



# Traineeships: A Response to the Government's consultation document from the London Work Based Learning Alliance

## 1. Introduction

The London Work Based Learning Alliance (LWBLA) is very pleased to respond to this consultation and welcome the opportunity of discussing any aspect of the detail with Government.

The LWBLA is the representative body for all Apprenticeship providers in London. Our membership is predominantly independent providers who collectively deliver over 80% of all directly contracted publicly funded Apprenticeship volume. In addition our members deliver a highly significant proportion of Foundation Learning, local NEET initiatives, ESF, the Youth Contract, as well as being subcontractors to the Work Programme across London.

The LWBLA has hosted an open meeting of our members, which was very well attended, to discuss the issues and respond directly to the consultation process. The detail is set out in this response.

The LWBLA offers expertise and knowledge in this field and seeks representation on any Government committee or working party established to make Traineeships a success.

In 2012 we published our first apprenticeship policy prospectus for London. Please see our website for further information [www.lwbla.com/policies\\_prospectus12.php](http://www.lwbla.com/policies_prospectus12.php)

## 2. Strategic Overview

The LWBLA supports the Government's proposal to introduce a national Traineeship programme.

In summary the key points are:

- We see Traineeships as an important step forward in creating a new pathway for 16-24 year olds into the world of work.
- Traineeships can provide significant added value by strengthening the importance of learning in the workplace, and promoting the progression/ take up of Apprenticeships.
- We see the opportunity to develop a Traineeship programme that can closely complement Apprenticeships as part of a coherent package of skills based support available to all businesses/employers.



- The LWBLA broadly agrees with the approach taken by Government that Traineeships can become an important intervention to support employers in attracting and recruiting motivated staff and providing a credible approach to tackling the risk of long-term unemployment amongst 16-24 year olds.
- We share with Government the importance of high quality work experience as part of an integrated skills based offer.
- We view generating sufficient volume, scale and range of work experience offered by employers nationally and particularly in London as a key determinant of the likely success of the programme.
- We see the most effective way of introducing traineeships is to create a highly learner centered and personalised Traineeship programme sufficiently flexible to offer a realistic prospect of progression into employment.
- The Trainee aspires to become an Apprentice. The key difference between a Traineeship and an Apprenticeship is that the Apprentice has a contract of employment and a full framework of qualifications. Traineeships can therefore become an important pathway into the world of work with the accreditation of skills.
- We believe the critical performance measure of the overall programme success should be the conversion rate when progressing from a traineeship into paid employment - an apprenticeship, or a further career based qualification/study.
- Government should consider creating a new Traineeship Certificate to signify status and value to the individual and employer. This would ensure compliance with both SFA and EFA funding models.
- We would welcome the Government evaluating different models of financial incentives and support to the individual and employer to reflect the value of high quality work experience.
- We believe Traineeships can be a significant programme in London to reflect the size and scale of the labour market as over 50% of net new employment in the UK is generated in London.
- Traineeships should lead to more Apprenticeships on offer from employers. The London economy generates 15% of the UK GDP with 14% of the UK's economically active residents but has less than 10% of all publicly funded Apprenticeships. Traineeships should become a major programme with the active support of the Mayor/LEP and Boroughs.

## Defining the risks

The key risks we identified from the consultation document are set out below:

- **Displacement of Apprenticeships** – London may require a large range of employers to offer Traineeships to keep pace with the demand from individuals. So careful thought needs to be given to the branding, marketing and promotion



of a Traineeship to stimulate recurring interest from employers. It is also important to avoid Traineeships displacing Apprenticeships as an employer driven recruitment offer.

- **Benefit 'trap'** - For 19+ learners the unintended consequences of complex benefit regulations may choke off demand from those people most likely to benefit. We ask the Government to look at this in detail and provide clear guidance on eligibility and possible incentives for the individual and employers alike.
- **Conflicting employer offers** - Only providers who are prepared to deliver either or both Foundation Learning and Apprenticeships should be able to deliver Traineeships otherwise this becomes by default a programme competing with other Government programmes. The work experience component of the Traineeship should be specifically incentivised for the individual and employer.
- **Making best use of public monies** - To avoid any funding bottle neck from the limited number of providers with EFA contracted providers the Government should consider piloting new models of subcontracted /supply chains with existing providers to ensure sufficient coverage and funding to meet demand. The contract holder determines how a service is delivered.

We see these risks and no doubt others being evaluated and resolved as part of a rigorous development process. The LWBLA would welcome the opportunity to be an active participant in the development of the Traineeship programme.

