



# Apprenticeship Ambassador Network



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## Dear Ambassadors,

In a few days, we will discover the successful candidate who has secured the prestigious role as our next Prime Minister. Both men have, at times, mentioned the importance of apprenticeships during their campaigns.

When I met with the Skills Minister, Anne Milton last week, I agreed I would write to the new person in the Number 10 'hot seat' immediately to outline the compelling and powerful impact of both the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network and the Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network.

I want to impress upon the new leader of our country that rigorous and high quality apprenticeships have a plethora of economic and social benefits. I believe that our future Prime Minister needs to clearly understand the scale and magnitude of the investment being made by employers in apprenticeships and technical education.

And I want to reinforce the crucial role played by our Networks in terms of advocacy and inspiring greater numbers of employers and individuals to connect with apprenticeships. Our 77<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister needs to hear the voice of employers.

I have asked Sharon Forton's team at the ESFA to collate evidence from across the regions that I can use in my letter to demonstrate the success of our Networks. It is absolutely vital that we can gather results from Quarter One activities measured against the new 7 'Common Indicators'; covering topics such as schools engagement, case studies, social media activity, and attendance at events for example.

When we link this to our 4 'Core activities' of Celebrating, Signposting, Storytelling, and Insight, our Networks' achievements paint a very formidable picture indeed.

We are also looking at the structure of the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network.

Recently, we have had some contact from enthusiastic national employers who want to join our Network. We also have some existing national employers who want to leverage their influence and commitment closer together to make more of their combined efforts.

And we have some other national members who have not been as actively engaged as either they or we would wish them to be. So we are exploring how we tackle this challenge of disengagement from some national members.

This gives us a great opportunity to reinvigorate existing national members and allows us to recruit new members with a huge passion and commitment to apprenticeships across the country.



Even with any changes to our structure, it is pivotal that the Networks remain nationally significant and locally relevant.

And we must remember that our focus is on raising awareness and boosting engagement in apprenticeships to meet the diverse needs of employers, communities and individuals across England.

In fact, our remit has expanded slightly as the AAN has just delivered its first T Level event at Lumley Castle, near Durham in the North East. Hosted by George Ritchie, I know there was a tremendous turnout from employers and key stakeholders across the region to discover more about the new Technical Levels starting in September 2020.

George's standing and reputation in the business community helped to increase the attendance at this event; and for me, this captures how all our Chairs, Co-ordinators, and wider members have made impressive strides in cementing trusted relationships with a wide range of employers and partners in all our nine regions.

I am pleased that there will be a T Level event in each region by the end of October.

Because while some employers might say 'there are still 13 months to go before T Levels arrive', young people can actually undertake Industry Placements today. It's vital that young people can gain exposure to the world of work across a variety of job roles.

Apprenticeships and T Levels are part of the same technical education family.

And importantly, regional members and national employers are part of the same Apprenticeship Ambassador Network family. We are one Network. This is why we are moving towards greater integration with the Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. One of our strengths is that, collectively, we are making a difference.

And that will be a central message in my letter to Downing Street next week.

Thank you all for the time you are investing influencing employers and individuals to make that significant connection to apprenticeships.

We have had an extraordinarily productive and busy 2019 so far; I would like to wish all our Chairs, Co-ordinators and members a relaxing Summer – enjoy your holidays.

Equally, my sincere thanks to Sharon and her entire team in the ESFA for all that they do with the Networks. I witness their enthusiasm, professionalism and spirit closely and I know that our success really matters to them all.

Finally, congratulations to Joe Powell, the North East YAAN Chair. Joe received a First Class Honours Degree in Digital and Technology Solutions from Northumbria University – a superb accomplishment for a remarkable individual.

Best wishes

Jason

**Jason Holt CBE**  
Chair, Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

## **Stakeholder news**

### **AOC**

The Association of Colleges has called for the [next Spending Review](#) to include

- a significant increase in spending on the education of young people.
- increases in spending on higher technical education, adult education and apprenticeships to increase productivity.
- a capital budget to extend the life of buildings and equipment.
- a new strategic relationship between colleges and government.

