

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND APPRENTICESHIPS

A PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR CHANGE COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Led by the University of Sussex and developed in partnership
with the Sussex Council of Training Providers



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INTRODUCTION TO THE COMPREHENSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS



The recommendations set out in this section bring together the collective insights from across all three events in the **Social Mobility and Apprenticeships** series.

They represent the key areas where action is needed to strengthen equality of opportunity within higher and degree apprenticeship pathways.

These recommendations are intended to guide future development. They are not finalised actions, but proposals that should be developed collaboratively with stakeholders to ensure they are practical, impactful, and embedded across the apprenticeship system. Stakeholders include schools, colleges, training providers, employers, careers organisations, skills networks, business and employer networks, and local authorities.

Together, they provide a roadmap for how the apprenticeship ecosystem in Sussex can move from discussion to action, creating the conditions for apprenticeships to become a genuine driver of social mobility.

This document sits alongside the **Executive Summary** and the **Social Mobility and Apprenticeships Resource Document**.

All resources are available on the SCTP Social Mobility and Apprenticeships Resource webpage: www.sctp.org.uk/social-mobility-and-apprenticeships-resource

Comprehensive Recommendations

Recommendation	Example Activities	Potential Stakeholder	Impact
Event 1 – Careers Support, Raising Awareness and Reaching Potential			
Embed earlier, inclusive apprenticeship awareness and careers preparation	1. Integrate apprenticeship awareness into personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and careers programmes from KS2 onwards. 2. Invite former apprentices and employer ambassadors to speak in primary and secondary schools, including sector-themed days, to normalise apprenticeship language and widen awareness. 3. Provide CPD for teachers and careers leaders to understand and promote apprenticeships, including parity with university routes.	Careers Hubs, schools, local authorities, employers, universities, training providers/ SCTP/ South East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network	Expanded and normalised understanding of apprenticeships across the learner journey. Earlier engagement builds aspiration and confidence, particularly for learners from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds.
Promote clear progression pathways with targeted support	1. Develop visual apprenticeship route maps showing transitions from Level 2 to Level 7. 2. Host themed progression days in schools and colleges, inviting alumni to share their journeys.	Universities, training providers/ SCTP, schools, careers education, information and advice (CEIAG) professionals	Stronger alignment between aspirations and achievable apprenticeship progression routes.
Involve families and communities	1. Create accessible parent resources explaining apprenticeship routes, funding and outcomes. 2. Host family-focused careers events in schools with apprentice role models and alumni panels.	Universities, training providers/ SCTP, CEIAG professionals, schools, colleges	Empowers parents and carers to become advocates for apprenticeships, reducing one of the key barriers identified in research. Builds trust and clarity around routes to success.
Improve work experience and application readiness	1. Co-design meaningful work experience opportunities with employers, aligned to curriculum and local sectors. 2. Embed search/application workshops and mock interviews from Year 10 onwards.	Universities, training providers/ SCTP, Careers Hubs, schools, colleges, employers	Enhanced learner job readiness, motivation and confidence. Contributes to higher application success and a stronger pipeline of engaged and informed applicants.
Address structural and financial barriers	1. Undertake gap analysis on transport and benefit barriers. 2. Develop a Sussex-wide digital toolkit signposting financial and travel support. 3. Explore use of hardship funds for key access issues.	Universities, training providers/ SCTP, CEIAG professionals, schools, colleges	Improved participation among disadvantaged groups who face cost or access barriers. More equitable access to opportunities improves outcomes and reduces drop-out.
Address cultural barriers and challenge apprenticeship stereotypes	1. Launch myth-busting campaigns in schools and with parents, using real success stories. 2. Promote parity of esteem by aligning apprenticeship language with A-Level and university options. 3. Encourage teachers to include apprenticeship pathways in all post-16 transition conversations.	Universities, training providers/ SCTP, schools, colleges, Careers Hubs, CEIAG professionals	Reduced stigma and more inclusive understanding of apprenticeship potential. Learners and families feel empowered to make informed choices regardless of background.