### 3. Responding to the Consultation Questions

This section responds directly to the questions raised in the consultation document:

#### **Question 1: What are your views on the elements that are essential for an effective programme to support young people to prepare for Apprenticeships and other jobs?**

We broadly share the approach taken in the consultation document that a Traineeship should comprise the following elements:

- Thorough initial assessment and testing to set objective skills based learning aims and goals,
- A highly personalised learning programme utilising the outcome of the initial assessment with a central focus on acquiring employability skills, and other competencies and related techniques,
- Significant work experience designed to lead onto progression into paid work with training - an Apprenticeship,
- An accredited work based qualification such as unit towards an NVQ focusing on employability skills with options for sector specific accreditation designed to maximize the value of work experience,



- English and Math's relevant to the needs of the individual utilising delivery of the Functional Skills where appropriate, and designed to achieve progression into level 2/3 Apprenticeship frameworks.
- Non - accredited soft skills such learning and practicing interview techniques should be part of the Traineeship.

We would like to see the Government introduce a Traineeship Certificate as a tangible record of achievement for completing the Traineeship.

### **Question 2: Should a guaranteed interview be part of the core content of a Traineeship?**

Ideally you would want to guarantee an interview as a core part of the Traineeship. However in practice this is a decision for the employer who should be encouraged to do so.

The key point is to set realistic expectations for both the employer and the individual. A guaranteed interview should be aspirational and part of the programme design and attract funding accordingly.

One option to consider is an entry interview at the start of the Traineeship as part of the initial assessment process and an exit interview as part of the learning plan that all providers must comply with to an agreed specification or standard.

### **Question 3: What makes work placements high quality and effective?**

The relationship between the provider and employer is central to making available work placements of a high quality and effective for the individual trainee. The employer; because they are creating the opportunity, and the provider; for supporting both the learner and the employer throughout the period of the work experience.

The key elements of high quality work experience are:

- **Setting expectations** - The employer/provider relationship is central to achieving a high quality Traineeship, which should be part of a broader/wider offer such as apprenticeships,
- For large employers Traineeships should become an explicit part of the organisation's HR strategy for staff recruitment and retention including Apprenticeships (the graduate option is a reformed internship),
- For small businesses the reliance on the provider is critical in offering the employer support to recruit, retain, train and progress the Trainee.
- **Minimising the risk of failure** – having in place a nominated mentor to the Trainee who could be either an employee or an assessor to support and guide the trainee.
- **Maximising value** - Ensuring the accreditation of learning is relevant to the experience of being in the work place and the prospects of entry to a job/ apprenticeship/career.



- **Securing progression** – the outcome of a Traineeship is designed to secure progression into employment which is the critical performance measure in evaluating EFA and/or SFA contracts/grant agreements.

#### **Question 4: Are you aware of other evidence from existing programmes that demonstrates the effectiveness of these elements?**

The evidence from providers who deliver Foundation Learning and Apprenticeships in London are that a number of elements from existing programmes exist already and should be applied to the development of a Traineeship.

We would see the development of a formal Traineeship framework with broadly defined elements set out below to be available on a personalised basis. This should meet the requirements of a time based study programme funding model. In essence a Traineeship could be developed to mirror the structure of an Apprenticeship framework.

The essence of a Traineeship programme as described in the consultation document is that it is flexible and broadly available for 16-24 year olds who are likely to succeed in a Level 2 or 3 Apprenticeship. We do not see this as a replacement for Foundation Learning, but we can envisage learners progressing from Foundation Learning into a Traineeship funded by current EFA funding model and grant agreements.

The key components of a Traineeship framework could comprise elements a 'slimmed down' version of the following:

- Initial Assessment and the use of a learning plan to set expectations of progress, performance and outcomes,
- Literacy and Numeracy packages currently part of Foundation Learning programmes designed to raise the capability of the individual to meet the required standards of Functional Skills.
- Functional Skills tests to raise the overall capability and learning of the individual as part of the Level 2 Apprenticeship framework,
- On the job training - Accredited units towards an NVQ designed for specific sectors and job requirements,
- Off the job training so that the individual learns and understands the need to acquire specialist or technical underpinning knowledge.
- The critical importance of acquiring employability skills both accredited and non accredited, and
- The reengagement into routines and behaviors necessary to be successful in the work place within the Foundation Learning programme.

In summary a Traineeship could look very similar to an apprenticeship framework in overall design and structure without the detailed pedagogical specification and timeframe requirements.



**Question 5: How could Traineeships best complement what is already available for young people, simplify our offer and avoid unnecessary duplication?**

The closer a Traineeship is to an Apprenticeship framework the better. It becomes a natural fit and completes the offer to the employer.

The potential for duplication clearly exists and comes from a number of different directions; the list below is not exhaustive and is evidenced from the following:

- School driven work experience and the role of EBP's
- Access to Apprenticeships and the brand confusion of the 'Apprenticeship' for individuals who do not have a permanent contract of employment with an employer,
- Work Programme options for those aged 19+ ,
- ESF projects and local NEET based activities.

