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THE MATCH FACTOR
GOOD PRACTICE IN APPRENTICESHIP
RECRUITMENT

Today's young people, tomorrow's workforce



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The match factor: Good practice in Apprenticeship recruitment

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Foreword

The UK is battling with high youth unemployment. Although the situation has recently improved, 750,000 young people aged from 16 to 24 are unemployed in the UK (ONS 2014). These figures are particularly concerning, as research shows that those experiencing extended periods of unemployment in their youth are likely to face social and psychological disadvantages for a lifetime (Gregg and Tominey 2004). Increasing the number of unemployed young people transferring into meaningful employment is now a priority for policy-makers.

CIPD research shows that there has been a structural shift in the way employers engage – or rather don't engage – with young people. This means that education-to-work transitions take longer and are more difficult (CIPD 2012a). The negative consequences of this don't just impact on young people themselves, but are also a problem for organisations who struggle to build their future talent pipelines.

Employers hold the key to overcoming this issue. Recognising the impact that the HR profession in particular can make is the driving force behind the CIPD's Learning to Work programme, which supports employers in their efforts to increase and improve their engagement with young people. Good, youth-friendly recruitment practices that help organisations reach out to a wide pool of young people, who often struggle with traditional recruitment methods, are at the heart of this.

There are some indications that the tide is about to turn: while youth

unemployment figures are still very high, we have witnessed a change in employer behaviour over the past year. Indeed, many employers have started to recognise that investing in young people helps them to win the war on talent and that this investment starts early with engagement, at schools and universities. A recent CIPD survey found that 38% of employers recruited young people in the last 12 months in order to 'grow their own' – developing the skills their business needs in the future.

Another positive trend is that employers have started to diversify the variety of access routes offered to young people. Over the last 12 months school-leaver programmes, internships and work experience programmes have all increased in participation. Apprenticeship programmes have seen the biggest increase over the past year, with over half of the employers stating they now offer more Apprenticeships. This makes sense from a business perspective as Apprenticeships offer a great way to nurture your own talent. Future changes to the funding and delivery model will mean that employers now have greater control than ever before in the way they structure and run these programmes.

Apprenticeships are also a good way for young people to access the labour market as they allow an individual to train on the job and gain qualifications at the same time. Apprenticeship positions normally require less experience and fewer qualifications than other kinds of entry-level roles, thus allowing young people a fair chance to

compete for paid employment. It also allows for a smoother transition into work, as young apprentices have a 'softer landing' in the workplace because they are not expected to be immediately job-ready. Evidence from across Europe shows that countries that have strong and well-established Apprenticeships systems with high employer involvement tend to have lower levels of youth unemployment (Lanning and Rüdiger 2012).

Despite these positive changes there are still a lot of misconceptions around Apprenticeships amongst employers, individuals and parents. Furthermore, many employers still argue that they struggle to recruit the 'right' candidate into their roles and at the same time there is a concern that not all Apprenticeships are of the same quality and offer the same opportunities. This research sheds light on some of these issues, looking at the role of providers and recruitment practices and how mismatches between the supply of Apprenticeships and the demand for Apprenticeships can be improved. To address this we have come up with a clear set of recommendations for everyone involved.

The Apprenticeship system is about to undergo its biggest shake-up in decades, with employers being placed at the heart of the system. To capitalise on this it is important that all stakeholders get it right when it comes to ensuring a mutually beneficial and sustainable Apprenticeship match.

Katerina Rüdiger, Head of Skills and Policy Campaigns, CIPD

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to establish the underlying causes of a mismatch in the supply and demand of Apprenticeship vacancies, and the role recruitment practices and employer, provider and candidate behaviour and expectations play in this and how they can be overcome.

Last year the CIPD carried out research looking at employers' expectations of young people and young people's understanding of those, in particular during the recruitment process. What we found was a substantial gap that contributes to the poor labour market situation of young people. This gap is even more pronounced when it comes to Apprenticeships, as typically candidates would be at the younger end of the age spectrum. The National Apprenticeship Service therefore commissioned us to build on this research and look at the situation for Apprenticeships, drawing on their database of Apprenticeship vacancies and adverts.

Although Apprenticeships are open to individuals of all ages, in this report we are focusing specifically on the potential of this scheme to offer an alternative solution to youth unemployment in the UK, within the 16–24 age group, which is a priority for the UK Government (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2012).

Objectives

The objectives of the CIPD's research are to:

- Identify the underlying reason for a number of unmatched vacancies on the National Apprenticeship Service's Apprenticeship vacancies system, by researching the barriers to effective matching.
- Explore key issues of the process of filling Apprenticeship vacancies, in particular the underlying reasons for a low number of applications for some vacancies.
- Establish what can be done to improve the process of application-posting on the employer/provider side and selection on the candidate/provider side.
- Develop practical recommendations for providers and employers to take forward.

