



Minutes

Subject	AAN National meeting: 30 th July 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;

Lisa Alford: Apprenticeship & Qualifications Lead (Sainsbury's).
James Wilson: Emerging Talent Business Partner (Eversheds Sutherland).
Holly Savage: Senior Early Careers Advisor (Mott Macdonald).

The priorities for this meeting were to discuss and establish clarity on the next steps for the network and where energies should be concentrated (considering the current economic climate). The AAN Governance arrangements are to be finalised following discussion on this item.

2. Network Governance – Deepak Sharma, ESFA

Following on from the consultation that was initiated in the January 2020 AAN meeting, the Governance principles and membership criteria (for the National AAN members) was updated and presented. The key points were as follows;

- The Governance and Principles for AAN members is being refreshed. This includes the Terms of Reference (reflecting the AAN strategy), a code of conduct and a data sharing agreement to be shared with the network to sign up to. The Seven Principles of public life were re-emphasised as principles that all members should adhere to, as well as the code of conduct. The latter two are stated on the AAN portal (see below), while the data sharing agreement was explained, and a final form of words will be shared once formulated. All of this will apply to *all* members of the network.

- Criteria and process: *For National AAN members.*
For each of the National AAN member positions (National Chair and Vice Chair, Multi-regional employer members, Regional AAN Chairs and Regional YAAN Chairs), the following points were outlined for discussion, and to gain final agreement from members.
 - Criteria for the post
 - Appointment process
 - Tenure
 - Succession planning process

Clarification was provided that Regional AAN Chairs can provide updates on progress against their regional business plans during the ESFA quarterly review process. These reviews can provide an indication as to whether any further ESFA support is required for any of the Chairs, include support in succession planning or supporting a new Chair. All milestones and activities within the business plans are set and finalised by the Chairs themselves and members stated that being held to account enables sharing of highlights with the ESFA, as well as inwards amongst the membership and respective regions.

Members suggested that the review process should not be incorporated within the 'Tenure' principles. Regional Chairs confirmed that the quarterly review process is working well and that Chairs, as well as the National Chair and Vice Chair should be accountable to the ESFA.

Multi-regional employers will continue to demonstrate their ambassadorial activities against the AAN strategy headlines, and the ESFA will be asking them to provide relevant activities during the Covid19 recovery phase. The Multi-regional employer pledge was queried in terms of employers asking their apprentices to join the YAAN. This may be difficult for some employers due to the nature of their operations. Clarification was provided on this point; the employers are to *encourage* their apprentices to join the YAAN where possible.

The actions and suggestions from this agenda item are as follows;

Action: ESFA to share the Multi-regional employer member pledge document with regional Chairs

Action: The criteria of, 'presence in at least 5 of the 9 AAN regions' for Multi-regional members, is to be discussed in the separate Multi-regional employers meeting

Action: ESFA to provide an analysis of Multi-regional employer members with all of the network – which employers have signed the pledge, which regions they operate in and what sectors they represent. Regional Chairs can then explore any joint working/contribution of activities with the relevant Multi-regional members

Member feedback: The importance of the Data Confidentiality agreement should be emphasised in the Code of Conduct. The Terms of reference for the network should also reflect that the network is not a lobbying one, but *insight* is still encouraged and valued.

Action: ESFA to consider the feedback and comments on Governance and Membership criteria and finalise the Governance Arrangements accordingly. Once finalised, ESFA to share with the network.

3. Update on AAN National Conference – Daniel Francies, ESFA

A short survey was produced by the ESFA to gather the views of Network members views on arrangements for the conference for this year. The survey was disseminated to Employer Ambassadors and the YAAN.

There has been a high response rate. The main results of the survey are as follows;

- 67% of respondents would prefer the Conference to take place in early 2021.
- In terms of the mode for the conference, the majority of respondents (42%) prefer an online/virtual conference, closely followed by 39% that would prefer a hybrid of virtual and a limited face to face format.
- The location of NEC Birmingham was still preferred by most of the respondents (65%) although the survey was conducted before the announcement of WorkSkills cancelling this year

Action: ESFA to provide a breakdown of respondents by region to the Network

Action: The Conference working group will explore options following these survey results and present recommendations back to the Network

4. Thanking the Network – Peter Mucklow, Director of Apprenticeships ESFA / Steven Heaton

The Government are supporting the apprenticeship programme with a range of incentives and flexibilities to encourage the continuation, completion and recruitment of apprentices. Considering this, insight from employers and the wider sector has been a major focus in recent months and Peter thanked the AAN for providing valuable insight to the Department.

The Network has been extremely responsive in providing feedback and insight, especially considering some tight deadlines, to contribute to important consultations.

Steven Heaton presented a summary of all the consultations that the AAN contributed to recently. The AAN has also provided feedback on PR options such as Regional and National Apprenticeship Awards, and, contributed their views on National Apprenticeship Week 2021 timings.

Focus of the Network moving forward

As we move towards a phase of recovery, the Network discussed a re-balance of activities that can be delivered in order to support the Government's Plan for Jobs.

