

Learning & Skills Policy Update

July 2017

• Introduction	1	• technical education and skills, including T-levels
• Government changes	1	• careers education, information and guidance
• Apprenticeships	2	• post-16 funding (including support for young people and adult learners)
• Technical education reforms	5	• further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and local patterns of provision (including area reviews and city deals)
• Union learning – evidence of impact	6	• adult education, including the National Retraining Scheme
• Other policy and research news	6	• reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training

Introduction

This newsletter is intended to keep unions and other stakeholders abreast of policy developments in learning and skills, including providing updates on what the TUC and unionlearn are saying on specific policy issues. If you have any suggestions about either the content or the design of the newsletter, please contact Iain Murray: imurray@tuc.org.uk. The newsletter and a range of learning and skills policy briefings are available on the [unionlearn](#) and [TUC](#) websites.

Government changes

Following the election a new Skills Minister has been appointed. Anne Milton MP has been appointed as Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills and Minister for Women. The [DfE website](#) sets out her key responsibilities on FE and skills as follows:

- Apprenticeships including the Apprenticeship levy, traineeships and Institutes of Technology

- technical education and skills, including T-levels
- careers education, information and guidance
- post-16 funding (including support for young people and adult learners)
- further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and local patterns of provision (including area reviews and city deals)
- adult education, including the National Retraining Scheme
- reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training
- leading on the review of funding across tertiary education.

As Minister for Women, she also has overall responsibility for government policy on gender equality. The new minister has previously served in the government as a minister in the Department of Health and was appointed a government whip in 2012.

Her main responsibilities on FE and skills give some indication about key skills commitments in the Conservative Party manifesto which the new government intends to take forward. The Queen's Speech did not include any new education and skills legislation for the coming two years. As regards skills policy, the speech and the accompanying [briefing notes](#) only referred to commitments by the previous government to reform technical education,

establish Institutes of Technology, and increase the number of high quality Apprenticeships.

However, the list of the Minister's responsibilities suggests that the government will be taking forward two commitments in the manifesto that were not referred to in the Queen's Speech. These commitments are to undertake a major review of funding across post-16 tertiary education as a whole, and to introduce a new National Retraining Scheme. The manifesto also said that the training costs for the National Retraining Scheme would be met by government and that it would "also enable employers to access the Apprenticeship Levy to support wage costs during the training period." There is as yet no confirmation that these funding arrangements for the scheme will be taken forward.

Some other skills policies and measures in the Conservative Party manifesto which were not referred to in the Queen's Speech or the accompanying briefing notes, included the following:

- Ensure colleges deliver the skills required by businesses through a joint approach by Skills Advisory Panels and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Introduce a UCAS-style portal for the new technical education system
- Introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices
- Introduce a new right to request leave for training for all employees (the existing right is only available to workers in organisations of more than 250 employees).

There is as yet no further information on the status of these policy commitments going forward. However, it is anticipated that the commitment in the manifesto to a new "right to

lifelong learning in digital skills" will be taken forward. This was first [announced](#) in October 2016 and the government subsequently published a [digital skills strategy](#) (March 2017) which said the following:

"We will ensure that adults who lack core digital skills can access specified basic digital skills training free of charge, where it is made available by providers as part of the publicly-funded adult education offer. This will mirror the approach taken for adult literacy and numeracy training. Through this we will ensure everyone has access to the support they need to realise the benefits of the digital world. We will consult on the detail of this offer shortly."

A review of the Skills Minister's [first major speech](#) since being appointed highlighted that she identified the following four key priorities:

- clarifying the requirements for off-the-job training for Apprenticeships (see pages 3-4 for more details about the new guidance)
- improving careers advice in schools
- improving social mobility
- establishing clarity about the procurement process for Apprenticeship delivery for small- and medium-sized employers (SMEs).

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship Levy goes live

In April the new Apprenticeship Levy went live and the government issued a press release with a range of organisations giving their support to this new measure to drive up employer investment in training. The TUC General Secretary was quoted in the DfE press release, saying:

"The apprenticeship levy is good news for workers, who will have more opportunities to gain the skills needed for better paid jobs.

Unionlearn, the TUC and trade unions across the UK are looking forward to working with employers to make the expansion of good quality apprenticeships a success.”

Other organisations giving their support to the launch of the levy included EEF (The Manufacturers’ Organisation), the Chartered Management Institute, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) and the Association of Colleges (AoC). Individual employers, such as British Gas, also welcomed the levy and the wider aim of increasing the number of high quality Apprenticeships.