Comprehensive Recommendations

Recommendation	Example Activities	Potential Stakeholder	Impact
Event 2 - Retention, Achievement and Supporting Learners to Succeed			
Design inclusive, learner-centred onboarding and programme delivery	1. Conduct inclusive design audits of existing apprenticeship programmes. 2. Apply universal design for learning principles to ensure multiple ways to engage and demonstrate learning. 3. Deliver CPD to all provider staff and employers on inclusive onboarding, cultural responsiveness, and support planning.	Universities, training providers/SCTP, employers, quality assurance teams	Increased retention and achievement through a learning environment that anticipates diversity. Learners feel recognised, valued, and equipped to succeed regardless of their background or needs.
Embed continuous, proactive learner needs assessment and support	Following onboarding: 1. Go beyond one-off diagnostics; introduce ongoing learning and wellbeing reviews at regular intervals. 2. Establish anonymous feedback tools and safe spaces for apprentices to raise concerns. 3. Use data dashboards to flag risk early and deploy timely support interventions.	Universities, training providers, employer mentors, learner support staff	Early intervention prevents drop-out and ensures learners are consistently supported. Creates a culture of openness, trust and growth throughout the apprenticeship.
Strengthen systems of learner support and employer collaboration	1. Establish peer mentoring schemes linking new apprentices with more experienced peers. 2. Schedule monthly coaching-style review check-ins and termly wellbeing reviews. 3. Define clear roles and responsibilities for employer mentors, skills coaches and provider support teams.	Universities, training providers, learner support staff, employer mentors, apprenticeship coaches, SCTP	Enhanced learner wellbeing, trust and engagement. Early signals of difficulty are identified and addressed, collaboratively reducing dropouts and improving satisfaction.
Promote peer support and learning communities	1. Establish peer mentoring schemes (e.g. 2nd year/graduate apprentices buddying with new starters). 2. Offer safe spaces and digital forums for peer-to-peer learning support.	Universities, training providers, SCTP	Creates a stronger sense of belonging, peer support and resilience, particularly for marginalised groups or isolated learners. Boosts engagement and progression.
Simplify systems collaboratively and reduce bureaucratic burden	Across the three universities in Sussex, audit admin burden and evaluate areas for resource collaboration; remove duplication in onboarding, progress reviews and compliance documentation; improve shared access to learner records.	Universities, training providers, SCTP	Reduces burden on delivery staff, improves compliance accuracy, and frees up time for meaningful learner support. Enhances collaboration, provider efficiency and learner experience.

Comprehensive Recommendations

Recommendation	Example Activities	Potential Stakeholder	Impact
Event 3 - Engaging Employers in the Conversation			
Streamline employer engagement with tailored support for SMEs	1. Design and publish a Sussex-specific employer starter pack outlining key processes (e.g. Digital Apprenticeship Service, end point assessment, levy use). 2. Create short video explainers and FAQs to demystify key steps in the employer journey. 3. Through collaborative university working, launch a regional brokerage service for post sign-up support, matching, and compliance help.	Universities, training providers, SCTP, business and employer networks, Local Skills Improvement Plan, local authorities	Greater participation from SMEs and new employers. Reduced administrative burden and improved post sign-up retention. Employers feel supported and confident to commit long-term.
Make apprenticeships a core tool for diversity and social value strategies	1. Collaboratively work between universities, training providers and employers to co-create Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) aligned recruitment templates and onboarding checklists. 2. Develop case studies demonstrating how apprenticeships contribute to social value goals. 3. Encourage employers to track apprenticeship outcomes by socio-economic background, SEND status or care experience.	Universities, training providers/SCTP, employers, HR/L&D teams	Apprenticeships actively contribute to organisational inclusion, social impact and workforce equity. Employers adopt apprenticeships as a core tool for diversity, talent development and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) delivery.
Encourage cultural change through peer influence	1. Run quarterly spotlight sessions featuring SME stories. 2. Support peer-led learning and employer forums. 3. Develop video case studies and blogs to share widely.	Employers, universities, training providers, SCTP	Normalises apprenticeships as an aspirational route. Builds trusted employer voices into the ecosystem. Encourages peer learning and broader culture change across sectors.
Foster cross-sector collaboration to widen access and simplify pathways	1. Build a Sussex-wide apprenticeship access framework co-owned by HE/FE. 2. Create joint events (e.g. open days) to reduce fragmentation. 3. Co-design a cross-provider employer engagement strategy with shared language and standards. 4. Explore development of a local apprenticeship matching service for degree apprentices led by the three Sussex universities.	Universities, training providers, Local Skills Improvement Plan, local authorities, SCTP	Improves visibility, coordination and uptake across Sussex. Reduces employer confusion and increases learner access through simplified, streamlined systems.
Integrate apprenticeships into workforce planning and succession strategies	1. Offer employers planning workshops to embed apprenticeships within L&D strategies. 2. Develop toolkits linking apprenticeships to staff development, succession and retention planning.	Universities, training providers/SCTP (business development teams), employers (HR/L&D teams)	Creates a sustainable pipeline of internal talent. Employers are more likely to invest in apprenticeships when linked directly to growth, diversity and retention goals.
Foster regional collaboration and infrastructure	1. Convene a pan-Sussex university/HE provider employer forum. 2. Map shared delivery areas. 3. Pilot open days, shared matching platforms and standardised materials. (Linked to actions in Event 2).	Universities, training providers/SCTP, employers	Streamlined employer access to provision and simplified engagement. Reduces duplication and enhances learner progression across Sussex through coordinated effort.

“Social mobility doesn’t happen by accident. It requires intention and systems that recognise potential, remove barriers, and ensure that everyone, regardless of where they live, prior attainment, or personal circumstance, has the chance to thrive.”