Quantitative research

The CIPD accessed data collected by the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) on the Apprenticeship vacancies (Av) system in the 2012–13 academic year: information on 164,728 adverts, created in the period of 10 September 2009 to 1 September 2013 was available for analysis; this contained 164,226 unique adverts without duplicates. For the purposes of the analysis it selected adverts that were only created and live between 1 September 2012 and 31 August 2013, but closed on or before 31 August 2013. Only online adverts that had information on the number of applications available were included in the analysis.

Qualitative research

The CIPD and the NAS identified several learning providers around the country who could share their insights on matching Apprenticeship candidates and employers, as well as helping both to sustain that relationship. The CIPD:

- interviewed representatives of 16 learning providers, asking them about the process of working with young people and employers, and the challenges they are facing
- conducted 12 interviews with candidates and learners either looking for or enrolled in an Apprenticeship, their past and current expectations of employment, and their employment experiences
- spoke to representatives of eight organisations who employed apprentices via the learning providers in the study, asking them about the challenges and benefits of participating in an Apprenticeship, as well as their expectations and experiences of young people. All employers we spoke to already have an apprentice or are looking to take one on, so their opinions on availability, costs and benefits of Apprenticeships are limited to their experience.

1 Policy challenges – general

‘The unhelpful misconceptions that employers hold of young people, and the lack of understanding among young people of employment in general, affect the mutual expectations even before the relationship begins.’

Throughout this research, the CIPD identified some positive recruitment practices that helped improve awareness of the benefits of Apprenticeships among employers and young people, as well as create an Apprenticeship match that is likely to last and be beneficial for everyone involved. At the same time, there is evidence that poor practices exist alongside, where short-term gains are prioritised over long-term sustainability of an Apprenticeship.

Some Apprenticeship vacancies still struggle to attract enough candidates. In the 2012–13 academic year, 40% of vacancies posted on the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) website attracted only up to five applications per vacancy. However, even where candidates do apply, they may not be meeting the requirements put forward by employers, resulting in those vacancies being unfilled. The fact that some Apprenticeship vacancies are not matched with a suitable candidate, despite both employers’ interest and availability of 16–24-year-olds, indicates that the process of matching vacancies to young people is not as straightforward as simply balancing the volumes of jobs and candidates. The concern is that there is a mismatch between what the potential candidates have to offer and the level of skills and experience expected from them by the employers (UK Commission for Employment and Skills 2013).

Expectations

Previous CIPD research (CIPD 2013) showed that the differences in what the parties expect from each other can jeopardise the success of an employment relationship. Moreover, the unhelpful misconceptions that employers hold of young people, and the lack of understanding among young people of employment in general, affect the mutual expectations even before the relationship begins. A similar mismatch in expectations might be acting as the key barrier to a greater uptake of Apprenticeships in England and higher rates of completing the programme in full.

Employers, eager to minimise costs, are sometimes looking for higher levels of skill and work-readiness than young people can typically offer. Even so, young people are likely to have limited experience of the world of work and can, therefore, hold unrealistic expectations of working conditions and wages. It is important for the training providers to manage the expectations both at the beginning of an Apprenticeship and as the relationship evolves in order to contribute to the apprentices’ successful completion.

Location

Some geographical areas have considerably lower volumes of applicants compared with the number of vacancies on offer. Most learning providers agree that even where both employers and candidates are convinced of the benefits of an Apprenticeship,

there is still a mismatch in where and when Apprenticeships become available. First, in some geographical areas, vacancies fail to attract applications, even though average weekly wage levels are relatively high, which might be associated with the remoteness of those locations. Even so, in areas such as London and the north-east of England, the demand for Apprenticeships considerably exceeds the number of vacancies available (see Table 1).

Timing

In addition, there are differences in the periods when vacancies become available compared with the increases in the volumes of applicants. Many young people are looking for vacancies just before or after they leave school, over the summer or early autumn, and other peak periods, for example February, but may become discouraged to continue applying throughout the year if they are unsuccessful at first. Nevertheless, it is difficult to predict when vacancies become available as that would depend on employers' needs and their recruitment campaigns. Some providers are already starting to align their engagement with employers and young candidates to ensure a steady flow of the supply and the demand of vacancies.

'Most learning providers agree that even where both employers and candidates are convinced of the benefits of an Apprenticeship, there is still a mismatch in where and when Apprenticeships become available.'

Table 1: Hard-to-fill vacancies, by region (%)

	0–5 applications	6–20	21+
East Midlands	34.9	45.6	19.5
East of England	39.8	45.6	14.6
London	37.8	32.7	29.5
North-east	31.0	45.3	23.7
North-west	42.4	38.9	18.6
South-east	48.1	40.7	11.3
South-west	46.1	42.1	11.7
West Midlands	35.4	41.8	22.8
Yorkshire and the Humber	40.6	41.3	18.1

2 Challenges for employers: is there sufficient demand for Apprenticeships among employers?

It appears that the barriers that prevent more employers from offering Apprenticeship opportunities arise not simply from their lack of awareness of the scheme, but from the misconceptions about the balance of costs and benefits associated with an Apprenticeship.

