I need."

"I wanted to work on real-world issues"

Infrastructure is key to Britain's national success

Skills policy must be coordinated between sectors, writes **Lord Blunkett**, chair of the Heathrow Skills Taskforce

Britain is at a pivotal moment in improving its national infrastructure. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build a legacy that will last for decades to come – one that stretches well beyond the obvious benefits of better, more sustainable road and rail networks.

Major projects such as HS2, Hinkley Point C and Heathrow Expansion are all due be completed over the next decade and beyond. Each of these projects has the potential to develop skilled and long-lasting jobs, and unlock the investment so desperately needed for Britain's future. But it is only if we work together that we can truly deliver the right legacy. One which tackles skills shortages, maximises productivity, and prepares our nation's workers to remain competitive on the global stage.

It is crucial that all those involved



recognise that “business as usual” is no longer good enough. It is universally acknowledged that productivity levels in the UK are lower than other leading European countries; and that the differential between London and the South, and the rest of the country is unsustainable. Existing skills gaps – particularly in construction and engineering – are at risk of widening unless new emerging technologies are embraced, and individuals are continuously helped to upskill.

Recently I've been working with colleagues from across local authorities, trade unions, schools, colleges, universities, and the voluntary and private sectors to identify how Heathrow Expansion can make the most of the skills opportunities on offer. Over the past 18 months, we considered how the airport can work

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Heathrow
Building for the future



with its supply chain and partners to ensure expansion benefits all of its current and future workforce.

We also looked at how Heathrow and other infrastructure projects can source the talent they need and collaborate to help Britain's workforce prosper long past the completion of the project. With input from a range of experts in the fields of employment, skills, social mobility, diversity and inclusion, apprenticeships and more, the taskforce I chaired identified the need for a more holistic approach.

I believe it is essential that our ambitious recommendations are the beginning of a long-term journey for approaching the upgrade of Britain's infrastructure and start a ripple of better practice across industries. Heathrow's response so far is very promising, particularly its commitment to use new

off-site construction methods – logistics hubs – as part of the project to spread training, jobs and apprenticeships in regions and nations of the UK outside the South East.

But it is not enough for one business to commit to change. As Britain gears up to build the infrastructure of tomorrow, other projects across the country need to shift from the “business as usual” mindset of old to one that instead put skills at the heart of its approach. Taking up the challenge for “shared apprenticeships”, skills passports for transferability, ambitious work experience days for returners to the labour market and, of course, paying the Living Wage, are all part of the package which it is to be hoped will be embraced way beyond Heathrow itself.

**For more information, please visit:
mediacentre.heathrow.com**

IN FOCUS

The Heathrow Skills Taskforce

In recognition of the major challenge of creating a skills strategy for an infrastructure project the size of Heathrow Expansion, Lord Blunkett was invited to establish and lead the Heathrow Skills Taskforce. The taskforce's objective was to make recommendations to the airport on the future skills and employment choices needed to maximise the benefits that an expanded Heathrow is expected to create.

The taskforce delivered its recommendations to Heathrow in September 2018. These included:

- | Leading business change: doing more to engage, support and challenge supply chain and commercial partners;
- | Celebrating diversity and embracing inclusion: doing more to ensure consistent diversity and inclusion standards, and providing more tailored support for colleagues with additional needs;
- | Maximising apprenticeship opportunities: increasing the focus on higher-level apprenticeships, and collaborating with commercial partners and supply chains;
- | Promoting career choices and engaging with the education sector: provide a range of career choices and deliver on high-quality training and re-skilling to support progression and sustainable careers;
- | Enabling skills for a lasting legacy: pioneer new approaches that address skill gaps, align with the work of other infrastructure projects, and help Britain build an experienced and flexible workforce which is adaptable to future skills requirements.

The airport is now developing its Skills Strategy, expected in Spring 2019.