Re-focusing on 'Storytelling' and 'Signposting' activities by Network members was discussed. Some of the points and suggestions raised from the discussion are stated below.

Signposting & Storytelling

- Like minded employers can help in terms of preventing possible redundancies. Providing insight to the ESFA on planned redundancies and signposting apprentices/employers that might be affected to the redundancy support resource will help.
- Sharing best practice and promoting off the job training for apprentices who are still on furlough to other employers.
- Working with the YAAN to deliver virtual signposting and storytelling at schools that have requested virtual information via the ASK partners
- Highlighting employers/sectors that are still recruiting apprentices in order to provide good news stories; and to promote this via social media channels
- Promoting good news stories such as the planned virtual Graduation Ceremony planned in the South East region
- Apprenticeship leads at large employers encouraging their Senior Management to allow their apprentices to complete, and not be considered for redundancy before completion. These employers to encourage SMEs in their supply chain to do so too.
- Explore the possibility of linking the AAN with WorldSkills to promote messaging to wider audiences and promote opportunities and good news stories to young people.

Action: Employers of the AAN to post positive messages on recruitment, best practice and other good news stories on their social media channels

Action: AAN members to continue to feedback their ideas and examples centred on Storytelling and Signposting so that these can be shared within ESFA and externally in the sector

Members provided some insight from employers, such as the incentives may not be enough to encourage apprentice recruitment or being badly timed for some employers to take advantage of. AAN regions are working with key partners such as FSB to engage with SMEs and to support them so as to prevent redundancies where possible.

Some employers also feel that flexibility on the use of the levy may help. The Apprenticeship levy policy is a HMT policy and remains as set. Further insight from members is welcomed in terms of the effectiveness, take up and views on the flexibilities and incentives recently announced.

Action: AAN members to continue to share insight with the ESFA on the incentives announced in the Plan for Jobs.

The ESFA confirmed the following;

- There are a range of alternative routes for employers and individuals that might be more relevant such as Traineeships, T-Levels and Kickstart, as well as the academic routes. The AAN are encouraged to signpost employers and individuals to the alternative routes that are relevant. A summary on the different routes available is being produced, so the right choices can be made on career options/offer to individuals.

Action: ESFA to share summary document on the different routes available with the AAN for comment and feedback once it has been produced.

- The ESFA will fund apprentices to completion if they are within 6 months of completing their programme.

5. Showcasing Best Practice – Matt O’Conner, East of England AAN Chair

The region has worked with Amazing Apprenticeships to produce an employer guide for their members and wider employers in the East of England. This guide focuses on ‘Apprentice Re-boarding post Covid19’. The region has considered the key themes that were being raised by its membership and incorporated these within the guide. These include;

- Consistent Communication
- Embracing the Technology Challenge

- Returning to the Workplace
- How companies can re-energise their apprenticeship programme
- Mental Health and wellbeing of employees

The guide contains case studies, tips, information and advice against the themes and topics above.

The recent virtual meetings have led to better networking within the region and a lot of good practice and behaviours have been shared by the membership, which led to the creation of the guide.

Action: The East of England guide to be shared with the Network.

<https://www.eastofenglandaan.co.uk/post/apprentice-reboarding-our-ambassadors-can-help>

6. The Landscape – Karen Woodward: Deputy Director, ESFA

An update was provided on the performance of the apprenticeship programme since the start of the academic year. A breakdown by levels and age was summarised as well as the number of Traineeship starts for the academic year. The official statistics for the programme can be viewed at the following link;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>

The completion of apprenticeships has an equal focus as well as starts, and future marketing campaigns will highlight this. The Traineeships data has demonstrated positive progression of learners into apprenticeships.

A summary was presented on the ‘Plan for Jobs’ which was announced by the Chancellor on July 8th 2020. The skills related incentives contained within Plan for Jobs were covered including.

- The additional financial incentives for employers to recruit apprentices within the next 6 months.
- Increase in the number of apprentice reservations available for employers on the Apprenticeship Service system.
- Additional funding for Traineeship placements and financial incentives for employers to offer a placement. There are also flexibilities in prior attainment level (raised from Level 2 to Level 3) and programme duration (increased from maximum of 6 months to 12 months).
- The Kickstart programme has been introduced: This is aimed at 16-24-year olds who are furthest from employment (on Universal Credit and at risk of long term unemployment). Funding is available from Government to cover the National Minimum Wage (for 25 hours per week) of participants for a six-month job placement.

Further detail on the Plan for Jobs can be found at;

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents>

A summary was also provided on the launch of the service to support redundant apprentices, which will occur from August 1st.

There are 3 elements to the service:

- Advice and guidance.
- Signposting individuals to other services.
- A vacancy sharing service.

The support of employers is required to make the vacancy sharing service work and for businesses to register vacancies, via the completion of a simple form.

Action: Employers to signpost redundant and at risk of redundancy apprentices at the link below. Employers to post any vacancies here and visit the site if they are looking to recruit apprentices. Members to share this within their networks;

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