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Does apprenticeship work for adults?
The experiences of adult apprentices in England

Project Report

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Acknowledgements

Contents

List of Tables

List of Charts

Figures

Does apprenticeship work for adults?
The experiences of adult apprentices in England

Final Report

Section 1: Introduction

Overview and research Aims

1.1. This report presents findings from the first research study of government-supported apprenticeship in England to focus on the experiences and perspectives of apprentices aged 25 and over and of their employers. The research also provides evidence about the training, upskilling and reskilling of adult workers more generally, including those in the later stages of working life. Apprenticeship has long been seen as a model of learning preparing young people to enter the labour market. The UK and Australia are the only countries where government funding is also available to support apprenticeships for adults, including those already in employment, from the age of 25 upwards. The full-year confirmed publicly available statistics for 2012-13 show that 45 per cent (230,300) of apprentices starting the government-supported programme in England were 25 or over and 32 per cent were aged between 19 and 24 when they started. In this report, we use the terms 'adult apprentices' (or 'adult apprenticeship') and 'older apprentices', to refer to people aged 25 or over. In contrast, we refer to those aged 24 and under as 'younger apprentices'[1].

1.2. The study has achieved its four main aims. First, it has generated a new statistical map of the adult apprentice population in England based on an analysis of the available official statistical data of apprentices' characteristics (including age, gender, ethnicity, learning difficulties/disability, region, apprenticeship level, and current occupational sector). Second, it has collected the first detailed empirical evidence from adult apprentices about their reasons and motivation for starting an apprenticeship, their experiences of participation, and perceptions of what they have learned. Third, it has generated evidence on why employers in different sectors recruit older apprentices, how adult apprenticeship fits with workforce development and business goals, and on how the training is delivered. Fourth, it has employed Fuller and Unwin's 'expansive – restrictive continuum' (Fuller and Unwin 2004a, 2014a) as a tool to analyse different organisational approaches to adult apprenticeship and to identify recommendations for policy and practice.

1.3. In addition to providing both quantitative and qualitative evidence of the 'lived reality' of adult apprenticeship in England, this report also exposes the continued desire on the part of adult employees to improve their career and employment prospects and to fulfil their potential. At the same time, the report provides evidence of the considerable efforts being made by some employers and training providers to create meaningful training opportunities for adults in the face of intense pressures in relation to funding and an underpinning uncertainty as to the level of commitment by policymakers.

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[1] The funding arrangements for government-supported Apprenticeship programmes differ according to age group. Apprentices who start the programme aged 19 and over, or 25 and over are all referred to as 'adult apprentices' to distinguish them from the 16-18 age group.

1.4. This report is organised in eight sections. Following the Introduction (Section 1), which provides a review of the evolution of adult apprenticeship policy, Section 2 identifies and discusses key themes in the literature on the changing relationship between age, work and training. Section 3 describes the case study design and methodology employed in completing our primary empirical research, while in the next Section (4) we draw on the official administrative data to provide a statistical picture of participation in adult apprenticeship. Sections 5 and 6 focus on our organisational cases studies: firstly by presenting vignettes of each organisation (Section 5); and secondly, by exploring employers' motivations for recruiting adult apprentices and their experiences of implementing the programme (Section 6). In Section 7 we turn to the adult apprentices themselves, presenting an account of how they became apprentices, their experiences of participation and perceptions of the benefits and challenges, including a focus on similarities and differences by age and gender. In our final Section (8), we employ Fuller and Unwin's (2014a) Expansive-Restrictive Framework to analyse similarities and differences between the organisational case studies and conclude by identifying the key features underpinning an expansive approach to adult apprenticeship.

1.5. This first section continues with a review of the way adult apprenticeship has evolved in England. This has been informed by an analysis of relevant policy documents and by two interviews with senior policymakers involved with the original development of adult apprenticeship policy. The review shows how, during the first half of the 2000s, the rationale for extending apprenticeship funding to people aged 25 and over was rooted in concerns about skill levels in the adult workforce and the impact on the UK's ability to compete in the global economy. It also shows how the implementation of adult apprenticeships began during a time of considerable policy activity and complexity in relation to training and skills. We argue in this report that this 'policy history' needs to be studied and put on record because it reveals the highly contingent and short-term nature of this country's continued struggle to establish a coherent and robust vocational education and training system.

Adult Apprenticeship Policy

1.6. In England the government supported apprenticeship programme is currently available at Level 2 (broadly equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A* to C), known as Intermediate Apprenticeship, and Level 3 (broadly equivalent to two A-level passes), known as Advanced Apprenticeship. There is also a Higher Apprenticeship programme (Level 4 and above), but numbers participating at this level are currently small (9,800 total starts in 2012/13). Since the government-supported apprenticeship programme was introduced in 1994 (then known as Modern Apprenticeship and only available at Level 3)[2], successive governments have invested in expanding the programme, although significant investment only began in the early 2000s.

1.7. Initially, government funding was provided for two age groups: 16-18 and 19-24. In 2003, the then Labour government published a White Paper focused on addressing the UK's seemingly perennial skills problem and the barriers it presented to the country's economic competitiveness and productivity (DfES 2003). One of the proposals was lifting the age limit on apprenticeships so that 'more older learners can participate and bringing in a wider range of employers' (ibid: 22). Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) would be asked to work with

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[2] In 2004, the then Labour government changed the name from Modern Apprenticeship to Apprenticeships and included the existing Level 2 National Traineeships (see Fuller and Unwin 2003 and Unwin and Wellington 2001 for critiques of Modern Apprenticeship).

employers to design apprenticeship programmes for adults aged 25 and over. In 2005, the then Modern Apprenticeship Taskforce informed government that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was not going to meet its Public Sector Agreement (PSA) target for apprenticeship numbers. At the same time, the LSC was aware that some large employers wanted to offer apprenticeships to their older employees as well as recruit younger apprentices. In addition, the LSC was being lobbied by employers in three specific sectors about the need to provide retraining and upskilling for adults: a) the care sector, which was having to respond to the requirement of the 2000 Care Standards Act that 50 per cent of employees in care homes should be qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 2; b) the engineering sector; and c) the IT sector.

1.8. In response to these demands, the LSC launched an initiative to fund the training and assessment required for adult employees to gain a first Level 2 NVQ. The LSC also produced an internal paper for the then Minister for Skills, Ivan Lewis, proposing the development of adult apprenticeships. Four pilot programmes were run, but there are no publicly available records of any evaluation. There was some concern in the LSC at the time about the potential for deadweight (employers taking public funds for training they would otherwise have funded themselves). There was also a concern that adult apprenticeship should not be used as a vehicle for accrediting (through NVQs) existing employees for skills they already possessed. In 2006, the government-commissioned *Leitch Review of Skills* set out a detailed, target-driven agenda for improving adult skills (including literacy and numeracy), stating that, 'More adult apprenticeships will be available for those individuals and employers who wish to fill skill gaps' (Leitch 2006: 24). It also called for apprenticeship numbers as a whole to be boosted to 400,000 per year (in England). The following key phrase in Leitch shows how the then Labour government was trying to balance competitiveness and social inclusion goals: **'…**skills is the most important lever within our control to create wealth and to reduce social deprivation**'** (ibid: 2). A key target for Leitch was to increase the numbers of adults with nationally recognised qualifications at Level 2 and above so that the UK could rise up the international league tables for education and training (see Payne 2009).

1.9. In August 2006 and as a response to Leitch, the *Train to Gain* initiative was launched. Lanning and Lawton (2012: 19) have called this, 'the flagship programme for Labour's qualifications agenda in adult skills policy'. This initiative had ambitious aims in relation to boosting the qualification levels of adults (particularly in relation to NVQs at Levels 2 and 3), making training providers (including FE colleges) more responsive to employer demands for flexible, workplace-based training, and providing a skills brokerage service for employers (NAO 2009). By 2008/09, *Train to Gain* accounted for one third of England's total adult skills budget. Evaluations of the effectiveness of the initiative have been very critical pointing to considerable deadweight, investigations into alleged fraudulent practices by some training providers, and doubts about the extent to which the employment and career prospects of adult employees were sufficiently enhanced (ibid). Whilst there is not the space in this report to discuss *Train to Gain* in further detail (see e.g. Ofsted 2008 for another account), it is important to note that at its heart was the use of competence-based qualifications (NVQs) to accredit the existing skills of adult employees. This key feature is also at the heart of the apprenticeship programme in England and is of particular importance to apprenticeships for adults aged 25 and over.

1.10. Although the starting age of apprentices in Europe has been getting older due to the delayed nature of transitions from education to the labour market, England stands out because it has such a large proportion of older adults who join an apprenticeship whilst they are with their existing employer – a practice known as 'conversion'. When Fuller and Unwin acted as specialist advisers to the Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Select Committee's Scrutiny of the Draft Apprenticeships Bill in 2007/08, the Committee pursued this matter with witnesses from the then Learning and Skills Council and noted that:

> We established during the course of the inquiry that the majority of apprentices were not new recruits to a business but existing employees who are in work and who "convert" from their current jobs to apprenticeships with the same employer. (House of Commons 2009)

1.11. The Select Committee recommended that official statistics should differentiate between apprentices recruited to a new position with an employer and those who had been 'converted'. In its response, the then government agreed this should be done, though stated that the earliest date for the change would from August 1st 2010. Four years later, this change has still not been made. This makes it impossible to develop a clear picture of which employers (in both the public and private sector) prefer to use apprenticeship as a vehicle for training older employees rather than recruiting 16-18 year olds. It must also be remembered that some 16-18 year old apprentices are also 'conversions'. The reason that this matter is serious for both adults and young people is that there is still a possibility that apprentices are only being accredited for what they already know rather than developing new skills. Furthermore, it suggests that government and its agencies responsible for the funding, promotion and management of apprenticeship are still focusing primarily on quantity rather than quality. Providing funding for the 'conversion' of existing employees has been a major catalyst for the rapid increase in the number of apprentices in recent years.

1.12. One of our policy key informants explained that prior to 2005 apprenticeship was regarded as 'a programme in a suite of other programmes…limited by age…very low profile and below the radar'. He added:

> …well (Tony) Blair didn't care very much about apprenticeships. (Gordon) Brown did, and I remember in Leitch…when we were going through some of the final recommendations, Brown said, 'Can't we do more apprenticeships?'…so there was this kind of flurry of activity – how do apprenticeships work and what are they? …Once we'd unpacked all of that, it was clear that Brown wanted a big apprenticeship story from the end of Leitch and said, 'Well can't we double the number?' So, lo and behold that's exactly what we recommended, and we doubled the number of apprenticeships.

1.13. In 2008, at the same time as the *Train to Gain* initiative had become firmly established, the Labour government produced its plans for developing its apprenticeship programme (DIUS/DCSF 2008). This included the following rationale for additional funding for adult apprenticeships:

> For certain groups of adults – those facing a career change, those entering the labour market for the first time or those coming back to work after an extended break due to caring responsibilities – an Apprenticeship can be a highly effective way of making such a transition. (ibid: 15-16)

1.14. When the Coalition government was elected in May 2010, one of its first policy announcements was that the *Train to Gain* initiative would be abolished and its funding allocation switched to apprenticeships. The Conservative Party (2008) had proposed this in a policy paper prior to the 2010 General Election. The paper bemoaned the 'tick-box culture' of assessing employees' existing skills and the overall poor quality of apprenticeships (ibid: 19) and announced that a future Conservative government would invest in 'real apprenticeships of all ages' (ibid: 21).

1.15. In April 2013, the government introduced Advanced Learning Loans for people aged 24 and over covering education and training at Level 3 and 4, including advanced and higher apprenticeships. In February 2014, however, the Skills Funding Statement announced that 24+ apprenticeships would be brought back under the Adult Skills Budget. Government explained that 'it became clear that' loans were 'not the preferred funding route for employers or prospective apprentices'.[3] It has subsequently stated that, 'Data show that the number of Apprenticeship starts for those aged 24 and above studying at Level 3 and above has been directly affected'.[4] As we note in Section 4, the 2013-14 statistics do indeed show a fall in the proportion of 25+ apprentices.

1.16. Despite the considerable investment in adult apprenticeships for almost a decade, there has been a surprising lack of public or scholarly debate about what they are for and how they should be organised (Fuller and Unwin 2012), although there have been two critical reports from the National Audit Office (2012) and the House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts (2012). This report starts to fill this gap. It argues that the current use of 'apprenticeship' as a generic term for government-supported training dilutes the meaning and value of apprenticeship. In doing so, it also aims to stimulate discussion about what forms of adult training will be needed in response to the international challenge to develop 'active ageing' policies as working lives extend.

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[3] See: https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-of-further-education-and-skills-training/supporting-pages/funding-system-for-further-education-24-advanced-learning-loans.

[4] See 'Tables Notes' at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships.

Section 2: A Summary of the Research Literature

Introduction

2.1. This section of the report provides a summary of the key themes we drew from the literature review[5] we conducted to ensure our study of 'adult apprenticeship' was informed by the findings, concepts and theories from research in relevant fields of inquiry, including: adult learning; life course transition; workplace learning; human resource management; sociology of work; and ageing and the workforce. There is a substantial and multi-disciplinary international literature in each of the first four fields, which are also informed by insights from political economy and policy studies, and a rapidly growing literature in the fifth. There is also a substantial literature on apprenticeship, the vast majority of work positions apprenticeship as an institution within the initial vocational education and training (VET) systems for young people (generally aged between 16 and 24) of different countries. Apprenticeship is also an internationally understood and resilient model of learning dating back many centuries (see Fuller and Unwin 2013a). We draw on this aspect of apprenticeship in Sections 7 and 8 in relation to the analysis of our research findings.

2.2. As the period of transition from schooling through to the labour market has gradually been extended in many countries, the notional age boundary between 'young person', 'adult' and 'older' has shifted. The OECD (2010) reports that, internationally, the age range of 'young people' in some form of schooling, combined in varying degrees with some form of work, extends from 15 to 29 years. In the United States (US) and Canada, individuals typically enter government-recognised 'registered apprenticeships' in their late 20s (see Lerman, 2013; Meredith, 2013). As Lerman (2013: 110) notes, the relatively high age of entry in the US, coupled with the very limited connections between apprenticeship and schools and colleges, "are reasons why they are largely invisible to education providers and policy-makers". Despite the US experience and the fact that apprentices in Europe can also be in their 20s, the concept of 'adult apprenticeship' is a policy construct currently found only in Australia and the United Kingdom (UK), where the age restriction on government-funded apprenticeship was relaxed in 1992 and 2003 respectively to encourage a growth in apprenticeship numbers. Two studies provide valuable overviews: a 2006 report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in Australia (Karmel 2006); and a report from the UK's National Audit Office (NAO 2012). There has also been some research on adult apprentices in Australia's construction industry (Sparks et al 2009). As yet, however, apprenticeship research still tends to conceptualise apprentices as 'young people' and distinct from the 'adult' or 'older' workforce.

2.3. The summary is structured into three main sections. First, we discuss the ways in which age is defined in relation to work and in the light of the international drive to extend people's working lives. Next we discuss the shifting meaning of transitions through the life course and the way the concept of age evokes certain stereotypes. Thirdly, we examine how views on age interact with the way organisations afford access to training and individuals' attitudes to learning at and for work.

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[5] The literature review is available to download on the website of the Centre for Learning and Life Chances in Knowledge Economies and Societies (LLAKES) – www.llakes.ac.uk.

Defining and Extending Working Age

2.4. There has long been an assumption embedded within the policy literature that age is a defining feature of labour market participation and that there is a 'prime' working age. This is reinforced through the OECD's classification of the labour force in terms of three age groups: 15-24 year olds who are recent labour market entrants; 25-54 year olds who are in 'the prime of their working lives'; and 55-64 year olds, as 'those who have passed the peak of their career and are approaching retirement' (OECD, 2013: 132). The European Union (EU) uses the same classification (see Eurostat 2014), though Nordic countries tend to define 'older workers' from the age of 45, which is also the age used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see Martin et al 2014; Smith et al 2010). In their study of the common stereotypes used to portray older workers in the US, Ng and Feldman (2012: 824) argued the case for using 40 as an 'acceptable cut-off' stage in a working lifespan from 16-65 to distinguish 'older' from 'younger' workers. They note that, although this could be contested, particularly as 40 might seem an odd age to be deemed as 'old', but that this was 'consistent with both previous research and legal definitions' (ibid). From their analysis of the UK's ONS Opinions Survey for 2010/11, Sweiry and Willitts (2011) also found that the mean age at which survey respondents considered people stopped being young was 40.71 years, whilst the mean age for starting to be old was 59.21 years. These divisions seem increasingly out-dated, however, in the light of the drive in many advanced economies to extend working life in response to the impact on rates of employment due to falling birth rates, people living longer, and the social and economic cost of increasing dependency of ageing populations.

2.5. The EU declared 2012 as the year of 'active ageing and solidarity between generations' (Cedefop, 2012: forward). The concept of 'active ageing' was adopted by the World Health Organisation in 2002 and defined as: 'the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age' (WHO 2002: 12). A key aspect of the EU's '2020 strategy' to achieve a 75% employment rate for the 20-64 age group, is to increase the participation of older workers (EC 2010:8).

2.6. Walker and Maltby (2012: 121) point out that the EU began developing ageing-related policies in the early 1990s, when 'the main policy discourse was still in the deserving or compassionate mode: older workers needed inclusion and equal opportunities'. They argue that now, 'the dominant policy paradigm across the globe is the economistic one of working longer' (ibid: 119) and add that, 'The reality of the labour market experience of large numbers of older workers in most EU countries is exclusion from employment' (ibid). Walker and Maltby (ibid) contrast the concept of 'active ageing' with that of, 'successful ageing' as introduced by Rowe and Kahn (1987) during their pioneering multi-disciplinary study of older people in the US. Rowe and Kahn challenged the existing notion of 'normal ageing' prevalent in gerontology at the time by showing that there was substantial heterogeneity among older people in terms of the way they lived and behaved and that this increased with age. Their concept of 'successful ageing' combines three overlapping dimensions: a) avoiding disease; b) maintaining high cognitive and physical function; and c) engagement with life. Walker and Maltby (2012: 119) call for a 'new paradigm of active ageing', one that 'reflects the gerontological heritage as well as the policy imperatives', in order to overcome the 'traditional age-segregated life-course model of education, work and employment into a more age-integrated approach where all three span the whole life course'. As we will show later in this report, our research findings support the need for this paradigm shift.

2.7. The UK government defines the 'older' worker as someone between age 50 and the State Pension Age (SPA), though the latter is set to rise over the coming years to reach 67 for men by 2026 and 67 for women by 2028. This follows legislation introduced in 2011 to abolish the default retirement age of 65 and a policy drive to encourage more people to stay in work for longer (DWP, 2014). Age discrimination legislation was introduced in the UK in 2006 and was further developed in the 2010 Equality Act, which included protection against discrimination for people of any age if the less favourable treatment is based on their age. This means it applies equally to people of all ages and includes: employees and job applicants; ex-employees; apprentices; people seeking or undertaking vocational training; and contract and agency workers. The economic argument for these policies has been made in a report for the Department for Work and Pensions by researchers at the National Institute of Economic and Social Research who found that, as well as increasing the supply of labour, extending working life raises the potential levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and consumption and boosts tax revenues (Barrell et al 2011). McNair (2011) argues that the age of 50 has strong resonance in the UK because it marks the point when there is: a) a decline in labour market participation; b) reported age discrimination; and c) growing awareness of approaching retirement (ibid:3).

2.8. The abolition or extension of mandatory retirement ages is now being pursued in many countries (see Wood et al, 2010; Field et al, 2013). The US and New Zealand were relatively early adopters in this regard having abolished mandatory retirement in 1986 and between 1993 and 1999 respectively. An OECD report in 2006 gave a further boost to the trend by calling for a comprehensive change in policy and a cultural shift to ensure that people could extend their stay in employment. The OECD (2006) used the device of the 'age dependency ratio', which calculates the age structure of the population and the number of individuals that are likely to be dependent on the support of others in relation to the number of individuals capable of providing that support. The ratio of older inactive individuals per worker is set to almost double from around 38 per cent in 2000 to over 70 per cent by 2050, whilst in Europe, the ratio will be one-to-one. The trend is particularly pronounced in Saudi Arabia, China, Korea, Brazil, Turkey and Indonesia (Johansson: 2013: 11). As Vickerstaff (2010: 869) notes, an ageing population is 'increasingly being reframed as a major social, economic and political problem', in particular because it is seen to 'unbalance the established inter-generational contract on which many welfare states are based, namely that current prime age workers pay for the pensions and health care of the retired'.

2.9. The global drive to extend working life has put into reverse the early retirement trend of the 1980s and 1990s, which, as Phillipson (2013: 151) argues, 'accelerated the growth of post-work lifestyles, consolidated by the cohort of 'first wave' baby boomers (those born in the 1940s and early 1950s)'. Phillipson (ibid) adds that, 'Both aspects are now in collision with the drive to delay retirement and put in place later pension ages'. Drawing on data from five UK-based surveys of the employment experiences of over 22,000 workers taken from 1986 to 2006, Felstead (2010a) observed that, unlike in previous recessions when older workers were encouraged and able to take early retirement, its attractions have diminished as pension funds have shrunk and government has encouraged the extension of working life as one solution to the financial consequences of an ageing population.

Shifting Meaning of Life Course Transition

2.10. The experiences and perspectives of the 'adult apprentices' in our study illustrate how problematic the traditional linear model of transition (education-work-retirement) has become

(see Vickerstaff and Cox 2005). The concept of transition has been a dominant theme in sociology for some years, particularly influenced by the work of Bauman (2000) and his post-modern notion of 'liquid life', Beck's (1992) notion of individuals navigating their way through the 'risk society', and Giddens's (1991) notion of 'reflexive modernisation' (for discussion, see, inter alia, Evans and Helve, 2013; Field et al 2013; Vickerstaff and Cox, 2005). The growing concern to study transition across the life course, as opposed to focusing solely on young people's transition from education to work, is partly a reflection of the breakdown of a clearly defined age of exit from the labour market and recognition of increasingly individualised and fractured trajectories (see, inter alia, Bimrose and Brown 2010; Fuller 2007).

