



MINUTES
Apprenticeships APPG meeting
Tuesday 16 January 2018
4pm – 5pm, Committee Room 9, Palace of Westminster

Chair: Catherine McKinnell MP (part) and Lord Lucas (part)

Co-Chair of APPG, Catherine McKinnell MP briefly introduced the panel and reaffirmed the APPG's commitment to help increase the number of women in engineering and apprenticeships. She said that it was a subject very close to her heart.

Opening the discussion, **the Chair of Crossrail, Sir Terry Morgan** outlined some of the measures he had implemented in trying to increase the number of female engineers. The review he authored at the request of the Department for Transport into skills in the engineering sector had a set of recommendations with the primary one, he said, being to support greater diversity of apprentices in the sector. Crossrail had more than met its target of 400 apprentices working on the project and the aim of at least 20% of that figure being female. He pointed out that major projects, including HS2, had the ambition of a 50/50 split by 2020. He also noted that 30% of Crossrail's 2017 apprenticeship intake were women, and 40% were from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Sir Terry highlighted the importance of presenting a positive, exciting message and promoting role models to increase the number of female engineers. He added that the broad agenda of engineering and the exciting dynamics of the career needed to be made clearer.

Picking up on the theme of role models, **Head of Commercial at Semta Group, Jo Icton** argued that the engineering industry needed to promote their sector to the people who will influence children. She said that the messaging around engineering needed to be challenged and for the breadth of the career to be shared better. As an example, she hypothesised that young women passionate about design or helping their community would see fashion or design as a natural career, when those interests are just as relevant to engineering.

She spoke about the need for engineering for the country and highlighted the absence of women in the sector. She said that female engineers were particularly successful. She noted that one recent national award winner had difficulty convincing her own family that an apprenticeship was better than attending university. Another common objection to an apprenticeship came from school, with pupils pushed into choosing the university option. She called for parity of esteem between apprenticeships and universities and the need for more understanding that a degree could be achieved through an apprenticeship.

As an example of how to encourage more female engineers, Jo spoke about MBDA putting more onus onto schools. As they were struggling to get women to apply for their apprenticeships, MBDA said to schools that groups of children looking around their engineering plants would have to be at least 50% female.

Jo ended her remarks by reiterating the importance of messaging and the need to make the case that technology and innovation are all part of the exciting engineering industry.

Head of Heathrow Academy, Karima Khandker emphasised the importance of early intervention to encourage more women to become apprentice engineers. She highlighted Heathrow's work in running primary and secondary school challenges focussed on STEM subjects and helping young girls understand the realities of a career in engineering. Karima referred to how companies could excite young people about working in engineering through going into local schools and talking in terms likely to resonate with students. She argued that the opportunities of engineering are far broader than commonly understood.

Reflecting on the Employment and Skills Academy that Heathrow set up, she underlined the importance of that collaboration in engaging young people. She said that it was crucial to talk to parents and schools about the exciting opportunities that engineering can offer their children.

Senior HR Business Partner at Microsoft, Caroline Bryan focussed her remarks on encouraging more women to pursue careers in technology and the efforts of Microsoft in changing recruitment processes to achieve this goal. She outlined that Microsoft had put less emphasis on specific capabilities in job descriptions and more attention on personality. This was due to feedback from female applicants who found ticking capability boxes off-putting. She added that Microsoft now delay hiring for a position if they do not have a diverse and wide-ranging shortlist.

Caroline argued that engagement with schools was an important part of increasing the amount of female apprentices Microsoft hired in technical roles. As with previous speakers, she placed great importance in the way technological careers are portrayed. She called for less talk about coding and increased focus on the ability to work in a creative and collaborative manner to make a difference. As an example, she spoke of the success of Microsoft's Digigirls project, in which female students who are yet to make GCSE choices work at Microsoft to use coding to solve real life problems. Students who were previously involved now work at Microsoft today.

