



Association of Employment and Learning Providers
Press release – 23 August 2011

GCSE results:

‘Apprenticeships need to be marketed better to employers if more young people are going to benefit from them’, say training providers

The body, representing the training organisations who train 75% of apprentices in England, says that not enough employers in the country know how apprenticeships can benefit their businesses and that this is limiting the number of young people being offered places on the highly popular programme after they have finished their GCSEs.

With 1 in 5 of young people unable to find work and this summer’s school leavers swelling the ranks of those looking for employment or training opportunities, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is urging the government’s National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) to work with providers to persuade more employers that apprenticeships represent an excellent investment with real returns for their business.

England has a lower proportion of apprentices in the workforce compared with France and Germany and AELP wants to see a new marketing campaign emphasising why businesses cannot afford *not* to invest in apprenticeships, especially when the government can help meet the employer’s costs.

AELP has welcomed the government’s significant investment in apprenticeships with provisional data published in June showing that 326,000 people started the programme in the first 9 months of 2010-11.

However, the number of people aged over 25 starting apprenticeships (121,000) was greater in that period than the number of 16-18 year olds (102,900) and of 19-24 year olds (102,800) starting the programme. Independent training organisations report that the surge in adult apprenticeships is because employers are placing existing members of the workforce on to the programme while the difficult economic climate is making it harder for them to actually take on new apprentices from younger age groups.

AELP is also concerned that any calls by government on businesses to contribute more cash to funding apprenticeships at this time is absolutely the wrong message.

Paul Warner, AELP’s director of employment and skills, said:

“2011 has undoubtedly been a challenging year for training providers in trying to encourage employers to take on more young people as apprentices. Therefore we have to be careful not to raise unrealistic expectations among young people who are receiving their GCSE results this week that an apprenticeship place is automatically there for them if they want it.

“To help meet demand from young people, we want to see a renewed marketing push by the government’s National Apprenticeship Service to target the thousands of

employers who have never employed an apprentice and explain why it makes sound business sense for them to do so.”

Paul Warner attributed the growing popularity of apprenticeships among young people to the fact that apprentices earn while they learn within contracted employment and that the programme’s completion rate now stands at 73.8% which compares well with the best in Europe.

AELP is also saying that the new Work Programme’s chances of success would be boosted if the currently separate welfare-to-work agenda and the apprenticeship-focused skills agenda were merged into a single system of provision. In the association’s view, the coalition government should be credited with recent progress towards a more unified approach, such as DWP ministers talking up the importance of apprenticeships. But to achieve the common goal of sustainable employment for more people in Britain, joined-up policy must match the single approach which AELP members themselves are rolling out at ground level.

More can be done to tackle NEET issue

Following on from the Wolf Review of vocational learning, AELP wants the Department for Education (DfE) to join the DWP and BIS in signing up to the sustainable employment goal as a way of reducing the number of young people out of work.

Paul Warner commented:

“We believe that the DfE’s Foundation Learning programme can make a real difference to young people avoiding becoming NEET, but we are disappointed that the DfE has not yet accepted that landing a job as a result of the programme, as opposed to a qualification, should be officially counted as a positive outcome for a disadvantaged young person.

“In tackling the NEET issue, we would also like to see training providers enjoy the same flexibilities from the DfE in supporting young people as they are now getting from other government departments.”

Government officials have indicated that they are willing to listen to individual providers’ proposals for flexible and more responsive provision and AELP will continue to maintain dialogue with them on the matter.

ENDS

Contact Aidan Relf on 07710 305182

Notes to editors

1. About Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on- and off-the-job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications (glossary source: Data Service – Statistical First Release). As an employee, Apprentices earn as they learn and gain practical skills in the workplace.

An Apprenticeship framework contains the following separately certified elements:

- A knowledge-based element (the theoretical knowledge underpinning a job in a certain occupation and industry, typically certified via a Technical Certificate).

- A competence-based element (the ability to discharge the functions of a certain occupation, typically certified via work-based assessed national vocational qualifications - NVQs).
- Transferable skills (literacy and numeracy) - key skills / functional skills.
- A module on employment rights and responsibilities.

See <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk> for further information on Apprenticeships.

Latest official statistics dated June 2011 on apprenticeships, including starts and success rates, are available at:

<http://tinyurl.com/42xz8m7>

2. About AELP

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) is the leading trade association for vocational learning and employment providers in Britain. The majority of its 600+ members are independent private, not-for-profit and voluntary sector training and employment services organisations. Membership is open to any provider committed to quality provision and it includes over 50 FE colleges involved in work based learning.

Approximately 75% of Apprenticeships in England are delivered by AELP members. Over 70% of the Work Programme prime contractors are AELP members with many other members delivering the programme as sub-contractors. AELP providers engage with almost 300,000 employers across the country and last year they helped 117,240 learners complete an apprenticeship. 184,000 apprentices of all ages are currently estimated to be on AELP members' programmes. More information on AELP is at: www.aelp.org.uk.