2.11. As the normative age thresholds mapping out the lifecourse have been questioned, there has been renewed interest in the explanatory potential of the concept of 'generation', which was developed by the German sociologist, Karl Mannheim in the 1920s and 30s (see Biesta et al 2011 for a discussion). Generations are seen to be formed through a 'common location in historical time and…a 'distinct consciousness of that historical position…shaped by the events and experiences of that time' (Gilleard 2004: 108). The concept of generation can be used to make sense of the way a group's shared position, more than age itself, influences attitudes and orientations to work and learning. This has influenced a strand of research, which has hypothesised that there are generational differences in relation to people's work values including organisational commitment. From their analysis of this research, however, Parry and Urwin (2011) conclude that, as yet, based on existing empirical evidence, it is not possible to make a robust case to support such a claim and argue that, 'future academic research should continue to work on disentangling the effects of age, career stage, cohort and period' and consider the impact on gender and race (ibid: 93). Felstead's (2010b) analysis of the UK Skills Surveys from 1991 to 2006 show the danger of assuming that older generations will remain more committed to their workplaces than younger ones. He found that whilst organisational commitment among people aged 50 and over was relatively high during the 1990s, it fell sharply in the 2000s. The fall was particularly strong in the public sector and was stronger for men than women.

2.12. Nevertheless, the feeling of belonging to or associating one's self with a particular generation is a powerful and enduring sensibility, one that can have both positive and negative connotations. McMullin et al (2007) used 'generational affinity' with computing technology to explain the ways in which age norms are ascribed to generational groups within the working environment. Groups identify with particular technologies or cultural phenomena as 'natural' parts of that generation's coming of age. The seemingly natural, taken-for-granted distinctions made through technological affinities draw our attention to the way in which 'otherness' is constructed in the workplace. The influence of stereotypes and how they create workplace cultures is important for our understanding of how organisations treat different groups of workers. The focus on age, particularly in public policy, fails to recognise that it is unable to explain very different experiences across the workforce (see Radl 2012). Individual characteristics such as gender, race, class and health, add layer upon layer of complexity to and intersect with age. Duncan and Loretto (2004) have argued that the concept of 'ageism' is now increasingly being used to refer to discrimination in general rather than being confined to the experiences of 'older' workers. This is confirmed by Parry and Harris's (2011: 12) finding from a review of workplace practices in the UK that, 'Despite anti-age discrimination legislation, stereotypical attitudes about both older and younger workers appear to be both widespread and well embedded' (see also Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006; Brooke and Taylor 2005).

Workplace Practices, Training and Quality of Work

2.13. There is a long-standing and extensive literature on the ways in which workplaces are organised, including who gets access to training and promotion, who gets to be involved in decision-making and the relationship between these factors and the quality of work itself (see, inter alia, Warhurst et al, 2012; Felstead et al 2009; Green, 2006; Rainbird et al 2004). The concept of the workplace as a learning environment and the ways in which individuals can be said to learn in the workplace has also generated a considerable body of research (see for a review, Fuller and Unwin 2011). Given the mandatory requirement for adult apprentices to achieve Level 2 in Functional Skills, the OECD's findings from the first round of its Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) are highly relevant for our study. The findings showed how newly acquired skills need to be used and refined through use in the workplace. This aligns with research by Wolf and Evans (2010) on the problems faced by employees who are trying to improve their competence in literacy, numeracy and ICT, yet find they have limited opportunity to practice these skills due to the nature of their jobs. Similarly, given the central involvement of a trade union in one of our case studies, we note the findings of Wanrooy et al (2013) that unionised workplaces and those in the public sector are more likely to display higher levels of training.

2.14. The overwhelming picture from the literature is one of employer discrimination towards older workers and a reluctance to plan for the demographic changes highlighted earlier in this review (see, inter alia, Martin et al, 2014; Parry and Tyson 2010; Taylor 2013). Loretto and White (2006) argue that there is an 'enactment gap' between the stated equality policies of organisations and actual practice and behaviour on the other (see also McVittie et al, 2003). Van Dalen and Henkens (2005) remind us, however, that some employees hold even stronger stereotypical views than senior managers. Yet, again, we have to be careful not to fall into the stereotyping trap ourselves and condemn all workplaces. One study that has particular resonance in the light of our findings is McBride's (2011) research on female workers' access to training in the National Health Service. She highlighted the positive influence of 'enthusiastic local actors' (corporate staff, workforce development managers and external actors) who were facilitating women's training and development (ibid: 543). As we will argue in this report, detailed case study research offers an important means of building more rounded pictures of the lived-experience within workplaces, including the ability to make visible the perceptions of line managers and supervisors whose influence risks being smoothed out of the organisational narrative. Managers and supervisors often act as gatekeepers to training resources and occupy the loosely regulated space between stated organisation policy and practice.

2.15. Age is, of course, a culturally dependent concept, whose significance and consequences within the workplace are filtered through organisational and occupational practice (Loretto and White 2006). Furthermore, each occupational context offers an extra mediating factor. A particularly prevalent stereotype is that older workers are resistant to change and tend to display reduced potential for development than their younger colleagues (Posthuma and Campion, 2009). This stereotype is particularly pervasive in the IT sector. From their research in the IT sector in Canada, Australia, the US and the UK, McMullin, Duerden Commeau (2011:148-9) found that 'ageist beliefs in regard to learning and technological adaptation' were 'shared and normative among workers and managers and younger and older respondents'. In this research, 'older' meant anyone aged 40 or over. In contrast, research in Germany by Bertschek and Meyer (2008) found that workers older than 49 were not significantly less productive than prime age workers between 30 and 49, though older workers who used a computer were significantly more productive than older non-computer users.

2.16. McCarthy et al's (2014) study of the views of over 400 managers and supervisors in industries across Ireland suggests, however, that ageist views transcend sector. Their survey found 'older' was defined on a scale from 28 to 75 years of age, with a mean age of 52.4 years. Their survey also confirmed the findings from previous research to show that, the older the manager or supervisor, the older they set the age of being an 'older worker' and that older workers tend to display 'more positive stereotypes towards older workers than (chronologically) 'younger' employees (ibid: 14).

2.17. The gendered nature of work and the ways in which men and women are regarded in the workplace are themes that appear in the literature on apprenticeship as well as in research more generally (see, inter alia, Ainsworth 2002; Moore 2009). A study by Grant et al (2006) in six local labour markets across England exploring why women work in low-paid roles has particular relevance for our research. The study highlighted how the concept of working 'below their potential' (defined in relation to levels of qualification and experience including at supervisor/management level) was associated with gender in that, whereas part-time, low-paid work is associated with young and pre-retirement males, it was a feature across the working lives for women in their 30s, 40s and 50s. As such, the propensity of women to spend their apparently 'prime' career stage in such employment raises questions about the motivations or requirements for work-related training. In this study, the attitudes of line managers revealed not only a pervasive attitude that 'working below potential' was a positive choice, but also ignorance of the workers' previously acquired skills and experience.

2.18. As the literature amply demonstrates, the ways in which individual employees respond to opportunities to enhance their skills or to invitations to participate in training (which may occur despite their actual level of expertise) have to be considered in relation to a wide range of factors. In his review of the UK Skills Surveys, Felstead (2010a: 1309) found that approximately two-thirds of older men and women (50+ age group) said that they 'did not want any training', as compared to between one-third and two-fifths of younger workers. He also examined whether the drive to prolong working lives has been at the expense of a poorer quality of working experience for older workers. Whilst observing an improving situation for older workers' employment experience based on some measures, including the skill content of jobs, he concluded that the opportunity for training and the duration of training remains different by age (2010:1311; see also Canduela et al 2012; McNair 2011; Smeaton et al, 2009). Also, 'men and women in their fifties who received training were a little less likely than their younger counterparts to say that it had improved their skills and working practices. More notably, the training they received was far less likely to result in a pay rise or to add to their enjoyment of work' (ibid: 1308).

2.19. From his analysis of Labour Force Survey data on the relationship between training and labour market participation for adults from age 25, together with survey and telephone interview data from individuals and organisations across Austria, Schmid (2012) found that closeness to retirement led to a decrease in training participation. He also found, however, little difference in outcomes of training across the age groups and concluded that chronological age on its own played a minor role. Rather, he argued, we need to understand the 'complex interplay of educational level, occupational status, company environments (provision of time and cost incentives for the employee as well as sector-specific differences in training needs) and individual cost-benefit considerations' in terms of how decisions are made to participate in training. These findings problematise any straightforward relationship between training and ageing, and instead direct our attention to the heterogeneity of older workers and the organisations in which they work.

Conclusion

2.20. As the case studies in our study will show, the relationship between individuals' experiences of learning at and for work and the practices and policies of the organisations in which they work is complex, dynamic and interwoven. We will argue that through our findings, we are able to contribute to furthering the understanding of the intersection between life course transition, skill formation and reformation, and labour market participation. The added value of our research is that we have been able to investigate and shed light on that intersection from within the particular context and phenomenon of government-supported adult apprenticeship. Given the absence of literature on the lived-experiences of adult apprentices, their work colleagues and their employers, our study can hopefully pave the way for further research.

Section 3: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction and Research Questions

3.1. The project commenced in January 2013 and was organised in two stages of 6 and 12 months consecutively. *Phase 1* focused on the development of a literature review on adult apprenticeship, training and older workers (see previous section) and a statistical picture of adult participation in government-supported apprenticeship programmes (see Section 4). The approaches undertaken to produce the literature review and the statistical mapping are outlined in Sections 2 and 4 respectively. *Phase 2* involved primary case study research exploring employers and apprentices perceptions and experiences of the government supported adult apprenticeship programme. In addition, we undertook two interviews with key informants from the policy community about the decision of the then Labour government to make the programme available to adults aged 25 and over. To address the research aims outlined in the Introduction to this report (Section 1), our research design has enabled us to address five research questions as follows:

> RQ1: What are the social characteristics of adult apprentices (including age and gender) and how are they distributed across apprenticeship sectors and levels? (See Section 4)

> RQ2: Why do employers in different sectors engage with adult apprenticeship and how do organisational stakeholders understand and conceptualise their approach? (See Sections 5 and 6)

> RQ3: Who is involved in the delivery of adult apprenticeships and what are their roles and experiences? (See Sections 5 and 6)

> RQ4: What is the 'lived reality' and experience of apprenticeship as a model of learning for adults? (See Section 7)

> RQ5: How do the experiences of and perceptions about adult apprenticeship vary by age group, gender and sector? (See Section 7)

We now focus on our case study approach, outlining our methodology and data collection.

The Case Studies

3.2. The purpose of the organisational case studies was to generate illustrative qualitative evidence about the reasons why employers and adults aged 25+ participate in apprenticeship, the 'lived experience' of being involved, and the perceived benefits and challenges. We aimed to undertake five organisational case studies, creating a diverse sample in terms of organisation size, sector and geographical spread, and with data being collected from two major target groups, adult apprentices and organisational key informants (including managers and training providers), in each case study.

Constructing and accessing the case study organisations

3.3. Our review of the main themes in the literature and results from the statistical mapping were presented to our Advisory Group (see Appendix A) in May 2013. The insights gained

from the work undertaken in *Phase 1* and the helpful advice given by our advisory panel of experts and key stakeholders helped to inform the selection of our organisational case studies for the second phase of the research. Our aim was to identify case studies representing occupational sectors in which older apprentices are most likely to be found as well as those in which adult apprentices are less common. We also wanted to generate an adult apprentice sample with diverse characteristics, including age, gender and background. We drew up a long list of potential case study organisations within a range of sectors including, Healthcare; Social Care, Construction, Engineering; Retail; Travel and Transport, and Hospitality and Catering.

3.4. Having designed our research instruments (Appendix B) and obtained ethical approval from University of Southampton's Ethics Committee by April 2013 (see selected ethics documentation at Appendix C), we commenced the process of negotiating access to potential case study organisations. This proved to be a challenging process for two main reasons. The first was a lack of interest from some organisations, particularly from the retail sector, in being involved in academic research. We had been keen to include a retail case study as the retail sector employs significant numbers of adult apprentices, as well as older workers more generally. It was disappointing that all the retail companies we approached declined our invitation on the basis that it was company policy not to participate in research. A second challenge was finding organisations that employed adult apprentices. On more than one occasion, the idea of participating in our research was greeted with early enthusiasm, but it subsequently materialised after initial meetings and internal scrutiny of organisational workforce data that the organisation did not in fact employ any older apprentices. In the case of a large construction sector company, older apprentices were eventually identified in one arm of the organisation, but at too late a stage to be included as one of our main case studies. While frustrating, these experiences were interesting in terms of their reflection of the changing availability, use and recognition of older apprentices within some organisations.

3.5. We were able to confirm our set of five case study organisations towards the end of 2013 as follows:

- Social Care organisation in the East of England (*Social Care*)
- Hospitality company, with public houses across the UK (*Hospitality*)
- Transport organisation based in the North of England (*Transport*)
- NHS Health Trust in the West of England (*NHS Trust*)
- Energy infrastructure company (national) (*Energy*)

3.6. The sample is diverse in terms of sector, geography and organisational size. It also covers a range of apprenticeship programmes including health and social care, and business administration, which have high numbers of older apprentices, as well as engineering, which has fewer numbers. We provide vignettes for each of these organisations, outlining some of their key features, including the history of their involvement in adult apprenticeship and the data collected during the case study process (see Section 5).

3.7. We were able to draw valuable insights from the construction organisation mentioned above. This company was enthusiastic about the concept of adult apprenticeship and intended to increase its recruitment of older apprentices in the future.

3.8. Within each of the five case studies, we aimed to undertake up to five key informant (KI) interviews (25 in total) and to recruit five adult apprentices (25 in total) to participate in a longitudinal study involving two interviews, approximately three to six months apart.

Opening up the case studies and key informant interviews

3.9. The initial stage of engagement involved liaising with the relevant gatekeepers who were knowledgeable about the use of apprenticeship in the organisation, the age range of their apprentices and the frameworks they were following. Establishing a key organisational contact was important for helping to identify and secure interviews with KIs: those people who were involved in organisational policy-making in terms of workforce development, training and apprenticeships, as well as others involved in the selection, recruitment, training and assessment, and line management of adult apprentices.

3.10. The purpose of the KI interviews was to gain a full picture of the organisation's policy and approach towards apprenticeships. There were two stages to the process: a) a preliminary interview with an appropriate KI (often the organisational gatekeeper) to establish contextual information such as numbers of apprentices across the different age bands, types and levels of apprenticeship programme, approach to training and assessment, involvement of external providers, completion rates, and relationship with the National Apprenticeship Service; and b) interviews with the range of KIs to explore inter alia the organisation's motives for recruiting adult apprentices, the nature of their role and involvement with the apprenticeship programme, their experience of managing older apprentices, and the challenges and benefits presented by this group.

3.11. The KI interviews were usually conducted face-to-face at the participants' workplaces, but occasionally, due to logistical reasons, they were done by telephone. The interviews provided a valuable mechanism for learning about the organisation and its approach towards a whole range of apprenticeship issues. What was particularly striking across all the case study sites was the passion of many of the KIs for the concept of adult apprenticeship and the role it can play in the development of workforce skills. The organisational findings, drawing on our KI interviews are presented in Sections 5 and 6.

Apprentice interviews

3.12. The adult apprentice sample in each organisation was generated, with help from our organisational gatekeepers, to reflect the characteristics (including age and gender) of the apprentice population and the programmes they were participating in. Each organisation's apprentice sample also contributed to the achievement of our overall goal of creating a dataset of interviewees that included a spread of ages, males and females (and where available ethnic minority backgrounds) as well as a range of apprenticeship sectors and levels. The vast majority of apprentice interviews were conducted face-to-face during a visit to the organisation. This enabled us to develop an 'ethnographic feel' for the workplace by walking round and observing employees in context. For practical reasons,

including time constraints, a few apprentices were interviewed in pairs. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and subjected to thematic data analysis by all members of the research team.

3.13. Our interview approach involved a two-step process. Apprentices were interviewed twice with a period of three and six months between each meeting. The first interview, utilising a biographical narrative interview (Roberts 2002, Brockmann 2010) was relatively unstructured. Participants were invited to tell us the 'story' of how they came to be doing an apprenticeship at this stage in their life and career. Interviewees were prompted if necessary to recall whether there was a particular 'moment' in relation to this decision and for information about their education, training and employment backgrounds and experiences. Importantly, the first interviews helped to establish a good rapport between researcher and research participant, which was then built upon in the subsequent interview. At the end of the first interview, interviewees were asked to complete a pro-forma requesting basic demographic data, as well as information about their employment status and apprenticeship programme.

3.14. The second interviews were semi-structured and probed more deeply into the apprentices' daily work and training, and their experiences of being an 'older apprentice' in the particular case study organisation. Expectations, disappointments, surprises and pleasures were all discussed, as were the nature of the apprentices' relationships with managers, other colleagues and fellow apprentices of different ages. The interviews gathered evidence on workplace and training experiences, work-life balance, the impact of gender, and future career ambitions. Developing a longitudinal approach allowed us to capture continuities and discontinuities over time in our participants' perceptions and experiences of their apprenticeship. It also enabled us to collect information on apprentice retention and churn. In one of our organisations (Hospitality), only two of our initial group of five adult apprentices were still employed at the time of the second interviews.

3.15. A further research tool was the 'Learning Log' (Fuller and Unwin 2004b). This was designed to complement and augment the data collected from the interviews. At the first interview, apprentices were asked if they would be willing to keep a weekly log for four consecutive weeks, answering a range of 'tick box questions' on new skills learnt, job changes and work support. We provided stamped, addressed envelopes to facilitate return. We hoped that the information would feed into our questions in the second interview. Whilst most participants readily agreed to complete their logs, about half returned them to us. We are aware that this may have been 'a step too far' in terms of time commitment to the research for some apprentices, many of whom were already juggling busy work commitments with completion of assessed tasks for their qualifications, as well as family lives. However, the information that was received contributed some valuable supplementary evidence.

Summary of Case Study Data

Key Informants

3.16. We completed a total of 24 KI interviews across the five case study organisations. In three of our case study organisations, we interviewed personnel from external training providers, who were working with the employer to deliver apprenticeship programmes.

Table One: Key Informant Interviews

Gender	Job Role[6]	Organisation
F	Senior manager	Social Care
F	Support officer	Social Care
F	Support officer	Social Care
F	Development officer	Social Care
F	Manager	Training provider (Social Care)
F	Regional manager	Training provider (Social Care)
F	Senior manager	Hospitality
M	Pub 1 General manager	Hospitality
M	Pub 2 General manager	Hospitality
M	Pub 3 General manager	Hospitality
M	Manager	Training provider (Hospitality)
F	Account trainer	Training provider (Hospitality)
M	Senior manager	Transport
F	Line manager	Transport
F	Manager	Transport
F	Account manager	Training provider (Transport)
F	Senior manager	NHS Trust
F	Manager	NHS Trust
F	Trainer	NHS Trust
F	Senior trainer	NHS Trust
M	Senior manager	Energy
M	Programme manager	Energy
M	Trainer	Energy
F	Development coordinator	Energy
	Total Number of KI interviews	**24**

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[6] We have used broad terms throughout to refer to KI roles and titles to help protect their anonymity.

Apprentices

3.17. We interviewed 29 apprentices, of whom 27 were aged 25+ and two were under 25. Key features of the sample are summarised in the following tables.

Table Two: Adult Apprentices – individuals by gender, age, sector framework, programme level, number of interviews and case study organisation

Pseudonym	Gender	Age band	Sector Framework	Programme level	Number of interviews	Organisation
Evelyn	F	60-69	Business Administration	3	2	Social Care
David	M	50-59	Health and social care	3	2	Social Care
Barry	M	40-49	Health and social care	3	1	Social Care
Alan	M	25-29	Health and social care	3	1	Social Care
Ruth	F	30-39	Health and social care	2	2	Social Care
Bryony	F	30-39	Health and social care	2	2	Social Care
George	M	25-29	Hospitality and catering	2	1	Hospitality
Lisa	F	30-39	Hospitality and catering	2	1	Hospitality
Rebecca	F	40-49	Hospitality and catering	2	2	Hospitality
Sonia	F	50-59	Hospitality and catering	2	2	Hospitality
Beverley	F	25-29	Hospitality and catering	2	1	Hospitality
Gary	M	40-49	Customer service	3	2	Transport
Tom	M	50-59	Customer service	3	2	Transport
Peter	M	40-49	Customer service	3	2	Transport
Seth	M	50-59	Customer service	3	1	Transport
Sally	F	30-39	Business Administration	3	2	Transport
Sarah	F	25-29	Business Administration	3	2	Transport
Brenda	F	40-49	Health and social care	3	2	NHS Trust
Howard	M	40-49	Health and social care	3	2	NHS Trust
Natasha	F	30-39	Health and social care	3	2	NHS Trust
Richard	M	25-29	Health and social care	2	2	NHS Trust
Hayley	F	25-29	Health and social care	4+ Higher Apprenticeship	2	NHS Trust
Derek	M	30-39	Engineering	3	2	Energy
Guy	M	30-39	Engineering	4+ Higher Apprenticeship	2	Energy
John	M	25-29	Engineering	3	2	Energy
Paul	M	25-29	Engineering	3	1	Energy
Simon	M	25-29	Engineering	3	2	Energy

Table Three: Total adult apprentice population characteristics

Characteristic	Number of apprentices
Gender	
Female	12
Male	15
Age band	
60-69	1
50-59	4
40-49	6
30-39	7
25-29	9
Sector framework	
Business Administration	3
Health and social care	10
Hospitality and catering	5
Customer service	4
Engineering	5
Programme level	
Level 2	8
Level 3	17
Level 4+	2
Case study organisation	
Social Care	6
Hospitality	5
Transport	6
NHS Trust	5
Energy	5

3.18. The figures presented in Tables Two and Three show that, as is the case for the national adult apprentice population (see Section 4), our 27 adult apprentices were from a wide range of age groups, including the over 60 age band. Unlike the national adult apprenticeship population as a whole, however, the majority of our apprentices were male. This is partly because we included a case study of an engineering/energy infrastructure company, which has a predominantly male workforce and apprenticeship group. Four of the sectors (Business Administration, Health and Social Care, Hospitality and Catering and Customer Service) represented in our sample have high numbers across the adult apprenticeship population as a whole, whereas engineering has far fewer (see Section 4). Ten of our 27 apprentices were registered on the Health and Social Care framework, making this the largest sub-group in our sample. However, within this programme, some of our participants were following social care and some health care pathways. The majority of our apprentices had started a Level 3 or above programme, whereas in the national population the split between Level 2 and Level 3+ participation for adult apprentices is approximately even.

