

**Conference Report**

1. **Paul Holme – Northern Provider Network**
* Given the common issues and challenges in relation to the skills system and the background of devolution agreements and the Northern Powerhouse it is important that local networks continue to come together and work alongside the national organisations in particular AELP.
* The extent of change mean that providers need to be working collectively to support each other and this was a key role for the networks to help facilitate these processes.
* Recent survey work undertaken by GMLPN with members in relation to Apprenticeship starts indicated a very significant downturn and the results would be shared with ESFA and AELP
1. **“The Quality Agenda for Apprenticeships”**

**Richard Guy – Deputy Director Quality – Institute for Apprenticeships**

Richard described:

* The role of the Institute for Apprenticeship
* The “Quality Alliance”
* The Institute’s Quality Statement and Strategy have been published and delegates were urged to respond to the consultation via the following link by the closing date of the 18th October
* [Institute for Apprenticeships sets out vision on quality - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/institute-for-apprenticeships-sets-out-vision-on-quality)

 Key issues moving forward

* Driving up quality and the opportunity for providers to input the overall employer led quality strategy
* The need to develop models for the 20% delivery for each occupation and sector but this would take time
1. **The Ofsted Common Inspection Framework Moving Forward**

**Chris Jones – Senior HMI and OfSTED lead for apprenticeships**

* Changes to the inspection handbook
* What this means for providers
* The range of evidence that providers need to make available

**In addition Chris drew attention to:**

* The need to support the 125 ‘new’ providers now in scope for OfSTED inspection and the role which existing providers might play in supporting these new providers
* The importance of being able to demonstrate the acquisition and utilisation of new skills by Apprentices was key in demonstrating that the off the job elements were being delivered

**Questions and statements from delegates identified:**

* The gap in the HE QAA framework/OfSTED CIF in relation to those aspects of a degree Apprenticeship which are not part of the degree
* Public sector fixed term contracts which are less than the duration of the Apprenticeship

**5. The Funding Reforms in Action 11-00**

 **Kirsty Evans – Education and Skills Funding Agency**

 **Apprenticeships**

* Recognition that as with any new system there were glitches with the DAS but the agency was working hard to resolve these but recognised the impact on starts & performance. In the Q&A session Kirsty acknowledged that the performance management point one would need to be applied sensibly but stressed that funding would be made available.
* Starts volumes were down and minister recognised this. The priority was to develop a high quality sustainable system which enjoyed support from employers and Apprentices.
* Policy colleagues were monitoring the situation to assess the impact of employer contributions and 20% off the job but would not make knee jerk changes. The system was after all only a few months old. It was clear however the impact varied considerably amongst sectors and some such as health and social care appeared to be particularly adversely impacted.
* Planned roll out of DAS still on course which will include consolidation of the technical support into a single portal/service available to both employers and providers
* Other issues under consideration in relation to Apprenticeships:
	+ Maths and English funding and LLDD and disadvantage uplifts
	+ The rate of switch off of SASE Frameworks
	+ Changes to the DAS reporting system
	+ Changes to Find an Apprenticeship to simplify the search fields

 **Technical Education**

* Description that the policy was moving forward but slower than originally envisaged
* **The Autumn Statement will set out an implementation plan and there will be consultation and it was important that all types of providers responded.**

**6. The Current Challenges**

 **Mark Dawe - Chief Executive AELP**

 **Mark raised the following issues:**

 **Adult Education Budget**

* Whilst the announcement of additional funding was welcome the whole procurement process was deeply flawed.
* In discussion it became apparent that the contract extensions for providers would not run beyond summer 2018 and in the devolved areas where the process of devolution is taking much longer than planned there was a very real risk of the loss of provision and providers.

 **Apprenticeships**

* The current policy changes were too blunt – a quality system based primarily upon 20% off the job and a minimum duration was far too blunt and needed to be nuanced and the Institute for Apprenticeships needed to address this quickly and advise government accordingly.
* The funding rates for Level 2 and existing budget constraints allied to the growth in higher level more costly Apprenticeships was already impacting on social mobility.
* Employers in some sectors were already facing payroll pressures and simply could not accommodate the 10% contribution allied to the time off requirements.
* Whilst accepting that the ESFA might not accede to demands to reduce the minimum contract award the temporary relaxation on sub-contracting requirements should be sustained which would help to ensure the survival of some really excellent niche provision delivered by smaller providers.

 **Technical Education**

* It was vital that within the 15 routeways there were clearly defined and available opportunities for young people at both Level 2 And Level 3.
* Developing a system whereby young people were able to access good quality work experience could not be delivered by colleges of further education working alone. The overwhelming majority of relationships with employers were held by independent training providers who were working with them every day. There was an increasing tendency for larger employers to establish their own training provision and the design of any future system needed to acknowledge these twin aspects if we are to deliver a successful technical education system

 **OfSTED Inspections**

* OfSTED have confirmed that, at a time where the system is witnessing increased turbulence and instability that where providers are taking on learners from providers where contracts have been terminated and /or they have ceased training OfSTED will henceforth take this into account when considering success rates etc.

 **Other Issues**

* It was clear that the combination of funding pressures, procurement processes with minimum contract awards together with other changes including reduced funding rates for SASE Frameworks was creating an environment where it was increasingly challenging for smaller providers to remain viable.

**7. Question and Answer Session with the Panel of Speakers**

 The following issues were raised by delegates in the Q&A session:

* The funding rules requiring 20% off the job training were simply inoperable in some industries and were distorting effective delivery rather than enhancing Apprenticeships delivery. Providers wanted further examples of what constituted ‘good’ off the job training practice.
* There was an apparent disconnect in terms of both the funding and quality assurance arrangements where degree Apprenticeships had non degree elements .
* The AEB tendering process had resulted in situations whereby providers scoring the maximum possible score were not being awarded a contract because their priority provision amounted to less than the minimum award and others scoring less well had achieved an allocation. This potentially reduced the overall quality of provision.
* Concerns were expressed that unless all employers and providers were engaged in the delivery of Technical Education the necessary volume of good quality work experience placements would not be available.

8 **The Future Apprenticeship support programme**

**Paul Kessell–Holland : Head of Partnerships**

**Education and Training Foundation**

**Paul covered:**

* Future Apprenticeships – ETF support including EPA
* Employers as providers
* Teach Too – supporting providers and employers
* Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment - Professional Exchanges
* Supporting employers to procure high quality provision

A key message from ETF was the importance of providers and networks maintaining an active dialogue with ETF to ensure that their development work including research activity remained practitioner led and the need to be helping to set the agenda.