Gordon Marsden, the Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Skills, talks to Rohan Banerjee about the evolution of the apprenticeship conversation

“You can’t have a system that concentrates on just one type of training”



For Gordon Marsden, the Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Further Education and Skills, a growing enthusiasm for apprenticeships “makes sense”. Marsden, himself a graduate of New College, Oxford, where he studied history, acknowledges that a long-standing “obsession” with university has caused an “imbalance” in the United Kingdom’s employment market. And so the Labour MP for Blackpool South is a firm believer in the value of more flexible and vocational training. “We regularly take on apprentices in the constituency office,” he says proudly. “We’ve helped people to get their Level 3s and 4s in business administration.”

As tuition fees have soared and rhetoric around education has been “narrowed”, Marsden says, there is now a situation in which there are

more graduates than graduate jobs. The mistake made by successive governments of both parties, according to Marsden, was to allow apprenticeships to be seen as “necessarily other, rather than equal to university”. They are too often regarded, he says, “as something that is principally industrial, and exclusive to the construction or engineering sectors, without appreciating the crux of what an apprenticeship actually is”.

And what is that? “An apprenticeship, by its traditional definition, means a skilled person actively engaging with someone and teaching them a trade. It’s not a skill that can just be taken off the shelf... an apprentice has to learn, in detail, on the job. The idea that an apprenticeship should be viewed as the ‘easy’ option is nonsense.”

Indeed, Marsden stresses, an apprenticeship should not denote





“A degree does not guarantee ending up better off”

SHUTTERSTOCK / DMITRY KALINOVSKY

low-skill or low-pay training. “This problem with perception,” he says, “is, in part, at least, thanks to a pretty raw deal that apprenticeships have got from the media.” He’s quick to clarify: “That’s not a dig at the *New Statesman*, by the way. But there has been this narrative, one that’s completely blinkered by the idea of university being the only means of social mobility. Yet the irony is that tuition fees, and the debt attached to them, mean that a university education is not a guarantee of ending up better off.”

Perhaps it is not a guarantee, but certain university degrees have been shown to be a valuable commodity in the job market. Research by the Department for Education found that five years after graduation, average annual salaries for students taught at Russell Group universities were £33,500.

The current minimum wage for an

apprentice in the UK is £3.70 per hour – less than half of the national living wage for someone aged 25 or older. Can apprenticeships, then, ever truly be considered competitive? “I think you’ve got to appreciate that the pay for apprenticeships – of course, they need to be higher in some cases – does depend largely on the employer, but hopefully that’ll change with time... certainly, I’m in favour of apprentices being paid fairly and competitively for the work they do. And there are plenty of apprenticeship programmes which do pay a competitive salary.” According to research carried out by trade website RateMyApprenticeship, the average salary for apprenticeships across all sectors in 2018/19 ranged from £19,160 in London to £15,125 in the North East. And according to graduate-jobs.com, the average graduate starting salary in the UK is around £22,000.

But Marsden points to the long-term cost of university. “Are young people happy about being saddled with debt? There are signs that graduate premiums are being reduced. If you look at longitudinal figures, they’re going down. If you look at the Blackpool area, where my constituency is, where we don’t have a huge number of people going to university, the prospect of an apprenticeship, to earn while you learn, is attractive. If you go and do an apprenticeship with BAE Systems a few miles down the road, and they sponsor you through a course, you’re going to get a lot out of that in terms of your long-term career. It could lead to promotions further down the line, without the burden of debt.”

The government’s apprenticeship levy – a 0.5 per cent tax on UK employers with a paybill totalling more than £3m per year to fund new apprenticeships – was introduced in April 2017. For Marsden, “the devil is in the detail”. One of the Conservatives’ flagship skills policies is “a good idea in principle”, but has been, he feels, “a missed opportunity”.

There were 375,800 new apprenticeship starts for the 2017/18 academic year, according to official government data, compared with

“Labour supports the principle of the levy”



494,900 in 2016/17, and 509,400 in 2015/16 – a decline of 24.1 and 26.2 per cent respectively. Marsden says: “Labour supports the principle of the levy, but this government has failed to create a system that demonstrates a value to the employers paying into the central pot. The government was slow out of the blocks to establish clear standards for what apprenticeships should cover. That is now the remit of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfA), but it took a long time to set up.” Where the apprenticeship levy should have been viewed as “a catalyst for inward investment”, Marsden says, it is instead “viewed by some companies as just another inconvenient tax”.

