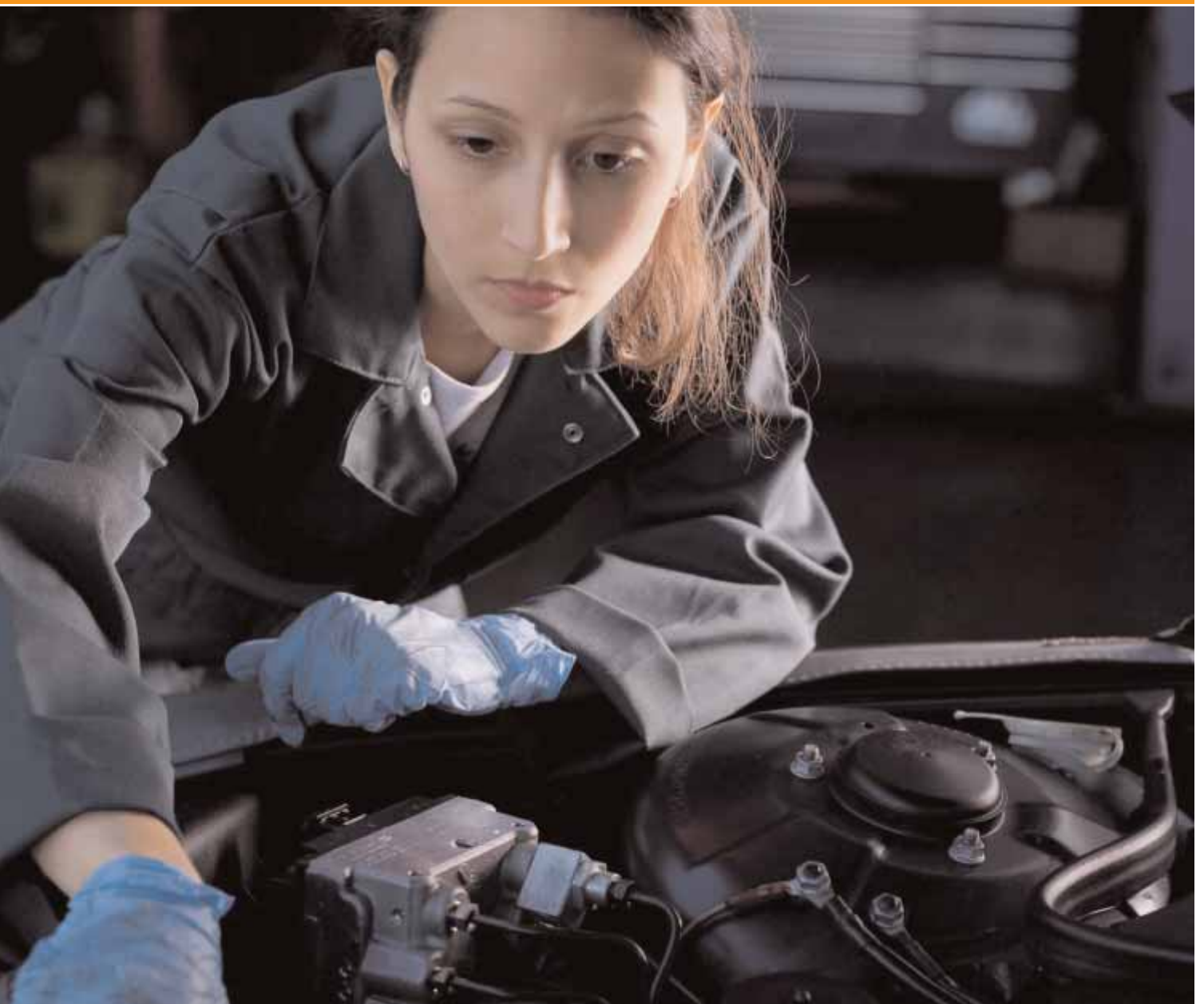


## **You're hired**

Apprenticeships in London  
July 2006





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## **You're Hired: Apprenticeships in London Chair's Foreword**



A lack of skills is one of the biggest economic problems our country faces. And the problem is more acute in London.

Many Londoners are unemployed because they lack the necessary skills. At the same time, job vacancies go unfilled because there aren't enough people available with the right skills.