Awareness

Awareness of Apprenticeships and their benefits for business is growing among employers but there are still many SMEs that are not aware of Apprenticeships and their benefits.

Even where employers are aware of Apprenticeships as a pathway to work for learners, they sometimes hold misconceptions about what Apprenticeships can offer an organisation, including the organisation's skills base and future talent potential. This can lead to an unhelpful focus on the immediate costs of recruitment and training, instead of seeing those as an investment in the capability and commitment of their workforce.

While in the sectors that have a tradition of Apprenticeships (construction, engineering) employers realise the long-term benefits of their investment in training, other areas, such as business administration and retail, need to improve. As one learning provider puts it:

Something like motor vehicles and engineering are traditionally [Apprenticeship-based]. Almost all of the staff and the

employees would have gone through an Apprenticeship. ... Areas like business admin, customer service [and] housing are slightly different ... it's a little bit harder sometimes to get through to employers and their understanding of the potential impact that (gaining a qualification) could have.

Costs

Upfront costs of Apprenticeships are a major concern for employers. It is true that an initial investment in terms of time for recruitment and training of the candidate is required. In addition, the employer has to pay the apprentice's wage and potentially cover some of the training costs. This has led to unhelpful targeting of applicants by age, where employers or training providers show preference for 16–18-year-old applicants that draw full government funding. For example, some providers only promote 16–18-year-olds to maximise their funding, without consulting the employer.

The costs associated with recruiting and training apprentices must be considered in the context of the benefits that an apprentice can offer to the firm over time. To ensure that the organisation receives a return on its investment in the apprentice, it has to ensure that the learner is the best suitable candidate for the job and strive to retain that employee after the end of their Apprenticeship.

One provider says this about how employers need to view costs:

We are very honest in our literature that this isn't a hit-the-ground-running kind of recruitment. You have to have patience. ... There's a tipping point at around six months [when benefits start to outweigh the costs].

Ownership

The current Apprenticeships funding system is under review. If the funding model would move to a model where employers take ownership of the Apprenticeship funding in England, the onus is on them to use good recruitment practices to ensure they find the best candidates for their Apprenticeship vacancies.

Even so, many small employers, according to one provider, would struggle in this area:

Small employers are trying [to do more] but their job at the end of the day is to make stuff. It's not to make Apprenticeships, it's not to make NVQs or technical certificates ... if we don't do it, they won't do it.

If employers choose to continue to rely on the learning providers to select apprentices for their organisation, they need to be equipped to recognise good practice and invest their Apprenticeship funding effectively.

3 Challenges for candidates: do young people feel engaged with Apprenticeships?

There are inconsistencies in what young people may understand about Apprenticeships, as well as misconceptions over the types of careers an Apprenticeship pathway can serve. This is caused to a large extent by lack of information and promotion of Apprenticeships in schools and poor perceptions of Apprenticeships as an alternative route into work (CIPD 2012b).

Guidance

The lack of awareness of Apprenticeship benefits among learners and – very importantly – by their parents directs some young people with the relevant experience and career preferences away from this route. One provider puts it well:

Parents also are misguided in what they think is involved in an Apprenticeship. They don't value [them] because, back in their day, Apprenticeships were at £1 an hour and would do manual labour. I think we could do a lot more – all providers, the Government, everybody – to raise the profile and get the parents to buy in and engage.

One issue is with the lack of support available to young people to decide on those career pathways. Patchy career advice in some schools has left many pupils uninformed about Apprenticeships as a pathway into full-time employment. Furthermore, incentives for schools to keep their learners in sixth form have contributed to a perception of Apprenticeships as a pathway best

suited for those who are deemed to be unlikely to succeed in a school environment. Young people also rarely learn employability and job-seeking skills before they apply for an Apprenticeship. Even so, some organisations are able to provide learners with advice and guidance on researching job opportunities, application-writing and interviewing skills.

Number of applications

Several factors are likely to considerably increase the number of applications submitted by an applicant:

- **Age:** the older the candidates are, the fewer applications they submit on average. For example, those aged under 16 submitted an average of seven applications per person, compared with 21–24-year-olds submitting four applications per person.
- **Location:** candidates living in London or the West Midlands submitted an average of eight and seven applications per person respectively, while in the south-west and the south-east of England the averages dropped to five applications per person.
- **Ethnicity:** belonging to an ethnicity group other than White: candidates identifying as White British, White Irish or White (Other) submitted the least number of applications per person on average (5.7), compared with Bangladeshi applicants, for example, with an average of 11 applications per person.

'There are inconsistencies in what young people may understand about Apprenticeships, as well as misconceptions over the types of careers an Apprenticeship pathway can serve.'