**Question 6: What are your views on the proposed Traineeships model? Are the core components right? Is the balance between flexibility and specification correct?**

We broadly endorse the model as set out in the discussion document.

We think the Traineeship offer needs to be highly personalised and so the model should be capable of being highly flexible in both content and delivery.

**Question 7: What are your views on the right age range for the programme (Paragraph 21)?**

We broadly endorse the age range of 16-24 year olds. We believe there may well be the case for trailing pilots or Traineeships for the over25's in targeted areas of regeneration or where major investment is leading to new job creation as part of an inward investment package along with other skills based programmes. This could be an area where ESF funds are directed in the future.

**Question 8: What are your views on the right duration for the programme (Paragraph 24)?**

We see that an average length of stay of 6 months or the equivalent of two terms is the right length of stay. The programme should not be time bound and if a Trainee is offered employment and becomes an Apprentice in less than 13 weeks then this is a testament to the success of the Trainee and the commitment of the employer.

**Question 9: What other elements of flexible content would you expect to be added to the core locally?**

We see the opportunity for volunteering to be part of the Traineeship particularly where the voluntary and Third Sector organisations have a keen interest locally in supporting 16 -24 year olds into employment.



**Question 10: What are your views on the most effective routes for delivering Traineeships? Do the funding systems set out in Paragraph 27 provide sufficient flexibility to achieve this?**

The most effective route for delivering a Traineeship is through a provider who delivers either or both foundation learning and apprenticeships. Traineeships can only be secured through effective marketing to employers.

In London over 80% of all apprentices are employed in SME's so this requires a high level of sales marketing and promotional work by providers to secure a job vacancy for an Apprentice.

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) pilot the use of the Apprenticeship Vacancy (AV) service in London to generate employer interest in offering work experience through the current provider base.

NAS should promote Traineeships to all large companies and employer associations such as the FSB and CBI.

**Question 11: How can we ensure that Traineeships are a high quality route, which delivers real progression for young people but minimizes bureaucracy for employers and providers (Paragraph 30)?**

The LWBLA's approach to developing new ideas and projects is to engage the organisations responsible for the delivery in the design of the project. This has two major attractions: it secures buy in from the very organisations responsible for delivery, and enables experienced practitioners to design out known risks and adapt relevant existing delivery methods. We would also support the use of the following options to build a high quality offer:

- Establish an Employer panel comprising HR practitioners and work experience experts to set benchmarks of performance and service standards.
- Encourage the Learner voice to be heard for trainees by piloting an online feedback and evaluation service
- Government should establish a Traineeship standard and Certificate to create esteem and use value for the individual and employer.
- Create an Online centre of good practice through a pilot of the provider network in London.
- Use Regional hubs for setting specifications of service for the learner and employer under the guidance of the LEP delivered by a provider network.
- The Traineeship programme should be part of the Ofsted inspection in the same way that an Apprenticeship programme is graded.

Providers have the expertise and infrastructure to manage the 'bureaucracy' and the paperwork should be limited to a start and outcome return.



**Question 12: The success of Traineeships will rely on employers offering high quality work placements. How can we best support and encourage employers to offer these? What will employers see as the benefits of being involved in Traineeships?**

Strategically we see the following key aspects this would drive the programme forward on a significant scale:

- NAS should have a central role in the promotion of Traineeships to employers with close support and collaboration for providers. The Traineeship offer should become part of the NAS promotional activity designed to complement and support Apprenticeships.
- In London given the scale of employment generation we believe that there should be a regional pilot to work collaboratively between NAS the LEP and providers to create a hub for information and support to the employer, provider and trainee. This would be a radical shift in thinking allowing all the key participants – the employer and provider to work within an agreed regional framework and service offer.
- We would also like to see the AV service reformed and expanded to encourage employers opt advertise Traineeship work experience on line to encourage good quality candidates to apply.
- For employers the Traineeship offer sits alongside the Apprenticeship offer part of an agreed HR strategy for recruitment and retention, with all large employers encouraged to offer a scheme, which would replace existing intern arrangements.
- The Government should also consider an incentive based package to encourage SME's to recruit Trainees as part of the Apprenticeship offer with a scaled down and reformed AGE grant to be paid in part to the Trainee and Employer for the work experience.

## **4. The next steps - Making it happen**

We would like to see the Government publish a critical path and risk analysis with a clear timeline for implementation. We would suggest that existing Apprenticeship and Foundation Learning providers are invited by Government to help design and test the programme.

The LWBLA has formed a Traineeship Expert group comprised of leading managers from existing Foundation Learning and Apprenticeship providers in London. The function of the LWBLA group is: to follow the policy process, increase understanding, promote good practice, and model the offer to employers.

We would welcome the opportunity of being part of a Government led group looking at the direction of travel and detailed specification of a Traineeship programme.