3.19. In one of our case studies (*Hospitality*), we were able to interview two younger apprentices, one male and one female. Both individuals were participating in the Level 2 programme.

Table Four: Under-25s

Pseudonym	Gender	Age band	Sector framework	Level	No of interviews	Organisation
Stephanie	F	under-25	Hospitality and catering	2	1	Hospitality
Dominic	M	under-25	Hospitality and catering	2	1	Hospitality

Equality and diversity

3.20. All bar one of our 29 apprentices classified themselves as White (the other as Asian). None of our apprentices considered that they had a disability. Those from ethnic minority backgrounds are under-represented in the national apprenticeship population, as are those who declare having a disability (see Section 4).

Section 4: Statistical picture

Introduction

4.1. National apprenticeship systems are generally positioned as part of the institutionalised vocational education and training arrangements countries provide to support young people's initial transition from education into skilled jobs. Government-supported apprenticeship in England was made available to the 25+ age group from 2005-06. Under the Coalition government, the number of starts[7] on the apprenticeship programme grew from 279,700 in 2009-10 to 457,200 in 2010-11, and 510,200 in 2012-13. The official administrative data on apprenticeship participation provides statistics on the age of the apprenticeship population in three main bands: under-19, 19-24 and 25 and over (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships). There are no publicly available official administrative statistics tracking the number and type of employers participating in the programme, or the number of apprentice 'conversions' (see Section 1).

4.2. This statistical account focuses on two main areas:

- Characteristics of 25+starts (2012/13) by age, gender, programme level, ethnicity, broad region, with some comparisons to the younger age groups
- Pattern of 25+ participation by occupational sector (represented by starts in apprenticeship sector frameworks), with comparisons to the younger age groups.

Apprentice characteristics

Broad age bands

4.3. The proportion of apprentices starting their programme aged 25 or over has grown since 2010-11. The full year figures (2012-13)[8] for starts in the three main age bands are:

- 25+   - 230,300 (45%[9] of all starts)
- 19-24   - 165,400 (32% of all starts)
- under-19   - 114,500 (22% of all starts)

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[7] The term 'starts' is the way the UK government refers to registrations in one year on apprenticeship frameworks. The official statistics note that 'learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once' (see https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships). As it is unlikely that very many individuals will start more than one apprenticeship in a year, the 'start' statistics are taken as a proxy for actual numbers of apprentices. There are no publicly available statistics differentiating between 'starts' and actual individuals and, hence, there is a further gap in the public record (see para 1.11).

[8] As this report was being finalised, the headline statistics for 2013-14 were published showing a fall in the overall number of apprentices from 510,200 to 440,400. They also show a rise in the proportion of the 19-24 age apprentices to 36 per cent of all starts and a decline in the proportion of 25+ apprentices to 37 per cent of all starts. The proportion of apprentices aged under 19 rose slightly to 27 per cent (see link above to access statistics).

[9] Percentages are rounded to the nearest one percent

Narrow age bands

4.4. Table Five shows a wide age range within the 25+ category.

Table Five: Starts by narrow age band 2012-13

Age band	Number	%
under-19	114,500	22
19-24	165,400	32
25-29	60,800	12
30-39	71,400	14
40-49	64,000	13
50-59	30,800	6
60-69	3,200	1
70+	100	"*"[10]
Total	510,200	100

Source: derived from the Individualised Learner Record 2012-13.

4.5. It also shows that well over 3,000 apprentices are aged 60 or older.

4.6. The most recent Australian statistics (NCVER 2014: 6) suggest a similar age distribution (although the figures are not directly comparable as they are not collected on the same basis as the English statistics):

- 19 and under   - 105,400 (27% of all in-training)
- 20-24   - 105,800 (27% of all in-training)
- 25-44   - 124,800 (32% of all in-training)
- 45+   - 50,800 (13% of all in-training)

Age and Gender

4.7. Table 6 shows there were more female (55%) than male starts.

Table Six: Starts broad age band by gender, 2012-13

Age band	%[1] Male No	Female No	All by age band
under-19	55% 62,800	45% 51,700	114,500
19-24	48% 79,200	52% 86,200	165,400
25+	39% 89,200	61% 141,100	230,300
All by gender	45% 231,200	55% 279,000	510,200

Source: derived from the Individualised Learner Record 2012-13.

[1] *The percentages provided in Table Two represent the proportion of the age band that are male or female.*

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[10] We round the figures to the nearest 100 and use the symbol "*" to refer to percentages that round to 0 throughout this section.

4.8. Table Six shows that the gender balance differs by age band. The majority of under-19 starts are male (55%), whereas males are in the minority in the oldest group. The majority of 19-24 (52%) and 25+ starts (61%) are female. The gender balance is most even (48% male to 52% female) in the 19-24 age band. In summary, younger apprentices are more likely to be male, and older apprentices are more likely to be female.

4.9. Looking at starts by age group from the perspective of the male and female populations respectively indicates that:

- Of the total male start population, 27% are under-19; in contrast a lower proportion (19%) of the female start population are in this age group.
- Of the total male start population, 34% are 19-24; in contrast, a slightly lower proportion (31%) of the female start population, are in this age group.
- Of the total male start population, 39% are 25+; in contrast, a much higher proportion (51%) of the female start population, are in this age group.

In summary, the incidence of older apprentices in the female apprentice population is higher than in the male start population.

Age and programme level

4.10. Across all age groups, the majority of apprentice starts (57%) were at Level 2. However, the distribution of starts by level differs by age group.

Table Seven: Apprenticeship starts by the level of programme and age band, 2012-13.

Age band	% L2 number	% L3 number	% L4+ number	Total Age band
under-19	71% 80,900	29% 33,100	"*"% 600	114,500
19-24	60% 99,000	39% 63,900	1% 2,400	165,400
25+	49% 112,900	48% 110,600	3% 6,800	230,300
Total Level	57% 292,800	41% 207,700	2% 9,800	510,200

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record 2012-13

[1] *The percentages in Table Seven represent the proportion of the age group starting an apprenticeship at each level.*

4.11. The cross-referencing of level and age band reveals that starts in the oldest age band (25+) are less likely to be in the L2 programme than their younger peers. Approximately, half the 25+ starts commence a L2 and half a L3 programme. In contrast, most of the under-19 age group (approximately 7 out of 10) and the 19-24s (60%) start a L2 apprenticeship. The likelihood of apprentices starting a Level 2 (or above) programme decreases the older the age group.

- 71% of starts in the under-19 group are in a Level 2 programme
- 60% of starts in the 19-24 group are in a Level 2 programme
- 49% of starts in the 25+ group are in a Level 2 programme

It follows that older apprentices are more likely to be starting a Level 3 (or above) programme than their younger peers.

Age, gender and level

4.12. To focus in more detail on the relationship between age, gender and programme level, Table Eight presents the number of 25+ starts by gender and programme level.

Table Eight: 25+ starts by gender and level, 2012-13

Gender	Level	Number 25+ starts	% starts by level and gender
Male	L2	50,400	57
	L3	36,900	41
	HA	1,800	2
All male		**89,200**	**100**
Female	L2	62,500	44
	L3	73,700	52
	HA	5,000	4
All female		**141,100**	**100**
Total M/F		**230,300**	

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record 2012-13

4.13. Table Eight shows that male starts in the 25+ age category are more likely (57%) than females (44%) in this age band to begin a Level 2 programme. Female apprentice starts aged 25+ are more likely than their male peers to start both the L3 and L4+ programmes (56% of females in this age band start one of these two programmes, compared with 43% of males).

4.14. The picture is different for the youngest age group. Whilst a strong majority of both males and females in the under-19 category begin a L2 programme, the proportion of females (74%) starting the lowest level programme is higher than the proportion of males (68%). The pattern is reversed for the 19-24 age group, where (in similarity with the 25+ age band) the proportion of females starting a L2 programme is lower (57%) than the proportion of males (62%).

- 68% of male under-19 starts begin a L2 programme
- 74% of female under-19 starts being a L2 programme
- 62% of male 19-24s begin a L2 programme
- 57% of female 19-24s begin a L2 programme

Focusing on older adults (50+) reveals another pattern (see Table Nine).

Table Nine: 50+ starts by gender and level, 2012-13

Gender	Level	50+ starts	% starts by level and gender
Male	L2	8,200	67%
	L3	3,900	32%
	HA	200	1%
All male		**12,300**	**100%**
Female	L2	10,500	48%
	L3	10,400	48%
	HA	800	4%
All female		**21,700**	**100%**
Total M/F		**34,000**	

Source: derived from the Individualised Learner Record 2012-13

4.15. Nearly two thirds (21,700 - 64%) of starts in the 50+ population are female. The distribution of females and males across programme levels is uneven, with the majority (67%) of the male population starting a Level 2 apprenticeship, compared with just under half (48%) of the female population. Those in the older male population (50+) are more likely than the 25+ male population to be starting a Level 2 programme (than a Level 3 programme). The same pattern is true for the older female population (50+) when compared with the 25+ female population, although the percentage difference for females is smaller.

4.16. Whilst based on relatively small numbers, females aged 50+ are also more likely than males to be starting the highest programme level (the Higher Apprenticeship).

Ethnicity

4.17. The vast majority (89%) of apprentice starts (all ages) are categorised as 'White'. The proportion of all-age starts by ethnic category is as follows:

Table Ten: All age apprentice starts by ethnicity, 2012-13

Ethnic category	% all starts, all ages (rounded)
Asian/Asian British	4
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	3
White	89
Mixed/multiple ethnic group	2
Other Ethnic Group	1
Not provided	1

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record – broad based categories

4.18. According to the 2011 census, 86 per cent of residents in England and Wales were 'White British', 7.5% 'Asian/Asian British'; 3.3% 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British'; 2.2% 'Mixed/multiple ethnic group'; and 1% 'Other ethnic group'.[11] This means that the White ethnic group (see Table Ten) is slightly over-represented in the apprenticeship start statistics. Of the ethnic minority categories, starts in the 'Asian/Asian British' group are the most under-represented in relation to the share this group has in the general population.

Table Eleven: % starts by 'White' and age band, 2012-13

Ethnicity	% 25+	% 19-24	% under-19
'White'	87	90	92

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record – broad-based categories

4.19. The proportion of starts in the 'White' ethnic category declines slightly as the age group rises (see Table Eleven), indicating that the population of apprentice starts becomes slightly more ethnically diverse the older the age band. The 'White' ethnic group is most over-represented in the youngest age band (under-19s).

Learning Difficulty or Disability

Table Twelve: % starts by 'Disability' and age band, 2012-13

Response	% 25+ number	% 19-24 number	% under-19 number
Learner does not consider him/herself to have a learning difficulty and, or disability or health problem	91% 210,700	90% 149,200	88% 101,200
Learner considers him/herself to have a learning difficulty and, or disability or health problem	7% 16,900	9% 14,200	10% 11,700
No information provided by learner	1% 2,700	1% 1,900	1% 1,600
All	230,300	165,400	114,500

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.20. Overall, less than 10 percent of starts 'consider themselves to have a learning difficulty and, or disability or health problem'. Those in the 25+ age band are most likely to consider (91%) that they do NOT have a disability of some kind, followed by those in the 19-24 age group, and then those in the under-19 band. According to figures published by the Disability Rights Commission in 2008, 19 per cent of people in the working age population in Britain have a disability, which suggests that this group is under-represented in the apprenticeship programme.[12]

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[11] See: http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/census-data/index.html

[12] Cited by the Disabled Living Foundation http://www.dlf.org.uk/content/key-facts accessed 26 August 2014),

Region

Table Thirteen: starts by age and region, 2012-13

Region	% 25+	% 19-24	% under-19
North East	7	6	7
North West	17	16	16
Yorks & Humber	11	12	13
East Midlands	9	9	10
West Midlands	13	12	11
East of England	9	9	10
London	9	8	8
South East	13	15	13
South West	9	11	11
Other	1	1	1

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.21. Overall, the distribution of apprentice starts by age band is relatively even with similar percentages from each age band starting programmes in each region.

4.22. Having provided an overview of the characteristics of the adult apprentice population and how these compare with younger age groups, the next section develops an account of how apprentices are distributed across occupational sectors.

Participation by Sector Framework

4.23. Apprenticeship registrations are currently linked to specific sector frameworks. The frameworks have to be approved as compliant with the Specification for Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE)[13]. The specification includes requirements relating to the level of the programme, its minimum length and the qualifications that have to be achieved to ensure successful completion. Currently, there are over 200 SASE compliant apprenticeship frameworks covering jobs and occupations across the economy and in the private, public and third sectors. Registrations are not spread evenly across the frameworks and apprentice starts tend to cluster in a much smaller number.

Most populated frameworks

4.24. Table Fourteen (below) presents the ten most populated sector frameworks for apprentice starts in 2012-13. These top ten sectors account for the majority (70%) of all starts. The remaining starts (30%) are distributed across approximately 130 sector frameworks.

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[13] The government-supported apprenticeship programme is currently undergoing reform through the 'Trailblazer' initiative, which is bringing groups of employers together to develop new standards for apprenticeships under the principle of one standard for one occupation.

Table Fourteen: Top 10 most populated sector frameworks, all age starts 2012-13

Sector framework	Number
Health and Social Care	80,900
Business Administration	49,500
Management	48,000
Customer Service	45,400
Hospitality and Catering	35,600
Children's Care Learning and Development	26,300
Retail	25,100
Hairdressing	15,600
Industrial Applications	15,100
Engineering	13,800
Total	355,300

Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.25. Taken together, these ten frameworks account for seven out of ten (70%) of all starts in 2012-13. Health and social care is by far the most populated framework, it accounts for 16 percent of all starts.

4.26. Chart One shows the proportion of males and females starting each of the 'top 10' frameworks. In line with stereotypical patterns of occupational gender segregation, the male/female balance is most strikingly uneven in four sectors: Children's Care, Learning and Development (92% female); Health and Social Care (83% female); Industrial Applications (11% female); and Engineering (3% female).

Chart One: Top 10 framework starts by gender – all ages - 2012/13
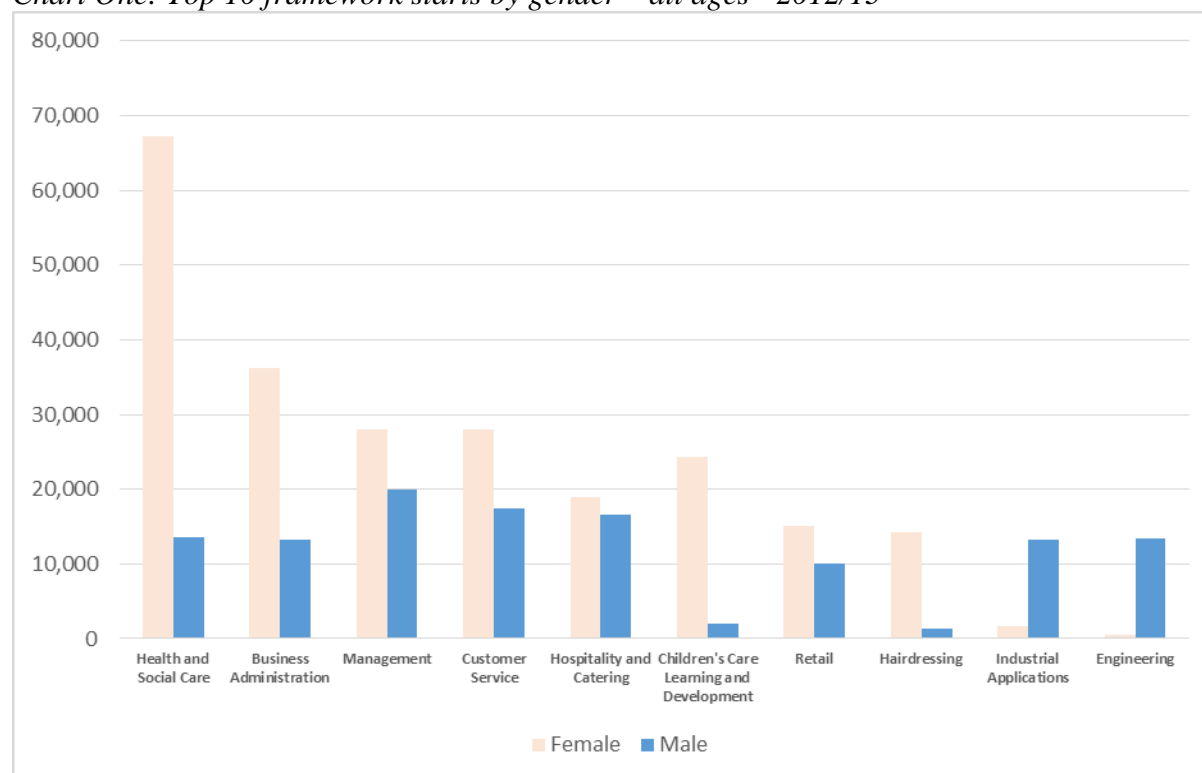
Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.27. The following charts (two to five) present the 'top 10' most populated sector frameworks by age and gender, revealing differences in the population of sectors by different age bands.

Chart Two: 25+ Top 10 sector framework starts and gender, 2012-13
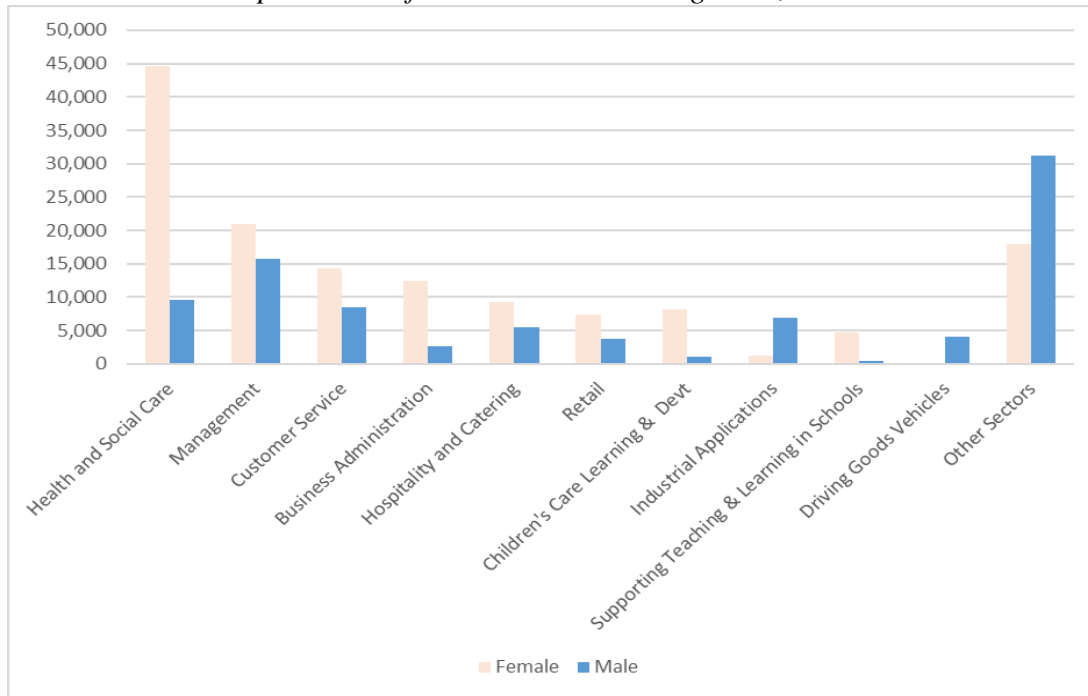
Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.28. A large majority (79%) of 25+ starts begin their apprenticeship in one of the 'top 10' sector frameworks. Both female and male starts are concentrated in these sectors, but females (87% of female starts) are even more heavily crowded into the 'top 10' than their male peers (65% of male starts).

Chart Three: 50+ Top 10 sector framework starts and gender, 2012-13
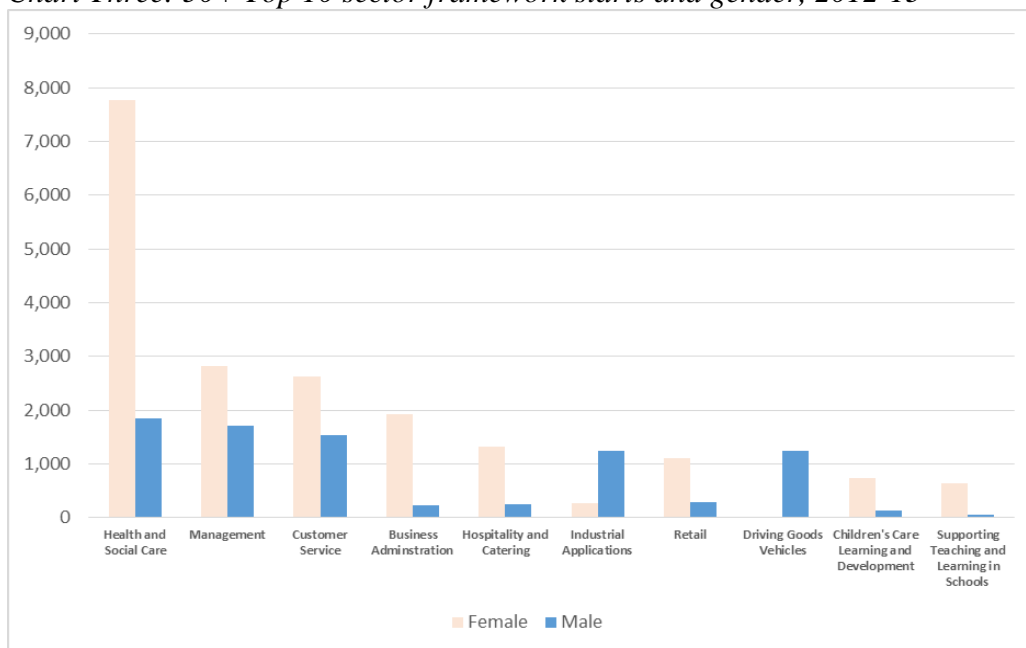
Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.29. The data presented in Chart Three show some minor differences between the older adult group (50+) and the adult apprenticeship (25+) start population as a whole (Chart Two). Both age bands feature the same 'top 10' sector frameworks, with the 'top 5' appearing in the same order. However, the ordering of the sectors in the bottom five is different for the older group with starts in Industrial Applications rising to sixth place (from eighth), Driving Goods Vehicles rising to eighth place (from tenth) compared with the 25+ age group. Retail, Children's Care Learning and Development, and Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools appear lower down the 50+ 'top 10' compared with their position in the 25+ age group.

