# All Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships call for evidence

Education and Employers welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the debate about apprenticeships. We have substantial research expertise on many areas of employer engagement, including apprenticeships. Our programmes such as Inspiring the Future allow schools and volunteers to play a vital role in introducing young people to the world of work and giving them a better understanding of the options open to them. Programmes such as these allow employee volunteers to play a vital role in making apprenticeships accessible and appealing to young people.

Education and Employers is an independent charity launched in 2009 to provide children and young people with the inspiration, motivation, knowledge, skills and opportunities they need to help them achieve their potential. We aim to achieve this by working with state schools, employers, the national bodies that represent them and other partners including the government and third sector organisations. Education and Employers undertakes high quality research on education and employer engagement that informs education policy and practice. We also collaborate with other leading research institutions and ensure that research produced by academics around the world is easily accessible to practitioners, employers and policy makers.

[Our research](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/key-findings-from-our-research/) shows that too often young people do not get a chance to see all the options available to them. The effect is to stifle social mobility as young people often aspire to the jobs they see around them, especially those done by their family and neighbours. This is the case for children at both [primary](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/drawing-the-future/) and [secondary](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/disconnected-report/) school. Not only are children’s aspirations limited, but they are [disconnected](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/disconnected-report/) from the current and future labour market.

The recent discussion around apprenticeships is welcome because a strong apprenticeship system brings gains for both employers and employees, resulting in improvements in productivity, recruitment and the development of the skills needed for growth. The recent Social Mobility Commission ‘[Apprenticeships and social mobility](https://feweek.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Apprenticeships_and_social_mobility_report_FINAL_proofed_22.06.20.pdf)’ report highlights the role of apprenticeships as “a ladder of social mobility”. The Commission’s Joint Deputy Chair [identified](https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/49906-the-government-must-act-to-improve-social-mobility-for-apprentices?utm_source=FE+News&utm_campaign=433a50b0eb-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_06_26_08_20&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_a588419e08-433a50b0eb-375854702) that “apprenticeships remain one of the most effective means of boosting social mobility for workers from poorer backgrounds.” However, to full utilise apprenticeships, volunteers have a role to play in promoting them to young people in schools and colleges.

[Ofsted](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CET-Apprenticeship-Report-FINAL-1a.pdf) has shown that young people who undertook work experience or employment-tasters related to apprenticeships while still in school make much better progress than peers who did not – they are retained for longer and more of them complete their apprenticeship successfully. Many employers know this already: half of hairdressing firm Sassoon’s apprentices did a work experience placement with the company while still in school. Such practice needs to become widespread.

## The role of volunteers from the world of work

More employees and employers should volunteer in and engage with schools. Careers talks and fairs are excellent opportunities for businesses to communicate key information about themselves, including how an individual could go about joining the company. Exposure to volunteers is an effective way for young people to explore career options and understand the qualifications and experience which are valued by prospective employers. If an employer engages apprentices, then a careers talk is a great way to let young people know about this option. Encouraging a current or recent apprentice to give the careers talk themselves can inspire and inform young people about the options open to them.

Young people are particularly [respectful of, and attentive to](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/what-works-primary/), working people. They see them as [authentic](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/primary-futures-connecting-life-and-learning-in-uk-primary-education/) and honest, and prompting them to think more widely about career aspirations. Young people listen to them in a different way to teachers and parents: [88% of young adults](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/closing_the_gap__how_employers_can_change_the_way_young_people_see_apprenticeships_.pdf) who heard from three or more employers about careers while at school say it helped them decide on a career, with 28% saying it helped a lot. But just 11% had the opportunity to hear from at least three working professionals before leaving school or college.

Volunteering in schools also helps to tackle gender stereotypes. If [young men or women are reluctant to cross typical gender boundaries](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/the-challenges-facing-young-women-in-apprenticeships/) in apprenticeships then employers are losing out on the opportunity of recruiting potentially talented individuals.