Following the roll-out of the Apprenticeship Levy since April, unionlearn has continued to promote two key guides to support union reps, officers and ULF projects to negotiate good quality Apprenticeships with employers. These unionlearn guides are the comprehensive [Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) and a short negotiating leaflet, [15 Key Apprenticeship Levy Negotiating Tips](#).

New TUC guide to Accessible Apprenticeships

The TUC and unionlearn have produced a new guide aimed at boosting the support that union representatives and officers can provide to help more disabled people access high quality apprenticeships. The guide – *Accessible Apprenticeships* - covers a range of areas where unions can make a real difference, including negotiating good quality Apprenticeship programmes with employers that include a clear focus on arrangements to support more disabled people to successfully apply.

This will include ensuring reasonable changes to working conditions such as working hours, equipment or duties. The guide also addresses the different forms of support that union representatives in the workplace can offer to disabled apprentices in order for them to

complete a high quality training programme that leads to sustainable well paid employment. The booklet also includes guidance on high quality pre-Apprenticeship routes for disabled people who require a programme of initial support before embarking on an Apprenticeship.

An early edition of the guide was launched at the TUC’s annual Disabled Workers Conference in May and a new booklet version is now available on the unionlearn website at www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications/accessible-apprenticeships

New government guidance on Apprenticeship training requirement

A 20 per cent off-the-job training requirement applies to Apprenticeships and the government is reinforcing this to improve quality and standards. [New guidance](#) aimed at employers and providers has been produced by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on how this requirement must be fulfilled.

When union reps negotiate with employers and support apprentices they should be aware of this regulation and ensure that training accounts for a minimum of 20 per cent of the apprentice’s employed time. The minimum duration of an Apprenticeship is one year but the TUC believes that they should, in general, last longer than this. According to the new guidance, the off-the-job training must be:

- directly relevant to the Apprenticeship framework or standard
- undertaken outside of the normal day-to-day working environment
- taken during an apprentice’s employed time.

It is noteworthy that the training element can be delivered in the apprentice’s normal place of work but not as part of normal working duties. The ESFA’s expectation is that if in exceptional

circumstances the training takes place out of contracted hours, the apprentice is recompensed with time off in lieu or some other arrangement is agreed. This is useful information for union reps so that they can support apprentices and negotiate if necessary when such circumstances arise.

The table on this page summarises what the guidance stipulates about what can be included in the “20 per cent off the job training” and as importantly, what cannot be included.

As far as the timing of the training goes the guidance explains that it can be delivered at any point of the Apprenticeship, including the following examples:

- a proportion of every day
- one day a week throughout the Apprenticeship
- one week out of every five
- a proportion at the beginning, middle or end of the Apprenticeship.

Each apprentice should receive a commitment statement outlining the programme of training in the Apprenticeship and how the minimum 20 per cent off-the-job training will be delivered. Providers are responsible for making the evidence available in case of an inspection by Ofsted or HEFCE.

The ESFA guidance offers illustrative examples to describe situations where certain training would or would not cover the minimum 20 per cent rule.

Pre-Apprenticeships and traineeships

Unionlearn will be holding a seminar on Wednesday 19th July (11.30am – 3.00pm) in central London to highlight best practice in union support for high quality pre-Apprenticeship programmes, including

Included:	Not included:
Teaching of new knowledge, skills and/or behaviours	Normal working duties (comparison with other staff that are fully occupationally competent can be helpful in determining this)
The teaching of theory such as: lectures, role playing; simulation exercises; online learning; and manufacturer training	English and maths learning (up to level 2) which is funded separately and needs to be accounted for separately as regards off the job learning
Practical training such as: shadowing; mentoring; industry visits; and, attendance at competitions	Progress reviews on what the apprentice has learned or on-programme assessment needed for an Apprenticeship framework or standard
Learning support and time spent writing assessments or assignments	Training which takes place outside the apprentice’s paid working hours
Training on or off employer site	Training outside paid employment
Online or distance learning as part of a blended learning approach	Only online or distance learning as the training element
An induction when it includes an educational element that provides some basics of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are core to the Apprenticeship	An induction does not count when it involves activities such as a tour of the office or picking up a building pass

traineeships and other forms of provision. The seminar will have a focus on hearing from unions themselves on best practice in this area, including a range of activities funded through a number of Union Learning Fund projects and often developed in partnership with training providers and employers. For more details on how to register for the seminar, go to:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/events

Institute for Apprenticeships

In April the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) [announced](#) the appointment of Chairs for 15 Route Panels and a Panel of Apprentices to advise the IfA board. The 15 Route panels are made up of industry experts and the IfA says that “they will be responsible for setting the standards of knowledge, skills and behaviours needed by employers for every occupation in England” and will play a key role “in reviewing and recommending Apprenticeship standards and assessment plans and advising on funding levels on behalf of the institute.”