Table 2: Number of vacancies and candidates, by region

Region	Number of vacancies	% of vacancies	Number of candidates	% of candidates	Applications per vacancy	Average number of applications submitted per candidate
East Midlands	11,240	10.1	44,683	10.2	13.2	6.1
East of England	10,858	9.8	44,148	10.1	11.1	5.2
London	15,626	14	63,961	14.7	19.5	7.6
North-east	6,695	6.0	28,706	6.6	15.2	6.5
North-west	15,756	14.1	61,737	14.1	12.8	5.8
South-east	14,157	12.7	52,108	11.9	9.3	4.6
South-west	10,667	9.6	36,088	8.3	9.7	4.8
West Midlands	15,530	13.9	59,741	13.7	14.8	7.0
Yorkshire and the Humber	10,280	9.2	40,713	9.3	12.4	5.4
Total	111,360		436,331		13.3	6.0

Perceptions

A huge issue with achieving quality Apprenticeships is linked to young people's perceptions around the programme: although they may begin the journey with a view to gain qualification, some apprentices lack the long-term perspective and commitment to persevere with a particular career track. These applicants might view immediate earning opportunities to be more attractive than an Apprenticeship, and therefore require the long-term benefits to be re-emphasised during the recruitment process. However, the programme itself is intended for training and, therefore, should allow for some form of testing out career options and honing employability skills. One provider admits:

Young people ... want to buy things, they want to go out with their friends and it's very difficult financially. They don't really understand pay scales, they have no idea what an entry person is paid. So an apprentice might start on £120 a week but, by the time they've done 12 months, they could be earning £18,000 to £20,000. On the other hand,

if they leave school and get a job they could be on £11,000 a year. Many of them think, 'I think that's a much better deal than an Apprenticeship.' But they'll still be on £11,000 or £12,000 a year later. So they don't see the long-term gain – or, maybe, they just don't have that information.

Expectations mismatch with employers

Even if there is demand for apprentices from an employer, and there is a pool of young people willing to enter an Apprenticeship, differences in expectations between the employer and the young person may make the match more difficult. Some employers have unrealistically high expectations of the qualifications and the skills that young people must offer, while others are sometimes looking for unrealistic working conditions.

One learning provider echoes the feelings of one employer client:

They shortlisted for five, worked out a date, they'd arranged a lunch with all the staff. One just never turned up, one they had

to phone up and get him out of bed, another one turned up looking a mess and the other two were not suitable.

Another provider comments on the lack of young people's understanding of career sectors:

They might want to be an astronaut in the long term, but we ask them 'What can you do in the short term that's real?' ... a lot of young people are coming out of school and an Apprenticeship is like the 'poor' option ... the last resort. We have to refresh them in terms of: 'This is a fabulous way to develop your career because you can probably earn and learn and still get the same as your colleague who has gone to university.'

4 Challenges for learning providers: how to improve the match between the vacancy and getting the right candidate

In the current system many employers rely on learning providers to source, screen and recruit young people. These organisations are funded by the UK Government, fully or partially, to fulfil the training component of Apprenticeships and to conduct assessments of progress.

Funding

A provider's income from Apprenticeships depends (among others) on the number of learners on the programme, the age of the learner and the success rates (the number of learners successfully finishing the programme). In order to maximise the chances that an Apprenticeship will be completed, it is in a learning provider's interest to proactively seek Apprenticeship opportunities, raise the awareness of young people and employers of the scheme, and carefully select learners who are the best match for the vacancy on offer. As a result, many successful providers act in a way similar to recruitment agencies in the wider labour market: they may take on the process of screening.

The 'broker' role

In the current arrangement, learning providers act as brokers between the employer and the candidate, both during the recruitment process and after the match is complete. Providers gauge Apprenticeship candidates for functional skills and attitudes and prepare them for employer interview, for example by giving employability tips and providing general careers advice. Similarly, they assist employers with apprentice job design, scheduling interviews and supporting them

throughout the Apprenticeship. The practices that they demonstrate up front can have a significant impact on whether the match will happen, the expectations of the learner and the employer of each other, and the sustainability of the match.

One employer reflected on their poor experience with several providers:

Training providers that we have met initially were giving the impression that they were fitting round pegs into square holes. Some young people are simply not ready for an Apprenticeship yet. As a small business we needed to make sure we had absolutely the right candidate, as we would not have had the resources to develop the basic skills of someone who didn't fit our requirements.

The good, the bad – and the costly

- **The good:** some providers are already making a difference to creating sustainable Apprenticeship vacancies, by working with employers to inform them about the opportunities that such training programmes offer, help design job specifications and take on the time-consuming work of screening candidate applications.
- **The bad:** even so, we identified several practices of learning providers that lead to poor learning and employment outcomes in the long term, while they may be offering a particular provider short-term

gains in increased funding, speed and ease of recruitment. We challenge such 'false economy', compromising the quality of Apprenticeships by mis-selling this form of employment to employers, and potentially affecting the image of Apprenticeships overall.

- **The costly:** many providers may be tempted to underplay some of the costs associated with an Apprenticeship up front in order to retain vacancies and clients who may not be attaching priority to apprentice uptake; however, such practices create a false economy, undermining long-term Apprenticeship benefits. After the match it would appear that some providers do not provide the right level of support for young people, which can result in young people leaving the programme early.