### **T levels**

The Government has announced the [first T Level providers to receive funding](#) from the £38 million T Level Capital Fund.

The breakdown of the funding between the 11 providers is available below:

1. Shipley College of Further Education - £121,125
2. The College of Richard Collyer - £206,292
3. City of Stoke-on-Trent sixth Form College - £296,551
4. Barnsley College - £2,250,000
5. Fareham College - £446,625
6. Havant and South Downs College - £495,030
7. Farnborough College of Technology - £767,500
8. Cardinal Newman Sixth Form College - £868,382
9. Salesian School - £1,184,000
10. Blackpool and The Flyde - £400,000
11. Bridgwater and Taunton College - £646,988
12. Bridgwater and Taunton College - £999,089

### **British Chambers of Commerce**

In a survey of 1,100 businesses, the [British Chambers of Commerce](#) found that three quarters of employers did not know about or understand T Levels and 20% reported a lack of suitable apprenticeship standards.

Businesses also said they had experienced a lack of candidates applying for apprenticeship vacancies and had difficulty managing off-the-job training requirements.

## **AELP**

A [spending review submission](#) from the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) warns that parts of the country could end up as “apprenticeship deserts.”

It says the top priority should be to restore a non-levy annual apprenticeship budget of £1 billion to give employers better access to the programme, as well as changes to the payroll threshold of the Apprenticeship Levy.

## **Apprenticeships on the right track**

The [Strategic Transport Apprenticeship Taskforce's third annual report](#) shows that diversity in road and rail apprenticeships has increased.

The proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) apprentices has increased by 56% over the last 2 years and women now make up 15.4% of technical and engineering apprenticeship starts, up from 10% 2 years ago.

## **LEPs in the clear?**

[Local Enterprise Partnerships](#) have underspent their funding by more than £1 billion in the past three years, leading the Public Accounts Committee to question if they can deliver complex projects.

The Committee's progress review raises concerns about transparency and governance and a lack of local accountability.

# Coordinator in the spotlight

Alan Wallace – North East

## **Q1. What do you enjoy the most about being the AAN co-ordinator for the North East?**

Working with the Chairs of the networks to encourage and engage with people across the North East on apprenticeships. Learning new skills and supporting both Networks to ensure that we effectively deliver the agreed business plan.

## **Q2. What is your biggest challenge as a co-ordinator?**

Managing my administration, it has never been my strongest asset.

## **Q3 Sum up a co-ordinator's role in 3 words**

Busy, challenging and exciting.

## **Q4. Sum up yourself in 3 words**

Biker, husband, friend.

## **Q5. Tell us about your day job?**

The role I play is so varied and it provides many opportunities to engage with the network employers. I am also getting more involved with the young ambassadors and find this wonderful; it is great to see the enthusiasm that they have for what apprenticeships are doing or have done for them.

## **Q6. Your area put forward 10 apprentices for the TES campaign. You must be hugely proud of the talent in the region - why do you think this is?**

As a region we have some incredible apprentices that are at the heart of the North East economy. We don't shout about the successes we have as a region and people are generally understated about what they manage to achieve. I think it is incredible that we have been able to foster and encourage people to talk about their achievements. I, like the other ambassadors, are so proud of what we are achieving together.

## **Q7. How do you think your previous job roles and previous experience has helped you in your coordinator role?**

I have been involved in many roles in apprenticeships since 1986 and I think all of these have contributed to what I am able to bring to the role of the coordinator in the North East

## **Q8. If you were Skills Minister for a day, what one thing about apprenticeships would you want to change?**

I would change the 20% rule for Degree apprenticeships. The vast majority of Degree apprenticeships show the commitment that individuals have to lifelong learning and show a significant level of commitment from the employer also. For me most people working at this level understand the need for their own time commitment and are willing to do that.

## **Q9. Finally, it must be great working with George as he was a former apprentice himself.**

Yes it is great working with George, he is inspirational. His drive and commitment to apprenticeships is infectious; he gets the best out of the people he works with and his network of contacts in the North East is just mind blowing.