There is no single panacea but apprenticeships are an important ingredient in the solution. But sadly, apprenticeships have become something of a 'Cinderella' training option.

Our scrutiny found several hurdles in the way of the provision and take-up of apprenticeship opportunities. In some industries, there simply aren't enough apprenticeships available, while in others opportunities aren't taken up. Centrally dictated strategies take little notice of local needs. And most young people aren't even aware of the options available.

But perhaps the biggest barrier is prejudice. There is a widespread assumption that the academic route is the most appropriate form of education for all young people, and that vocational training is merely a last resort for those with poor exam results.

Apprenticeships are one of the best ways of giving young people career fulfilment and a good start in life. Better provision is not expensive and, indeed, brings proven economic dividends. If we get it right, everyone stands to benefit: young people, businesses, and London as a whole.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Dee Dooney'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

**Dee Dooney AM**  
**Chair of the Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee**

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## Executive Summary

Apprenticeships are an important source of the skills needed by London's economy, and a gateway to opportunity for Londoners. Apprenticeships help to match up the skills needs of employers and the jobs needs of young people.

Apprenticeships enable young people to study for qualifications such as NVQs while gaining work-based experience and training, and earning money.

We identified issues with apprenticeships in London including, in some sectors, shortages of employers to take apprentices on. Some who do not employ apprentices have exaggerated ideas about costs or risks that they fear are involved.

But employers who do have apprentices find that these difficulties are much smaller and that apprentices are in fact an asset. So we recommend that the Learning and Skills Council, the body responsible overall for apprenticeships in England, should tackle the way that employers see apprenticeships.

The government sets the Learning and Skills Council targets for the numbers of apprentices. These targets are passed on to each region and sector, and may create a priority for 'bums on seats' at the expense of more important specific needs for certain kinds of skills in certain areas or communities. Therefore we recommend that target-setting begin at the regional and industry-specific level, and be informed in the first place by economic needs.

At school young people may not find out much about apprenticeships, or they may see apprenticeships as a last resort for 'failures' who don't have the GCSEs to go to college and don't have a job. Therefore we recommend that the Learning and Skills Council should prioritise better promotion of apprenticeships, especially in schools.

Many young people start apprenticeships but don't finish them. This often means that they are missing out on the skills and learning opportunities they need. Among the reasons for leaving are breakdowns of the placement of the apprentice with a particular employer or training provider. So we recommend that the Learning and Skills Council should design apprenticeships in such a way that apprentices can move from one employer or one college to another and still carry on in the overall apprenticeship programme, keeping credit for what they have learnt and achieved so far.

And the populations of young people going into certain kinds of apprenticeships are very unrepresentative of the general population of young people in London. Some apprenticeships recruit predominantly young women, others predominantly young men. Some apprenticeships recruit predominantly white people. To ensure that London is drawing on the whole pool of talent and that all its young people have equal access to the opportunities they need, we recommend that the Learning and Skills Council should more clearly tackle these imbalances.

We hope that our recommendations can be taken forward to benefit London's young people and London's employers alike.

# You're Hired: apprenticeships in London

## Introduction

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*"We need to give young people the option that says 'if you want to go to university full-time, great; if you want to work full-time, great; another option is an apprenticeship; not because you failed your GCSEs but because it can lead somewhere'."*

Kevin Drugan – Chief Executive, Chartered Surveyors Training Trust

London needs more skills, and Londoners need to be able to get skilled jobs. Employers report that nearly one in ten workers in London do not have all the skills needed for their job<sup>1</sup> and that the availability of skilled employees is the most significant problem for them across the capital<sup>2</sup>. London has higher unemployment than the UK as a whole<sup>3</sup>.

Apprenticeships and other forms of vocational training are designed to bridge this gap, between people needing good jobs, and employers needing skilled workers. However, the number of people going through apprenticeships to skilled careers is limited by several factors.

In some cases, there are apprenticeships available, but not enough young people wishing to go into them. In others, there are plenty of young people wanting to be apprentices but not enough employers to train them in the workplace or not enough places at colleges offering the right qualifications.

Too many people who do enter an apprenticeship do not finish the programme and do not get the right skills or qualifications for their future careers. And there are some people who complete their apprenticeships but then are unable to go into the appropriate jobs or further career progression.