5 Recommendations for action

'We recommend that, in order to maximise the quality of the Apprenticeship match and of the success rate, providers adopt good recruitment practices.'

Our review of the process of recruiting young people into Apprenticeships shows that practices used in recruitment are critical to creating a successful employment relationship between the employer and the learner. For example, advertising, the structure of the application process and the selection methods directly impact the quality of Apprenticeship recruits. In addition, the experiences of the employer and the young person during recruitment indirectly impact the perceptions and attitudes around Apprenticeships and, therefore, the longevity of the match. Poor experiences can deter some organisations and young people from considering the Apprenticeship pathway.

The opportunity for Apprenticeships is clear. Although combining work and study is not as popular in England as it is in other countries, it is equally clear that some employers see the business case for creating vacancies that allow individuals to learn on the job. Indeed, Apprenticeships have been shown to:

- grow the human capital of the organisation's workforce
- secure employee commitment to delivering quality products and services
- assist in future workforce planning (CIPD 2012c).

The appetite is clearly present on the part of candidates: the number of young people applying for the programme is increasing steadily – there were 542,970 16–24-year-olds registered with the NAS in 2013.

To move towards better understanding and behaviours on the part of employers, providers and candidates means understanding what good and poor practices look like. To illustrate this, Table 3 outlines good and poor practice from the point of view of the provider, as the lynchpin between employer and candidate.

Learning providers

Recommendations

Where learning providers involved in the recruitment process act in the long-term interests of both the organisation and the young person, the recruitment process can be slower but more thorough and rewarding for all parties. On the other hand, in the case of a poor match, a proportion of learners are likely to drop out of the programme before they complete the training, as both the employer and the young person are progressively more disappointed with the experience.

We recommend that, in order to maximise the quality of the Apprenticeship match and of the success rates, providers adopt good recruitment practices and avoid poor practices, as described in Table 3.

Employers

In the future when employers take ownership of the Apprenticeship funding, they will be able to impact the quality of Apprenticeship recruits through either adopting the positive recruitment practices themselves or through partnering with those learning providers who demonstrate effective recruitment approaches.

Table 3: Summary of provider good and poor recruitment practices

Good practices

When working with employers

- Building the business case for Apprenticeship costs and benefits
- Working with employers to identify learning needs that would support an Apprenticeship
- Challenging employers to pay apprentices above the minimum Apprenticeship wage

When working with young people

- Emphasising the long-term benefits of an Apprenticeship to the young people
- Working with parents to get their buy-in
- Working with schools to offer impartial career advice to young people deciding on how to continue with their education
- Using current apprentices as champions of information and advice
- Providing face-to-face career information, advice and guidance as required
- Providing mentor support

When managing the match between vacancies and applicants

- Looking for opportunities beyond their immediate geographical area to redress the mismatch between the demand and the supply of Apprenticeships
- Encouraging employers to contribute a travel allowance for difficult geographical areas
- Proactively engaging employers and young people to manage the fluctuations of demand and supply in time

Poor practices

When working with employers

- Mis-selling Apprenticeships as ‘cheap labour’
- Offering incorrect frameworks to keep clients
- Discriminating candidates by age, or assuming that an employer is only looking for candidates of a certain age
- Posting misleading Apprenticeship adverts
- Failing to follow the NAS employer referral process correctly

When working with young people

- Posting misleading Apprenticeship adverts to attract learners on non-employment learning tracks
- Failing to provide tailored feedback to candidates to help them improve with future applications
- Failing to signpost unsuitable candidates to upskilling opportunities and career guidance
- Failing to tailor the Apprenticeship advert to attract the interest of a young applicant
- One-size-fits-all approach to young person’s learning needs rather than tailoring learning to build on existing candidate knowledge and skills

When managing the match between vacancies and applicants

- Filling vacancies too quickly without careful selection of learners that make the best match
- Ignoring unsuccessful applicants instead of considering them for similar or future positions
- Advertising with unrealistic candidate requirements and salaries not reflective of job role or sector averages
- Failing to challenge the learner’s and the employer’s expectations of an Apprenticeship up front
- Failure to monitor the development of the employment relationship and prevent potential dropouts

'Take ownership of the recruitment and training process, as employing young apprentices is an investment in the skills and motivation of your workforce.'