## Regional Input

### Clare Connor, RSA Group LAAN Ambassador – London

#### **Tell us a bit about yourself...**

I joined RSA in April 2018 as a professional development consultant where 90% of my role is apprenticeship focused. I'm originally from Shropshire but have lived and worked in London for the last 2 years. I love exploring the city and travelling in general. I joined the LAAN in January which was a great way to start 2019 and I'm just preparing for a volunteering opportunity in Kenya which will be my highlight for the end of the year.



#### **What apprenticeship will you be completing and why did you decide to choose this course in particular?**

I am completing the Level 5 Learning & Development Consultant apprenticeship. Although I have been working in the HR/L&D space for the last 5 years I don't have any formal L&D qualifications. This programme will give me some extra stretch plus a great opportunity to develop my skills with a programme that lends itself perfectly to my current role at RSA.

#### **What or who inspired you to start an apprenticeship of your own?**

I am extremely passionate about apprenticeships and advocate them with every opportunity I can. I've had the pleasure to coach, mentor, and manage hundreds of apprentices and their programmes over the last few years and I've seen the amazing impact they've had on individuals and organisations, which was something I was always envious of as I truly wish the apprenticeship opportunities that are available now were on offer to me when I left college. I can now stop with the envy and use all the brilliant apprentices I know as my inspiration to get through my own programme.

#### **What advice would you give to others in a similar position to yourself, who would like to start an apprenticeship but haven't got around to doing so?**

I've realised that the only thing that ever stops me from doing anything is usually me, and with this apprenticeship, it was time to stop being my own barrier!

I am completing this programme with one of my trusted training providers and I've talked it through with them and with my colleagues at RSA, both of which have given me great support and the extra motivation I needed to start. In summary my advice would be to get a good support system in place and simply just go for it like I have.

#### **What are you most excited about for starting your apprenticeship?**

I'm actually excited about learning and studying again. I am in a mixed employer cohort so this apprenticeship will also give me the opportunity to meet new people, network and be part of an apprentice community.

#### **How did your family and friends react when you decided to do an apprenticeship?**

My family and friends were not surprised with me starting an apprenticeship because they know the passion I have for them. They all agree it's the right time for me to start practicing what I preach, gain my qualifications and prove that apprenticeships work regardless of age.

#### **What are your expectations?**

I know this apprenticeship won't be easy and I expect it to be a challenge, especially as I haven't studied since 2002; however I have placed high expectations on myself and my training provider to deliver a really exciting programme that will push me and ultimately ensure I bring my best self to work every day.

#### **What are you looking forward to gaining most from your apprenticeship?**

People that work in L&D rarely have the opportunity to develop themselves ironically, but this apprenticeship will give me an 18 month focus on enhancing my skills and knowledge plus I will gain nationally recognised qualifications - the icing on the cake - and give me those extra credentials to truly be an expert in my field.

## New campaign promotes benefits of apprenticeships to business – South West

A new campaign has been launched to promote the benefits of apprenticeships to businesses across Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly.

Cornwall Apprenticeships includes a new website, real time listings of apprentice vacancies, case studies and free advice and support to help small businesses discover how apprenticeships can boost skills and business performance. We are also undertaking telemarketing with 5000 SME employers in Cornwall and arranging a series of employer focussed events.

The Campaign is a partnership between Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Skills Hub, Cornwall Council's Economic

Growth Service, and the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), and is part-funded by the European Social Fund.

[www.cornwallapprenticeships.com](http://www.cornwallapprenticeships.com) is an easy-to-navigate website which includes a wealth of information, advice and support for employers and individuals, including success stories from local businesses already working with apprentices.

The employer section includes information on how to hire an apprentice, costings, a comprehensive employers' toolkit and the benefits to their business, as well as how to get further impartial support from the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Skills Hub.

The individuals' section details how to find an apprenticeship and the benefits of becoming an apprentice.

**Cathie Kessell, Employment & Apprenticeship Officer at the Cornwall Council and Isles of Scilly Local Enterprise Partnership, said:** "We are delighted to be launching this fantastic new resource for businesses in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly."