Could the levy, which only affects approximately 2 per cent of UK employers, stand to be more ambitious? Could rolling the levy out to more businesses increase the amount of central funding available, and thus create more high-quality apprenticeships? “I think the main case is for identifying training needs for employers. I think it is an increasingly accepted view that you can’t micro-manage everything from Whitehall. That idea is for the birds. Labour would advocate devolving more processes and ensuring a greater employer input into establishing and modifying the standards of new apprenticeships.” As for engaging smaller businesses, Marsden says there is an argument to suggest that “many

non-levy payers feel disengaged” and less inclined to take on apprentices.

“As with anything,” Marsden continues, “the levy is vulnerable to abuse.” He highlights that some larger companies have “rebadged” some of their more junior roles as apprenticeships and are not spending the funding as intended, “which is why it is so important to have clearly defined standards, agreed on by the IfA and employers, to close this sort of loophole”.

The debate around apprenticeships in general, Marsden hopes, will “evolve”. He is weary of an insistence on juxtaposition with university – “it’s not a case of either or, it’s about making them both viable and attractive options” – and, in the future, he wants as much attention to be paid to apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3 as at degree-level. “You can’t have a system that concentrates on just one type of training... you need one that is progressive. Levels 2 and 3 are absolutely crucial, for example, in the hospitality and services sector. Just as you don’t need a degree to do every single job – even if we have a saturation of degree holders right now – you don’t need every single apprenticeship to be degree-level. If the watch-word for New Labour was ‘Education, Education, Education’ then the watch-word for Labour now must be ‘Progression, Progression, Progression’. Levels 2 and 3 are important as an access point, which can then lead to a career.”

The conversation returns to the point about making sense. Apprenticeships, Marsden is convinced, will be key to “bridging that gap” between vocation and education. He notes that “automation and technology” will change the “landscape of work”, and access to diverse and flexible training opportunities is essential to upskilling and re-skilling the UK workforce. “Apprenticeships need to develop at the same pace as society,” Marsden says, “which means being sensitive to changing employer needs and offering a whole range of life chances, rather than just directing our young people towards one train of thought. To me, that makes sense.”

Technology is the backbone of our economy

Digital skills are more important than ever before, writes Ji Li, managing director of Plum Innovations

The fourth industrial revolution is in full flow. Technology permeates every aspect of our society and digital skills are fast becoming a necessity to get by. As all industries realise the many benefits of digitisation – for example, paperless offices save on space and resources, while social media catalyses advertisement and businesses' reach – the workforce at large has to evolve.

Companies want computer-savvy, digitally engaged employees, who know how to get the most out of their surroundings. Producing a workforce that is digitally capable, then, represents one of the most pressing challenges of our time. There is a need to normalise technology as early as possible in the education process. It should be harnessed across subjects, not viewed in isolation, and schools should note the importance of digital skills on a par with English and Maths.

Educational technology (EdTech) is a growing sector, encompassing various digital tools and services designed to enhance students' learning environments and experiences. David Lakin, head of education at the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET), says that children should actively engage with technology and develop digital skills as early as possible in their lives. "The IET's latest skills survey shows that the majority of UK-based engineering and technology companies believe that digital technologies and automation will advance rapidly over the next five to ten years. With an increasing focus

on digital skills in the workplace, it's fundamental that the curriculum keeps up with these advancements."

Schools must embrace technology, Lakin explains, in order to make learning more interactive, using it to better illustrate lessons in practice. He says that programmes such as the IET's First Lego League – "a competition which teaches coding and robotics in a fun way" – signify an opportunity to engage students beyond the routine and rigidity of textbooks and slideshows.

The aim of EdTech is to introduce true transformational change in how education is delivered. Nina Iles, head of EdTech at the British Educational Suppliers Association (BESA), highlights the advantages that it offers for staff, as well as students. Through a series of regional conferences, called LearnEd, BESA has partnered with the Department for Education (DfE) to gather insight from teachers on what they need from new technologies. Iles says: "BESA is aware that senior leaders and teachers can, understandably, be overwhelmed by the sheer scale of choice when it comes to selecting the right EdTech solutions. BESA is proud to be partnering with the DfE to take proven EdTech solutions to the teacher. Through a series of regional 'LearnEd' conferences, the DfE and BESA are providing a platform for teachers to meet with, and learn from, other teachers already using EdTech that is making a positive impact on learning, saving teacher time and introducing school-wide efficiencies."