Recommendations

- Consider the balance of long-term benefits that employing young people can offer to your business versus upfront costs of recruitment and training.
- Take ownership of the recruitment and training process, as employing young apprentices is an investment in the skills and motivation of your future workforce.
- Reach out to young people proactively through employment fairs and online platforms, both extending employment opportunities to them as well as mentoring them on employability skills, as young candidates are likely to add value to your business and help grow your future workforce.
- Engage with the entire process of recruiting your apprentice, including design of the Apprenticeship role with duties adequate to the skill level of a young person, formulating an attractive job advert and selecting the best candidate for the role as that would help manage the employment relationship once the Apprenticeship begins. Make sure to avoid age discrimination and consider government support in covering the training contribution.
- Understand that young people will judge the quality of the jobs you are offering by your behaviours in the recruitment process. Respect their time and make recruitment decisions in a timely manner.
- Adjust your recruitment practices to the skill and experience level of a young person. Consider a skill-based/strength-based rather than competency-based interview approach.
- Provide feedback on the interview process to unsuccessful candidates.
- Consider the fairness of the pay you are offering young recruits and provide travel expenses where possible.
- Understand that some young people looking for Apprenticeships will have limited experience of working and may lack skills to perform even basic tasks (writing emails, answering phone calls). Invest time in managing young recruits, providing pastoral support and mentoring. Appropriate levels of support at the beginning of the employment relationship are likely to improve employee skill and confidence levels more quickly, therefore enabling them to take on more challenging tasks and perform the job to a higher standard.
- Provide explicit and tailored support to your line managers that manage young apprentices and offer a platform to share success stories and experience to managers.
- Consider how the motivation of an employee changes over time and ensure that the apprentice feels that their contribution is valued through reasonable autonomy, task variety, as well as formal and informal reward and recognition, such as incremental pay increase, vouchers and simply saying 'thank you'.
- Be clear about the career prospects at the end of the Apprenticeship and make it known to the apprentice as soon as possible.

Skills Funding Agency/National Apprenticeship Service

Recommendations

To support the flow of applications to 'hard-to-fill' vacancies, the Skills Funding Agency/NAS should:

- Support campaigns aimed at attracting young people to apply

for Apprenticeships, particularly in geographical areas where candidate application rates are low even though Apprenticeship wages and the volumes of potential applicants are relatively high: the south-west and south-east of England.

- Generate better-quality vacancies in geographical areas that attract fewer applications per vacancy, despite relatively high volumes of young people registered with the NAS: the East Midlands, east of England, Yorkshire and the Humber.
- Help create more vacancies in areas where candidates' interest in Apprenticeships exceeds availability of vacancies: London and the north-east of England.
- Engage with more companies and promote Apprenticeships to result in an increase in vacancies in arts, media and publishing, where vacancies are most likely to attract greater application volumes across the range of frameworks and are less likely to have hard-to-fill vacancies.
- Consider greater prominence of career information on the NAS website in areas with low application rates (leisure, travel and tourism, and retail and commercial enterprise), highlighting career opportunities in those industry sectors to young people, and including links to the National Careers Service website.
- Focus attention on improving the quality and attractiveness of Apprenticeship adverts in leisure, travel and tourism, education and training, and retail and commercial enterprise, where the rates of application per vacancy are particularly low across the frameworks.
- Find ways to identify candidates who stopped applying after their first unsuccessful attempt and try to engage them by signposting them to careers information, advice and guidance.

In addition, the CIPD recommends that the Skills Funding Agency/NAS should consider the following:

- Review the Av application system, considering feedback from candidates, training providers and employers.
- Continue working with the 16–18-year-old candidate cohort to assist candidates in successfully securing Apprenticeships.
- Continue to provide employers with impartial information and advice on Apprenticeships.
- Provide specific and accessible information on Apprenticeships to parents.
- Support employers during the implementation of Apprenticeship reforms.
- Encourage best recruitment practice among training providers and employers.

Apprenticeship candidates

Recommendations

We recommend that young people either seeking or in Apprenticeships are encouraged by other stakeholders to:

- Proactively seek career information, advice and guidance, for example through the National Careers Service. Where advice is not available through school, the NAS, local colleges and learning providers can signpost them to the sources of advice.
- Have a discussion with their career adviser, mentor, parent and/or friends about your strengths. Skills are not gained just through work experience – extracurricular activities and your hobbies may have shown areas where they best apply themselves. Use those examples in job interviews to talk about their skills.

- Join mentoring schemes such as the CIPD's Steps Ahead Mentoring programme, which matches HR volunteers with young jobseekers (18–24) to have one-to-one sessions with an experienced HR professional to gain insight into how recruitment works and what employers expect of candidates during the different stages of the process.
- Look for work experience/ 'Saturday jobs' and volunteering opportunities to familiarise themselves with the world of work, as well as basic workplace skills (dressing for work, communication in professional settings, timekeeping, and so on).
- Adopt a systematic approach to job search: identify areas or sectors that they are interested in and focus on tailoring your application to a specific industry, employer and job description.
- Always prepare for job assessments and interviews by understanding the employer background, job description and clarifying the logistics of getting to the interview location, the interview process and the types of questions that would be asked, if possible.
- Ask questions and speak of their expectations before and during an Apprenticeship to prevent disappointments.
- Proactively communicate with their training provider/assessor during the Apprenticeship to notify them of your progress and ongoing issues.