4.30. In similarity with the 25+ age group, most (80%) of the 50+ starts are concentrated in the 'top 10' sector frameworks. The 'top 3' sectors, Health and Social Care, Customer Service and Management account for nearly half (49%) of all 25+ starts and more than half (54%) of the 50+ starts in 2012/13.

4.31. Females (88% of 50+ female starts) are more heavily crowded into the 'top 10' than males (69% of 50+ male starts). Whilst the degree of crowding for 50+ female starts remains about the same as for the 25+ population as a whole, it has increased for 50+ males (up from 65%).

Chart Four: 19-24 Top 10 sector framework starts and gender, 2012-13
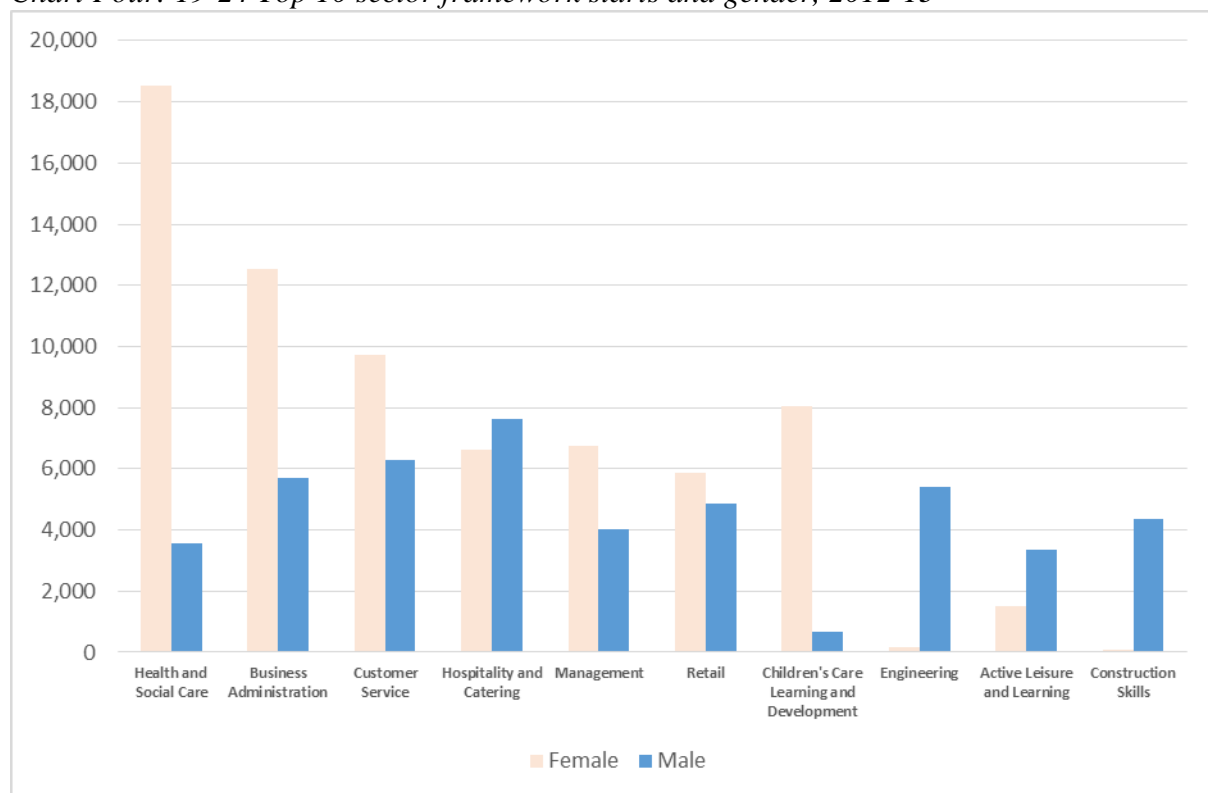
Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.32. The 'top 5' frameworks for the 19-24 age group include the same sectors as the 25+ and 50+ adult apprentice age groups. As was the case for the older groups, Health and Social Care is the most populated framework, although the order of the other sectors in the 'top 5' changes. The lower half of the 'top 10' includes three sectors (Engineering, Active Leisure and Learning, and Construction Skills) that do not appear for the 25+ and 50+ groups. They replace Industrial Applications, Driving Goods Vehicles, and Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools.

4.33. The majority (70%) of starts in the 19-24 age group are concentrated in the 'top 10' sector frameworks, however the concentration is less strong than for the two older age bands. Females are very heavily crowded (81% of the 19-24 female start population) into the 'top 10' compared to 58% of the 19-24 male start population, although the crowding for both sexes is less than for the 25+ and 50+ age groups.

Chart Five: Under-19 Top 10 sector framework starts and gender, 2012-13
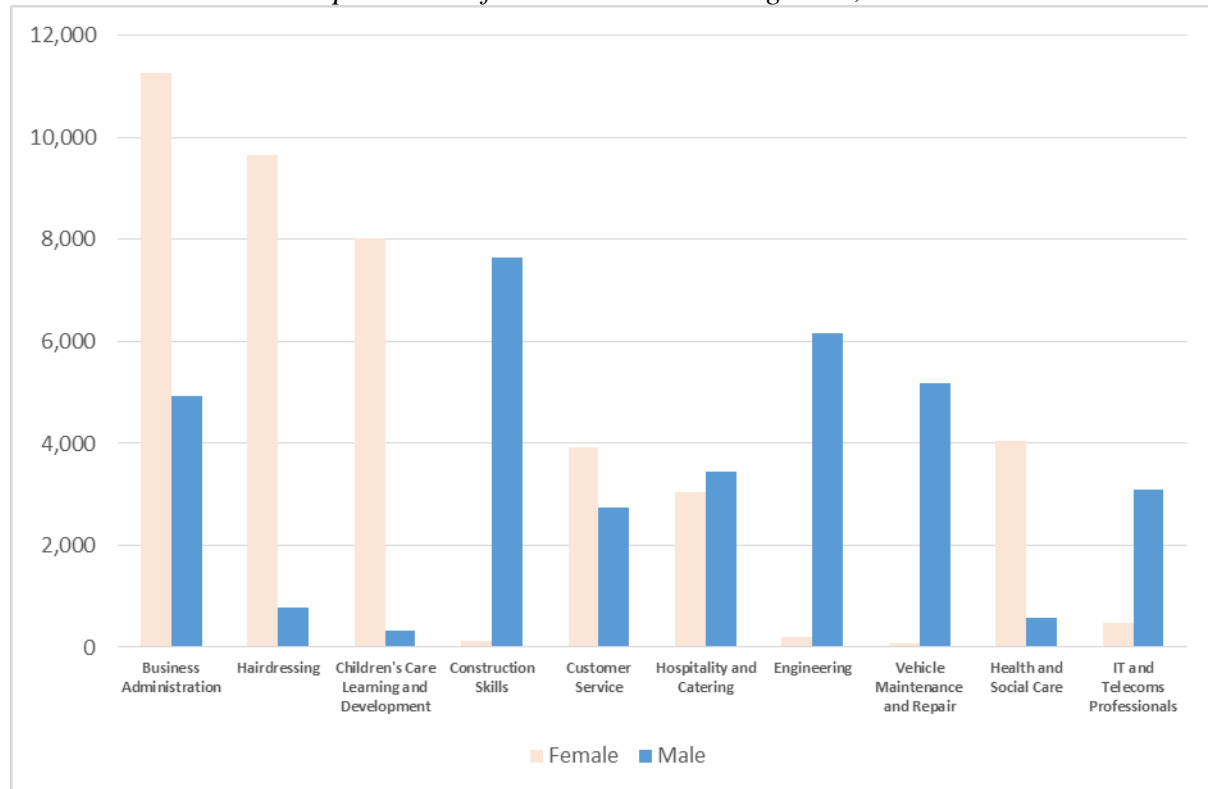
Source: derived from Individualised Learner Record

4.34. The 'top 10 ' sector frameworks for the under-19 age group differs quite markedly from the profiles for the 25+ and 50+ apprentices. Five new sectors appear – Hairdressing, Construction Skills, Engineering, Vehicle Maintenance and Repair, and IT and Telecoms Professionals, replacing, Management, Retail, Driving Goods Vehicles, Industrial Applications, and Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. In addition, Health and Social Care drops from its top spot in all three of the other age bands to ninth for the youngest group. Hairdressing, appearing for the first time and is the second most populated sector framework for the under-19s.

4.35. Whilst the majority (66%) of under-19 starts are in the 'top 10' sectors, the concentration is less strong than for the 19-24, 25+ and 50+ age groups. This means that the distribution across sectors is widest for the youngest apprentice age group. In terms of gender, females (79% of the under-19 female start population) are again more heavily crowded into the 'top 10' sectors than their male peers (56% of the under-19 male start population). The degree of crowding for both sexes in the under-19 age group is less than for the other age groups, confirming that crowding for both males and females intensifies with age. Overall, the sector distribution of young male starts is the least crowded, and the distribution of older female (50+) starts is the most crowded.

Age, gender, sector framework and labour market segmentation

4.36. The picture painted by the apprenticeship statistics presented in this section is illustrative of broader patterns of labour market segmentation. Gender and age combine to present particular apprenticeships as dominated by young females (Hairdressing) or young males (Construction), or older females (Health and Social Care), or older males (Driving Goods Vehicles). Analysis of the characteristics of apprentices and trainees in Australia (Karmel 2006, NCVER 2014) also reveals that patterns of participation in government-supported training programmes reflect wider labour market segmentation. The fact that both countries 'allow' *existing employees* to enrol as apprentices also helps explain the similarity of participation patterns across gender, sector and age group.

4.37. Gender segregation in the government-supported apprenticeship programme in England is persistent (for an extended discussion of this issue, see Fuller and Unwin 2013b). In the case of young people (aged 16-24), it also reflects longstanding gender imbalances in the labour market more generally. In a recent Work Foundation report for the TUC on gender divisions in the youth labour market, Brinkley et al (2013) presented statistics from the Labour Force Survey to show that in the kinds of intermediate and lower level main job groups typically associated with apprenticeship programmes (such as Administrative and Secretarial, Skilled trade occupations, and Personal service occupations and Sales and customer service occupations), the gender imbalance remains marked. In comparison, there is a much more even balance in higher-level occupations (including Associate professional and technical, Professional occupations and Managers and senior officials) typically associated with higher level qualifications.

4.38. In terms of the apprenticeship start statistics, the pattern is for the gender imbalance in sectors that are strongly dominated by females to weaken (slightly) with age. Examples from the following apprenticeship sector frameworks illustrate this trend:

Health and Social Care

- 87% of the under-19s that start a Health and Social Care apprenticeship are female
- 84% of the 19-24s that start a Health and Social Care apprenticeship are female
- 81% of the 25+ age group that start a Health and Social Care apprenticeship are female

Children's Care Learning and Development

- 96% of the under-19s that start a Children's Care Learning and Development apprenticeship are female
- 92% of the 19-24s that start a Children's Care Learning and Development apprenticeship are female
- 88% of the 25+ age group that start a Children's Care Learning and Development apprenticeship are female

Hairdressing

- 92% of the under-19s that start a Hairdressing apprenticeship are female

- 88% of the 19-24s that start a Hairdressing apprenticeship are female
- 88% of the 25+ age group that start a Hairdressing apprenticeship are female

4.39. In contrast, the pattern is for the gender imbalance to be retained across the age groups in sectors that are strongly dominated by males and where most starts are 24 and under. The example of Engineering illustrates this finding:

Engineering

- 3% of the under-19s that start an Engineering apprenticeship are female
- 3% of the 19-24s that start an Engineering apprenticeship are female
- 3% of the 25+ age group that start an Engineering apprenticeship are female

Industrial applications

4.40. Like Engineering, Industrial Applications is a sector dominated by males but unlike Engineering most starts in this programme are older. The statistics here indicate that the gender imbalance weakens with age:

- 3% of the under-19s that start an Industrial Applications apprenticeship are female
- 9% of the 19-24s that start an Industrial Applications apprenticeship are female
- 16% of the 25+ age group that start an Industrial Applications apprenticeship are female

Conclusion

4.41. Overall, the statistical picture of apprenticeship participation and age has revealed a marked contrast in the most populated sectors for older and younger apprentices. Health and Social Care, Management and Customer Service dominated the starts for adult apprentices, whereas the 'top 3' for the under-19s were Business Administration, Hairdressing and Children's Care Learning and Development. The findings have also shown that older apprentices are more likely than their younger peers to start a Level 3 or above programme. The account has indicated that patterns of participation in apprenticeship reflect wider patterns in the labour market in terms of the size of the service sector compared with the manufacturing and construction sectors, and the persistence of stereotypical occupational gender imbalances.

4.42. The increase in adult apprentices has diversified the apprentice population as a whole, by dramatically increasing the number and proportion of female apprentices. Whereas the majority of under-19 apprentices are still (as has historically been the case) male, females are in the majority in the older groups. The findings also provide evidence to illustrate the complexity of the intersection between apprenticeship starts, sector, gender and age. Traditional apprenticeship sectors dominated by young males retain a strong gender imbalance. Hairdressing, a traditional apprenticeship dominated by females becomes slightly less unbalanced with the arrival of an older intake. New apprenticeship sectors, such as Industrial applications that are dominated by older males develop a slightly better gender balance amongst the older start population.

4.43. Finally, there are two key forms of administrative data, the number and type of participating employers, and the number of apprentice 'conversions' that would enable studies such as this to provide a more detailed statistical picture of apprenticeship participation. However, currently, neither of these is publicly available.

Section 5: Organisational Vignettes

5.1. The purpose of this section is to introduce the five organisations that participated in the case study research by providing a vignette of their main characteristics and involvement with the apprenticeship programme. The vignettes draw on the data collected from organisational gatekeepers as well as from the KI interviews and organisational documentation and websites.

Social Care

5.2. This organisation is a Community Benefit Society (CBS) based in the East of England. It employs just over 800 people and delivers a range of adult health and social care services through contracts with the local authority, the area's Clinical Commissioning Group, the Home Office and the Department of Health. Those services include: community nursing; disability services; psychology; employability; and transport. As a CBS, the organisation is run for the benefit of the community and reinvests any surpluses it makes back into the business in order to maintain and develop its services. Our research focused on the work of the organisation's Employability Service (ES), which had been set up in response to the area's high levels of unemployment and 'worklessness'. Helping local people to find employment is regarded as a key component of a wider strategy for improving mental and physical health and, hence, for the general well-being of the community.

5.3. The ES team is divided between the 'supported employment team', which assists people with learning disabilities and physical disabilities to get into employment and training, and the 'employability team'. The 'employability team' works with individuals (aged 19+) who are referred from Jobcentre Plus. Each individual is assessed to see which of the various ES 'progression pathways' might be appropriate for their needs. The pathways include: voluntary work placements; apprenticeships, and (paid) internships. The ES team has recently begun to deliver Traineeships for 16-23 year olds and is considering offering Higher Apprenticeships. The team provides practical support to enable individuals to overcome any barriers preventing them from gaining employment, including, for example, problems with debt, transport, and childcare. Apprenticeship is regarded as the 'middle' pathway because some individuals require a period of work experience to improve their basic skills and build their confidence prior to becoming an apprentice, and internships are for unemployed graduates. At the time of the research there were 35 individuals following apprenticeships in Business Administration and Health and Social Care, the majority of whom were at Level 2. In our sample, two male apprentices had started at Level 3 because that was the minimum requirement for healthcare assistants at their workplace (a rehabilitation centre).

5.4. All apprentices have employment contracts with the organisation (or one of its partner organisations in the local area) for the mandatory minimum period of 12 months and are paid the National Minimum Wage. There is no guarantee of a permanent job, but at the end of the apprenticeship, individuals can apply for jobs with the organisation or externally. One of the female interviewees in our sample had completed her apprenticeship when we interviewed her and had gained employment in the organisation's head office. She was now completing a Level 3 course in Business Administration. During the period between the first and second interviews, the three male apprentices had all been interviewed for permanent posts and been successful. The ES team work with the regional team of a large national training provider who is responsible for managing all of the training requirements stated in the apprenticeship frameworks. Potential apprentices are interviewed and assessed by the ES team and the training provider who then devises an individual learning plan based on the requirements of

the apprenticeship framework and the job role within the organisation (or partner organisation). Line managers can make a request for an apprentice if they have a suitable vacancy. Training provider personnel visit the apprentices once a month to carry out on-the-job assessments of their performance against the mandatory NVQs, to coach them in the relevant Functional Skills, and to discuss their progress (with both the apprentices and their line managers). The training provider also manages the online Functional Skills tests. The assessors use pie charts on their laptops to show the apprentices how they are progressing. Once all NVQ units have been signed off, an assessor will notify the training provider's sector-specific regional quality advisor who checks the apprentices' portfolios and then contacts the relevant awarding body to apply for the certificates.

5.5. The 'employability' focus of the organisation's approach to apprenticeship means that it provides a contrast to the more typical approach of employers who are training apprentices as part of their own workforce development agenda. The key challenge for the manager of the ES team is to keep up-to-date with the different and changing government funding streams she needs to access and, in addition, to manage this diverse funding in such a way as to sustain placements and training opportunities for her team's clients.

Data Collection

5.6. The fieldwork took place during the winter and early spring of 2013-14. The tables below provide a summary of the interviews undertaken with six adult apprentices and six KIs. Four of the apprentices were available for a second interview, but two were unavailable. This meant that we undertook a total of 10 adult apprentice interviews.

Table Fifteen: Apprentices

Gender (pseudonyms)	Age	Apprenticeship level and type	Site	Number of interviews
F (Evelyn)	62	3 (Business Administration)	1 (head office)	2
M (David)	52	3 (Health & Social Care)	2 (occupational therapy)	2
M (Barry)	48	3 (Health & Social Care)	3 (rehabilitation centre)	1
M (Alan)	26	3 (Health & Social Care)	3	1
F (Ruth)	39	2 (Health & Social Care)	4 (community care)	2
F (Bryony)	31	2 (Health & Social Care	4	2

Table Sixteen: Key Informants

Gender	Position and organisation	Number of interviews
F	Senior Manager	1
F	Support Officer	1 (telephone)
F	Support Officer	1
F	Development Officer	1
F	Manager, Training Provider	1
F	Regional Manager, Training Provider	1

Hospitality

5.7. This organisation has an estate of well over 1,000 public houses and several hotels across the UK and over 15,000 employees. The group directly manages the majority of its pubs, whilst overseeing the rest, which are managed by leaseholders. The pubs range from those serving the family market to those aimed more at sports' fans or business professionals. Licensees are supported by the facilities and services available through the group, including for training, investment, products and infrastructure. A typical pub has a general manager, a deputy general manager, one or two team leaders, and a number of employees providing front of house services, plus a kitchen manager and a number of kitchen staff depending on the size of the pub.

5.8. The group runs an all-age (16+) apprenticeship, as part of the government-supported apprenticeship scheme, offering five types of Level 2 apprenticeship covering customer service, food and beverage service, food production and Team Leading. Young people under the age of 18 are eligible to join the apprenticeship programme, but due to rules relating to the serving of alcohol there are restrictions on where and when they can work, and also regarding their supervision. It also offers a Level 3 apprenticeship in Leadership and Management for people aiming to become general managers and supports post-graduate degree level provision for those in senior leadership operational roles.

5.9. Apprenticeship is embedded within the company's workforce development model. The model articulates the range of available roles and career pathways and how these relate to training and apprenticeship provision. It outlines what individuals need to do in order to progress to the next educational and career level. The (Level 2) apprenticeship is conceived as a 12-month 'learning journey', with management systems in place to track and monitor apprentices' progress towards completing all the relevant framework requirements. Those successfully completing the Level 2 programme, and who have the supervisory and managerial aptitude and aspirations, have the opportunity to progress to Level 3 (and beyond), when job roles at the commensurate level of responsibility are available.

5.10. The company's aim is to have an apprentice in every pub. Its apprenticeship figures for the year 2012-13 indicated that there were nearly 800 apprentices 'in learning'. Of these, 7% were aged 16-18, 72% 19-24 and 21% 25 or over (percentages are rounded). Just over half (52%) of all apprentices were female, approx. 90% were classified as White British and 9% as having a disability. The company has a direct contract with the Skills Funding Agency, which includes a target number of starts on the government-supported apprenticeship programme in every four-week period. The company sub-contracts the delivery of the formal aspects of the Level 2 apprenticeship frameworks to an external training provider. The focus of our research was on this programme, but the company has also created a more substantial and 'stretching' Level 2 programme (than the government-supported Level 2 framework). This programme and its Level 3 apprenticeship are delivered in-house.

5.11. The turnover in the hospitality industry is high, with the biggest 'wastage' in the first four weeks of employment. The company's apprentices are selected from staff who have successfully completed a 13-week induction programme. The company wants to check that an individual likes the job and sees their future in the industry before investing in an apprenticeship. The induction programme, which is delivered through a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning, is divided into three stages. The first stage covers health and safety, basic food hygiene, and other topics related to the compliance requirements for working in a pub.