Eventually, it would appear that all skills will be digital. Plum Innovations' core message is to underscore the positive impact that EdTech can have on our children's learning experiences and outcomes. Whether it is an interactive digital lesson that helps history come to life or staff simply being able to work from home to facilitate more flexible working, there is no doubt that technology could be truly transformative.

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Delivering a digitally capable UK workforce

Carlos Cubillo-Barsi, managing director of Digital Skills Solutions, reflects on technology's growing influence on business and society

Are digital skills a necessity?

A recent report from the Office for National Statistics found that over two and a half million jobs in the United Kingdom could be plausibly classed as "digital", yet only a third of those roles actually exist within technology-focused industries.

Technology is pervasive. There is a considerable amount of UK employment that relies on digital skills that perhaps previously wouldn't have been viewed or categorised within the digital sector.

I think there has been a cultural shift and smaller companies, as well as the large multinationals, are really appreciating the opportunities afforded by digitisation. It's not just a case of paperless offices saving on space or costs, you've got to consider how cloud-based software, for example, makes data-basing and collation more efficient.

How can you convince companies to embrace digitisation?

The internet creates new marketplaces for all industries and sectors. And flexible or remote working, enabled by technology, is a huge boost for employers who can get more out of their employees, who feel more in control of their working patterns.

Creating digital infrastructure – email, websites, advertising, et cetera – makes for a more mobile and accessible business that can respond to the world around it. Not only can digitisation deliver cost efficiencies and increased productivity

for companies, but it can enhance experiences of products and services for consumers or clients.

What role do apprenticeships have to play in delivering a more digitally savvy workforce?

Apprenticeships are absolutely key to this cause as an accessible means of offering training and development. An over-reliance on the school and university route has created a bottlenecked economy.

Apprenticeships offer a genuine alternative that can adapt to the personalities and skill sets of people who might thrive in a more hands-on environment. The opportunity to earn as you learn, too, is a huge plus for this type of education.

How transformative can technology be in the education sector?

Central to any ambition of delivering a more digitally capable UK workforce should be the aim to normalise digital skills from an early stage. Digital skills should be embedded within school curriculums as early as possible.

Beyond that, though, we need to see more investment in the adult education sector, and in the upskilling of existing employees. You need digital skills, in my view, to be an effective citizen. Digital skills are a catalyst for social inclusion. As more sectors and services move online, we can only realise the true benefits of these advancements, if people are equipped with the skills they need to enjoy them.

What is the role of Digital Skills Solutions in delivering a digitally capable UK workforce?

We are offering training in some of the most crucial areas of the digital economy: big data, coding, digital marketing and cyber security. Blending classroom learning with on-the-job experience, we hope that our apprenticeship offering is a giant step towards a digitally engaged talent pool for UK plc.

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”

Professor Ahmed Al-Shamma'a,
LJMU's Executive Dean of the Faculty
of Engineering and Technology

How Finland became the world's most literate nation

While Brits watch their libraries disappear, Helsinki's radical new library combines reading, skills and recreation.

Augusta Riddy travels to Oodi

This is book heaven," says Katri Vänttinen, beaming. As the City of Helsinki's library director, she should know. Standing on the third floor of the brand new Oodi library in the city centre, it is a little bit heavenly. Trees, beautiful furniture and books fill the huge space, which follows one sweeping curvature as natural light floods through the glass that encloses it.

In Helsinki – home to almost 650,000 people – there are 36 public libraries. "Libraries are the second-highest rated public service in Helsinki; the number one is drinking water," explains Helsinki's executive director of culture Tommi Laitio. It is enshrined in law that every Finnish municipality must have a public library, and as a result there are 853 across the country.

