



all party parliamentary group on
apprenticeships

APPG on Apprenticeships - Parents, teachers, friends - Raising the esteem of apprenticeships in education – Minutes - 5th February 2019

Chair – Catherine McKinnell MP

Speakers: Toby Perkins MP, Apprenticeships Tutor at QA, Chris Dack and Member of the Education Select Committee, Emma Hardy MP.

Parliamentarians present: Cat McKinnell MP, Gillian Keegan MP, Karin Smyth MP, Lord Young of Norwood Green, Emma Hardy MP, Baroness Garden of Frognal, Lord Lucas and Lord Aberdare.

Co-Chair, **Cat McKinnell MP** opened the meeting, saying that the issue of the esteem of apprenticeships is raised frequently with her, both in terms of young people's faith in them as well as the confidence parents have.

Speaking first was **Toby Perkins MP (Lab, Chesterfield)**, a former Shadow Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills. He began by stating the support there was in Parliament for apprenticeships and the esteem they are held in, where apprenticeships are frequently held up as a force for good.

He then began to address issues surrounding apprenticeship esteem, the first of which, that in the last 5 years, the energy spent getting more people into apprenticeship had turned into a "*nebulous thing*" describing a large variety of things that would not traditionally be known as apprenticeships. For example, 'train to gain', and suddenly people didn't know what an apprenticeship represented anymore.

In addition, he noted the importance of improving quality, that poor quality apprenticeships out there, had an overall effect of reducing the positive impact that they can be seen to have.

He also noted that a number of small business feel apprenticeships are no longer obtainable, due to them being viewed as not commercially viable, the sums not adding up with the risks attached, This also harms their reputation.

He concluded by stating that for more parents to value the role of apprenticeships, government and businesses needed to make sure that they "*really deliver*" for young people which would then make it much easier to get them to sign up.

Next to speak was **Chris Dack, a digital marketing apprenticeships tutor at QA**, a training provider for apprenticeships among other things. He began by speaking about his personal experience of choosing to take a BTech, which was viewed as a second rate option at the time. He said that in teaching apprentices, he knew what they've been through and the way in which their self confidence had been knocked. He noted the positive transformation he saw through their apprenticeships as they realised that they had formed the basis of a career.

He went onto to address the importance of raising esteem, coming from industry, he said the root cause that needed tackling was the school environment, in which universities are given precedent over apprenticeships, with this thinking trickling down to parents also. He said that schools need to understand that apprenticeships offer a career and valuable life skills, as currently pupils were stuck in an educational vacuum and missing the more diverse message that is out there.

Following Chris, the panel opened up to questions and comments.

Siobhan Randell Education and Engagement Manager at Whitehat spoke about positive progress she had seen in being an apprentice ambassador coming into schools, she said they were in high demand and were inundated with requests for speaking. She also noted that universities had datasets available on quality, fun, student satisfaction, community and retention rates. But that does not exist for apprenticeships.

Lynda Dunlop, Apprenticeships Officer at the Royal Opera House, spoke about the positive impact she had seen in putting together a prospectus to go with the job, similar to a university prospectus, showing benefits and nature of the job. This wasn't only good for apprentices, but good for the parents who could have the confidence that they are not just putting their child into some random job.

Baroness Garden spoke about her experience working in the coalition government, in the Department for Education, and how she was the only person on the Ministerial team who had not only been a teacher but also had knowledge of Further Education and Vocational skills. The issue she raised was that there was a lack of knowledge among ministers and civil servants who did not understand anything beyond the traditional academic and university route.

Former teacher and Education Select Committee Member, Emma Hardy MP, began by talking about her experience as a primary school teacher for 11 years and her initial scepticism about apprenticeships, especially as a teacher, she felt conditioned to guide children towards a more traditionally academic pathway. What changed her mind was learning about the German vocational education program and meeting a number of apprentices. She felt that for apprenticeships to offer parity of esteem, there needed to be parity of outcomes.