Furthermore, there are issues about equality of opportunity; many apprenticeship programmes are filled overwhelmingly by people of one ethnic group or one gender. If people are missing out on training in this way, talent is being wasted and people are not getting the opportunities they deserve.

In the next few years, skills for work will be especially important to Londoners and London's economy. Major transport projects, the 2012 Olympics and regeneration programmes will all demand more skilled workers, and particularly those with specific skills such as construction, leisure and hospitality, and management. These projects need skilled workers for their delivery, and these projects will create career opportunities that Londoners need to be able to take advantage of.

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<sup>1</sup> London Annual Business Survey 2003 – 9%, compared to 7% nationally

<sup>2</sup> London Annual Business Survey 2004

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics, Labour Force Survey Winter 2005/06 – women 7%, men 8%



In this report, we look into these problems and recommend actions to address them. In this way, we hope to contribute to the economic development of the capital and help Londoners to gain the skills and careers they need.

### *What are apprenticeships?*

Apprenticeships are programmes for young people, combining on-the-job training with study for a nationally-recognised qualification such as an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification). The programme is provided jointly by an employer and a training provider such as a further education college. Apprentices earn a wage while they work and learn.

There are approximately 16,000 apprentices in London. The majority are young people from age 16 to early 20s, though recent expansions have opened apprenticeships to some aged 14-16 and over 25.

Apprenticeships cover a range of occupations. The Learning and Skills Council advertises over 180 apprenticeship programmes, in sectors including: administration and management; agriculture; construction; customer service; retailing and wholesaling; finance, insurance and real estate; food and drink; health and beauty; health, care and public services; hospitality; manufacturing; media and printing; recreation and travel; and transportation.

### *About this review*

The committee heard from a range of individuals and organisations. Five people spoke with us at a public hearing and we received eleven written submissions. We visited the Heathrow Construction Craft Centre to see apprentices working and learning, and we commissioned three focus groups with young people – those heading for apprenticeships, current apprentices, and those who had entered on apprenticeships but not completed them.

The investigation was set up to look at apprenticeship opportunities in London and the take-up of these opportunities by young people. We wanted to find ways to develop, improve and promote apprenticeship opportunities for young people in London .

This report describes what we have found out and makes recommendations for the more effective promotion of apprenticeships, improving apprenticeship programmes and strengthening the links between apprenticeship strategy and the economic needs of London and Londoners.

## **The provision of apprenticeship places**

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### *Employer places*

In some sectors apprenticeship numbers are limited by the places available with employers. The Learning and Skills Council reported that in construction engineering, among other sectors, there were many more young people seeking apprenticeships than there were places available.

Employers take into account various factors in deciding whether or not to take on apprentices, but the essential calculation is of the balance between the benefits offered by the apprentice (during and after the apprenticeship) and the costs of employing the apprentice.

Benefits include the work output of the apprentice, who obviously will initially lack many skills of the job but who will become more productive with training. One major employer with an apprenticeship scheme reported that it made a profit of £1300 per apprentice per year, and that productivity was 7.5% higher for those who had been apprentices compared to others who had not completed the scheme<sup>4</sup>.

Costs will include the time of more experienced staff in supervising and coaching the apprentice, and the administrative work the company must do to comply with requirements of employing a young person and fitting in with a structured programme like an apprenticeship.

Figures provided to us by Made in London, the London manufacturer's group, suggest that companies who have not employed an apprentice in the past have an exaggerated idea of the costs involved. For example, 70% of manufacturers who had never employed an apprentice thought that the level of bureaucracy involved would be a barrier. However, only 20% of manufacturers who had employed an apprentice felt that the level of bureaucracy was too high.

Issues with bureaucracy and other costs are an issue for some employers, particularly smaller firms, who may be less able to take the risk of a placement not working out and have less spare administrative and supervisory capacity. The Learning and Skills Council told us that they were committed to working with employers and training providers to identify and remove unnecessary bureaucracy. But also an effective communication with employers using evidence such as the Made in London survey may be able to counteract the misconceptions and encourage more employers to take apprentices on.

This promotion should be concentrated in industries where the numbers of available employer places are the limiting factor in apprenticeship numbers.

