



# Consultation 'The future of Apprenticeships in England: Next steps from the Richard Review'.

To: All English Contacts

For information: All contacts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales

## Key issues

The paper provides a consultation opportunity following the Richard Review of Apprenticeships

There are potential reforms of funding, standards and assessment

Government is promoting the role of Apprenticeships with expectations of further funding increases

## 1. Introduction

The Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills are seeking views from the sector on the paper 'The Future of Apprenticeships in England: Next Steps from the Richard Review' issued in March 2013. It can be found [here](#).

Comments from members will be incorporated into the APSE response to the paper.

## 2. Context

The Ministerial foreword in the paper opens by praising apprenticeships – "There is much to be proud of in Apprenticeships. Apprentices are employed in more sectors, with more employers and at more skill levels than ever. Apprenticeships deliver excellent returns, enjoy a profile and status not seen for many years, and are now being developed at degree level and beyond for the first time. We are determined to build on these strengths.

High quality Apprenticeships offer a powerful tool to help individuals to progress and succeed; they help businesses create the skilled workforce needed to compete, and equal any in the world. But we must ensure that Apprenticeships serve employers in the decades ahead, and bring all up to the standards of the best."

It goes on to say that the government must empower employers to be at the heart of the apprenticeship system and that the bar must be set high on standards and quality adding that apprenticeships are central to the government's drive to raise the nation's skills and that funding has been increased for the programme.

## 3. The Richard Review

The Richard Review was an independent review of apprenticeships in England to ensure that in the future the programme is meeting the needs of the changing economy, consistently delivers the professionally recognised qualifications and skills which employers and learners need and is maximising the impact of government investment. It reported in November 2012 and makes a clear case for further reforms with a number of recommendations including that apprenticeships should be targeted at those new to a job or role; suitable jobs will require sustained and substantial training; the government should introduce a separate programme for employability skills; and training and accreditation of those already fully competent in their jobs should be delivered separately.

#### **4. Traineeships**

The paper notes that employers consistently express concern that young people often lack the right skills and attitudes when they apply for apprenticeships or other jobs. The Richard Review recommends that the government should introduce a new scheme, alongside apprenticeships, to help young people develop the employability skills and experience of work needed to get a good job or apprenticeship. It states that starting later this year, traineeships will offer unemployed people aged 16 to 24 years a combination of extended work placements, work skills training, English and maths, and other support suited to individual needs. They will help young people prepare for apprenticeships and other employment opportunities.

#### **5. Standards**

The paper states that the government agree with the Review that every apprenticeship should be based on industry standards that are widely recognised, easy to understand and trusted by employers, describing what an employer requires from a fully competent apprentice at the end of their training. They should focus, in broad terms, on what is needed to demonstrate mastery of an occupation, not competence in a series of narrowly defined tasks.

This approach differs from today's system, in which apprenticeship frameworks list qualifications that apprentices must work through but do not set out holistically the knowledge and skills needed to demonstrate full competence in the job. It differs too from the approach taken for qualifications within current apprenticeships, and by the National Occupational Standards on which they are based. The Review argues that these are too narrow and detailed to be meaningful to employers, or to capture what employers really look for in new employees. The current approach encourages a focus on evidencing that an individual has, at one point in time, undertaken a series of discrete tasks, rather than on teaching an individual to do a whole job and on assessing this.

Government also agrees that responsibility for designing standards rightly sits with employers and the review states that government cannot determine standards or skills needed for all occupations; nor should it try.

#### **6. Qualifications**

For each occupation or major job role the government recognises the strong arguments set out in the Review that there should be a single standard set, defining the core knowledge and skills required. This could maximise recognition, consistency and transferability, and make it easier to assure that quality is maintained. For similar reasons, there is a strong case for a single qualification associated with this standard.

#### **7. Assessment**

The paper states that it is vital that employers trust the qualifications apprentices take. The Richard review sets out steps to ensure stretching standards and qualifications defined by employers will help to build this trust. The government notes that it agrees with the Review that we must reform assessment so that it is more independent and more trusted by employers. There must be no incentive to pass individuals who are not sufficiently competent.

#### **8. English and maths**

The paper notes that the government shares Richard's ambition that all apprentices should be supported to achieve Level 2 qualifications in English and maths, and are committed to progressing towards this as skills in English and maths provide a foundation for progression in all occupations. From August 2012, all apprentices have been offered training to work towards level 2 qualifications in these subjects where they have not achieved one or both previously. To support this, in 2012/13, the government doubled the funding available for English and maths training for adult apprentices, and raised this substantially for those under 19.

#### **9. Promoting innovative and high quality training**

The paper states that clear and holistic standards being agreed for each occupation, and a shift towards assessment at the end, can liberate professional trainers to do what they do best: to teach and to train.

The government strongly agrees with the Review that every apprenticeship should at its heart be about a relationship between an individual employer and individual learner with the shape of every apprenticeship journey should be different. An apprenticeship should not be something taken 'off the shelf' by a provider, or something prescribed by government. Every job, every workplace, and every individual learner is different, so it should be up to employers, together with training providers and learners, to shape the learning journey themselves, and the government should minimise the things that get in their way whilst helping ensure quality outcomes, not to prescribe processes.

The government intends to encourage greater innovation and dynamism in training delivery, with more entrants to the market bringing fresh ideas and approaches, and spurring existing providers to respond in kind.

