



all party parliamentary group on
apprenticeships

APPG on Apprenticeships - Apprenticeships and the Public Sector: Health – Minutes – Tuesday 18 June

Chair – Catherine McKinnell MP

Speakers: Phil Kenmore, Head of Health and Social Care, BDU, Open University, Helga Pile, Deputy Head of Health, UNISON, Ben Mason, Founder and CEO, Globalbridge and Sarah Green, Associate Director of Education, University Hospitals Bristol NHS, NHS Foundation Trust.

First to speak was **Head of Health and Social Care at the business development unit of the Open University (OU), Phil Kenmore**. He began by providing background to the OU, explaining how it is the biggest university in Europe with an average age of 26. He then moved on address healthcare, which the OU had been working in since 2002, producing 17000 nursing graduates. Through its mix of distance learning and face to face on the ground training.

He noted the issue that NHS trusts struggle with the management of the levy and do not have access to levy to fund an apprentice's study time. He discussed how the role of a nursing apprentice still needs to be filled when they are studying. He agreed that if this problem was addressed then the number of nursing apprenticeships would *"go through the roof"*.

He also explained that in the future, there may be a situation where some students undertake their apprenticeship, gain the qualifications required to be a nurse and register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council before completing an End Point Assessment (EPA). This means there could be instances where students have qualified as a nurse without undertaking an EPA. Because of this, universities would not receive remuneration as technically the student has not fully completed their apprenticeship.

Following this was **Deputy Head of Health at UNISON, Helga Pile** who provided a public sector union perspective on apprenticeships in the health sector. She first addressed the large amount of levy money that isn't being spent, especially at a time of shortages in the health service, and the possibility that it might be 'clawed back' by the Treasury. She then discussed the 40,000 nursing vacancies, and the knock-on effect of these resulting in a lack of support for trainees and apprentices. She said the balance of spending on the levy by the NHS was concentrated at levels two and three for administrative and clerical jobs, whereas it would be better served trying to match that funding to areas where staff shortages are i.e. nurses.

She did note that NHS interim people plan, which is supporting the NHS long term plan, had some reference to apprenticeships, but it did not go far enough, and it was a missed opportunity to bring about more apprenticeships.

She noted that nursing apprenticeships were a good model to support those who previously would not be able to take up nursing, having been priced out of doing traditional route, especially with the removal of nursing bursary. She also noted that nursing apprentices resulted in higher employment in the local area, improving the local community, this is because nursing apprentices have higher retention rates.

She said that UNISON was pushing for adding more flexibility to loosen restrictions on the levy, with the ability to pool across employers in the health service. It was also calling for the Department for Health and Social Care to put in more support to offer nursing apprenticeships at scale, as you would only see cost benefits over a longer time. UNISON is also calling for the nursing apprenticeship amount of pay to be standardised nationally.

The next speaker was **Founder and CEO of Globalbridge, Ben Mason**. Globalbridge was founded to address issues around access and perception around apprenticeships. It is a digital multimedia platform where users create a digital profile to connect with opportunities. It is used by NHS employers. The Group heard how vital the health sector could become in engaging young people with technology. He explained that not many people are aware of the NHS's role in upskilling the future workforce. Technology plays a vital role within the NHS however there is a lack of understanding amongst the general public that this could be a way into the sector.

The final speaker of the session was **Associate Director of Education at University Hospitals Bristol NHS, NHS Foundation Trust, Sarah Green**. She spoke of how Apprenticeships offer an attractive supply route to local communities for health-based roles. She noted that a health apprenticeship resulted in exposure to a number of health-based careers, as such they could be seen to be enabling pathways.

She said that they offered the ability as employer to shape apprenticeships to what they need in terms of skills and care. This meant that apprentices felt relevant in the workplace, with the potential to gain a career long term.

Though she said it was not without challenges, there was the ability of the levy to fund training, she noted that the NHS is very much a different business model to what the apprenticeship system was designed for. She also explained that there is already a shortage of people, so there isn't the ability to backfill, when people need to do learning away from the job. She also noted the business model is out of cycle of NHS business cycle and as such there is a need for upfront investment.