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<sup>4</sup> British Telecom, reported by the Trades Union Congress

### *Training places*

There are other sectors where the issue is the number of training places available in colleges. The Learning and Skills Council was very clear that the most important change they could advocate was to the funding regime for post-16 education. They told us that school sixth forms are guaranteed a certain level of funding per pupil, which is considerably higher as a proportion of the cost of running the course than the funding which is available for other courses such as apprenticeships. Therefore, schools are incentivised to encourage pupils to stay with them in the sixth form and resources within post-16 education are directed to school sixth forms rather than to further education or apprenticeships.

The Learning and Skills Council works to an Annual Statement of Priorities. This sets out specific priorities and goals for the year, driving its work, including work with regional skills partnerships on delivery and implementation. Regional Learning and Skills Councils have their own Annual Statements.

**Therefore we believe that the more effective promotion of apprenticeships must start with the Learning and Skills Council, in their annual statement of priorities.** This can drive work, through regional and sector skills councils and regional skills partnerships, to the front-line delivery of apprenticeship programmes.

#### *Recommendation 1*

**The Learning & Skills Council should explicitly address, in its next Statement of Priorities, the need to overcome negative perceptions of apprenticeships through better promotion to employers such as:**

- **counteracting negative perceptions about bureaucracy and other costs**
- **promoting awareness of the benefits of using apprentices**

## Skills strategy and meeting economic needs

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Vocational training needs to meet economic needs, so decisions about what apprenticeships to offer need to be based on economic strategies.

*"GDP per head for Inner West London is nearly five times the England average, while Outer North and East London is 50% lower than the England average."*

Southern and Eastern Region, Trades Union Congress

Different parts of London have different economic needs. As well as long-standing economic inequalities, there are also the local skills demands of programmes such as the London 2012 Olympic Village, the Thames Gateway and new transport infrastructure. Skills needs vary not just by area, but by industry. There are greater skills gaps reported in technical or practical job-related skills, customer-handling skills and computer literacy skills. Industries reporting greater skills gaps include hotel and catering, administrative, and sales occupations<sup>5</sup>.

It is clear that a strategic approach to skills and training must look at these needs, and anticipate the future needs, when planning where to put effort and resources in providing training and work-based learning opportunities. We have been told of, and we acknowledge, considerable work in this regard, for example in the London regional Learning and Skills Council's Statement of Priorities.

However, we note some fundamental strategic issues, such as the imposition of targets for the number of people starting (or, in future, completing) apprenticeships by the Department for Education and Skills, following agreement with the Treasury. This has resulted in London being set a target by central government of 10,065 apprenticeship starts for 2004/05.

The need for London's skills partnerships to meet this target incentivises them to direct resources to apprenticeship programmes where they can most easily or reliably put the required numbers onto the register. This will improve slightly when the target is for the numbers who complete the programme, but the completion target will still be numerical and it will still be based on "historical size of the programme, how much money there is available, and the size to which [the DfES] thought it could grow"<sup>6</sup>. Therefore it will still direct resources in directions that do not necessarily match the geographical areas, skills areas or industries where there are the greatest needs.

**We do not believe that the current practice, of setting targets for numbers of apprenticeships at the national level then apportioning these targets among the various regions and sectors, best addresses the skills needs of the economy or the employment needs of individuals.** We think that the priority

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<sup>5</sup> South East Region Trades Union Congress, London Central Learning and Skills Council

<sup>6</sup> London Central Learning and Skills Council

should be reversed, with sub-regional and sector strategies, based on evidence of economic need, determining targets for what apprenticeships are resourced and how many, and these local targets feeding into higher-level co-ordinating strategies.

*Recommendation 2*

**The government should not set a global numerical target for apprenticeships. The London Regional Skills Partnership, in consultation with the London Development Agency and sub-regional and sector Learning and Skills Councils, should set targets based on local/regional and industry-specific needs. The strategy of the Learning and Skills Council should reflect and support these locally-set targets.**

We note here that the Greater London Authority Review of Powers touches on a very relevant question. The Government has consulted on options to strengthen the links between skills and the London regional bodies with responsibility for economic development strategy. Options range from strengthening links between existing bodies to restructuring Learning and Skills Councils for London into a single regional body accountable to the Mayor for London. This last option has been proposed by the Mayor.<sup>7</sup>