"Apprenticeships have changed a lot in recent years and we want to encourage small businesses to consider the apprenticeship route especially when 95% of training costs are met by the Government in most cases.

**Josh Hoole, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Skills Hub Manager, said:** "Employing an apprentice is easier than you think. Once you've decided to take on an apprentice or use apprenticeships to upskill existing staff, you can contact us for free advice and support."

"We can help identify the right apprenticeship for your business, find the right training provider to deliver your apprenticeship and even find the right apprentice. We can also help with the paperwork to make sure everything is done correctly."

**Lorraine Collins, HR manager at Pool-based construction company RG Kellow, said:** "There are definite benefits for our business, as well as for the apprentices. We want to grow our business and grow top-class people with it. Apprentices help us do that. We've had people that have worked in carpentry, for example, for years and who want to pass down their skills. Apprentices want to learn."

For more information visit [www.cornwallapprenticeships.com](http://www.cornwallapprenticeships.com)



Laura Whyte, director of Truro-based accountancy firm Whyfield (plus staff and apprentices)

## APPRENTICESHIPS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY - Nadia Connabeer and Abigail Brown

**Q What is Shared Apprenticeships South West all about?**

A Nadia

Shared Apprenticeships SW is part of a CITB initiative aimed at creating a more flexible approach to apprenticeships in the construction industry. We employ the apprentices directly and deal with all the associated administration including tailored recruitment, college signups and mentoring. The successful candidate is then hosted by a construction company to gain their onsite experience. Depending on the host companies' requirements the apprentice may be moved to other host companies throughout their time with SASW, this makes for the 'shared' element of the company and can often aid the apprentice to learn more throughout their apprenticeship.



**Q What made you decide on a construction based apprenticeship?**

A Abigail

Building Plymouth gave a talk at my school during my first year of A Levels, and from then on it was always in the back of my head that I could see myself doing something in the world of construction – it just fitted. I loved my Maths A-level, so had a look at where my enthusiasm for numbers and buildings could take me – Quantity Surveying fit that criteria, and this is what role I was looking towards applying to. I decided an apprenticeship would be a far better route for me than university because I wanted to start real work in the workplace, and had gotten bored of the 5 day week studying. I applied for a Quantity Surveyor apprenticeship through SASW. Instead I got the opportunity to look at a range of construction industry roles (QS/Site Manager/Design Manager and Estimator), doing a broader construction course: "Construction in the built environment". Following some excellent job experience with Midas I came to the right decision about my future - always try before you buy! I now have one day a week at college learning 'from the textbook' if you like, and the rest of the week gaining practical knowledge and picking up correct terminology and developing technical skills.

**Q How have attitudes changed to women apprentices working on construction sites since Nadia completed her apprenticeship to Abigail working in 2019?**

A Nadia

Abigail and I did different apprenticeships, therefore may not face the same challenges. As I completed a trade apprenticeship I was working everyday alongside other trades people – all male, unfortunately I never met another female tradesperson on site. Abigail has come in to a role which more women are working in and for a very well-respected company. I doubt Abigail will face many, if any struggles in terms of people's attitude towards females in construction.





**Q What support do you get from your host employer Midas?**

**A Abigail**

There is a genuine enthusiasm to develop my skills and help me decide on what job I am to tailor my apprenticeship to within the next 6 months. I am assigned to a 'team' during each aspect of my rotation, so I am supported on each project I work on. I have made close friends in the company, not only improving my life outside of work, but improving work relationships and connections – getting help from them who are all ahead of me in terms of studies.

**Q Explain your current role and how it helps apprentices?**

**A Nadia**

My current job role is Mentor and Recruitment Manager. We currently have 50 apprentices across the South West, 25 of them I mentor, based from Plymouth – Exeter – Bridgwater – Barnstaple – Bournemouth!

As vacancies arise, I place adverts, shortlist candidates, interview them and take the successful candidate/s to the potential host employer. It helps to know the companies and what they want. I knew straight away when seeing Abigail's application form that she would be perfect for Midas!