Recommendations specifically for 'hard-to-fill' vacancies

More specifically, we understand that some – 'hard-to-fill' – vacancies attract too few applicants to choose from as a result of a combination of the characteristics of the vacancy itself, such as wage level, location, time of advertisement, sector and

‘Understand that wage increases are not the only thing that attract candidates to the job and make little difference for the applications volume in such sectors as leisure and retail.’

framework of the Apprenticeship. There are a few things that both learning providers and the NAS could do to increase the number of applicants for those positions:

- Challenge employers on the Apprenticeship wage levels. Over 60% of Apprenticeship vacancies were advertised at the National Minimum Wage in 2012–13. Consider which areas have higher living costs, making Apprenticeship minimum wage unsustainable for a candidate. Aim to advertise Apprenticeships at wages that are reflective of the levels of pay in a particular sector of employment.
- Explore the differences in application rates between different frameworks within a single industry sector. Evidence shows that a higher wage considerably improves vacancy attractiveness in some sectors, increasing application rates. Consider which frameworks attract high application rates but have low availability of vacancies at the moment. Work with employers in relevant sectors to create Apprenticeship vacancies and match candidate demand.
- Track the peaks and troughs in the volumes of vacancies versus applicant supply. Work with large employers to proactively engage them at the times when the growth in application numbers overtakes the increase in the volume of vacancies

(April, May, June). On the other hand, maintain candidate databases to proactively approach previously unsuccessful candidates for similar positions they might be interested in.

- Understand that wage increases are not the only thing that attract candidates to the job and make little difference for the applications volume in such sectors as leisure and retail. Make Apprenticeship adverts attractive to the young person by understanding what candidates are looking for in an Apprenticeship:
 - simple and succinct description of duties
 - the level of tasks realistic to the skill level of a young person with relatively little work experience
 - variety of tasks offered by the role, making the young person feel like their contribution will be valued by the organisation
 - simple language, no jargon or technical terms
 - indication of employment prospects at the end of an Apprenticeship, or explanation of how it could lead on to a career
 - fair wage.

Appendix

Table 4: Average wage (£ per week), by sector, by region

Sector	East Midlands	East of England	London	North-east of England	North-west of England	South-east of England	South-west of England	West Midlands
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	113.2	120.7	145.9	108.9	115.1	126.6	119.0	114.3
Arts, media and publishing	124.0	121.4	174.5	113.4	115.5	148.3	122.6	118.2
Business, administration and law	122.8	127.9	142.5	120.8	127.5	133.9	128.0	119.2
Construction, planning and the built environment	123.7	132.2	160.6	116.0	124.0	162.5	126.3	113.6
Education and training	109.9	109.0	115.5	109.7	108.1	109.9	113.3	108.7
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	142.3	146.3	159.5	126.9	132.4	174.7	152.0	145.5
Health, public services and care	118.2	120.7	124.5	114.4	119.5	136.2	132.3	119.1
Information and communication technology	125.6	122.4	169.9	117.0	128.2	140.7	165.6	139.5
Leisure, travel and tourism	109.2	111.1	120.7	111.1	107.9	117.1	111.1	110.0
Retail and commercial enterprise	116.1	118.3	133.2	112.4	113.4	125.5	116.9	115.6
Science and mathematics	130.0	144.6	142.6	276.0	164.5	113.6	106.0	122.1
Total overall average	122.9	126.1	145.9	118.8	122.8	138.0	130.2	114.3

Table 5: Average number of applications and average wage (£ per week), by Apprenticeship framework

Sector	Number of vacancies	Number of applications per vacancy	Average wage
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care			
Agriculture	134	9.2	139.7
Animal care	175	26.2	109.3
Animal technology	3	6.7	300.0
Environmental conservation	43	12.5	113.2
Equine	289	9.7	109.1
Fencing	1	6.0	106.0
Floristry	49	14.7	115.8
Game and wildlife management	1	12.0	238.0
Horticulture	1,238	10.2	121.9
Land	40	9.3	115.6
Trees and timber	29	9.7	131.9
Veterinary nursing	12	31.0	106.0
Arts, media and publishing			
Community arts	45	15.0	147.6
Costume and wardrobe	3	79.0	184.0
Creative and digital media	651	19.8	142.3
Cultural heritage	61	18.9	187.9
Design	164	23.8	126.2
Live events and promotion	35	36.4	128.0
Music business	15	47.6	129.3
Photo imaging	5	36.8	119.6
Technical theatre	62	21.5	137.1
Business, administration and law			
Accounting	1,726	21.0	138.7
Bookkeeping	28	25.0	116.1
Business and administration	29,375	13.8	125.8
Contact centre operations management	548	4.1	142.8
Customer service	10,569	9.7	126.0
Enterprise	23	6.5	119.0
Management	76	24.5	195.1
Marketing	545	11.1	137.9
Payroll	40	21.0	144.8
Providing financial advice	40	5.0	119.8
Providing financial services	810	24.0	140.6
Providing mortgage advice	3	29.0	120.7
Sales and telesales	2,533	6.7	133.2