Brits might find this tough reading. In 2016 alone, 105 libraries closed in the UK; as local councils continue to bear punishing cuts, library budgets are getting slashed. Between 2016 and 2017, public library spending fell by £66m. Oodi, meanwhile, is publicly funded to



the tune of €100m, and has been given what Laitio describes as "probably the most prestigious, most valuable piece of land in the country" opposite the Finnish Parliament.

A concept 20 years in the making, it is a birthday present to the nation to mark the 100th anniversary of its independence. After a "blind" architectural competition – a common process for large Finnish projects in which architectural firms anonymously submit their proposals – Helsinki firm ALA Architects was selected to design the building. Construction has taken three years, and the hotly anticipated library finally opened to the public on 5th December 2018 to ecstatic crowds and Twitter fanfare. "Everyone in the city knows about this project, because it's so big," says Laitio. It faced virtually no public opposition, and expects to receive 10,000 visitors per day.

All this fuss... for a library? Yes, because Finns love libraries; they are such a core aspect of public life that as soon as an asylum seeker is granted



The library symbolises “civilisation itself”

permission to remain in the country, they are handed a library card. Oodi was not built because “we’re lacking libraries”, jokes Helsinki Mayor Jan Vapaavuori, but because the library is a symbol of national identity.

The average Finn visits libraries more than nine times a year, borrowing around 15 items. There were 50m library visits in 2017, and use of online library services is increasing by 40 per cent year on year. The average UK citizen visits libraries 3.5 times a year, and library use here is falling. The combination of an advanced public library network and one of the world’s most respected schools systems has seen Finland ranked the world’s most literate nation.

Putting the book down for a moment, Oodi is no normal library. It houses 100,000 books, which in proportion to the building’s size – over 10,000 sq. metres – is not a huge number. In fact, only one of the three floors is dedicated to reading; what is happening in the rest of the building bends – or stretches – the concept of a library.

Upon entering Oodi, an enforced hush does not descend. Nor are there any bookshelves in sight, but on the first floor – a large, fluid space – there is a cinema, a multi-purpose hall and a restaurant. The second floor, called the “attic”, is entirely dedicated to skills development. Here the public can use 3D printers and sewing machines, or borrow musical equipment and rock out in specially modified studios. There is even a kitchen and socialising area, which can be hired for a small fee, where the librarians hope birthday parties will take place, perhaps followed by a spot of karaoke. Staff roam the site ready to help the public use the resources available.

According to one member of staff, library users can pretty much do anything with what’s on offer at Oodi. Antti Nousjoki, partner at ALA Architects, describes the building as “almost an open platform, which the users can occupy the way themselves see fit [sic]”. And on the third floor – the “book heaven” – Nousjoki says that users can read their book or magazine

“in a relative sense of shared privacy”.

Each floor has a different character and purpose, but the design is infused with purpose. A “massive public consultation” heavily informed Oodi’s development, as library director Vänttinen explains: “When we started to dream about bringing a library to the city centre, we went to the people and asked ‘what are you dreaming about?’ It was an open-ended question – we didn’t even talk about libraries at the beginning.” Staff point out specific features that were requested by members of the public, including a sliding bookcase that reveals a story room for small children, who asked for an element of surprise. “We asked the people, and we are trying to deliver what they want,” concludes Vänttinen.

Oodi is set to increase annual spending on libraries in Helsinki by 20-25 per cent and will cost roughly €7-8m a year to run. However, no new librarians were hired to work in Oodi. Instead, 50 people were selected from the existing Helsinki libraries workforce, and these people are supported by a number of robots. During our visit, these small devices could be spotted whizzing past people’s ankles, returning and sorting books. Elsewhere in the building, as if to complete the futuristic impression, a man manoeuvred a drone.

Spending time with figures from the Oodi inner circle, it is striking how emotional – perhaps even a little melodramatic – their descriptions of the library’s identity and purpose are. Mayor Vapaavuori says the library “symbolises education, equality, transparency, civilisation itself. In today’s world. It symbolises the need to defend democracy”.