The next two stages cover both specialist technical training as well as the generic skills associated with serving guests. In addition, the company also gives longer serving staff the opportunity to become apprentices too.

5.12. General Managers apply online to enrol their staff on to the apprenticeship programme, with the group's learning and support team checking that individuals have been assigned to the most appropriate type of apprenticeship and that all pre-requisite training has been completed. The external training partner delivers the training and assessment necessary for completion of the relevant frameworks, and submits monthly and 12-weekly progress reviews. Twice a year, the company holds a celebration event to present Level 2 certificates and to encourage the apprentices to network. The Level 3 apprentices are invited to an evening three-course meal with company directors and their line managers. The company has found that around 89% of (what it calls its) 'team players' who have gone through a Level 2 apprenticeship remain in the business, half have gone on to progress to the next level.

Data Collection

5.13. Apprentices at four pubs in the South of England took part in the project, with fieldwork taking place in winter and early spring (2013-14). The table below provides a summary of the interviews undertaken with five adult apprentices and two younger apprentices (from the 16-24 age group). Two of the adult apprentices were available for second interview but the other three had left the company in the period between the first and second rounds of interviewing. The withdrawal of three of our adult apprentices after the first interview meant that we undertook a total of seven adult apprentice interviews. The two younger apprentices were interviewed once, as a pair.

Table Seventeen: Apprentices

Gender (pseudonyms)	Age	Apprenticeship level and type	Pub	Number of interviews
M (George)	27	2 (kitchen)	1	1
F (Lisa)	32	2 (food & beverage)	1	1
F (Rebecca)	41	2 (food & beverage)	2	2
F (Sonia)	50	2 (food & beverage)	2	2
F (Beverley)	29	2 (food & beverage)	3	1
F (Stephanie)	21	2 (food & beverage)	4	1
M (Dominic)	20	2 (food & beverage)	4	1

5.14. In addition, we interviewed six individuals as KIs. This enabled us to develop a picture of the apprenticeship from a range of perspectives, including the company, individual pubs, and the training provider.

Table Eighteen: Key Informants

Gender	Position	Number of interviews
F	Senior Manager	1
M	General Manager Pub 1	1
M	General Manager Pub 2	1
M	General Manager Pub 3	1
M	Manager, Training Provider	1
F	Trainer, Training Provider	1

Transport

5.15. This public sector organisation is located in the North of England and has responsibility for the public transport network across the city. Its core areas of responsibility include: co-ordination of bus and rail services; maintenance of the transport infrastructure and provision of transport information to the public. The organisation also owns and operates major visitor attractions in the city.

5.16. This organisation has several hundred employees working in diverse professional, technical and administrative roles. However, technological innovations and efficiency drives have meant that overall the workforce has been contracting in recent years. It is a unionised workplace with a lengthy history of working with Unionlearn. The organisation has a number of Unionlearn representatives (ULRs), who are involved in encouraging and supporting workplace learning, including for apprentices. The organisation holds a regular collaborative meeting involving management and union representatives, where its approach to employee learning and development is discussed.

5.17. After a workforce review, management decided that there was a need to address the challenges of rapid technological changes to its business operations and of having an ageing and largely male workforce, which at the time only had a small number of employees who were under the age of 25. The organisation also wanted to respond to the rising numbers of young people who were unemployed and classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training) across the city region by starting an apprenticeship programme for young people. Since then it has recruited around 20 apprentices in the 16-24 age group who have been pursuing apprenticeships either in engineering (mechanical or electrical) or business administration. It also offered the existing workforce the chance to gain NVQs. Subsequently, the NVQ initiative has been expanded into an Adult Apprenticeship programme covering Customer Service and Business Administration. At the time of our research, approximately 30 individuals were starting Customer Service apprentices each year with fewer (approx. 15) starting Business Administration apprenticeships. In contrast to the younger apprentices who are recruited to the organisation as new entrants, all its adult apprentices are existing rather than new employees.

5.18. The apprenticeship programme is organised and monitored by the Learning and Development Team which manages the company's workforce development strategy. The Adult Apprentices' training is undertaken in the workplace, with tutor/assessors from the local college coming into the business to support individuals to meet the competence and knowledge-based elements of their apprenticeship framework. The Functional Skills

components (English, maths and ICT) of the framework, for both younger and adult apprentices, are delivered in-house by a specialist tutor. The organisation is an approved City and Guilds Centre for functional skills. The functional skills tutor uses a 'blended approach' of online and face-to-face teaching (one-to-one and groups) and the content is tailored around actual workplace tasks to enhance its relevance and authenticity.

5.19. Engineering apprentices (all in the 16-24 age group) go off-the-job for most of the first year of their apprenticeship before moving to a work-based programme. The Business Administration apprenticeship for younger apprentices is organised into four-month secondments to enable them to learn about a variety of functions and have the opportunity to identify areas where they would like to work in the longer-term. Unlike their younger peers, the adult apprentices are in existing jobs at the company when they join the apprenticeship scheme and they remain in these whilst undertaking the relevant training and assessments for their apprenticeship.

5.20. All the organisation's apprentices (young and older) start on a Level 2 programme. Nearly all those in the younger age group progress to Level 3 and even beyond this to obtain higher level qualifications (e.g. HNC and, or professional qualifications). Adult apprentices can also move on to the next qualification level if there is scope in their current role to allow them to gain evidence that they are undertaking more advanced tasks, or if they make a successful application for a job that becomes available at a higher level.

5.21. Apprenticeship for both the younger and adult apprentices is funded under the standard government model, with the organisation paying the apprentices' wages and the training, assessment and the external training provider drawing down funding from the Skills Funding Agency to pay for the qualifications required to complete the apprenticeship frameworks.

Data Collection

5.22. We interviewed six apprentices altogether (2 female and 4 male) ranging in age from 26 to 55. Five apprentices were interviewed twice with the second interview following the first after a gap of approximately four months. One male apprentice participated only in the second interview (along with one of the original male apprentices). The four males were all completing their Level 3 Customer Service apprenticeship and the two females were both completing their Level 3 Business Administration apprenticeship. All apprentices were full-time, permanent employees. In summary, the interviews were as follows:

Table Nineteen: Apprentices

Gender (pseudonyms)	Age	Apprenticeship level and type	Number of interviews
M (Gary)	47	Level 3 Customer Services	2
M (Tom)	55	Level 3 Customer Services	2
M (Peter)	48	Level 3 Customer Services	2
M (Seth)	50	Level 3 Customer Services	1 (second round)
F (Sally)	33	Level 3 Business Administration	2
F (Sarah)	26	Level 3 Business Administration	2

5.23. In terms of Key Informants, we interviewed four individuals including, three of the organisation's managers involved in the management and support of adult apprentices and one from the local FE college who was the account manager responsible for the college's delivery of training and assessment at this organisation.

Table Twenty: Key Informants

Gender	Position	Organisation
M	Senior Manager	Transport
F	Line Manager	Transport
F	Manager	Transport
F	Account Manager	FE College

NHS Trust

5.24. This organisation is located in a city in the West of England and provides a full range of services as well as major specialities for which it has international recognition. The organisation employs over 9,000 staff, currently distributed across two sites. The hospital also contains a range of other health care services as well as Staff Development offices. These serve staff at all levels of the workforce and are located in a modern building comprising learning suites, a library, social space, catering facilities and open plan offices.

5.25. The NHS Trust engages in continuous staff development and training and all new healthcare employees must undergo some form of initial training, however temporary their contract. As people of all ages, educational and occupational backgrounds are employed, not everyone will have studied at GCSE level: some older workers may have followed alternative qualifications such as O levels and/or CSEs. All applicants are therefore invited to attend for initial screening in maths and English in order to assess their skill level and identify whether additional support is needed for a particular role. The Trust has over 300 apprentices and offers opportunities to pursue programmes in healthcare, pathology, pharmacy, and maternity support, nursery nursing, business administration and payroll, with 150 qualifying annually at Levels 2 and 3. In addition, Assistant Practitioner Programmes at Levels 4/5 are offered in conjunction with a foundation degree, and about 50 people per year are trained at this level for NHS band 4 roles. In total, the Trust employs approximately 200 Assistant Practitioners including both qualified and trainees.

5.26. Apprenticeship is embedded within the Trust's workforce development model, which values this route to replace skilled workers anticipated to retire as well as to staff the new hospital. In addition, there is the high turnover rate commonly associated with healthcare support workers, and apprenticeships are offered as a means of attracting applicants and up-skilling new recruits. The turnover rate is also variable however, which means that it can be difficult to identify specific posts, which may become vacant. Offering training in a continuous and ongoing way across a broad range of functions is a key strategy by which to have the right skills levels in place to deal with workforce fluctuations. In addition, healthcare support workers are a section of the healthcare workforce who have traditionally fallen outside of formal training initiatives. Although based across a wide range of departments, with job roles ranging from supporting clinics to assisting in theatre, healthcare support staff have, until recently, been an unregulated group of workers; unlike nurses, there has been no history of continuous professional development. In a context of

high-profile reviews of healthcare provision on the one hand, and the Trust's anticipation of losing experienced staff who are predominantly in their 50s on the other, the organisation has turned to an extensive apprenticeship programme to develop the skills and knowledge of this group.

5.27. In spite of the Trust's commitment to hiring apprentices, it recognised that a certain amount of education needed to be given to its line managers, who were equating 'apprentice' with a very young person of between 16 to 18 years old. Many line managers faced, for example with staffing a busy and demanding ward, tend to prefer an older worker of 24 years or above and did not always realise that an apprentice could indeed be of this age. With some resistance to the term being evident, the Trust developed an organisational strategy that does not earmark specific roles as 'apprenticeships'. Instead, they have worked to incorporate apprenticeships into the recruitment of staff across all age groups and at all levels of service. A consequence of this is that apprentices themselves did not always identify with the label, instead seeing that they were undertaking ongoing training and development.

5.28. The Trust works primarily through its own Skills Funding Agency contract and the staff development team deliver all the teaching, including functional skills in numeracy, literacy and ICT. They also deliver training to apprentices employed at a local private hospital that also offers the scheme but do not have training facilities. Level 2 and 3 apprentices have at least a day off once a month to attend bespoke training sessions delivered at the training centre. Those keen to push on with their training may on occasion attend twice a month, although this was the exception rather than the norm as most apprentices worked long hours and fitting in the time to study and write assignments was a key challenge. The day training off-the-job was much valued by the apprentices: time is used to talk over assignments with tutors, discuss issues that are occurring in the work context which may be affecting the successful studies or the observation and 'signing' off of key skill competencies, as well as compare notes with other apprentices. Trainers recognised that the needs of older workers may be somewhat different and worked hard to raise the confidence levels of learners, some who had perhaps been out of the classroom for over 30 years and were daunted by returning to academic study. In addition, if particular problems were being experienced in the work setting, tutors would work with both sides to mediate a solution. At Level 4, apprentices attend a local university on a weekly basis where the level of tuition and ability to build networks was much appreciated.

Data Collection

5.29. Apprentices took part in the project while based at the training centre, although one apprentice (Hayley), studying at Level 4, participated via telephone interviews as her training took place elsewhere. One respondent (Howard) was employed by the local private hospital. The fieldwork took place from Autumn 2013 to Spring 2014. The table below provides a summary of the interviews undertaken with five adult apprentices, three of whom were female and two male. All were available for second interview.

Table Twenty One: Apprentices

Gender (pseudonyms)	Age	Apprenticeship level and type	Number of interviews
F (Brenda)	49	Level 3 Health and Social Care	2
M (Howard)	40s	Level 3 Health and Social Care	2
F (Natasha)	30s	Level 3 Health and Social Care	2
M (Richard)	28	Level 2 Health and Social Care	2
F (Hayley)	26	Level 4 Health and Social Care	2

5.30. In addition, we interviewed four individuals as key informants. This enabled us to develop a picture of the apprenticeship from a range of perspectives, including clinical managers, Human Resources Managers, apprenticeship leads and trainers.

Table Twenty Two: Key Informants

Gender	Position	Number of interviews
F	Senior Manager	1
F	Manager	1
F	Trainer	1
F	Senior Trainer	1

Energy

5.31. This multinational electricity and gas utility company owns, part owns and operates transmission and distribution networks across the UK, Europe and the United States. It has over 25,000 employees worldwide, with nearly 9,000 employed within the UK. The company is privately owned by shareholders and has a large, purpose-built Training Centre. On the electricity side, the company owns and manages the grids that connect individual consumers, businesses and communities while on the gas side, they work with other gas companies to transport gas to millions of people. These large-scale operations are run through local depots and substations, where the majority of staff are located. The organisation is active in national training initiatives aimed to enhance capacity within engineering.

5.32. The company runs a range of career development opportunities, including a Graduate Development Programme, Student Programmes, an Engineer Training Programme and an Advanced Apprenticeship (Level 3). The latter has been running for nearly twenty years and is open to all ages. Three apprenticeship frameworks are offered: Engineering; Electrical; and Gas Utilisation. These frameworks are also available at Level 4/5, although badged as an 'Engineer Training Programme', rather than as an 'Apprenticeship', due to the lack of government funding at higher levels. The frameworks cover dedicated aspects of the company's operations such as: substation management; over-line applications; electrical power; electrical instrumentation; gas distribution; and gas transmission. The apprenticeship programme has Beacon award recognition and successful completion leads to a permanent career with the organisation. As such, it attracts high quality applicants and the company markets it as a 'real alternative to the traditional university route'. The programmes variously take between two and a half to four years to complete with a

progressive and highly competitive salary scale. There are currently over 400 apprentices across all programmes.

5.33. Apprenticeship is embedded within the company's workforce development model. The number of apprentices recruited in any one year is determined by a projected estimate of future job vacancies (which arise mainly from retirement) in three years time. In 2013-14 120 people recruited on to the Level 3 framework (data was unavailable for the higher levels), of whom 40% were aged 16-18, 56% were aged between19 to 24, and 4% were over 25. More usually, older applicants join at Level 4 or 5, having trained at Level 3 elsewhere. Only two of the Level 3 cohort were female - in some years there may be no women. This is cause of some concern to the company who are working with schools to try and attract more girls into Engineering. The majority of apprentices are White British, perhaps in part because a key means of recruitment is through 'family and friends'. The recruitment website goes online once a year, and is open first to relatives and associates before going live to the general public. Typically, sons follow fathers into the company, known for its excellent training and career development, pay and retention.

5.34. The turnover in the company is very low, with retirement being the key reason for people leaving. Many people now retiring in their late 50s and 60s started together as apprentices 40-odd years ago and have stayed together as a team ever since. Applicants are appointed to fill specific vacancies, so that from the beginning of their training, they know which specialism they are being trained in and often in which area of the company they will be working. Apprentices are selected through a three-stage process consisting of a pre-screening questionnaire, a telephone interview and finally attendance at an Assessment Centre. Apprentices are mainly recruited from outside rather than 'in-house', although very occasionally someone may transfer from another function such as Planning or Human Relations to an apprenticeship.

5.35. The apprenticeship consists of an off-the-job induction period at the training centre and on-the-job training in the workplace. The company has a direct contract with the SFA and uses specialist training providers and a further education college to deliver the off-the-job training, supplemented by their own trainers, who provide safety and hand skills training and tutorial support. If an apprentice is having difficulties passing a particular module, additional support is given to enable them to succeed next time round. The training centre has residential facilities where apprentices stay on a weekly basis to study for their modules. As the apprenticeship progresses the proportion of on-the-job training increases from 30% in the first year to 70% in subsequent years. In the final stages, therefore, apprentices are predominantly developing their skills alongside experienced engineers.

Data Collection

5.36. Apprentices took part in the project while based at the Training Centre, with fieldwork taking place in early Spring 2014. The table below provides a summary of the interviews undertaken with five adult apprentices, all of whom were male. Four of the apprentices were available for second interview but one was out on site and unable to travel back to the Training Centre. Interviews were not conducted on site for safety reasons.

Table Twenty Three: Energy Apprentices

Gender (pseudonyms)	Age	Apprenticeship level and type	Number of interviews
M (Derek)	39	Level 3 Gas Distribution	2
M (Guy)	31	Higher Apprenticeship Electrical	2
M (John)	26	Level 3 Electrical and Instrumentation	2
M (Paul)	29	Level 3 Electrical Power Engineering	1
M (Simon)	27	Level 3 Gas Transmission, Electrical & Instrumentation	2

5.37. In addition, we interviewed four individuals as key informants. This enabled us to develop a picture of the apprenticeship from a range of perspectives, including the company, training managers and trainers.

Table Twenty Four: Key informants

Gender	Position	Number of interviews
M	Senior Manager	1
M	Programme Manager	1
M	Trainer	1
F	Development Coordinator	1

Section 6: Organisational Drivers for Adult Apprenticeships

Introduction

6.1 All the case study organisations were facing challenges, to a greater or lesser degree, over the short, medium and long-term in relation to the capability and age profile of their workforces and in relation to staff retention. They shared a heightened awareness that, as employers, they needed to understand and respond to the way their older employees as well as adults in society more generally were changing their attitudes to working life and retirement. For each of them, the decision to participate in the government-supported 'adult apprenticeship' programme was part of a broader workforce development strategy based on their business goals.

6.2. Three interrelated themes emerged from our interviews with managers about the key factors that motivated them to provide adult apprenticeships: a) workforce planning; b) organisational culture, workforce quality and performance; and c) corporate social responsibility. This section explores these themes, drawing on data from those interviews.

Workforce planning

6.3. To a greater or lesser extent, all the case study organisations were engaged in workforce planning to identify and address their future employment and skill needs. Those needs ranged from natural staff reductions through retirement, the need to fill new jobs, and skill gaps arising from technological development and organisational expansion. The hospitality and health case studies also reflected the high turnover rates common to their sector. For ease of identification, we refer to our five case study organisations in this and the following sections by their sectoral focus.

6.4. The Table below (Twenty Five) presents the key drivers behind the decision to utilise adult apprenticeships as part of a workforce planning and development strategy.

Table Twenty Five: Drivers for Participation

Case study Organisation	Drivers for Participation
Social Care	a) Upskilling existing workforce; b) Business goal to improve regional employability by helping unemployed people to re-enter labour market
Hospitality	a) Staff retention; b) Development of future cohort of general managers
Transport	a) Upskilling and retention of ageing workforce; b) Enabling older employees to gain qualifications including maths and English
NHS Trust	a) Upskilling and retention of ageing and unqualified workforce in response to competitive business market
Energy	a) Sustainability of skilled workforce; b) 'Grow your own' policy in response to lack of skilled people in labour market

6.5. Before we discuss the above drivers in more detail, it is important to point out the relationship between apprenticeship and employment in the case study organisations. The next section (7), which presents research findings related to apprentices' experiences, will show, how the way in which apprenticeship is conceived within an organisation has a direct impact on the status and identity of employees deemed to be 'apprentices'. Two organisations (*Energy* and *Transport*) have a long business history of recruiting young people (16-24 year olds) into three-year apprenticeships in engineering-related disciplines, and also, at *Transport,* in Business Administration. In the case of *Energy*, apprentices aged 25 and over are new recruits to the company and participate in the same apprenticeship programmes as their younger colleagues. A key informant at *Energy* said there had been an exception to general practice in that one 40 year-old employee who was unhappy in his current role had decided to retrain through the apprenticeship programme. In the case of *Transport*, 'adult apprentices' are existing employees who have been with the company for varying amounts of time. Their apprenticeship programmes are separate from the ones for the newly recruited young people. In the case of *Social Care* and *NHS Trust*, they recruit some new individuals into adult apprenticeships and also place existing employees on apprenticeships. *Hospitality* has a different approach in that all new employees (as well as existing staff), regardless of age, are given the opportunity to join an apprenticeship programme once they have successfully completed the company's induction period.

6.6. Our *Energy* Case Study had one of the most stable workforces. There is very low turnover with the main reason for leaving being natural wastage due to retirement. This stability means that future workforce needs can be planned 10 years in advance and, as such, apprentices are hired on a rolling basis to fill some of the predicted vacancies. Many engineers now retiring in their late 50s and 60s started together as apprentices 40-odd years ago and have stayed together in their teams ever since, meaning that a complete 'new cohort' may be required. The Programme Manager explained:

> *Workforce planning teams look 10 years in advance of where we are and that's how we base our numbers because we know that in 3 years' time we'll need 29 trainees and in all these different locations…Our workforce planning exercise looks at retirement age and obviously the age of people in the workforce. So, in distribution, there's a massive shortfall of people over the next 10 years. We're going to lose half because of ageing and what they're finding now is that some people are choosing to go earlier.*

6.7. Whilst there has been a trend towards earlier retirement, recent changes to the statutory retirement age and concerns about pensions have meant some older workers are choosing to remain in employment longer. In response to this, *Energy* is employing a dual strategy. First they are trying to shift the average age of their workforce because too many skills are tied up in older workers who will leave in the shorter term: as the Senior Manager put it, "*there's a skills cliff-edge which we've had to rein in*". Second, they are also trying to embrace the broader cultural shift in valuing older workers and are aiming to keep skills in place by encouraging people to stay in work longer. This means that older applicants for apprenticeships are viewed more positively than they may have been in the past. Furthermore, a lack of sufficiently qualified people available in the open labour market, and the absence of competitors training new engineers, means that the organisation has difficulty attracting ready-trained specialists. The Programme Manager explained that adult apprenticeship complemented the organisation's long-standing 'grow your own' skills policy:

> *... 'grow your own' stance…that's the only way of getting those technical skills…Not a case of poaching people, or headhunting. Have to grow your own.*

6.8. Workforce planning also involves thinking about how the product market is changing and the impact of that on both skills and the organisation of work. This factor was critical in *Transport*'s approach to workforce planning. This organisation also had a stable, long-serving workforce, but it recognised that the lower skill and competency levels, which had once been acceptable when much of the workforce was initially recruited, were no longer appropriate. The organisation feared it would be left behind commercially and was thus becoming vulnerable. The Senior Manager explained that following a workforce review five years ago, management decided they had to address the challenges of rapid technological and digital change to the business operations coupled with an ageing and largely male workforce. At that time, only a small number of employees were under the age of 25. He said:

> *We realised…about 10 years ago, that the organisation was very top heavy with older workers, who'd been (here) 20-25 years and when they joined the organisation they didn't need qualifications. It wasn't that kind of organisation…if you had experience…we'll bring you in because you have that tacit knowledge. About ten years ago we realised the world is changing quite dramatically… 25 years meant nothing if you didn't have that qualification to back that up…a number of staff didn't have basic English, maths and ICT and we realised that they were the building blocks if we were to gain an improvement in the service that we offer.*

6.9. The organisation decided to invest in training the existing workforce to enable people to become multi-skilled. The business knowledge and experience embedded in the current workforce were recognised as valuable assets, which should not be wasted through redundancy and new appointments:

> *… we'll be looking at downsizing again, so we know that in order to keep those staff that are work-ready and working age, who want to continue in the organisation, we are looking to multi-skill, so not looking to bring new people in, normally those with a lot more skills. Our turnover rate is something like 4.3, really, really low…but it's about making sure we're keeping those people and their skills and not letting that tacit knowledge go unless we really have to… We're trying to keep the people we've got.* (Senior Manager, *Transport*)

6.10. In contrast to *Energy* and *Transport*, the *NHS Trust* needs to plan for high turnover. High rates of workforce churn are endemic to healthcare support workers, who often come into this form of work as a temporary measure while en route to more highly qualified health care occupations or other careers. However, the turnover rate is also variable, which means that it can be difficult to identify when specific posts may become vacant. In addition, the organisation is undergoing expansion due to the construction of a large new hospital on its current site, which needs staffing, but there is also competition from other hospitals in the area. Apprenticeships are embedded within the Trust's broader workforce development model, offered as a means of attracting and up-skilling applicants. Offering training in a continuous and ongoing way across a broad range of functions is a key strategy by which to have the right skills levels in place to deal with workforce fluctuations.

