



Minutes

Subject	AAN National meeting: 29 th October 2020
Location	Virtual
Time	10.30 – 12:30

1. Welcome and Introductions – AAN Chair

Jason Holt CBE, National AAN Chair, opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. New members and those attending the meeting for the first time were welcomed as well as the YAAN Chairs on the call.

Congratulations and a special mention were given to Nigel Fenn on his award of an MBE in The Queen's Birthday Honours - for his impressive services to apprenticeships and technical education across the South West region. Nigel has championed apprenticeship opportunities at South West Water, the Pennon Group and its supply chains over many years, creating hundreds of exciting new roles.

Richard Hamer, Director of Education and Skills at BAE Systems, was also congratulated for receiving an MBE for services to education, social mobility and young people in the defence industry. Richard has superbly led the work across BAE Systems to deliver the highest quality apprenticeship training and built inspiring STEM programmes with schools and charities in the UK.

Jason also congratulated all AAN employer members on the call that featured in the recently announced Top 100 large employers list. BAE Systems are 1 of 6 businesses attending the meeting that secured places in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers list. Other AAN members to feature, and congratulated were as follows.

Congratulations to Frank Clayton, our Yorkshire and Humber Chair as NG Bailey was listed as 88th on the list.

ASDA was placed in 65th position – congratulations to AAN member Hayley Tatum.

BT finished in 4th place, congratulations to Ann Potterton and Emma Snowden.

BAE Systems featured as number 23 on the list.

Lander Automotive made 14th place, a tremendous accomplishment for Anita Davenport-Brooks, the West Midlands AAN Chair.

In first place, was the British Army. A stunning victory for the Army, many congratulations to David Tait from the MoD and Lt. Col. Ingrid Hall.

The British Army achieved the top spot by helping over 8,000 apprentices gain new skills and progress in 2019-2020; with almost a fifth of its staff currently completing apprenticeship programmes as part of their military training – in areas including engineering, telecommunications, logistics, construction, health and IT.

Confirmation was provided that next year there will be a Top 50 SME category and Jason is hoping to see great representation of Ambassador members listed in that.

All regional AAN Chairs were also thanked for their support and involvement with the upcoming regional Apprenticeship Awards. There has been a positive number of entries for the regional awards and the part played by AAN Chairs has been invaluable.

Jason informed members that Kathryn Porter, AAN Vice-Chair, will be stepping down from her post at the end of October in order to concentrate on her consultancy business.

The AAN network acknowledged and expressed their gratitude for Kathryn's leadership, commitment to apprenticeships, and her energy in driving a substantial amount of the success of the AAN.

Kathryn's replacement will hopefully be announced shortly as the appointment will need to be validated by Jason and the ESFA.

2. Apprenticeship Performance Update – Anthony Knowles, ESFA

Anthony Knowles summarised the latest data available on the apprenticeship programme. The most recent publicly published data is derived from the September ILR return for the 2019/20 academic year. The Covid19 pandemic has caused a lag in data submissions and there isn't any data available yet for the current academic year. The next set of published data will be available at the end of November 2020 and will represent the final full data for 2019/20 as well as data split and reported by region.

Some of the top-level summary, and actions are highlighted as follows;

- The number of apprenticeship starts from March to June 2020 decreased due to Government lockdown measures, although there was a slight recovery in July.
- Between the period of 23rd March to July 31st, the fall in apprenticeship starts impacted all ages (compared to the corresponding period in the previous year) although the biggest percentage drop was in the 16-18-year-old age category.
- Across the same time span, when comparing to the previous year, the biggest decrease in starts by level was experienced at the Intermediate level. All sectors were also negatively impacted by a fall in starts, especially Retail & Commercial Enterprise and Leisure, Travel & Tourism
- In July and August 2020, apprenticeship vacancies were lower than those in the previous year, but more in line with differences seen prior to restrictions being implemented, i.e. 22 and 34 per cent lower than in July and August 2019, respectively

A full breakdown on the data and statistics discussed can be found at the following link;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-october-2020>

In line with the Chancellor's Plan for Jobs, the ESFA is working with employers to encourage and prioritise the following;

- Encourage employers/apprentices to return to work from a Break in Learning when it is safe to do so
- Encouraging employers to take up the new apprenticeship incentives on offer
- Continue providing support for apprentices who have been made redundant/re at risk of redundancy through the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices:

<https://engage.apprenticeships.gov.uk/redundancy-apprentice>

The ESFA is encouraging employers to post their vacancies on both the Find an Apprenticeship service as well as the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices, and the number of adverts are being monitored.

Action: AAN members to continue to post vacancies/ encourage partners to post vacancies on the Find an Apprenticeship Service as well as the Redundancy Support Service. To signpost accordingly

Action: AAN members to utilise incentives where possible and signpost their members and partners to the apprenticeship incentives

3. Evaluation of webinar activity and insight – Steven Heaton, ESFA

The webinars delivered via the ESFA Locality Teams have progressed well and we have now concluded Series 2 of the ATTACK webinars. The webinars focused on moving from awareness of the incentives to creating new skills programmes. The slides shown at the meeting captured the results of the survey evaluation.

The surveys are utilised to collate insight from attendees on aspects such as intention to utilise incentives, intention to offer T-Level Industry placements, intention to deliver Traineeships and also possible intention to connect the Kickstart programme to Apprenticeships. Views of attendees to ascertain barriers and challenges to all of the above have also been collated. The results from the surveys will be shared with colleagues in the Policy Teams and can be fed into future submissions to shape the Apprenticeship and Technical Education programmes.