She argued that industry still had to work hard to overcome the stigma attached to apprenticeships. She said Microsoft placed importance in using role models, with their own apprentices being the best ambassadors. She ended her remarks by commenting on the importance of partnership working; sharing different ways of working and inspiring other companies to take on female apprentices can make a huge difference.

Officer of the APPG, Lord Lucas said he was pleased with the emphasis on the person rather than the qualifications for getting an apprenticeship (thus making it easier for women to access engineering) and spoke of the need of ensuring that full information on apprenticeship positions was available year-round. He highlighted the importance of using names for degrees embedded in apprenticeships that already have name recognition. **Vice-Chair of the APPG, Lord Aberdare** asked about smaller businesses and apprenticeships and said that the levy might be helpful for them.

Sir Terry Morgan said he was extremely disappointed by the levy, with even large employers struggling with the huge bureaucracy. He could not recall any employers saying the levy was working for their businesses and supply chains. The government needs to support and nurture the current appetite amongst employers for skills and apprenticeships. **Jo Iceton** said that any underspend of the levy should be contained within the same sector. **Caroline Bryan** called for an increase in the amount of the levy companies would be able to transfer to another employer. **Caroline and Karima** called for employers to be more flexible over hours and shifts as this can become a barrier to hiring more female apprentices.

Baroness Howe said that the barriers outlined by the speakers were "horrifying" and asked what more could be done. **The Earl of Liverpool** asked how the government could put the apprenticeship levy on the right path. **A representative from KPMG** mentioned the importance of early intervention points in putting forward the option of engineering to young women. She asked what "soft power" campaigns (such as through TV and social media) could be used to address this.

Sir Terry Morgan reaffirmed the importance of campaigning against apprenticeship stigma but assured the APPG that momentum was building to achieve this. He disagreed with the levy being administered by the Department for Education.

Jo Iceton called for school metrics to be based on employment, pointing out that some people go to university and do not secure jobs. Additionally, she argued for improvements in explaining the destination of apprentices and highlighted that apprentices are employed in jobs from day one.



Karim Khandker said that UCAS do now advertise apprenticeships but reiterated the need for improved accessibility and for schools to encourage more young people to pursue apprenticeships. **Caroline Bryan** said that it was important to share more success stories to demonstrate that apprenticeships were successful and fulfilling routes.

Vice Chair of the APPG, Baroness Garden referred to the annual Women and Work APPG report and highlighted that no matter how interested women were in apprenticeships, there was still a stigma about being ‘the only one’ working in these industries. **Mark Gale from the Young Women’s Trust** wanted to know what could be done to give hesitant companies (who were worried about discriminating against men) the support and legal guidance needed so that they can have the option of selecting female candidates. **Stephen Howse from Semta Group** called for the definition of STEM to be drawn in the careers strategy so that every young person has at least one engineering experience at their time in school.

Caroline Bryan and **Jo Iceton** highlighted the importance of changing the dialogue on the issue and talking more positivity about the opportunities. **Sir Terry Morgan** took issue with the point about discrimination of white men and argued in favour of positive discrimination. **Karima Khandker** mentioned the challenges with the levy and the need to take forward great examples. She argued that a skills levy would be a great opportunity and that collaboration was vital.

The Government Envoy for the Year of Engineering and Government Apprenticeship Ambassador, Stephen Metcalfe MP closed the APPG meeting by arguing that engineering affected every facet of life. For the UK to be leading in engineering he urged engagement with the upcoming fourth industrial revolution. He added that it was vital to erase outdated stereotypical views of engineering and reignite a passion for the industry. He alluded to the need to change the fact that 94% of the work force was white and 91% male. He argued for a more inclusive and bright future for engineering, and that he wanted every student to have an interaction every year with an engineer.

He said that government has a role in achieving a legacy for the Year of Engineering but that it was up to industry to take up the mantle. He continued by saying that apprenticeships needed to be seen as an attractive alternative to education. He concluded the meeting by saying that there was “synergy” between the Year of Engineering and the APPG on Apprenticeships and he looked forward to working with the Group to achieve change in the future.