6.11. *NHS Trust* finds that many people like to work locally, meaning that older, local residents may apply for health care jobs without having the necessary training and qualifications. The Senior Manager explained that the Trust firmly believes these workers have the potential to be their 'core workforce'. It is important, therefore, to keep them happy and well-motivated:

> *... there's a fine balance between progression and stability so while we'd want turnover and people moving up, what we also want is a core of people who want to stay and are happy to do what they're doing. And my experience is a lot of that comes from people who are on their second or third career choice.*

6.12. A further motivation for the apprenticeship programme is the fact that health care support workers have traditionally had much less access to training initiatives than other health workers. Although based across a wide range of departments, they have, until recently, been an unregulated group of workers with no history of continuous professional development. In a context of high-profile reviews of healthcare provision and the Trust's anticipation of losing experienced staff who are predominantly in their 50s, it has turned to an extensive apprenticeship programme to develop the skills and knowledge of this group so they can move into some of the hard-to-fill jobs in health care which require very specific skills sets.

6.13. The *NHS Trust* apprenticeship programme also aligns with line managers' preference for more mature workers, as a Manager explained:

> *What we've been trying to do for the last 12 months is educate them (managers) about the value of apprenticeships and as soon as I mention the word apprentice they think of 16 year olds. They say 'I don't want a 16 year old!', then I say 'you can have a 24 year old apprentice', and they say 'yeah, yeah I'll have one of them!' (and) 'What do you mean a 24 year old apprentice?'! So that's one of the ways we got apprenticeships off really well. They can employ who they like, and because we've got some of that infrastructure money, they all get trained, we try to make parity, so if they've not got the maths and English qualifications, it doesn't matter what age they are, they get that.*

6.14. The hospitality industry is also characterised by high turnover. Our case study organisation regarded apprenticeship as a key vehicle for improving staff retention and as a means to identify employees who will stay in the company and have aspirations for career progression. New recruits participate in an induction programme to sift out those who the organisation decides would be unlikely to benefit from or complete an apprenticeship:

The Senior Manager (Hospitality) explained:

> *We don't directly recruit apprentices, we recruit the individual, they'll do a 13-week induction programme with us and on successful completion of that ... they'll be eligible to join an apprenticeship programme. Our turnover in this industry is so high, it's a 100% and the biggest fall out is in those first four weeks, so we really want to make sure that that individual likes the job, is in it for the long haul before we invest all that additional time.*

She went on:

> *...our target is to get an apprentice in every pub, and we've got half, we've got 46 and a year ago we had 22%. The business is completely behind what we're doing because the figures tell us that everybody who goes through an apprenticeship, 89% who have gone through apprenticeship are still with us, so that's 11% turnover, and that's compared to an industry where there's 100% turnover.*

6.15. For our case study organisation, *Social Care*, adult apprenticeship also fitted a 'grow your own' approach. It provided the means by which the different sections of the organisation could train existing employees and serve the needs of unemployed adults from the local area, some of whom might then be identified as suitable permanent employees to help them improve their 'employability'. The Senior Manager explained:

> *We offer mentoring, voluntary placements, apprenticeships, everything that supports the worklessness agenda, as well as upskilling staff. We've also signed up to the local employability charter…That's supporting people at a low level entry basis, so your teamwork, confidence building, things like that, again everything we do as a service.*

Organisational Culture, Workforce Quality and Performance

6.16. Our key informants in the case study organisations all stressed the importance of creating a culture of continuous learning in the workplace involving all employees, regardless of age. This was seen as vital in order to ensure their workforces had the expertise necessary to meet business goals and for business survival. All the organisations stressed the fact that their workforces had to be capable of adapting to the considerable challenges their businesses were facing. At the same time, they also knew that maintaining the goodwill of their workforces was key to ensuring employees would accept the need for upskilling and retraining. For example, *Transport's* Manager viewed the organisation's motivation to offer apprenticeships as in keeping with its learning culture and beliefs about the relationship between employee learning and organisational wellbeing, she observed:

> *Employee learning and development is a core organisational value at [T]… if staff are trained, they're more motivated, they're more confident, I think about things like that because I'm a line manager as well as a ULR (Union Learning Representative), you need a more motivated team, things go smoother, less problems in the office…*

6.17. The partnership approach between *Transport* and Unionlearn was an important element in the organisation's motivation to promote workforce learning in general. The Manager continued:

> *As a Unionlearn rep, I go to meetings I find out what's coming… out from the joint learning forum, different parts of learning within the organisation, someone from the directorate, people from Unison, other unions, Transport and General we've got here as well… a senior Unionlearn Rep will be there and they'll decide the way forward on certain things and that will cascade. We have an intranet…you can click on there and get more information, we find out from the learning team, emails, so I get lots of emails from the learning team. I'll pick things up, things that need to go to certain groups to promote things, so that's how it's fed out.*

6.18. For *Hospitality*, apprenticeship is embedded within the company's workforce development model and is viewed as the key means to develop its future general managers. For *NHS Trust*, training is seen to be a regular part of every employee's role. As such, all new healthcare employees must undergo some form of initial training, however temporary their contract. The Senior Manager explained:

> *We do get a lot of people who come as a support worker and end up coming back when they've done [their initial training] ... which could be you know a higher qualification or another course or [specialism] they've been and worked for and they come back.*

6.19. Apprenticeship was seen as an important means by which to improve and develop the quality of staff performance not only through training in specific skills, but also through 'softer' aspects such as improving motivation. For *Hospitality,* apprenticeship was seen to 'add value' to company training by sending out a positive message to employees that the company will invest in them and give them access to formal qualifications. From the company's perspective, it therefore provides a way of both upskilling staff and raising individual and organisational standards of performance:

> *...it [apprenticeship] pushes them further, rather than what we have, you know a training package, but the apprenticeship takes them to that next level, so you're not just getting a good employee, you're getting a great employee and that's what makes the difference.* (General Manager, pub 1)

6.20. The Senior Manager (*Hospitality*) explained that the apprenticeship programme provides the ladder into its management structure and grades:

> *The qualifications I've talked to you about: food production, food beverage, customer service, they are 'nice to haves', they are encouraged, so if you want to develop yourself the general manager will have those development conversations about the apprenticeships. The team leader is now becoming a bit more, you must do that, if you wish to progress within our business, it is essential that you do that training.*

She added that apprenticeship had a far greater, longer-term impact on performance than other types of training course:

> *We found (that) off the cuff workshops have minimal impact. You go, you sit in a workshop, you participate and you leave and within a week you've retained 10% of that learning. Whereas with an apprenticeship, you'll do the pre-work, you'll do the workshop, you'll have homework, you'll train others, [the training provider] will sign to say they've observed you doing that and through that transfer of learning you'll retain more because you teach others.*

6.21. This was reasserted by a General Manager in one of the organisation's pubs. For him, apprenticeship offered an opportunity to do more than staff training. He described how the business was able to tailor the programme towards its own particular organisational requirements and to set a standard for each of its pubs to aspire to:

> *... we're prepared to invest in them, they know the job security is there, so you have your job security, you have the time, from (a manager's) point of view, you spend more time (with apprentices)...so it makes them feel more part of the team. (In one*

pub) there were five (apprentices)… at one stage, five people doing it…that's the way I sold it (to other pubs), the [pub] has five apprentices…other people ask the question, 'why has he got five, why has he got none?'. It snowballs, gets the team feeling important, we're special, we've been picked to do it. (General Manager, pub 1)

6.22. In the case of *Social Care,* motivating older adults who had been unemployed for some time to engage in training often required what the Senior Manager referred to as "*a wrap around service, so if an individual's got any issues, personal, debt, transport, childcare, we support them - anything that is a barrier to them gaining employment".*

6.23. Our case study organisations wanted to capitalise on the distinctive qualities and skills possessed by some of their older workers. For *NHS Trust*, in particular, older workers were seen to bring valuable life experience and resources to the workplace, as the Senior Manager explained:

> *They bring a lot of life experience…they might have worked in residential care or social care or nursing homes or they've looked after elderly relatives, children or they've been carers at home and they just haven't been able to come and do this kind of job…I spoke to a young man (aged over 24)…he'd been a mechanic…he said that he had experience of looking after his granny when she was very ill and that's when he first realised…that actually he could be really good at this and would really like to do it and in fact he's progressed on to a higher apprenticeship and might very well – he'd be someone I would think might go into nurse training…And people who have their families really young and they grow up and then they themselves are still only 40, you know. And that's their chance then to get into their career.*

6.24. *Energy's* experience is also that older apprentices tend to be more highly motivated and 'hungry'. Our key informants made comparisons between graduates, some of whom were seen as assuming that it is their automatic right to access prestigious careers, and older apprentices, who were seen to recognise that it had been a tough slog to get onto an apprenticeship programme. The Senior Manager explained:

> *The big difference we're seeing now is the difference between our apprenticeship routes into our business and the conventional graduate route is that the degree of sort of hunger and ambition and generally 'no frills no baggage' attached to an apprentice is much greater among graduates. There's an assumed – we've bred into graduates that they're inexpendable when they're not. It is a little bit of a cruel generalisation because of course there are absolutely exceptional graduates…apprentices that come in having got a real chance because there's something like nine or ten to one application, who have gone through a very tough selection, they realise they're quite privileged to be there, quite in contrast to graduates who feel they have a right to be there, because they've got a degree. And that doesn't mean that graduates don't wake up soon – quickly and smell the coffee, they do, but we see this sense of loyalty earlier in apprentices and so when you then take that up and take in older apprentices who get a second chance, I would say that is amplified… We haven't done any particular scientific study other than that we do have analysis about five or six years ago on this where we showed that the time to market, the productive time is something like 20% on a like for like basis quicker than the graduate entry. So once they come out of their training… they're loyal – the retention rate is higher.*

Corporate Social Responsibility

6.25. All our organisations felt that the training and retention of older workers through apprenticeship should not only be evaluated in terms of instrumental value, but also in relation to their corporate social responsibility. This was most pronounced in the case of *Social Care*, where adult apprenticeship was a means to support both the organisation's workforce needs as well as improving the employability of the local population:

> *(We)…support people from Jobcentre Plus, work programme providers, your lone parents, your average unemployed people claiming benefits, people with mental health issues, carers, right across the board. We don't turn anyone away…They have more mental health and physical issues. The objective was - if we support people's mental health and well being then they won't access our services as often, so basically it would be a little bit kinder to our budget as well as well as supporting the worklesssness agenda.* (Senior Manager, *Social Care*)

6.26. Although not their 'core business' as such, similar approaches to the employment needs of the local community were also demonstrated by our other case study organisations. For example, as well as running adult apprenticeships, *Transport* wanted to respond to the rising numbers of young people in its region who were unemployed and classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training). As a result, it has recruited around 20 apprentices in the 16-24 age group who have been pursuing apprenticeships either in engineering (mechanical or electrical) or business administration.

6.27. The *NHS Trust* is located in an area of inner-city deprivation and believes it has a corporate social responsibility as a major employer to try and make a difference. Creating more jobs for local people is seen as an essential factor for regeneration:

> *… one of our corporate responsibilities as a big local employer is to really contribute to local regeneration…what we've tried to do in my team is engaging with our local schools and really creating opportunities for local people…Jobcentre Plus is just at the top of the road from this hospital. So for me, it's an absolute no-brainer that we should be working really closely.* (Senior Manager, *NHS Trust*)

6.28. For *NHS Trust*, the motivation to employ locally was strengthened by a desire to put in place a workforce that reflects the profile of the community it cares for, including its ethnic diversity and migrant population. The Senior Manager went on to explain:

> *…what we want is a workforce that …reflects the community we're in, the general demographic, but also takes account of our other issues around our ageing workforce, so you've got enough youngsters coming through for progression…we have Indian, Asian, African – quite a lot of African at the moment. They have very little English … but their roles are so important in the community they're working in that actually we're working really closely…so that they become fully fledged Assistant Practitioners.*

6.29. In the case of *Energy,* its corporate social responsibility includes a commitment to opening up engineering as a career to more women and people with ethnic minority backgrounds. The organisation is active in national training initiatives aimed at enhancing diversity within engineering. Its own experience of enabling an existing 40 year-old

employee to become an apprentice in order to retrain could offer a model for encouraging women who work within engineering companies in an administrative or sales capacity to switch to engineering. It also highlights the potential of adult apprenticeship more generally as a means of encouraging people to retrain for a new career at a time when this might be coming more common as people's working lives are extended.

6.30. Whilst all the apprenticeship programmes result in older employees gaining qualifications, a sense of this being a corporate responsibility was most pronounced in the case of *Transport*. The Manager explained:

> *It's not always about qualifications, but as you get older it is, because you often find that people who are older, and they're out of work, and they go for a new job, they've got all the experience, a life time's experience, but not the qualification.*

6.31. How far enabling existing employees to gain qualifications equates to an apprenticeship was, however, not clear-cut for another manager who had come to realise during the interview that an employee in her team was an adult apprentice. She certainly saw the benefits for her team as well as the individual, but as this quotation shows, she expressed surprise about the employee's apprenticeship status:

> *With the younger ones…we knew what we were trying to achieve with them. We were kept up-to-date with what they needed to learn while they were with you, but not this one. I didn't even know it was an apprenticeship. I thought she was doing in-house qualifications, similar to what I'd done in the past, which you do on your own. It's for the benefit of the team, but it's about building your own skills to move.* (Line Manager, *Transport*)

6.32. The extent to which the term 'adult apprenticeship' is appropriate for older employees had been extensively debated at *Transport*. The Senior Manager said:

> *We've sort of rebranded it and called it [*Name*]…because people did turn up their nose at apprenticeship – 'I'm too old'… I'm not telling anyone I'm an apprentice'.*

6.33. This view was supported by a key informant (Account Manager) from *Transport's* training partner (the local college) who had experience of working with other employers:

> *We work with a large company that wanted…something like 50 IT apprentices…they wanted two separate approaches. For the younger ones they were happy to use the word 'apprentice', but for the older ones they wanted to re-brand it for the older workers, they felt there was a stigma…if you internally market it to your staff, it might have the qualifications listed and not put them in an apprenticeship box.*

Conclusion

6.34. Our case study organisations were all able to articulate the business benefits that flowed from employing and training older employees. It was clear that adult apprenticeship was an important vehicle for addressing skills gaps and shortages, as well as a retention strategy. The organisations were also benefitting from the additional value accrued through the capabilities and increased motivation that older workers bring to the workplace. Common to all the organisations was a belief that a 'grow your own' policy was crucial to their sustainability, efficiency and their ability to compete in their different product markets. Apprenticeship was being used, therefore, as a model of skill formation and re-formation for both new recruits and older existing employees.

6.35. The case study organisations were also benefitting from government funding, though the importance of this contribution to their resources for training varied. In the case of *Energy* and *NHS Trust,* there was a long history of the organisations investing significant resources of their own in apprenticeship and workforce training more generally. In the cases of *Transport, Hospitality* and *Social Care*, government funding was a catalyst for adult apprenticeship as both organisations had worked with external training providers to run government-supported training schemes for several years. The Senior Manager at *Transport* explained how the local college had helped them make the transition from the end of the *Train to Gain* initiative to adult apprenticeship. He said that because the organisation had found that the adult apprenticeship model offered more than *Train to Gain* initiative, it would continue to invest in it even if government funding reduced or was withdrawn:

> *As an organisation, we realised that the world was changing as far as the funding schemes. We'd always been used to the Skills Funding Agency for the NVQs, and that dried up, and as a business we realised that for us to keep our staff at the same level, we were going to have to invest a lot of money as well as the time for staff to training…it was (college)…they sold the programme to us…it was a bundle and you get a more rounded person…and we can actually encourage people to keep up the English and maths.* (Senior Manager, *Transport*)

6.36. He also observed that this employer/provider relationship was mutually beneficial:

> *At the end of the day, we're assisting the college because we're helping them get outcomes, we're helping them draw down funding. But, it's about what we need and expect and about the employees as well, to make it as easy, as possible for them. They've got a full-time job to do as well as these qualifications.*

6.37. A comment from a key informant from the training provider working with *Social Care* highlighted how judgements about the public value of adult apprenticeship have to be based on an understanding of what 'training' actually means. She explained that when an employee is being assessed for skills they already have in order to gain a qualification, this does not require investment from the employer because the training provider draws down funding from the SFA. This means, in her words, that, "A lot of providers sell apprenticeship as a free course or free apprenticeship" and some use the term 'free frameworks'.

6.38. In 2012, the National Audit Office expressed concern that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), which has responsibility for adult apprenticeship, had "not yet assessed the level of 'additionality' delivered by the Programme". The term, 'Additionality',

refers to how far public funding has resulted in employers providing training that would not otherwise have occurred. This echoed the views of the Committee of Public Accounts, which in 2010 had criticised the lack of additionality flowing from *Train to Gain*. The NAO (2012:8) stated that BIS and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) were: "… not in a position to judge the extent to which providers may be generating significant surpluses or losses due to the rates paid on individual (apprenticeship) frameworks".

6.39. The variable extent to which our case study employers invest their own money in adult apprenticeship and the variability in the way they conceive of and operationalise apprenticeship would be mirrored across the country and across sectors. This variation has been both stimulated and sustained by successive governments who have treated apprenticeship (for both young people and adults) as a flexible instrument that can be adapted to suit the different needs of employers, often with the support of training providers who have expertise in accessing government funding. The result, as the next section will show, is that the experience of being an apprentice plays out differently from one organisation to another.

Section 7: Apprentices' Experiences and Perspectives

Introduction

7.1 The purpose of this section is to present findings from our interviews with adult apprentices themselves. It focuses on three main areas: a) exploring what apprentices perceive they are gaining from participation in the programme (benefits); b), identifying aspects they find difficult, or that could be improved (challenges); and c), outlining their reflections on the relevance of age, differences between males and females, and older and younger apprentices. The analysis provides a window into key aspects of the experiences and perceptions of adult apprentices, and emerging issues, but it does not claim to provide an exhaustive account. Selected direct quotations are provided as illustrative evidence and as a way of bringing through the voices of our interviewees and the lived reality of their participation.

7.2. Before turning to our first major theme, 'benefits', we briefly outline the main routes adults took to becoming an apprentice.

Route to becoming an adult apprentice

7.3. The majority of our adult apprentices were already employed (often for many years) by their organisation, when the option to take up an apprenticeship arose. For these individuals (as we saw in the findings presented in the organisational vignettes and organisational perspectives) participation in the programme was presented as a work-based, employer-supported opportunity to improve their skills, and gain formal qualifications. The extent to which take-up was perceived as mandatory or voluntary for existing employees varied. At one end of the spectrum, Seth, a customer service apprentice in *Transport*, felt he did not have any choice in the matter (although according to the organisation, participation was not actually mandatory):

> *Q: Were you asked if you'd like to do it [*apprenticeship*]?*
> *A: I was told basically.* (Seth, 50, *Transport*)

7.4. In contrast Sarah, a business administration apprentice in the same company, reported that she had asked if she could progress to Level 3 after completing an NVQ2. She didn't initially realise that the provision on offer through her employer came under the government-supported apprenticeship programme. Beverley (*Hospitality)* felt it was up to her to decide whether to take up the opportunity offered by her manager, explaining, *"...I just thought it might be good and I'd give it a go"*.

7.5. In other cases, existing employees were approached by their organisation's external training provider:

> *Well the lady [from the training provider] came down and she was dealing with another guy, a chef ... and [she] came up to me and said "would it be something you'd want to do?" and I said, "Definitely".* (Lisa, 32, *Hospitality*)

7.6. In contrast, where apprenticeship was offered to new starts as an explicit part of the employment contract, they viewed participation as integral to their selection and career progression. For example, apprentices in the NHS Trust, who were new recruits, were required to complete a structured programme of certified training (under the apprenticeship scheme). In

addition, these apprentices perceived a strong association between (further) training and qualifications and career progression. The following two quotations are illustrative:

> *…when I took the job it was explained "this is the contract, you have to do this". It's fair enough, you're coming with no experience and with a lot of responsibility and so it's a good way of doing it.* (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

> *I have to [do the next level] because my job's moving to a Level 3 level, which will be mandatory that I will do it, once I finish the Level 2, will go straight on to do it.* (Richard, 28, *NHS Trust*)

7.7. Similarly, apprenticeship in *Energy* was aligned with employment and progression within the occupational area of engineering. Typically, individuals applied externally to the company's apprenticeship programme as new recruits, although one of our interviewees had applied for an apprenticeship from his position in another part of the business.