The mentoring side covers anything from timely reviews, sickness reporting, holiday authorisation, liaising with host companies, making sure the apprentice is getting the correct experience and keeping in contact with the colleges to make sure the apprentices are on track with their qualification.

**Q What advice did you get at school to help decide your career path?**

**A Abigail**

My school focused on sending pupils to university, regardless of whether it was right for them. My school would encourage us to go to careers fairs outside of school. Advice was limited to the right university course! I tell pupils in school who are thinking about future careers to be mindful of all advice – and to listen to everyone's opinion (teachers, friends, careers advisors, google, do career quizzes too) but to make your own decision – because that is the only one that truly matters.

**Q Tell us something about you that we don't know?**

**A Nadia and Abigail (eg unusual hobby, volunteering, family?)**

I'm super famous! In fact, I'm a millionaire! – Sorry not sure what you'd like to hear! I won ScrewFix Trade Apprentice of the Year? I spend my spare time renovating my house and training my puppy...

I have done a skydive – and on the lookout for something to beat that feeling.

**Q You have both recently become Apprentice Ambassadors. What do you hope to get out of the network and what difference do you think we can make?**

**A Nadia and Abigail**

I hope to improve my network and carry on sharing the benefits of apprenticeships to both school leavers and anyone else looking for a career, especially within construction.

Get to meet more people who are keen to promote apprenticeships, and get into more schools so that more young people can find out about apprenticeships. Also I think we should introduce panels of 4 or 5 different apprentice ambassadors at shows to answer any questions about apprenticeships.

## Apprenticeship Challenge – East of England



AAN members Hertfordshire County Council was really proud to host and take part in the pilot East of England Apprentice Challenge on 27<sup>th</sup> June at our Fire and Rescue Centre at Longfield, Stevenage. Councillor Bob Deering supported the event by attending all day to welcome the apprentices, be a “Super Mentor” and give a closing speech.

The event is based on the Local Authority Challenge event, with apprentices being scored on a variety of challenges throughout the day. The overall winner was Kirsten Moore from Central Bedfordshire who has been awarded the title “East of England Local Government Apprentice of the Year 2019” and will be awarded a MacBook prize. There were also 4 Highly

Commended apprentices from Welwyn Hatfield, North Norfolk, Opus People Solutions and Breckland Council which each of whom received a certificate.

Each apprentice will also receive an individual feedback report to help them identify any particular development needs and their current strengths.

EELGA and Breckland Training Services are looking to host similar events next year to build on the success of this year’s pilot event.

## SE YAAN and AAN support Disability PRIDE

On Sunday 14 July 2019 the SE YAAN and AAN came together to sponsor and support the annual Disability PRIDE event in Brighton.

Back for its third year, the festival is a celebration of human diversity, recognising the contribution and challenges faced by those with - often hidden- disabilities.



The idea came from disabled Brighton mum, Jenny Skelton, who also has three adopted children with various disabilities, after one of her children suffered an incident of disability discrimination.

Since the first year, the group has grown significantly and has now launched a People’s Health Trust-funded supported volunteering programme so that more people with both visible and invisible impairments or conditions can get involved and help break down barriers.



The event, including live music, acts, performances and speeches, took place on the seafront at Hove Lawns

The SE AAN and YAAN joined in the colourful and musical march and manned a stand offering advice and guidance on apprenticeships. There was keen interest from many parents and carers who were under the impression that apprenticeships were only for 16 -18 year olds.



The event also gave the team a chance to give away their temporary tattoos and badges especially designed for the occasion.

## Key contacts

### Local Apprenticeship Ambassador Chairs

LAAN AREA	LAAN Chair	Email Address
South East	Elizabeth Flegg	<a href="mailto:Elizabeth.flegg@westsussex.gov.uk">Elizabeth.flegg@westsussex.gov.uk</a>
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East Midlands	David Hughes MBE	<a href="mailto:David.Hughes@the-mtc.org">David.Hughes@the-mtc.org</a>
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### Young Apprenticeship Ambassador Chairs

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