The London Assembly generally supports the principle of devolution of powers from the centre, with proper scrutiny, accountability and democratic representation. For this reason it would support the Mayor's proposal, with the provisos that there should be adequate scrutiny, a majority of elected representatives on the governing body of the regional skills organisation, and a requirement for the Mayor to produce a skills strategy subject to public accountability and scrutiny, with the enhanced powers that the Assembly requires to be able to refer back and call in Mayoral decisions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ODPM consultation paper – The Greater London Authority: The Government's proposals for additional powers and responsibilities for the Mayor and Assembly

<sup>8</sup> The London Assembly's response to the ODPM Review of GLA powers

## Promotion of apprenticeships

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*“When I left school I didn’t even know anything about apprenticeships.”*

*“If I’d known at sixteen and seventeen that I could have been working and earning at the same time, I’d have jumped at the chance.”*

Focus group participants – later enrolled on apprenticeships

We found limited awareness of apprenticeships among young people. A clear theme from the focus groups (as well as from the Learning and Skills Council and the Trades Union Congress at our meeting) was that many reach school-leaving age at 16 without a clear understanding of what apprenticeships are, or why one may be a good way to a career. Services such as Connexions (the government's support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England) were seen as good sources of information and advice about apprenticeships and other options, but these services were not always accessed by school students.

For many teenagers, schools are the primary source of advice about careers and continuing education or training; their promotion of apprenticeships was reportedly patchy. The Apprenticeships Task Force told us they had been repeatedly told by their own consultees that work-based learning is frequently downplayed or ignored by schools in their careers advice.

*“There was a careers advisor but they were mainly plugging their sixth form and if you didn’t go to their sixth form they weren’t really bothered.”*

Focus group participant – an apprentice

An issue reported by the Learning and Skills Council and the Chartered Surveyors Training Trust was that the academic route of A-levels and higher education is portrayed as a first choice and apprenticeships are seen as an alternative for those who do not do well enough at school. This attitude seemed to come through young people in the focus groups as well. “I basically did [an apprenticeship] because I messed up at school,” said one.

The Learning and Skills Council reported that, where apprenticeships are promoted by schools, it may be primarily to those who seem likely not to achieve the examination results that will enable them to choose the academic route. The assumption that academic study is the best option for all those who get the right grades is not always true, and deters some able young people from choosing work-based training.

**Apprenticeships should be more effectively promoted to young people.** This promotion should not rely on specialist or ad hoc sources of advice but should be part

of the routine information given to all young people. It should not wait until they are already at school leaving age and have already formed strong attitudes about what they wish to do next. And it should not present apprenticeships as a second-best option to academic study, for those who are 'not bright enough'. However, the promotion should also be realistic and prepare young people for the challenges and difficulties of completing an apprenticeship. Informed choices are less likely to lead to young people embarking on a programme they will not complete.

*Recommendation 3*

**The Learning & Skills Council should explicitly address the need to overcome negative misconceptions about apprenticeships (such as that they are a last resort for students unable to get into other education or employment) through better promotion to young people and their families, such as:**

- **positive presentation in schools of apprenticeship as one of the various possible paths to a skilled career**
- **clear information, presented early enough in the school career for young people to consider options fully**
- **realistic and clear information about challenges such as the work involved**
- **potentially work experience and learning placements at an earlier age**

## **Apprenticeship programmes and retention of apprentices**

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Young people are attracted to their chosen post-16 route by a combination of pay (or other immediate cost-benefit factors) and future prospects. So however well-promoted apprenticeships are, they must appeal in these terms to young people. We find that the key aspect that can be improved for the long-term attractiveness of apprenticeships is the clear progression from apprenticeship into a successful career.

The weekly pay to apprentices is an incentive to them to enter the programmes and to persevere with them, though they will compare it against any educational maintenance allowance they may be able to get in full-time education, and any wages they may be able to get in full-time employment.

Most apprentices (those under 18, and those under 25 and in the first year of their apprenticeship) do not qualify for the minimum wage. For 'employed' apprentices there is a minimum wage of £80 per 35-hour week, to be paid by the employer. Employers may pay more than this to reflect the value they place on apprentices and to attract a quality pool of applicants. Many employers increase the wage as the apprenticeship progresses to reward increasing skills and productivity and to encourage apprentices to stay on. About 15% of apprentices are unwaged, and qualify for a lesser allowance of £40 per week or the education maintenance allowance of up to £30 per week<sup>9</sup>.

The other major incentive to do an apprenticeship is the learning and the qualification to be gained, which offer a benefit in future career terms.