Benefits

7.8. Apprentices recognised that their participation had a range of benefits including supporting career change, gaining qualifications and certifying competence, progression, new learning and support, flexibility, and English and maths. These are outlined in turn below.

Supporting career change

7.9. In some of our case studies, there were good examples of apprenticeship providing an opportunity for adults to change careers or to get back into employment. For example, Ruth one of the apprentices in *Social Care* reflected:

> *I think for me, it [an apprenticeship] was the right thing to do. I needed the extra support…it's given me time to think about what I'm doing. If I'd gone in as a support worker without doing the apprenticeship, it's given me a lot of time to think, you know rather than being tossed straight into it. I'm a lot happier. My husband said a few months after I started, "I've got my wife back", because the previous job I was very stressed.* (Ruth, 39, *Social Care*)

7.10. In the case *Energy*, apprentices spoke about how their experience of working in previous jobs had helped them identify what kind of occupation and career they were looking for. They perceived that this self-knowledge had contributed to their success in the recruitment process and within their programmes. Derek explained:

> *So I wanted something more technical, but other than that, even until very recently I've not known what I wanted to do, and the office job was OK, but I like variety and 9-5, same job every day, I knew I didn't want that. I knew I didn't [missing word] retail either, but at least with that every day is different because you're coming into contact with different people. I knew I wanted something different, but didn't know what. Away from the job I like physical things, you know getting my hands dirty, so I've done DIY in the past and all that sort of stuff… Even in the early days, I knew there were engineers doing that job [the one he's now training for), but I didn't really think too much about it. Only in the last few years I've thought that job really does attract me.* (Derek, 39, *Energy*)

Gaining qualifications, certifying competence

7.11. A variety of factors influenced how apprentices perceived the benefits of participation. Where employees had worked for the organisation for some time and had substantial experience prior to joining the programme, their perceptions of benefits tended to be framed in terms of the opportunity to gain formal qualifications. These would provide credible evidence about their ability to do the job, and help improve their career prospects within the organisation and beyond. Lisa and Rebecca's observations are illustrative:

> *Well I like to think that it gives you something to show for what you've done, it gives you credit, so you know after four years I'm getting recognition for everything I've learnt, and these are the things I can do and this is the paper to prove it. People listen to it…* (Lisa, 32, *Hospitality*)

> *I've got nothing on my CV that looks good and I wanted something on there to prove that I could actually do things in life… that's why I did it.* (Rebecca, 41, *Hospitality*)

7.12. Others focused on the role the apprenticeship and qualifications could play in helping them to recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills. David suggested that the combination of training and qualifications was beneficial as it had developed his understanding of and ability to support his claim to have acquired relevant occupational expertise:

> *I suppose I think where the apprenticeship and the NVQ works together well is that you can present an understanding of the knowledge you've assimilated while you've been doing the job.* (David, 52, *Transport*)

7.13. Helping individuals to become aware of what they already know was perceived as a benefit by other apprentices. Gary reflected:

> *Just keeping logs, keeping information and how I pass information round. She asked me to show emails of what we'd sent to different people. She said, "oh you've used that, used that". Different communication skills, things we do every day but that we weren't aware of.* (Gary, 47, *Transport*)

Progression

7.14. The extent to which apprenticeship was seen as a platform for career progression was important to individuals. Apprentices were positive where they perceived that the apprenticeship model was aligned with their employers' career structure and promotion opportunities. For example, apprentices in *Hospitality* had a clear understanding of how they could 'get on' in the organisation and this linked to their participation in the apprenticeship programme. Sonia's case is illustrative. She had come to the industry in her late forties after a varied working life in administration and social care and a successful school career (passing three A levels). Sonia thoroughly enjoyed working in the pub restaurant in front-of-house roles and recognised that she could progress in the company if she combined completion of the Level 2 and subsequently the Level 3 apprenticeship programmes with good performance on-the-job. At the time of our second interview, she had completed the Level 2 and was expecting to progress to the Level 3 and gain promotion to a Deputy General Manager position, either in the same pub or another of the company's sites in the same region. Sonia explained:

It's [the apprenticeship], it's yeah, it's given me if I want to progress, it's given me something my superiors can look at as opposed to saying she's good at her job, they can actually see that I've actually achieved something... (Sonia, 50, *Hospitality*)

7.15. Similarly, career progression in the NHS Trust (up the NHS job bands) was mapped on to participation in the relevant apprenticeship and qualifications. Natasha explained that progressing to the Level 3 apprenticeship would allow her to access more demanding health care jobs available at NHS band 3:

...moving on to a higher level. It's just a bit more in depth and I could go to other departments if I wanted to. My department very much they have the 2s, because it's not very taxing whereas with the 3s you have a lot more responsibility, you could go to maternity, which is where I'd like to head. (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

New learning and support

7.16. Apprentices hired as new recruits with limited or no previous relevant occupational experience were much more likely than existing employees to perceive the opportunity for significant new learning as a core benefit of their apprenticeship, and contribution to their ability to become competent in their job. Natasha's comment reflects this:

...it's all things [training units] that are relevant, the mandatory ones, infection control, health and safety, and the optional ones are what you chose to suit what you need. I'm doing it with a colleague and we work in the same department, but we've chosen slightly different ones. I've chosen ones that help in the everyday, maintaining the environment, assisting the practitioner, assisting the patient, taking bloods, helping distressed patients... (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

7.17. John, from *Energy*, reflected on the opportunity being an apprentice provided for him to learn new skills under the guidance of a workplace mentor:

He [my mentor] was quite good, in that he'd show me how to do something once, and then we'd go to a smaller site, where there was less chance of something going wrong (laughing), and he'd always be there watching. Then he'd say, "you do it, and I'll be here and come jump in if I need to". For me I found that style of learning was great, just chuck you in and get on with it. (John, 26, *Energy*)

7.18. The quality of support available to apprentices affected their experience of formal off-the-job training and perceptions of the quality of their learning. Where apprentices had access to committed trainers and assessors, they were enthusiastic about and stimulated by their participation in the programme. The following quotations from *NHS Trust* are illustrative:

Very positive, no problems at all. I've always felt really well supported and I think the training is very accessible. I'd say it's a good place and there's lots of opportunities. I know the Trust want to get staff qualified, and the managers are very good and supportive if you want to do something. The managers are very aware of the opportunities for you. That's been my experience anyway. (Hayley, 26, *NHS Trust*)

> *We come here [the training centre], we have a schedule, it could be once a week, or twice a month, but we have assessors in our workplace that we work with closely and we just, yeah if there's a problem we discuss it, we show them our work, they witness us doing things. I don't [see my assessor daily] because I'm across sites, but I can email her, text her, call her, anytime weekends, she's really good. (Natasha, 30s, NHS Trust)*

7.19. Building on these observations, there was strong evidence that those apprentices participating in structured programmes, with organised and planned off-the-job training as well as good support from a workplace mentor or supervisor, were most enthusiastic about the quality and extent of their new learning. This is not to suggest that older apprentices' perceptions in this regard would be different from younger apprentices, as it is not surprising that participants recognise and appreciate high quality training. However, it does suggest that, where apprentices are employed as new recruits with limited previous relevant experience, the organisation is more likely to have developed a structured approach to training and the delivery of the qualifications, with consequent benefits in terms of learner experience. The challenges of learning anything new for experienced employees, when the apprenticeship model is based around accreditation of prior learning are explored below.

Flexibility

7.20. Participating in what they perceived to be a 'flexible' model was considered a benefit by some interviewees. In two of our organisations (*Social Care* and *Hospitality*), opportunities for off-the-job learning were limited and there was no classroom-based provision. Here, apprentices could complete their assignments either in work or in their own time through the completion of workbooks and engagement with online content, and they were assessed in the workplace. In *Transport, NHS Trust and Energy*, apprentices participated in off-the-job training sessions, away from their day-to-day work, but at company-based locations. *Energy* had a dedicated residential training centre, which was attended by apprentices located around the country. The other two organisations had learning centres attached to them, with regular monthly attendance scheduled. The length of time needed to complete the programme is also seen as flexible in that if apprentices want to push on to finish more quickly, this is possible:

> *I did start some of my subjects early because I want to finish quite quickly, I don't want it dragging on. You can do one after another, after another, it's quite good because you have like a matrix and you can say OK there's three infection control units I can do them together. Now we're doing safeguarding and duty of care, well they link together, that's two done. (Natasha, 30s, NHS Trust)*

English and maths

7.21. All government-supported apprenticeship frameworks include mandatory requirements for apprentices to achieve credits in English and maths. Our findings show that whilst it can be challenging to develop good quality provision (see previous section) and that some apprentices are negative about this aspect of their programme, many apprentices have had positive experiences, particularly in relation to their job capability and confidence. In the following quotation, Lisa reflects on her perceptions of learning maths after a long break since leaving school:

...I was quite good at reading off graphs and things like that, and there were fractions, and back at school I could do them. Fifteen years later, and it's like, God I haven't got a clue. But no, I would say, it's useful maths, because if the till breaks and you have to count back, it just refreshes you...so yeah, I would say it's quite useful. It's one of things I was quite pleased about actually. (Lisa, 32, *Hospitality*)

7.22. Linking the maths and English to the occupational context is seen as helpful. Alan's comment is illustrative:

It's a health and social care diploma, Level 3 and that includes a lot of English and maths, which I wasn't aware of, so that was a bit of a shock! So I sat down was doing sums that I hadn't done since school, but yeah they are tailored to whatever environment you're working in, and going through the choices of modules it's geared towards working with dementia or acquired brain injury through strokes for example. (Alan, 26, *Social Care*)

7.23. In the case of the Level 3 engineering apprenticeship, participants are expected to achieve advanced mathematical skills. Whilst Paul acknowledges that this is demanding for someone who has had a long break from formal education, he is clearly pleased to be coping well with the challenge:

Generally on the whole, OK, sort of myself personally 12 years after I left school, I was a bit worried, but it's been OK, and on the City and Guilds side, we have had to go back to first principles on the maths, trigonometry and things like was hard at first, but no, I've settled into it OK. (Paul, 29, *Energy*)

7.24. Alan suggests that having access to a computer has also helped him in relation to his writing skills and completion of written assignments:

I don't excel at writing, I can certainly talk and think, but sitting down to put pen to paper isn't one of my strong suits, so I was pleasantly surprised to know you could do it on a computer, which I'm very comfortable with. (Alan, 26, *Social Care*)

7.25. The opportunity to develop computer literacy through the support available for apprentices can programme can have a powerful positive effect on adult learner identity, as this comment from Brenda indicates.

I shocked myself because we had to do the English and maths on the computer. Got a computer at home, but never had access to it. I've got three children that take over, and I passed it straight off, really shocked myself that I could do it. Perhaps all those years ago if I had the support I would have gone further, but there wasn't that support then. It was the case that you were at the back of the class, or bottom grade and you were just expected to plod along. It's a bit of shame, but I'm enjoying life now... I do love learning, I've struggled with it, I've enjoyed doing it, but now I've learnt how to do the computer. The computer opens a new world. (Brenda, 49, *NHS Trust*)

Challenges

7.26. All the apprentices found some aspect of their apprenticeship challenging. We focus here on three interrelated issues: a) balancing the demands of the assessment requirements for the apprenticeship with the demands of the job and domestic commitments; b) tensions related to the balance of theory and practice in the apprentices' training; and c) progress beyond the apprenticeship.

Assessment time pressures

7.27. In each of the case study environments, apprentices were part of very busy workplaces and were very aware of the pressures on their supervisors, managers, assessors, mentors and co-workers. In addition, the majority of apprentices had domestic commitments, particularly in relation to childcare. As we noted above, apprentices were generally positive about the flexible nature of the assessment arrangements, which enabled them to collect the evidence they required in ways that fitted in with their work and domestic schedules. The following comment, from the social care case study, highlights, however, how apprentices had to continually motivate themselves to maintain the necessary momentum to ensure they completed assessments in timely manner:

> *I get on the internet, and my wife helps me a lot, and my NVQ assessor, and people here, people are so happy to help you. The only problem was that I hadn't been to school for so many years, you have to get back into thinking about punctuation, thrown back into the classroom thing, the hardest thing is that there's 10 maths exams we're doing on the internet, and it's hard to motivate yourself, when you want to say, 'stuff it, I want to see my daughter, have a beer and watch the football', but another voice says, 'you've got to do it, because without the NVQ 3 you can't stay here', because everyone is NVQ 3 here, minimum. The nurses are God knows what, the physios too, the Social Workers have got degrees. As support workers, it's an NVQ 3.* (Barry, 48, *Social Care*)

7.28. The downside of the flexible nature of assessment procedures in apprenticeship is that the workplace assessors are also very busy. The following comment from the healthcare case study is illustrative of the way several apprentices were very aware of the struggle that both they and their assessors had in creating the time and space to come together:

> *… it's hard for them because they're busy as well, so it's hard. You don't get time with your assessor. It would be nice to have a morning and sit down and go through everything and bring it all together in a quiet place. Whereas the thing I try and do is get these study days, one a month, I try to make the most of these days and I treat it as a normal work day, get as much done as I can. Try to finish a unit off whilst I'm here and then just leave a little bit to do at home.* (Richard, 28, *NHS Trust*)

7.29. Time pressures were particularly problematic in the hospitality case study as illustrated by this comment from one of the younger apprentices:

> *We have very little time here and we agree to use our own time to do the apprenticeship (complete the workbook)… She (assessor) will come to the pub every four weeks and we need to use at least a couple of hours of own time to sit down and go through the work, but sometimes it takes longer and then of course we've got a job*

to do. We can't just sit there. It gets a bit stressful cos you have to keep to the meeting, but maintain work on the bar. (Francesca, 21, *Hospitality*)

Theory and practice

7.30. As we have shown in the case study vignettes, apprenticeships vary in terms of the amount of time spent developing theoretical knowledge and practical expertise (either through an integrated approach or through classroom-based theory lessons). For some apprentices, the integrated approach raised doubts in their minds about how the added-value of the apprenticeship over and above their existing levels of competence. The following comments from the hospitality case study reflect an underlying disappointment about the actual content of the training:

> *(the training)…it was quite, I'll be honest, it was quite nebulous. I had a workbook that I filled in and our trainer sort of came to see us every now and then, and she ask a few questions, she'd observe us and then she'd sort of tick a load of stuff and I said to her what have I done, and she'd explain what I'd done. So, I've got to be honest and say it was all quite nebulous really… was surprised at how unstructured it was to be honest. I was expecting a lot more, 'do this, and I'll have it and mark it'…At some points how I got there I'm still not quite sure.* (Sonia, 50, *Hospitality*)

> *There was no training, it was more to do with paperwork, a lot of questions, a lot of work was done on the computer. The actual training, it was pulling certain beers and making coffees, things like that.* (Rebecca, 41, *Hospitality*)

7.31. The next comment from the transport case study highlights the way training and assessment can become indistinguishable when the collection of evidence of competence to meet NVQ requirements is seen by apprentices as the dominant aspect of their training programme:

> *As a whole, I don't feel it's added anything to my job role. The maths and English are quite basic and the NVQ customer service side is a lot of common sense. I don't feel it adds much to the job I do…It's more of a paper exercise. You have to show evidence of what you've. You're proving. The only think is maths and English, which is pretty basic. I didn't pick anything new. The maths and English is training, but it's basic. The NVQ isn't training, it's just proving.* (Peter, 48, *Transport*)

7.32. The struggle to find time during the working day to read and absorb new knowledge means that all the apprentices have to spend time outside work catching up on meeting the requirements set for the different qualifications which form part of their apprenticeships. This can further entrench the sense that sufficient time isn't being spent on actual training at work:

> *So do you feel that you are not getting much training at work because you're just so busy that you're having to do it on your own.* (Richard, 28, *NHS Trust*)

7.33. In the following comment, an apprentice in the hospitality case study captures the tension between the benefits of developing expertise through everyday work practice and finding the time and space to acquire more related in-depth theoretical knowledge:

> *Because we do our jobs on a daily basis I don't think you can put day release in because you're doing your job and it shows in your apprenticeship, the computer*

based side of things, pulling a proper pint, it's all in there. I don't think it would make a difference. You've got to learn the practical side of things before you can do anything. You can't give a customer a pint with a four-inch head. You need those basics. (Rebecca, 41, *Hospitality*)

7.34. Other apprentices, however, felt strongly that their programmes lacked sufficient depth and should have offered them more opportunities to advance both their practical and theoretical expertise. The following comments come from a discussion between two apprentices at *Transport* and focuses on what they saw to be a fundamental flaw in not having graded assessment in NVQs:

(in school) You always got a pass mark, 40, 45 or whatever, and they'd get a pass mark for that year, and then when you got the paper back, there were various grades. CSE grade 1 was equivalent to an O level…I'd like to see that breakdown, how well or badly I've done. (Gary, 47, *Transport*)

Yeah, (Gary's hit the nail on the head. The whole point of testing in my mind, at least if you test something, you know how well you've performed. Like the 100 metres, you've got a finishing time, so you know how exactly well you've done. (Tom, 55, T*ransport*)

It's to know what level I'm at. If I can pass it, fair enough I can pass it. If there's a pass rate of 50% but I pass it at 95%, I'll have a crack at Level 4, but I've just scraped by at Level 3, so you know 52% then maybe that's where I'm at. Let's you know where you are. Where you are at exactly. When you're at school, if you've got a C, you'll think maybe I'll not take the A level, but if you've got an A, then you'll go maybe I'll crack on with that. (Gary, 47, *Transport*)

7.35. *Energy* revealed that even in an apprenticeship which has a much clearer separation between theory and practice, apprentices are still faced with the challenge of balancing and reconciling the on-the-job and off-the-job sides of their training:

I think there have been some frustrations. Because it's been a lot of theory, and a lot of calculations, and cos we're not going to be doing (that) in our day job, we just need an appreciation, I think the thinking among the 10 of us is, you know, why are we going into such a level of detail?...I think at the back of our minds we do know we need it. I think maybe how it will be presented, when we give our feedback, is to say maybe split up the 7 weeks. So instead of having an intense 7 weeks theory…split it up into 2 week blocks. (Derek, 39, *Energy*)

The only problem I've got is that it's a three-year apprenticeship and some things are rushed because they need to get you through a lot of knowledge. I would say to anyone who's new to it, it's best to have a little bit of knowledge, even it's basic. If you've got no idea you'd struggle. I came here with very little, I knew a little bit about the instrumentation side, but nothing about the electrical. So with the electrical I did struggle. Every night I've got these massive big folders and every weekend, some nights, I go through it and think what have I done. It's hard, you have to be very motivated. (John, 26, *Energy*)

Progress beyond apprenticeship

7.36. A key challenge all the apprentices face is that progression within their existing workplace is dependent on the employer's business strategy and performance, and, in the case of *Transport, NHS Trust*, and *Social Care* also on whether they can transcend organisational and occupational hierarchies. Two female apprentices working in different sections in *Transport* discussed the internal barriers they can face:

> *I'm only a 13-15 (job band) and I can't go above up that, it's not in my job description and it's not in my pay scale so….the next one we have above us is two scales up and so we haven't even got one in the middle, it's two scales up…Persuading management, it's probably if someone goes. If you can try and get that job, that's the only way…You'd need the experience but they wouldn't give you it because you're not on that pay scale. It's very frustrating. Extremely frustrating.* (Sarah, 26, *Transport*)

> *It's quite different in our office because there's new things coming in all the time. But I honestly think that for the work I'm doing I shouldn't be on the grade I'm on. I'm doing a lot of project kind of stuff and it's not fair that they're sitting there on £26,000 and I'm doing admin and project work. I've got a fight on that one…I send emails at 11pm at night (at home) to make my life easier when I come into work. I shouldn't be doing that on my pay.* (Sally, 33, *Transport*)

7.37. In the social care case study, apprentices were very aware of the funding problems in their sector and the consequences for their own employment and progression prospects:

> *I would like to go onto the NVQ 3 cos some of the guys have done it. There is restricted funding and it might go on how long you've been with the company.* (Ruth, 39, *Social Care*)

7.38. Although many of the adult apprentices did discuss how their apprenticeship experience had stimulated their career ambitions, two male apprentices at the older end of the age scale in the transport case study reminded us that work satisfaction is not always linked to advancement. These apprentices had both worked for some 25 years in a bank before being made redundant. For them, the working conditions in *Transport* were much more favourable and less pressurised. Although both men were critical about their apprenticeships, they said that they did have access to other training opportunities in their workplace. Seth explained why, for them, they were not seeking career advancement:

> *I'm 50. I've got a decent level of customer service skills and I'm quite happy with what I already know…When we worked in the bank you had to account for every second of the day. If you worked for seven hours you had to account for that seven hours. Massive pressure. On a scale of one to ten, you're talking eight or nine for the bank, three here. But if you asked someone who's worked here for 30 years, they might put the pressure here as an eight, but…we have the bank as a comparison...That's why we're so happy.* (Seth, 50, *Transport*)

Age and gender differences

7.39. Our analysis of the interview evidence revealed the influence of age and gender on apprentices' perspectives, and their engagement with and experiences of apprenticeship. Overall, our interviewees were positive about the ability of adults to benefit from undertaking an apprenticeship. However, many of our apprentices admitted that they and their social networks had not previously known that older adults could participate. The following quotation from our oldest apprentice (aged 60+) is illustrative:

> *…it's amazing how so many people say they had no idea about apprenticeships, you know that apprenticeships were available for older people and they see my picture [on the organisation's website] … it's nice to show people you can do something at my age.* (Evelyn, 62, *Social Care*)

7.40. On the other hand, some of our apprentices admitted that they had been surprised to be offered an apprenticeship, but had been encouraged to consider the opportunity by their line managers' enthusiasm:

> *And when they first told me about the apprenticeship I laughed, I smiled, cos at that time I was [late forties], I said "why are you speaking to me" and they said weren't bothered how old I was, that I had the experience."* (Barry, 48, *Social Care*)

> *I said what was the point of me doing an apprenticeship at 50! He [pub general manager] said, "no you're never too late"…Yes my first thought was what the hell am I doing at 50 doing an apprenticeship? First off, I thought oi what are you telling me I need to learn, I did have that momentary feeling, like a smack in the face, but the more I thought about it … it gave me a rationale, and rather than running with an innate expression of myself, it gave me a structure and a reason for why I'm enjoying doing what I'm doing.* (Sonia, 50, *Hospitality*)

7.41. However, it was recognised that participating in an apprenticeship by those in older age-bands and life stages raises interesting issues that are not normally thought about in relation to the traditional idea of apprenticeship as a programme for young school leavers. Our first quotation is drawn from the interview with our two younger apprentices, Stephanie and Dominic. Stephanie perceives that the flexibility offered by a work and learn model can be particularly helpful for people with families. She observes:

> *It's [adult apprenticeship] brilliant. I think with the kind of apprenticeship we're doing because it's flexible, it's perfect. Someone my age could leave the job cos I don't have a family to pay for…but if you have a family and you have children you can't just say I'll leave my job and go to university. A lot of people decide to study in older age but they can't because of family and job and I think this [work and learn] is a good combination of study.* (Stephanie, 21, *Hospitality*)

7.42. The availability of flexible working hours had strong appeal for some of our adult apprentices, particularly women with domestic responsibilities. The opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship as a part-time employee was valued. In Rebecca's case, the flexibility of work available in the hospitality industry as well as the flexibility of the apprenticeship model allowed her to work and complete her programme around her family commitments:

> *At the moment I'm coming out [to work] two nights a week, and it's not a lot but I don't like leaving my children, if they're ill … I've got three young children and it works perfectly around school times…* (Rebecca, 41, *Hospitality*)

7.43. On the other hand, apprentices participating in demanding programmes requiring them to study outside work time, or attend residential training raised issues relating to work-life balance for some of the mothers and fathers in our sample, and as the next comments indicate:

> *Just one, that's enough at the moment until this is done. It's hard, she's only two and a half, but sometimes it can quite difficult, and on my days off I'm with her, and I do find I'm having to do things at the weekend I've got my husband around to do things.* (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

> *It is [demanding], I work 37.5 hours at work, and obviously I've got family, two children, and getting the right time, the right people to have it done is challenging.* (Howard, 40s, *NHS Trust*)

7.44. Apprentices in *Energy* have to spend several weeks away from their families at the residential training centre:

> *…the first year was horrible, just the fact we were here, away from everyone… went home at weekends, but it was a long way, and a lot of the guys, including myself, we'd travel back on the Sunday night so we weren't exhausted on the Monday, so it sort of cut your weekend right down.* (John, 26, *Energy*)

7.45. Another area affecting adult apprentices was the extent to which they could be given credit for prior learning. Some were frustrated that their earlier attainment, including qualifications gained several years previously, was not taken into account. Whilst others thought it was appropriate for all apprentices, whatever their age and educational background to proceed through the same programme together.