Table 5: continued

Sector	Number of vacancies	Number of applications per vacancy	Average wage
Construction, planning and the built environment			
Building services, engineering technology and project management	57	27.2	191.6
Construction building	2,598	8.6	118.7
Construction civil engineering	336	13.9	157.6
Construction specialist	419	17.4	122.7
Construction technical, supervision and management	85	16.8	177.1
Domestic heating	7	23.9	129.3
Electrotechnical	436	24.9	136.7
Heating and ventilating	35	30.9	133.2
Plumbing and heating	269	42.6	134.6
Refrigeration and air conditioning	54	20.3	122.1
Surveying	70	24.4	192.5
Sustainable resource management	25	14.0	132.1
Education and training			
Learning and development	65	13.0	123.7
Supporting teaching and learning in schools	1,080	13.2	110.4
Engineering and manufacturing technologies			
Advanced engineering construction	145	7.0	224.0
Aviation operations on the ground	1	51.0	187.0
Bus and coach engineering and maintenance	61	26.2	165.5
Ceramics manufacturing	18	5.3	107.8
Combined manufacturing processes	8	21.4	151.8
Driving goods vehicles	56	18.4	199.2
Engineering	1	76.0	106.0
Engineering construction	13	23.8	165.5
Engineering manufacture (operator and semi)	1,666	19.5	145.9
Engineering manufacture (senior technician)	94	13.2	195.9
Food and drink	330	8.0	136.4
Furniture industry	3	5.0	106.0
Furniture, furnishings and interiors manufacturing	82	8.9	117.9
Glass industry	173	8.0	125.6
Improving operational performance	979	14.0	134.7
Laboratory and science technicians	218	11.7	149.2
Manufacture craft and technician	3,435	16.8	166.2
Marine industry	30	26.5	139.5
Maritime occupations	14	6.6	120.6
Nuclear working	1	0.0	110.0
Passenger carrying vehicle (bus and coach)	32	0.0	106.0
Polymer processing operations	21	15.4	133.4
Process manufacturing	148	14.8	134.6
Production of coatings	14	11.6	151.7
Rail engineering (track)	471	7.1	122.5
Signmaking	101	10.4	116.4
The gas industry	26	9.8	218.5
The power industry	55	7.9	235.9
The water industry	22	28.0	162.6
Vehicle body and paint	299	25.6	114.9
Vehicle fitting	53	27.5	115.4
Vehicle maintenance and repair	2,056	35.9	115.7
Vehicle parts	530	18.0	113.6

Table 5: continued

Sector	Number of vacancies	Number of applications per vacancy	Average wage
Health, public services and care			
Children and young people's workforce	6,775	15.6	110.7
Custodial care	2	9.5	185.0
Emergency fire service operation	7	15.3	106.0
Health allied health profession support	2	5.5	152.5
Health and social care	4,382	8.8	138.5
Health blood donor support	1	0.0	106.0
Health clinical healthcare support	123	10.1	144.7
Health dental nursing	700	15.8	120.1
Health healthcare support services	726	11.8	139.8
Health maternity and paediatric support	4	17.0	106.0
Health optical retail	68	4.7	115.9
Health pathology support	4	27.3	215.8
Health pharmacy services	455	24.2	138.7
Housing	55	16.7	139.4
Libraries, archives, records and information management services	27	12.4	139.8
Providing security services	161	3.3	112.9
Security systems	120	12.5	129.5
Youth work	29	11.0	125.0
Information and communication technology			
IT application specialist	1,311	16.8	128.6
IT, software, web and telecoms professional	5,468	16.2	146.9
Leisure, travel and tourism			
Activity leadership	533	7.9	109.2
Advanced fitness	10	15.4	117.8
Advanced playwork	2	6.5	155.0
Instructing exercise and fitness	385	16.8	108.1
Leisure management	85	3.3	113.4
Leisure operations	564	6.3	114.7
Playwork	43	15.6	111.9
Sporting excellence	13	4.3	106.0
Sports development	83	6.8	107.0
Travel services	66	19.3	146.9
Retail and commercial enterprise			
Barbering	123	9.4	107.4
Beauty therapy	607	10.8	108.8
Cleaning and environmental services	225	7.2	117.5
Commercial moving	13	13.5	118.3
Drinks dispense systems	12	9.8	111.7
Facilities management	96	8.6	123.7
Fashion and textiles	119	11.8	110.9
Hairdressing	3,873	11.6	108.2
Hospitality and catering	6,953	7.0	123.8
International trade and logistics	40	14.0	147.8
Licensed hospitality	94	7.5	124.7
Logistics operations	81	12.2	148.8
Mail services	13	19.2	173.4
Nail services	30	15.1	106.2
Outdoor programmes	24	8.4	117.6
Vehicle sales	270	21.8	110.2
Warehousing and storage	2,439	15.9	122.2

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Today's young people, tomorrow's workforce

The **Learning to Work** programme is led by the CIPD to promote the role of employers in reducing youth unemployment. The CIPD's purpose is to **champion better work and working lives**, which starts with young people being able to access the labour market.

The overall aim of the programme is to promote the business case for investing in the future workforce. We encourage HR professionals to offer a wide range of access routes into their organisations and ensure their recruitment and management practices are youth-friendly. We also promote direct contact with young people via two youth volunteering programmes, **Steps Ahead Mentoring** and **Inspiring the Future**.

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