Action: ESFA to analyse invite and attendance lists to determine how many SMEs attended the webinars and also provided insight.

DfE is working with DWP in order to outline all the benefits and incentives of the apprenticeship programme so that DWP Work Coaches are familiar with these.

Discussions are progressing with DWP in order to explore and outline the potential progression from the Kickstart programme to Apprenticeships. Employers who will be involved in Kickstart are and will be encouraged to retain individuals at the end of the programme, so as to encourage progression onto an apprenticeship. These discussions between DfE and DWP are ongoing.

In response to questions regarding the success and time limited status of the new apprenticeship incentives recently introduced, clarification was provided that a review and analysis is ongoing.

The ESFA will review the success of the incentives against indicators such as positive uptake by non-levy employers and success of incentives in delivering additionality of apprenticeship starts.

4. Apprenticeship Programme Priorities – Karen Woodward, ESFA

Karen Woodward summarised the four strategic priorities linked to the previous Spending Review objectives and outlined how the activities of the AAN were, as a result, aligned to these priorities.

Moving forward, there are new emerging strategic priorities which will be shared along with the upcoming FE White Paper, when they are in the public domain.

In terms of the focus and engagement activities at the ESFA, employers of all sizes have been reached and engaged with via various methods such as Account Management, Communications and Campaigns, Partnerships (with

Ambassadors and Intermediaries) and support from the National Contact Centre. ESFA activity is currently focussed on delivering the response to the pandemic on Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices, job creation with or without incentives and returns from Breaks in learning.

The new strategic priorities, when published, as well as the employment landscape and newly introduced skills routes, will shape the direction and focus of the ESFA and how we work with employers and key partners. Ahead of the publication of the FE White Paper and confirmation of new strategic priorities, the following drivers are helping the ESFA to shape its focus

- Vocational skills routes that are alternatives and/or complimentary to Apprenticeships, such as Kickstart, T-Levels and Traineeships
- Data pertaining to the employment landscape. The data demonstrates that SMEs employ high percentages of employees in England when analysing all the employers in the country
- Key sectors, as highlighted in the Prime Minister's speech on Skills in September, and how apprenticeships are performing within these sectors
- The continuing importance of the Quality of Apprenticeships

In response to a query on Quality and how that is defined and referenced, confirmation was provided that there is a Quality Roadmap developed by the ESFA to help employers as a reference and check point for each stage of the apprenticeship recruitment and delivery journey.

The priorities on Quality that the ESFA works with the sector on are; focus on driving up completion and achievement rates, ensuring that the Providers listed on the ESFA Register are viewed by employers as being of high quality and working with Ofsted in order to continue the drive up quality via inspections.

Action: ESFA to share Quality Roadmap document with the AAN

5. AAN: Planning for the Future – Jason Holt CBE

In light of new strategic priorities (when published) and the drivers mentioned in the previous item, Jason outlined that the AAN priorities and focus should be refined and aligned accordingly. To enable and facilitate this, a consultation process will now begin with the Network. Views from members are now welcomed and a workshop will be arranged towards the end of November/early December for the Network to develop the focus of the AAN further.

Initial views from members of the network included the following;

- A focus on SME engagement is important. There are some barriers mentioned by members such as enabling levy transfers and the lack of time and resources at smaller employers to fulfil administration associated with apprentice recruitment.
- Work better with providers in order to reach more SMEs.
- When developing future regional Business Plans, have a clear focus on SMEs.
- Exploring how larger employers can be used strategically to reach out to their supply chains and engage them in Apprenticeships.
- Establish how best to reach SMEs; including improved linkages with LEPs, Intermediaries and YAAN apprentices supporting this agenda
- Determine if intermediaries already engaged with should join regional AANs in order to streamline efforts
- Establish what the reasons are for falling completion rates and focus on correcting this.
- Utilise large employers to speak to smaller employer to promote and implement T-Levels through the offer of Industrial Placements.

Members are encouraged to continue sending their views ahead of the planned workshop. The importance of dovetailing the activities of the AAN to emerging priorities was emphasised.

Action: Further views from members to be sent to:

AAN.Chair@education.gov.uk

6. Best Practice and Good News Stories

Laura Kedward (North West AAN Chair) and Tracy Fairhurst (Multi-Regional employer member representing Royal Mail) shared some best practice and good news. A summary is captured below.

North West:

- Lots of communications and engagement within the regional network
- There has been spotlights from many different regional members to promote and share their activities
- 30 new ambassadors have been recruited including many SMEs
- Greater engagement with the LEPs/Combined Authority within the North West
- Enhanced integration with the YAAN.
- Members involved in key initiatives such as Investors in Apprenticeships (Brother), Kickstart (Talk Talk) and greater engagement with Apprenticeships from Iceland
- Many North West members also experienced recognition and success in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers 2020 list

Royal Mail:

The organisation experienced many challenges due to Covid19 resulting in many apprentices being placed on Breaks in Learning. Best practice and good news shared included.

- Working with staff and apprentices to understand all concerns regarding continuing on their respective apprenticeships. A plan of action was developed and that led to all apprentices that were on Break in Learning to resume in June 2020.
- The planned apprentice recruitment at Royal Mail for this year, as well as the following year is on track.
- Royal Mail have successfully carried out levy transfers to 2 other employers.

Laura and Tracy were thanked for sharing their best practice and good news and the importance of doing so during these challenging times was emphasised.

AOB

- The National AAN Conference planning group have continued to meet and there is a recommendation of holding the conference during National Apprenticeship Week 2021. The exact date will be confirmed in due course.