*"Working at the same time and getting your qualification, getting paid for it as well, it's not bad."*

*"I thought it was a good opportunity because not only do you get the qualifications, you also get the experience of working as well."*

*"I wanted to do learning and get a qualification at the end of it, and I get paid at the same time."*

Focus group participants – apprentices and a former apprentice

However, the effectiveness of the career incentive depends on the perception that the apprenticeship will in fact be a good route to a career. This will be stronger where there is a clear path from one to the next, and where potential entrants can hear about 'graduates' who have gone on to post-apprenticeship work. It will be weaker if the progression is unclear or if young people hear about others who have completed apprenticeships and then not progressed to skilled jobs. The Chartered Surveyors Training Trust told us about the advantages of persuading employers to recognise the value of applicants who have completed an apprenticeship, compared to those who have a non-vocational qualification such as a university degree.

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<sup>9</sup> Trades Union Congress



One significant factor in this regard can be industries where employers agree (or are required) to set a minimum qualification or skills standard for employees. Examples include care services and, to an increasing extent, the construction industry. If workers are excluded from jobs for lack of qualifications, that is a clear incentive for them to complete an apprenticeship or other training that grants the qualification.

As well as the initial progression from an apprenticeship to employment, another important element is ongoing career development. The Learning and Skills Council spoke to us about their own apprentices, who complete general training at a junior level, and then stay with the employer adding to their experience and going on to more advanced and specialised jobs through additional training.

As well as encouraging young people to enter and continue with apprenticeships, strong progression pathways into permanent employment are to the benefit of employers, who gain the benefit of a skilled and committed worker in return for their investment of time and effort in training.

**All those involved in planning and delivering apprenticeships should take care to design them in such a way that the link between apprenticeships and further employment is strong.** This will help attract young people, help assure the return to employers, and help to drive the effort to match the skills delivered by the programme and the skills needed by the industry.

*Recommendation 4*

**In the Annual Statement of Priorities for 2006/07, the Learning & Skills Council should set a priority to strengthen the pathways from apprenticeship into employment and career progression.**

For apprenticeships to be effective, more young people need to complete their apprenticeships. We heard various figures for the completion rates of apprenticeships in different sectors and schemes. For one well-resourced scheme run by a single large employer, we were cited a completion rate of 98%. However, a construction trainer gave us a figure of 60% and we heard that in some other sectors completion rates are much lower. Low completion rates represent lost opportunities to gain skills, and time and resources wasted.

Our focus groups with young people, especially those who had dropped out of apprenticeships, gave a number of reasons for non-completion, including:

- funding was cut and the apprentice was not paid
- the teacher left and so the training element was absent
- the employer gave only menial work to do and did not provide opportunities for on-the-job learning.
- the apprentice did not like the work area when they tried it

- the apprentice was not motivated enough to make progress

Skills organisations told us of other reasons including moving home so that the apprentice is no longer within travelling distance of the workplace and/or training provider.

There was also discussion at our hearing of the likelihood in many occupations of an apprentice leaving an apprenticeship part-way through to take up a full-time job in the industry. In some cases this represented a success, because they had the necessary work-based skills. They may also have had key qualifications, such as an NVQ. However in other cases, the former apprentice was missing out on skills that would be more beneficial in the long term, for the sake of an immediate boost in wage.

We note that, from 2008, the Government numerical targets are set to be for apprenticeship completions, rather than starts<sup>10</sup>. This will promote efforts to increase the completion rate. We recognise the many and vigorous efforts already underway by Learning and Skills Councils and their partners to do this even under the current targets.

However, without changes to the way apprenticeships are designed, there will be obstacles to the achievement of this target. For example, if moves of residence continue to jeopardise placements, and if apprentices do not find it easier to move away from an inadequate or cut work placement or training provider, then there will continue to be many people willing and able to learn who fail to complete a course they have started.

Therefore our recommendation is for 'portability'. That is, that **apprenticeship programmes should be designed so that the individual can retain credit for learning that she or he has done and can continue the apprenticeship, even if they move to a different training provider or employer.** With overlap between the skills content, some credit could potentially be transferred to a different apprenticeship.

This recommendation was promoted to us by contributors including the Trades Union Congress, and is in tune with the Department for Education and Skills and the Learning and Skills Council's own findings<sup>11</sup>.