“We believe,” Laitio expounds, “that everyone deserves to have free access to not only knowledge, but also our shared culture, spaces that are beautiful, and to dignity.” Central to Oodi’s concept, he explains, is bringing a wide range of people together under one roof. “A lot of emphasis has been put on how we make sure that this building is safe and welcoming to homeless people [or] to

The building is designed to be welcoming to homeless people



CEOs with a couple of hours to spare ... We need to make sure that people believe that we can live together, and I don't think €100m for that feeling is a lot of money."

But €100m is quite a lot of money; it is 12 per cent of what the UK, a country with 13 times as many people, spent on libraries last year. Was it difficult to achieve the political consensus needed to launch the project? Mayor Vapaavuori, who is a member of the centre-right National Coalition Party, responds that it was not; "everything is relative." He says: "Finland is among the very few countries where it's still possible to spend a lot of public funding on cultural institutions." For some in Finland, there seems to be a resistance to any private funding for public projects; during the visit, one professional involved with Oodi expressed their disapproval at the recent use of private funding assistance for a children's hospital in Helsinki.

Vapaavuori says former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg was right when he said "culture brings more capital than capital brings culture". In the case of Hull in the North East of England, this is certainly true. "Since Hull was awarded UK City of Culture in

2013," the UK government website states, "it attracted over £3bn of investment and created 800 new jobs." In response to the revelation that cultural investment is not always money for old rope, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport announced a measly "£20m government boost for culture and creative industries in England". Towns and cities were given the opportunity to bid for up to £7m of the £20m pot to "help regeneration, create jobs and maximise the impact of investment". The idea of the state spending £100m on a public library here in the UK seems ludicrous in today's austerity-driven political culture.

Oodi is not the only public project in the works. Another library in Helsinki was completed just before Oodi opened, and the city is now looking at building a centre for dance, and an architecture and design museum. Vapaavuori predicts that the majority of the funding for these schemes will be public. "The fact that we're doing something like this in 2018 tells something really about who we are as people," says Laitio. "It's our community, and our society, at its finest."

Regional growth means national ambition

Skills policy is at the core of the Northern Powerhouse agenda, writes Thomas Burton, head of assessment at NOCN

If we want the Northern Powerhouse to succeed, the region has to be more productive and a key ingredient for this is skills, including in maths and English, and vocational apprenticeships, which enable people to work more effectively and efficiently.

The Industrial Revolution of the 18th century forced the traditional use of apprenticeships to change in England. The advent of new trades and the spirit of entrepreneurship called for more flexibility in the apprenticeship system. New manufacturing trades emerged during the industrial age, which saw the population of northern England feed the world's desire for British goods.

In the 20th century, public policies for skills development recognised something had gone amiss since the century of the industrial revolution. The UK looked enviously at the economic powerhouse of Germany, which had maintained its ancient system of "lehlings" (apprentices), "ausbildungsberufe" (trades) and "berufsschulen" (vocational schools). The UK government of the day responded with the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) in 1986, later followed by modern apprenticeships in 1994.

Fast-forward to the present day and the reformed apprenticeship system, which has been specifically re-designed to meet the needs of UK employers and to address productivity, a subject explored in detail in the recent productivity report

from NOCN and the Learning and Work Institute. Key to improving our national productivity is the government's industrial strategy which identifies a number of key northern industrial sectors, including advanced manufacturing, aerospace and construction.

Vital to the success of the Northern Powerhouse will be how we address the skills required for northern businesses to succeed, specifically current and future skills as we move into a likely post-Brexit economic model. The reformed apprenticeship system has now become an integral element in future talent acquisition for many businesses, as they embrace the opportunity to widen the scope of their recruitment activity, supplementing, or in some cases replacing, graduate trainees.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy in England has had a further impact on employers by forcing their hand to commit to employing apprentices to see a return on their levy investment if they are not to pay it as simply another tax. This has seen many large employers thinking strategically about their apprenticeship programme as a route into their industry for long-term succession planning.

Financial services are a good example of a sector which has seen one of the biggest uptakes of the new-style apprenticeships, with roles ranging from mortgage advice and customer service handlers to bank managers and investment specialists, with apprentices entering the sector from a wide and diverse background.

