

Additional information

Introduction

Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is working to identify how policy and practice can be improved to enable more people, including existing learners, with English as a second language (ESOL) to access apprenticeships. This project is being conducted with support from the Department for Education (DfE). Our aim is to establish how and to what extent providers and employers facilitate access to apprenticeships for those with ESOL needs, understand the transition from ESOL learning to apprenticeships, and understand the barriers and support required to enable this transition.

L&W is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We bring together over 90 years of combined history and heritage from the 'National Institute of Adult Continuing Education' and the 'Centre for Economic & Social Inclusion'.

Policy context

In order to meet the Government's target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020 it is crucial that those who want to undertake an Apprenticeship are supported to achieve this.

There is emerging evidence to suggest that in some instances English language skills may be a barrier to accessing and/or successfully completing an apprenticeship, for some who have English as a second language and have not yet achieved a GCSE English or maths Grade A-C. Some people experience a situation in which their occupational skills meet the standard required, but language learning needs present a barrier to achieving the Functional Skills English element of an apprenticeship. This can act as a barrier to being accepted onto an apprenticeship programme, particularly as Skills for Life ESOL qualifications are not currently recognised as an alternative to Functional Skills English within apprenticeship frameworks.

There is also a need to develop a better understanding of the ways in which learners can – or might be supported to – progress from ESOL learning into an apprenticeship. Sector intelligence suggests that links are not always well developed, even where providers offer both ESOL and apprenticeships provision.

Evidence sought

We would like to invite you to take part in this online call for evidence, through which we are seeking to identify the barriers people with ESOL needs face when trying to progress into apprenticeships, and how these barriers are currently or may be addressed. The call for evidence also seeks to understand the types and volumes of learners and potential learners this support is beneficial for and the extent to which models can be replicated elsewhere.

Specifically, the aim of this Call for Evidence is to:

- identify and illustrate the barriers faced by people with ESOL needs to accessing apprenticeships, understanding the extent to which these barriers may be addressed by providers and employers;
- understand how ESOL and apprenticeship providers and employers have supported those with ESOL needs to progress into apprenticeships, identifying features of effective practice;
- assess the implications of key features of apprenticeship policy to ESOL learners' progression, including English and maths requirements, and opportunities created by the Apprenticeship Levy; and
- identify examples of current practice with different types of learners and apprenticeship frameworks and Standards that may be explored further through in-depth interviews.

Who might be interested in responding

We would like to hear from providers of ESOL courses and/or apprenticeships as well as employers of staff with ESOL needs who have supported or would like to support such employees to enter apprenticeships.

We are interested in a range of delivery approaches across diverse providers, contexts and sectors. Our aim is to understand barriers and share effective practice which supports people with ESOL needs to progress into apprenticeships.

How will the information be used

The evidence gathered will inform the production of a final summary report and effective practice guide for those wanting to support people with ESOL needs to progress into apprenticeships. This will include key characteristics of delivery and support models and features of effective practice.

Individuals will not be named in any of these outputs, and organisations will only be named if permission has been given for us to write a case study. The project outputs will be used to support the development of effective practice supporting those with ESOL needs to progress into apprenticeships. The report and effective practice guide will be published on the L&W website, shared with the DfE and shared via our networks, sector events and social media channels.

CONTACT

If you have any queries about the project, please contact:

Liz Davies

Senior Researcher

Liz.Davies@learningandwork.org.uk