*Recommendation 5*

**The Learning and Skills Council should ensure that apprenticeship frameworks enable apprentices to change employers or training providers within the course – 'portability'. For example, apprenticeships divided into separately-certified modules could enable a trainee to take up another place without losing credit for what they have learnt and achieved so far.**

<sup>10</sup> London Central Learning and Skills Council

<sup>11</sup> '21<sup>st</sup> century apprenticeships' DfES and LSC 2003

## Equal opportunities

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*“How many women do we have in construction or engineering?”*

Barry Francis – Learning Services, Southern and Eastern Region Trades Union Congress

There are serious imbalances in the types of people who go into certain apprenticeships. We heard that there are still cases known of outright and explicit discrimination, for example against applicants for an apprenticeship from black and ethnic minority groups. We agree with the Learning and Skills Council and other witnesses that this is unacceptable and we commend and encourage their efforts to report such cases to the authorities and to take action against them.

However, it is clear that even where there is not intentional discrimination, there is still an effect that certain groups, particularly gender groups and black and ethnic minority groups, are grossly under-represented in certain types of apprenticeship. There are very few male apprentices in childcare, and very few female apprentices in construction, information technology, engineering and plumbing<sup>12</sup>. Among black and ethnic minority young people, few (less than 3% aged 16-19) enter apprenticeships. In certain jobs there is particularly marked under-representation of young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. For example, 93% of plumbing apprentices in Greater London are white, and over 80% in electrotechnical, engineering manufacture, and construction apprenticeships<sup>13</sup>.

We would hope for some benefit to equal opportunities from our recommendation 1 – better promotion in schools would reach young people from all sections of society. It would help to overcome the current situation whereby many young people are encouraged in to apprenticeships by word of mouth and other informal sources of information. Word of mouth is more likely to operate within gender or ethnic groups and to perpetuate established occupational patterns.

The Learning and Skills Council is working to promote equality of opportunity. However, there is a need for specific action to address the current marked and ingrained imbalances. All of London’s young people need access to career opportunities and must be able to contribute their talents to London’s economy. The Learning and Skills Council has some discussion of diversity in its Statement of Priorities for 2006/07, but the issues are not addressed clearly enough. In the Key Actions for 2006/07 there is only one paragraph that addresses diversity, and it does so in vague terms. Gender segregation between different skills areas is not addressed, and nor is the under-representation of ethnic minorities in specific skill areas.

**Therefore we think that this Statement of Priorities should in future make more detailed reference to the specific problems in apprenticeship take-up, and that it needs to feed through more effectively into action.**

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<sup>12</sup> Southern and Eastern Region Trades Union Congress

<sup>13</sup> Black Training and Enterprise Group quoting Learning and Skills Council figures

*Recommendation 6*

**The Learning and Skills Council should more fully address equalities issues in its next Statement of Priorities, by recognising the gender and ethnic imbalances in the current take-up of apprenticeships, prioritising the promotion of apprenticeships to the full range of young people and requiring action against discrimination wherever it may occur in the apprenticeship system. The Learning and Skills Council should ensure that Sector Skills Councils have targets for the participation of under-represented groups in apprenticeships.**

## **Conclusions**

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London's thousands of apprentices are gaining the skills and the experience so important to their own career success and to London's economy. Apprenticeship providers make an important contribution to London. However, we have found evidence that there are still skills gaps, there is still excess unemployment, and that there is scope for apprenticeships to do a great deal more.

By making apprenticeships attractive to young people, employers and training providers, ensuring that they are aware of the opportunities and able to take advantage of them, the numbers of successful apprentices can be considerably increased. And by improving the strategic match between apprenticeship work and economic strategy, and addressing the diversity issues, this increased output can be more effectively directed at the economic needs of London's whole population.

We hope that our recommendations enable apprenticeships to more effectively address the needs of young people, businesses, and London as a whole.