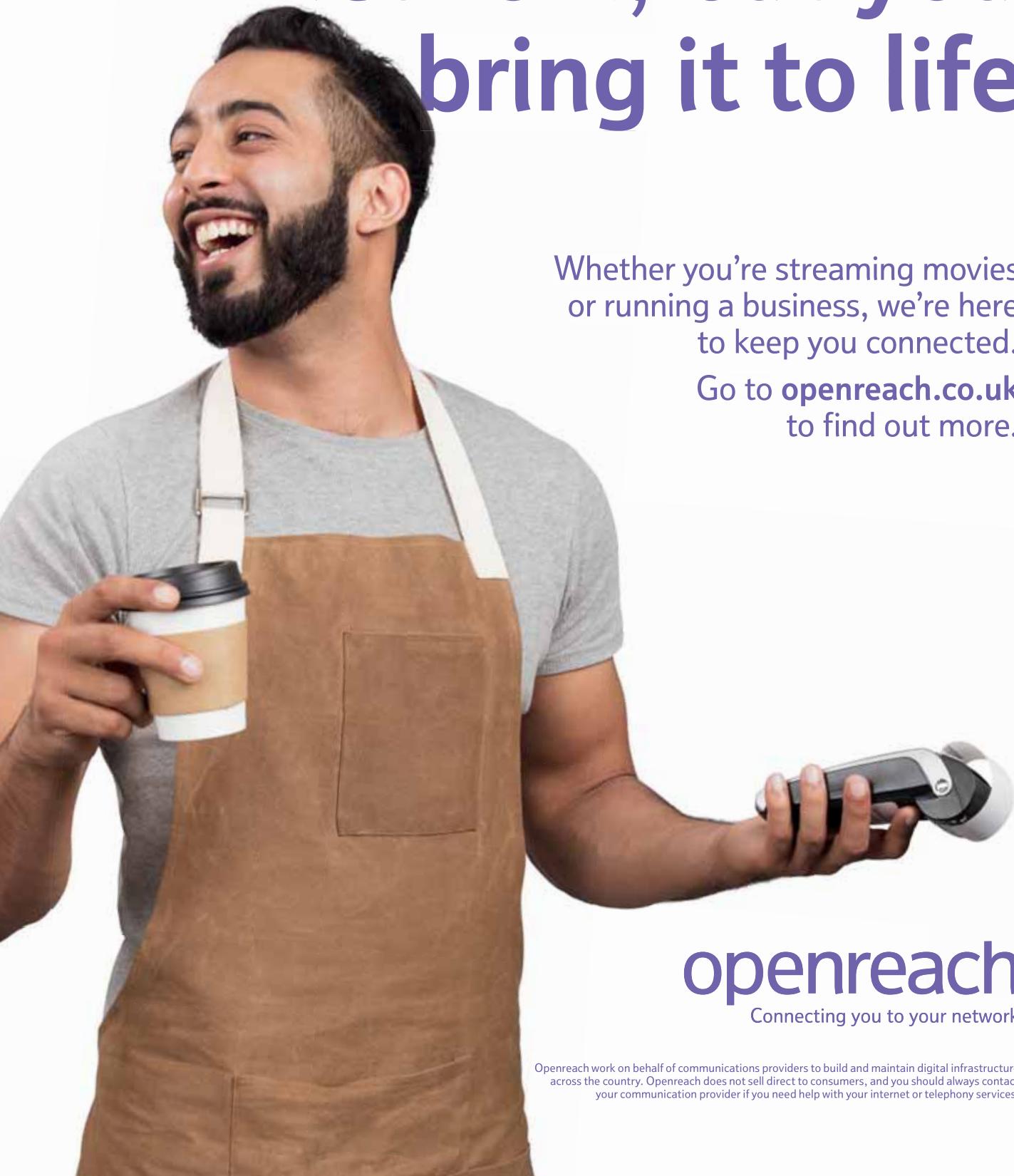
Simply stated, the workforce which has better skills is more productive. If we want the Northern Powerhouse over the next ten years to be more productive, with all the positive impacts that has on society, then we have to invest in skills now and one of the best ways to do that is through the apprenticeship programme.

For more information, please visit: www.nocn.org.uk

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