The development of the 15 routes has been heavily influenced by the recommendations of the independent panel chaired by Lord Sainsbury that made a number of recommendations about the reform of technical education. This included the establishment of 15 occupational pathways and plans to give the IfA the remit for regulating apprenticeship standards and the new technical education qualifications called T Levels.

The Panel of Apprentices is made up of current or recent apprentices from a wide range of occupations and sectors. The IfA says that panel members “will decide what issues to focus on and ensure the apprentice voice is heard within the decision making structure of the institute.”

Following appointment of the Route Panel Chairs, the IfA has now put out a call for

employers and experts from across different industries to apply for positions on the 15 panels, with up to 150 appointments to be appointed to. More information on the application process is available at: <https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/route-panel-member-institute-for-apprenticeships/>

Unions supporting high quality Apprenticeships

Unionlearn has published a new booklet containing a range of case studies highlighting how unions are supporting high quality Apprenticeships in the workplace. The case studies evidence how trade unions are making a difference for apprentices and the organisations that employ them in a range of ways, including: by negotiating high quality Apprenticeship programmes with employers, by challenging gender stereotypes, by coaching and mentoring young people, and, by helping employers widen access to specific groups such as BAME workers and disabled workers. The case studies booklet is available at: www.unionlearn.org.uk/publications

Technical education reforms

On 6 July the Secretary of State for Education gave a speech setting out the government’s latest thinking on its reform of technical education at the British Chambers of Commerce Business and Education conference. A [DfE press release](#) highlighted the following points made by the Secretary of State in her speech:

“I want to create an army of skilled young people for British business. But I need your help. Government can’t do it alone.”

“Because that’s what we need, never more than now. A skills revolution for Brexit Britain. That’s the real strategy on migration.”

“The introduction of T-Levels will be the next stage in this journey - a gold standard for technical and professional excellence. Offered alongside apprenticeships, they will form the basis of our new technical education system.”

“Delivering these reforms will be a challenge. I am clear there is only one way to get this right – through a genuine partnership between business, government and education professionals. This means we need a collective plan. One plan. One team. For skills.

A skills revolution. A technical education revolution. That is how we meet those challenges – head on. It’s how we build our future.

The Secretary of State also made the following commitments in the speech:

- £50 million investment from April 2018 to fund high quality work placements -a key component of every T Level – to help prepare young people for skilled work
- £15m to contribute to improvements in further education so we have the colleges and teachers we need to deliver the new T levels
- Plans to bolster the role of the current Further Education Commissioner - Richard Atkins - who will take on responsibility for Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges
- Plans for a Department for Education summit with businesses in the autumn to start developing the T level curriculum.

Union learning – evidence of impact

As highlighted in previous editions of this newsletter, the recent [evaluation](#) of the Union Learning Fund and unionlearn undertaken by Leeds and Exeter universities is the latest source of a range of findings evidencing the positive impact of union learning for workers

and employers. Unionlearn has now produced two accessible guides to some of the key findings from this evaluation:

- A new eNote – “The Union Learning Advantage”. eNotes are a great resource to help reps keep up to date on key workplace issues. Each eNote is a self-contained module that contains a mixture of text, video and quizzes. They last between 20 and 45 minutes and can be returned to as many times as you like. They are available at www.tuceducation.org.uk
- A new infographics booklet – “Measuring the Success of Union Learning” – which summarises facts and figures from the evaluation, available at: www.unionlearn.org.u/publications

Other policy and research news

CIPD policy report on UK skills system

In April the CIPD published their response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper as a policy report entitled [From ‘inadequate to ‘outstanding’: making the UK’s skills system world class](#). The CIPD call attention to the need to fix the long-term challenges in the UK skills system, including prioritising the improvement of English and maths skills levels, extending access to lifelong learning across the life course, improving the quality of vocational pathways, and expanding access to good quality career information, advice and guidance. The report also highlights previous recommendations by the OECD calling for improved social partnership working on skills in the UK through the expansion of collaborative approaches by employers and unions.