## **10. Funding**

On the issue of funding, the Richard Review makes a number of recommendations - that government funding must create the right incentives for apprenticeship training; that government should contribute to the cost, but employers should have direct purchasing power to ensure relevance and drive up quality; the price for apprenticeship training should be free to respond to and reflect employer demand; government should contribute only towards training to reach the industry agreed standard; payment to be partly linked to the apprentice passing the test; the preferred approach is that the government funds apprenticeships through National Insurance or the tax system – ideally through a tax credit, similar to the R&D tax credit; the funding system should be kept simple and accessible, including for small firms; and that government should consider varying how much it pays for training – and potentially how and when it makes the payment - according to the size of the firm and age of the apprentice.

## **11. Improving awareness and information**

The paper notes that high quality, accessible information is essential to promote choice and increase awareness. It goes on to say that too often today an apprenticeship is seen to be of lower status than other academic options. Yet apprenticeships offer pathways into highly skilled and often well-paid jobs across the economy, from science and engineering to accountancy, and from technicians to management. With higher apprenticeship opportunities rapidly expanding up to postgraduate level, and apprenticeships increasingly leading to professional registration, we must ensure that they attract the profile and standing they deserve.

## **12. Consultation questions**

- 1: How can we ensure that every apprenticeship delivers substantial new skills?
- 2: How should we invite and enable employers to come together to design new standards for apprenticeships?
- 3: What are your views on the proposed criteria for apprenticeship standards as set out above?
- 4: Should there be only one standard per apprentice occupation/job role?
- 5: Should there be only one qualification per standard?
- 6: How should we manage the transition from the current system of apprenticeship frameworks to a new system of employer-designed apprenticeship standards and qualifications?
- 7: How can we make sure that new standards stay relevant to employers, and are not compromised over time?
- 8: How can we ensure that employers are better engaged with the development and oversight of the assessment in apprenticeships?
- 9: How could employers best be involved in the practical delivery of assessment?
- 10: How can the independence and consistency of assessment in apprenticeships be further improved?
- 11: How should we implement end point assessment for apprenticeships?
- 12: How should we implement grading for apprenticeship qualifications?
- 13: What are the specific obstacles to all apprentices achieving level 2 English and maths as part of their apprenticeship, and how could these be overcome?
- 14: How would a requirement to have all apprentices achieve level 2 in English and maths impact on employers, providers and potential learners? What are the risks and potential solutions?
- 15: What further steps, by government or others, could encourage greater diversity and innovation in training delivery to help apprentices reach the standards that employers have set?

- 16: What approach would work best to ensure apprentices benefit from time to train and reflect away from their day to day workplace?
- 17: Should off-site learning be made mandatory?
- 18: How can the process for approving training providers be improved, to help employers find high quality, relevant training?
- 19: Do you believe that a kitemarking scheme for your sector or profession would add value and be supported?
- 20: What more can government do to facilitate effective third party/external use of its data to better inform individuals and employers about apprenticeships?
- 21: What approaches are effective to inform young people and their parents about the opportunities provided by an apprenticeship?
- 22: How can we support employers to engage with learners of all ages to provide information about apprenticeship opportunities?
- 23: Do you consider that proposals set out in this document would have a positive or negative impact on any group, including those with protected characteristics? Please provide any comments or evidence you have for your answer and set out which aspects of the reforms will impact and how these impacts might be managed.
- 24: Do you have any further comments on the issues in this consultation?

### **13. General comments**

APSE understands the need for a regular review of schemes such as apprenticeships. Local authorities play a significant role in providing apprenticeships and in the current economic climate have been the sector most likely to retain such schemes, provide apprentices with full time work at the end of their training and ensure an element of security in their work life. For example, Fife Council has taken on apprentices who have been either part way through their training or unable to find work at the end of it from external organisations, as well as bringing through their own set of internal apprentices.

It is imperative that local authorities are involved in the design of future apprenticeship schemes. They have an input to make from both a generic of view on issues such as standards, access to funding and quality as well as on practical issues like designing and implementing their own apprenticeship schemes. This is an area where local authorities make a real impact on the lives of young people, the local economy, the quality of the services they provide and so the recipients of those services, as well as the skills of the nation.

Our publication 'Tackling Youth Unemployment: Local authorities leading the response' details APSE's approach and notes a number of good practice examples where local authorities are addressing this issue and apprenticeship schemes are highlighted as one method of doing so.

The paper states that there exists some excellent practice forging meaningful connections between industry and education and no doubt this includes the excellent work that many local authorities carry out to keep schools, colleges and pupils aware of apprenticeship opportunities available to them through local councils.

As a supporter of local authorities we understand the expertise built up by councils both at the level of managing the whole apprenticeship process through to the day to day mentoring that contributes to producing skilled apprentices in many local authorities year after year. This review has the potential to be a substantial exercise and as such one that local authorities need to have a say in. APSE would encourage all involved in apprenticeships to submit a response either through APSE or directly to DoE/BIS.

APSE are running a one day event in Fife looking at the whole issue of youth unemployment and how local authorities are addressing it, titled 'Got no job; What's the council doing to help?' which will consider a number of relevant issues including a number of speakers talking about apprenticeships and training schemes. An agenda and booking form can be found [here](#).

### **14. Response details**

If you wish your comments to be included in the APSE response to this consultation paper please send them to Phil Brennan at [pbrennan@apse.org.uk](mailto:pbrennan@apse.org.uk). They should reach him by **22 May 2013**. Alternatively, the consultation

response form is available electronically [here](#) and can be submitted by email to: [apprenticeships.consultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:apprenticeships.consultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk). The closing date for responses is Wednesday 22 May 2013.

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