## Hearing from apprentices

In order to maximise the effectiveness of apprenticeships in the UK young people should be able to hear from apprentices themselves. In fact, every young person at every school should get the chance to meet with a range of people, including those who are or have been an apprentice. Young people meeting volunteers from the world of work creates lightbulb moments which show them how much choice they have.

As our research has shown, [four or more](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research-main/key-findings-from-our-research/) encounters with employers reduces the likelihood of young people becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), opens their minds to careers and helps to better align young people’s aspirations with qualifications and pathways to the jobs they want, including apprenticeships.

## Learning from the best: Germany and Switzerland

Evidence from [Germany](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/what-german-schools-do-to-engage-employers-in-education/) highlights how a successful apprenticeship programme engages employers in education, having them attend job fairs or ‘speed dating’ sessions with young people.

The Swiss Apprenticeship system is [widely regarded as the best in the world](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/closing_the_gap__how_employers_can_change_the_way_young_people_see_apprenticeships_.pdf). Switzerland takes a strategic approach in which young people are exposed to potential apprenticeship employers while still at school to help them make informed, successful decisions about their futures. In Switzerland work experience is very much about career exploration, a taste of a potential future. The system uses careers fairs and workplace visits to place young people with employers able to offer apprenticeships.

## Recommendations for schools and colleges

A key element of any employer’s talent pipeline strategy should be to raise awareness of apprenticeship routes, such as by giving careers talks in schools, and following this up with work experience or job shadowing to give a realistic insight into what a prospective apprentice can expect. By engaging with schools, employers can close the information gap for young people about what different apprenticeships can offer, and how to best prepare themselves for success in applications.

The OECD [argues](https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/closing_the_gap__how_employers_can_change_the_way_young_people_see_apprenticeships_.pdf) that employer contacts are integral to effective careers guidance and states that “schools should encourage an understanding of the world of work from the earliest years, backed by visits to workplaces and workplace experiences.”

Our [research on apprenticeships](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/teenage-apprenticeships/) explores what distinguishes schools which guide significant numbers of pupils into apprenticeships from those which do not. As a result, we made the following recommendations for schools and colleges[in our Teenage apprenticeships report:](https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/teenage-apprenticeships/)

* **Support** should be provided to schools and colleges to further raise the confidence of school staff in providing advice to interested students.
* **Increase and diversify** the amount of apprenticeship events involving employers, invite ex/current apprentices into school.
* Schools and colleges should do more to **engage parents** as part of wider apprenticeship awareness. It is important that parents understand their value and potential as a way of helping their children progress in the labour market.
* Do more to **promote** advanced and higher-level apprenticeships.
* Raise awareness of apprenticeships from a **younger age*.***
* Schools and colleges should do more to **challenge** gender stereotypes and broaden the aspirations of young women who are thinking about apprenticeships.
* Tailor recruitment skills provision to reflect the methods and processes that employers now use to hire apprentices.

## Inspiring the Future

Education and Employers provides free services which allow state schools and colleges to connect with employee volunteers willing to speak to young people about the jobs they do and the routes they took into them. The [Inspiring the Future](https://www.inspiringthefuture.org/) and [Primary Futures](https://primaryfutures.org/) programmes provide first-hand insight into jobs and careers, with many thousands of volunteers across the country able to speak about their experience, including of being an apprentice. The programmes are particularly relevant for raising awareness about apprenticeships, as, when registering, organisations are asked to disclose their interest in apprenticeships, making it easy for schools and colleges to find the right people. The scheme makes it easy for teachers to find people to give informed careers insights to pupils. Find out more at [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)

Thanks to virtual sessions, schools can now connect with volunteers from across the country - people from diverse backgrounds (social, ethnic and economic) doing a wide range of jobs. The new system also benefits employers as employees will be able to take part from home, meaning no time or money need be spent travelling to the school.

Potential volunteers can [**sign-up here**](https://sforce.co/2VCNglq) to share their career stories with local schools, volunteer as a school governor, or connect a school with volunteers from the world of work.

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