



all party parliamentary group on
apprenticeships

APPG on Apprenticeships - Apprentice Panel to Mark National Apprenticeships Week- Minutes – 5th March 2019

Chair- Catherine McKinnell MP

Speakers: Deputy Director for Apprenticeships at the Department for Education, Louise Wright, Shadow Minister for Skills, Gordon Marsden, Rob Grant from Centrica, Alia Saddique from KPMG, Oliva Dobell from Heathrow Airport, Chyanne Mwangi from Microsoft, Tyrone Upton from MACE at Battersea Power Station, Megan Whitbread from Troup Bywaters + Anders and London South Bank University.

Opening the panel was **Deputy Director for Apprenticeships at the Department for Education, Louise Wright** who spoke broadly about the government's work on apprenticeships and national apprenticeship week, especially the recent *Fire It Up* campaign, which linked to the theme for the week of *Blaze a Trail*.

Next to speak was **Shadow Minister for Skills, Gordon Marsden**, who holds the Labour apprenticeship brief. He praised apprenticeships for offering solutions to vital skills needs across sectors as well as giving young people opportunities. He raised the importance of high-quality apprenticeships and of "*progressively integrated skills*", which could future proof apprentices meaning apprentices can continue their career path wherever or however they wanted. He also called for a fairer deal for apprentices, in terms of pay and benefits, but also to include them in approved education training which will allow apprentices to apply for certain benefits and encourage more people from disadvantaged background. He praised the idea of the panel, as a way to offer more opportunities for apprentices to have access to policy makers.

First of the apprentices to speak was **Rob Grant, a mature apprentice from Centrica**. He spoke about originally joining Centrica as an apprentice many years prior and that he felt that it was a great experience, offering a career, not a job, with a real importance placed on his personal development. He was offered the chance to do a second apprenticeships in project management skills and jumped at the chance. He said as a mature apprentice he was envious of apprenticeships that are on offer today, with the number of routes and their flexibility. An area he identified that could be improved was working on the stigma around apprenticeships.

The next apprentice the group heard from was **Alia Saddique from KPMG**. She spoke about choosing an apprenticeship over university and the pressures surrounding that. She noted that in training to become an accountant and chartered tax adviser, through the apprenticeship route she could accomplish it a year faster than going to university.

Within her apprenticeship she had been able to rotate within the business and gain the wide-ranging experience that she would not have had elsewhere. She spoke of how the skills she had gained at KPMG felt transferable and widely applicable. She said she felt as valued as the graduates at KPMG, which she said was great sign for apprenticeships

as a whole. Though she said the worst aspect was the stereotypes surrounding apprenticeships, misconceptions around the minimum wage, lack of experience and it not being seen as a career. She added there should be a platform for potential apprentices to speak to apprentices and get experience of what it is like to be one. She would have found that valuable, having had no knowledge of what it would be like.

From **Heathrow Airport** we heard from **Olivia Dobell** who works as a Digital Marketing Apprentice. Olivia talked about coming to an apprenticeship after realising university was not for her, as she was a proactive learner, who learned better on the job. She said she was lucky to have parents who supported this and did not think University was the best possible option. She said her apprenticeship had opened doors for her, particularly the creative side of her apprenticeship, now being design certified in Photoshop. She also said that she enjoyed the networking side of her apprenticeship. As for what could be improved in her apprenticeship, she identified the amount of information about apprenticeships available to schools and colleges as being far less comprehensive than what was available for universities.

Chyanne Mwangi from Microsoft was the next apprentice the group heard from. She began by talking about how she knew university was not the route for her, she felt that she excelled in hands on learning as opposed to learning theory in a classroom environment.

She expressed disappointment that often apprenticeships were an eleventh-hour option, for those that failed exams or didn't get into university, when they should be a valid option from the start. She also praised the fact that her route offered both a degree and job experience at the end of it, as opposed to one or the other.

The next apprentice was **Tyrone Upton** an apprentice for **MACE at Battersea Power Station**, currently undertaking a degree apprenticeship in engineering. He spoke about the way his week worked, with university one day a week and working on site the other four days. He felt that his apprenticeship had given him a good amount of responsibility, which had not only taught him how to deal with complex situations but also to gain confidence.

He then described the process of applying for the apprenticeship, saying that while it was a long and daunting process, it did make clear the quality of applicant that MACE wanted for their apprentices, and it made him feel sought after and valued when he was eventually offered the apprenticeship.

The final apprentice the group heard from was **Megan Whitbread**, an apprentice at **Troup Bywaters + Anders**, attending **London South Bank University**. Megan was another degree apprentice, having undertaken a level three apprenticeship prior. She talked about having not enjoyed school and wanting to be out there gaining knowledge and experience. She added her school had viewed University as the default option for her and only pushed her towards an apprenticeship when she did poorly at exams. She argued apprenticeships should not be viewed as a back-up option. To improve the apprenticeship experience itself, she called for reduced travel costs.

Co-Chair Gillian Keegan MP closed the meeting thanking all the apprentices, calling their stories inspiring. She added that they had all made a great decision in becoming

apprentices and that they would be miles ahead of their peers. She closed by calling on the panel to become ambassadors for apprenticeships in the lives going forward.