## Recommendations

1. The Learning & Skills Council should explicitly address, in its next Statement of Priorities, the need to overcome negative perceptions of apprenticeships through better promotion to employers such as:
  - counteracting negative perceptions about bureaucracy and other costs
  - promoting awareness of the benefits of using apprentices
2. The government should not set a global numerical target for apprenticeships. The London Regional Skills Partnership, in consultation with the London Development Agency and sub-regional and sector Learning and Skills Councils, should set targets based on local/regional and industry-specific needs. The strategy of the Learning and Skills Council should reflect and support these locally-set targets.
3. The Learning & Skills Council should explicitly address the need to overcome negative misconceptions about apprenticeships (such as that they are a last resort for students unable to get into other education or employment) through better promotion to young people and their families, such as:
  - positive presentation in schools of apprenticeship as one of the various possible paths to a skilled career
  - clear information, presented early enough in school career for young people to consider options fully
  - realistic and clear information about challenges such as the work involved
  - potentially work experience and learning placements at an earlier age
4. In the Annual Statement of Priorities for 2006/07, the Learning & Skills Council should set a priority to strengthen the pathways from apprenticeship into employment and career progression.
5. The Learning and Skills Council should ensure that apprenticeship frameworks enable apprentices to change employers or training providers within the course – ‘portability’. For example, apprenticeships divided into separately-certified modules could enable a trainee to take up another place without losing credit for what they have learnt and achieved so far.
6. The Learning and Skills Council should more fully address equalities issues in its next Statement of Priorities, by recognising the gender and ethnic imbalances in the current take-up of apprenticeships, prioritising the promotion of apprenticeships to the full range of young people and requiring action against discrimination wherever it may occur in the apprenticeship system. The Learning and Skills Council should ensure that Sector Skills Councils have targets for the participation of under-represented groups.

## **Economic Development, Culture, Sport and Tourism Committee Members**

Dee Doocey, Chair	Liberal Democrat
Bob Blackman, Deputy Chair	Conservative
Tony Arbour	Conservative
Angie Bray	Conservative
Nicky Gavron	Labour
Sally Hamwee	Liberal Democrat
Peter Hulme Cross	One London
Joanne McCartney	Labour

Terms of reference for the Apprenticeships investigation:

- To investigate what apprenticeship opportunities exist for young people in London and the levels of take-up of existing schemes;
- To identify the proportion of large employers who run apprenticeship schemes in London and those who do not;
- To identify any gaps in current provision, both geographically and in service areas
- To make recommendations for developing, improving and promoting apprenticeship opportunities for young people in London

Contact:

Ian Williamson, Scrutiny Manager  
ian.williamson@london.gov.uk  
Tel: 020 7983 6541

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## List of those who provided views and information

The following organisations provided written views and information to the Committee:

- Apprenticeships Task Force
- Association of Colleges – London Region
- Association of London Government
- Black Training and Enterprise Group
- Chartered Surveyors Training Trust
- Construction Industry Training Board – Greater London Area
- Haringey Council
- Learning and Skills Council – London region
- London Development Agency
- Sector Skills Development Agency
- South Thames College
- Southern and Eastern Region Trades Union Congress (TUC)

The following people attended a meeting of the Committee:

Clare Arnold – Corporations Director, London West Learning and Skills Council  
Stewart Brydon – Construction Training Centre Manager, Heathrow, Carillion plc  
Verity Bullough – Executive Director, London Central Learning and Skills Council  
Kevin Drugan – Chief Executive, Chartered Surveyors Training Trust  
Barry Francis – Learning Services, Southern and Eastern Region TUC

The Committee made a site visit to the Heathrow Construction Training Centre, which employs apprentices at Heathrow Airport, including the Terminal 5 project and on local development projects.

The Committee also commissioned focus groups with young people. The groups were:

- School leavers contemplating joining an apprenticeship scheme (two mini focus groups of 5 and 3 people)
- Apprentices coming towards the end of training or recently completed their apprenticeship training (group of 7)
- People who had dropped out of an apprenticeship programme (group of 6)

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## **Principles of London Assembly scrutiny**

### **An aim for action**

An Assembly scrutiny is not an end in itself. It aims for action to achieve improvement.

### **Independence**

An Assembly scrutiny is conducted with objectivity; nothing should be done that could impair the independence of the process.

### **Holding the Mayor to account**

The Assembly rigorously examines all aspects of the Mayor's strategies.

### **Inclusiveness**

An Assembly scrutiny consults widely, having regard to issues of timeliness and cost.

### **Constructiveness**

The Assembly conducts its scrutinies and investigations in a positive manner, recognising the need to work with stakeholders and the Mayor to achieve improvement.

### **Value for money**

When conducting a scrutiny the Assembly is conscious of the need to spend public money effectively.



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