Generational dynamics and differences

7.46. Our evidence suggests that adult apprentices often perceive themselves to be more highly motivated to succeed than their younger peers. This was linked to the perception that older participants are more likely to appreciate the opportunity apprenticeship can provide for career development. Having had previous false starts and less positive experiences of work, they recognised the need to seize the chance for advancement that they had now been given.

> *… no offence to youngsters, I used to be young, but you want a job you enjoy, have a nice time, and get on with everybody. When you're older you've given up a lot to be here, so you want to get the most out of everything.* (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

7.47. The older apprentices in *Energy* perceived their previous work experience gave them perspective and insight that their younger inexperienced peers missed:

> *You know when people say young people aren't experienced and when I sit with younger guys, cos they are all younger than me, I do feel that I know more about the workplace than a lot of them, not saying all of them, but I've worked in a lot of*

different places and I know what it can be like, it can be a lot worse than this. (John, 26, *Energy*)

7.48. In addition, as illustrated by Simon's comment (below), the older apprentices were thinking (differently than young apprentices) about their post-apprenticeship career aspirations and the timescale for realising their ambitions:

> *Well I'd like to think, because I'm slightly more mature when I come out of it, I'd like to think that I'll have an easier time progressing, rather than say a 16 year old who's done the apprenticeship and come out of it, and his mind will be set on being a technician. Where I want to see myself as being a technician for a couple of years and then hopefully a more managerial post, that's what I hope anyway.* (Simon, 27, *Energy*)

7.49. For our adult apprentices working in the health and social care sectors, being older and having the benefit of more extensive life and family experience was perceived as a real advantage in relation to the nature of care work.

> *I don't think I could have necessarily done this then [when she was young] because I was very squeamish and very…., a different kind of person. You're not very worldly anyway, you're in your own little bubble. Once you have a family you change how you look at things. Do you know what I mean … and having illnesses as well helps because you can relate to the people there.* (Natasha, 30s, *NHS Trust*)

7.50. The relative novelty of older apprentices, particularly in *Energy*, was recognised through light-hearted interaction between the age groups. In the following quotation, Derek explains how he used his inter-personal skills to downplay the significance of his age and relevance of his prior knowledge about the company, and to promote what he had in common with his younger peers.

> *Perhaps when I first started there were some raised eyebrows, you know what's this old fella doing here! I think they thought I was the supervisor at first, but I sort explained that yeah I'd been with the company so many years and I'd got some aspects of knowledge from that, but as far as this apprenticeship was concerned I was starting from exactly the same point as anyone else. So I said that several times and I think that's settled now… I mean I'm just one of the 10 now. It's not a problem.* (Derek, 39, *Energy*)

7.51. Having presented and discussed our case study findings, the final section of this report (8) further develops our analysis, drawing out conclusions and recommendations.

Section 8: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

8.1 As this report has shown, organisations in both the public and private sector that are employing and training adult apprentices aged 25 and over are doing so to meet both their business and corporate social responsibility goals. Each of our case study organisations conceives, organises and runs these apprenticeship programmes in different ways, reflecting their organisational cultures, histories, business strategies, and the nature of the goods and services they produce and provide. As we noted in the Introduction to this report, there is considerable scope within government-supported apprenticeship for employers to shape their own programmes with regard to the length and type of on- and off-the-job training, types of qualifications, and the extent to which apprentices are involved in productive work. We also noted in the literature review that the UK and Australia are the only countries to use the term 'adult apprenticeship'. Both countries have significant numbers of apprentices aged 25 or over, many of whom are existing employees when they begin their apprenticeship. Despite the fact that in a number of countries, the starting age for an apprentice has been rising, reflecting the extended nature of youth transitions to the labour market, apprenticeship is still regarded (even in the UK) as a model of work-based learning for young people and, hence, part of initial vocational education and training. Yet, as our statistical evidence has shown, a remarkable number of mature adults in England are participating in some form of apprenticeship. What form their apprenticeship takes and the reasons why their employers have chosen to provide these apprenticeships are the questions that have underpinned this study.

8.2. We have seen in the sections presenting our research findings that adults experience apprenticeship in different ways according to their organisational context. We have also seen that although the term 'apprenticeship' is used by each of the case study organisations, there are clear and substantive differences in how the term is interpreted. Furthermore, within large and medium-sized organisations, workplaces can differ in terms of the way they are configured as learning environments and the way they support apprentices. In order to ensure that our findings can make a robust contribution to the existing literature on and policy debates about 'adult apprenticeship', we now evaluate the case study data using Fuller and Unwin's Expansive – Restrictive (E/R) framework (see inter alia, 2003, 2004a, 2012).[14] This has been developed over a number of years and used by employers and training providers to identify the organisational and pedagogical features that combine to shape the experiences and perceptions of apprentices. Here, we use the E/R framework to:

- illuminate key differences in organisational approaches to adult apprenticeships;
- identify key features of expansive adult apprenticeship;
- develop a set of questions for employers to consider as they design and seek to strengthen their approaches to adult apprenticeship provision.

Expansive – Restrictive Framework

8.3. The value of the E/R Framework (see Figure One, p. 72) is that it can be used by organisations to analyse and reflect on the extent to which their apprenticeship programmes

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[14] The E/R Framework forms the basis of a guide (Fuller and Unwin 2014a) to creating and managing expansive apprenticeships for employers, colleges and training providers published in 2014 by the National Apprenticeship Service and available at: http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/about-us/research.aspx.

exhibit features of 'expansiveness' and to what extent they are slipping towards a more restrictive model. An expansive apprenticeship emerges from a holistic approach so that apprentices are fully embedded in the work, values and culture of an organisation and occupational field. It follows, therefore, that 'expansive' apprenticeships are located in workplaces that also have expansive characteristics. In these environments, all employees are given opportunities to develop and use their skills and knowledge. This means that more experienced employees (and vocational teachers and trainers) understand the importance of passing on their expertise to apprentices. Apprentices are given the opportunity to acquire skills and knowledge that will help them progress in their occupation and provide a platform for further education and career development. They participate in well-planned training and receive constructive feedback. They are assessed in a variety of ways to capture their developing expertise and workplace contribution. They attain a range of types of capabilities that together make them a rounded employee and responsible citizen. A key characteristic of expansive apprenticeship programmes is that apprentices have a dual identity as workers and learners. All organisations are subject to daily pressures as well as longer-term challenges. This makes it hard to sustain expansive workplace conditions and to create expansive apprenticeship.

8.4. Our research findings provide an opportunity to reflect on the E/R Framework's characteristics from the specific perspective of our case studies and to consider how they can be augmented to become more meaningful for organisations developing and providing adult apprenticeships.

8.5. *C1 Apprenticeship develops occupational expertise to a standard recognised by industry (expansive) or skills for a limited job role (restrictive)*

Currently, government-supported apprenticeship is conceived as a job, and its performance is measured in terms of apprentices' attainment of the formal qualifications specified in approved sector frameworks. It has not, hitherto[15], been designed around a strong and shared concept of occupation (Fuller and Unwin 2014b). In sectors with a tradition of recognised industry and professional standards (e.g. in engineering), apprenticeship is more likely to have an occupational focus. In sectors and sub-sectors which lack a tradition of occupational standardisation (e.g. customer service or business administration), apprenticeship is more likely to be aligned with the development of skills for specific job roles designed by individual employers. This contrast is illustrated through our case studies. All apprentices in *Energy* were having an expansive experience, developing occupational expertise in line with industry recognised engineering standards. In comparison, the majority of apprenticeships in the other case studies were less expansive with the primary focus being on the apprentices' ability to perform in their job role. There were, however, notable exceptions, due to the variability within the different workplaces within the case study organisations. For example, in *Social Care*, two male apprentices were based in a rehabilitation centre with a clear occupational career structure and a requirement that permanent employees were qualified to a minimum Level 3. As a consequence, their experience was markedly different to their peers.

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[15] The current apprenticeships reform programme involving employer-led Trailblazers (see http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/standards) may lead to a more occupationally focused approach, but at the time of writing, it is not clear what impact the recommendations will have.

Figure One: The Expansive-Restrictive Framework (Fuller and Unwin 2014a)

Approaches to Apprenticeship
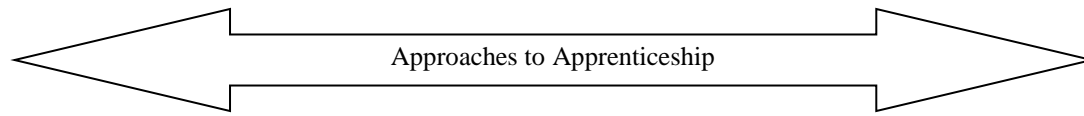
EXPANSIVE CHARACTERISTICS	RESTRICTIVE CHARACTERISTICS
C1 Apprenticeship develops occupational expertise to a standard recognised by industry	Apprenticeship develops skills for a limited job role
C2 Employer understands that Apprenticeship is a platform for career progression and occupational registration	Apprenticeship doesn't build the capacity to progress beyond present job role
C3 Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, apprentice as learner	Status as employee dominates: limited recognition of, and support for, apprentice as learner
C4 Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and is stretched to develop expertise in their occupational field	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of occupational field
C5 Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace	Training restricted to narrowly-defined job role and work station
C6 Apprentice's work tasks and training mapped onto the occupational standard and assessment requirements to ensure they become fully competent	Weak relationship between workplace tasks, the occupational standard and assessment procedures
C7 Apprentice gains qualifications that have labour market currency and support progression to next level (career and/or education)	Apprentice doesn't have the opportunity to gain valuable and portable qualifications
C8 Off-the-job training includes time for reflection and stretches apprentice to reach their full potential	Supporting individual apprentice to fulfil their potential is not seen as a priority
C9 Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning	Apprentice is regarded as a 'blank sheet' or 'empty vessel'
C10 Apprentice's progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach	Apprentice's progress monitored for job performance with limited developmental feedback

8.6. C2 Employer understands that apprenticeship is a platform for career progression and occupational registration (expansive), not solely about building the capacity to fulfil the present job role (restrictive)

Our findings show that the case study organisations can be located across the E/R continuum in relation to this characteristic. At the expansive end, *Energy* is providing an apprenticeship, which acts as a platform for career progression within the business as well as through its articulation with a professional registration ladder. Apprentices are at the start of an occupational journey that can lead eventually to chartered engineer status. *Hospitality* has a strong concept of how apprenticeship (at different levels) maps on to jobs with different levels of seniority. In this regard, it has the potential to move closer to the expansive side of the continuum, but there is scope to develop closer alignment between the apprenticeship and external occupational or professional registration opportunities. In the case of *Transport,* the focus is on strengthening existing employees' capacity to fulfil job roles, which are being extended to require more multi-skilling. There is less of an emphasis here on adult apprenticeship as platform for career progression, hence it is more restrictive with regards to this characteristic.

8.7. C3 Apprentices have dual status as learner and employee (expansive) as opposed to status as employee dominating (restrictive)

In all our case studies, apprentices were being treated as learners as well as employees. However, in practice, the meaning and enactment of this dual status varied. In *NHS Trust* and *Social Care*, most apprentices were recruited from outside the organisation. The status of being a new recruit as well as a newcomer to the apprenticeship programme contributed to a collective organisational recognition that apprentices have both learner and employee identities. In the case of *NHS Trust*, this was reinforced by regular attendance at the Trust's training centre. The recognition of and support for dual status was more limited, however, in *Hospitality*. Apprentices had periodic access to an assessor from the external training provider and to bespoke computer-based training resources, but the onus was mainly on the individual to complete their workbooks in their own time, and to seek help when they felt they needed it. The case of *Energy* once again stood out as apprenticeship is conceived as a learning journey building towards occupational competence. In the other organisations, apprentices were primarily seen as employees who spent some of their time in training and/or being assessed in order to accredit their skills.

8.8. C4 Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive work and is stretched to develop expertise in their occupational field (expansive), rather than being expected to make a fast transition to productive worker (restrictive).

All government-supported apprenticeships are required to take a minimum of 12 months to complete. The recruitment of experienced and, therefore, productive existing employees to an apprenticeship disrupts the notion that all individuals will take the same length of time to achieve the mandatory qualifications. Our evidence shows that adhering to the 12-month requirement means that organisations have to artificially delay completion for some apprentices. At the other end of the spectrum, *Energy's* apprenticeship is designed to take three years, enabling participants to gain a rounded understanding of the business and to develop the necessary knowledge and skills required to operate competently in the occupational field as well as within the organisation.

73

8.9. C5 Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace (expansive), rather than training being restricted to the demands of a narrowly-defined job role and work station (restrictive)

In the case of *Energy*, apprentices were participating in the workplace, the organisation's residential training centre, and training provided by an FE college. Apprentices in *Transport* and *NHS Trust* were able to visit specialist in-house training centres as well as learning in the workplace. In contrast, for apprentices in *Social Care* and *Hospitality*, their workplace was the sole community of practice, with trainers/assessors from the external training provider visiting them at work. Our key informants at *Hospitality* recognised the restrictive nature of a solely workplace-based apprenticeship and are developing more off-the-job training events for apprentices to attend.

8.10. C6 Apprentice's work tasks and training are mapped onto the occupational standard and assessment requirements to ensure they become fully competent (expansive) as opposed to a more weakly articulated relationship between work tasks, training and assessment (restrictive)

The key factor in producing a more or less expansive experience in relation to this characteristic was the involvement of supervisors, trainers and mentors in supporting apprentices' learning and facilitating their understanding about the relationship between the training, assessment, work tasks and progression. In the main, the apprentices in our sample could see the relevance of the apprenticeship content and assessment to their work. This was more problematic, however, in *Hospitality* where the tasks outlined in the apprenticeship units were viewed by apprentices as reflections of 'common sense' or reminders of correct processes rather than as significant new learning and where, as a consequence, assessment was seen to be validating what they already knew. A striking contrast, across the case studies, came in the apprentices' experiences of the English and maths components of the apprenticeship. Apprentices generally valued the opportunity to refresh and improve their skills in these areas. For example, in *Energy*, the requirement to attain mathematical competence at advanced level (L3) was recognised as integral to the development of occupational expertise. In *Social Care, Transport* and *Hospitality,* some apprentices were spending time outside work improving their English and maths in order to pass online tests. They reported having a sense of achievement in completing this aspect of the programme successfully, recognising the increasing relevance of these skills in the workplace (and also, for some apprentices, in their personal lives) and as a platform for further progression.

8.11. C7 Apprentice gains qualifications that have labour market currency and support progression to the next level (expansive), or those that have limited value and portability (restrictive)

Organisations running adult apprenticeships can offer them at Levels 2 and 3, and, in the case of Higher Apprenticeships, at 4 and beyond. In theory, therefore, the government-supported apprenticeship programme provides a means for individuals to progress up the levels. However, the close association between apprenticeship and a job role means that it is not automatic for apprentices completing one level to be able to progress to the next. The currency of qualifications available through apprenticeship frameworks is variable, particularly in terms of progression up the educational levels and in terms of wider labour market and educational recognition and portability (see Fuller and Unwin 2012 for a detailed review). In this regard, the apprentices in *Energy* are in the strongest position. Their

'expansive' apprenticeship gives them access to Level 3 knowledge-based qualifications that carry UCAS points (BTEC L3 Diploma) and have currency within the occupational labour market of engineering. In the cases of *Hospitality* and *NHS Trust*, both organisations have developed internal alignments between apprenticeship and job levels, enabling apprentices to see how attainment of the qualifications at one level could provide a platform for career progression within the operation of an internal (organisationally specific) labour market (and where jobs at the next level were available). In the cases of *Social Care* and *Transport,* internal alignment was variable and, hence, they were located towards the restrictive end of the continuum with regard to this characteristic.

8.12. *C8 Off-the-job training includes time for reflection and stretches the apprentice to reach their full potential (expansive), in contrast to this not being seen as a priority (restrictive)*

The positioning of most of our apprentices as productive employees (albeit with varying levels of dual status as learners) meant that apprenticeship was designed and enacted as a largely on-the-job programme. Again, *Energy* provides the exception, with its structured pattern of block-release training provided in its residential centre allowing apprentices from across the business to come together for study purposes. Opportunities were limited in the other organisations creating a more restrictive apprenticeship experience as the demands of 'doing the job' came first.

8.13. *C9 Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued, and used as a platform for new learning (expansive), as opposed to the individual being regarded as a 'blank sheet' (restrictive).*

This characteristic is particularly pertinent from the perspective of adult apprentices, who, as this report has shown, usually have substantial work and employment experience and, in many cases, also have lengthy employment service with the organisation (and in the same job role) in which they are doing their apprenticeship. In this scenario, the importance of recognising apprentices' existing knowledge and skills becomes highly relevant. The evidence from our case studies indicated a mixed picture. In *Hospitality* and *Transport*, many apprentices felt that they were not engaged in substantial new learning. Alternatively, in *Social Care*, some apprentices felt that their prior experience and maturity had been a key factor in their selection, as these are important characteristics for working in the care sector. The *NHS Trust* also appeared to value maturity as an important attribute for the recruitment of health care assistants (who were then placed on apprenticeship programmes). In *Energy*, where apprentices aged 25 and over formed a small minority within a much larger cohort of younger apprentices, the maturity and experience of the older apprentices was regarded (by apprentices and managers) as a benefit to the group as a whole. Older apprentices were valued for increasing diversity and for providing opportunities for inter-generational support. The challenge here is for trainers and supervisors to ensure that the different kinds of knowledge and experience attributed to younger and older apprentices is understood and utilised.

8.14. *C10 Apprentice's progress closely monitored and involves regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel who take a holistic approach (expansive), compared with progress monitored for job performance with limited developmental feedback (restrictive).*

At the expansive end of the continuum, *Energy* ensured that each apprentice had a workplace mentor responsible for supporting their day-to-day learning and development and providing

regular feedback. This was in addition to the planned and structured approach to off-the-job training, which provided the resources and time to monitor apprentices' progress as well as further opportunities for feedback. In contrast with this integrated approach, it was more typical in the other case study organisations for feedback on workplace performance and feedback on performance in the apprenticeship to be handled separately and not to be as 'joined up', leading to a more restrictive experience. In *Hospitality* and *Transport*, for example, the individual's progress on their apprenticeship was managed by a dedicated team, which operated outside normal line management structures in the workplace. Members of the learning and development team (*Transport*) or external training provider (*Hospitality*) take responsibility for monitoring apprentices' progress through the programme. The individual's line manager is responsible for monitoring the apprentice's on-the-job performance. In the case of *Social Care*, primary responsibility for monitoring progress lay with representatives from the external training provider who then discussed any matters arising from their review of an apprentice with the relevant line managers. In *NHS Trust*, more senior colleagues acted as workplace assessors and fed their assessments of apprentices' performance into the overall monitoring exercise undertaken by the Staff Development unit. Whilst there was a much stronger sense of an integrated approach here, some apprentices were frustrated by the fact that their assessors didn't have sufficient time within their own busy workloads to carry out progress reviews, which often resulted in a disrupted monitoring and assessment process.

Using the E/R Framework in Adult Apprenticeship

8.15. As we have stressed throughout this report, the differences between the way in which the case study organisations conceive and run apprenticeships for people aged 25 and over are related to sector, size, product market, business histories and cultures, and, in particular, business goals. Apprenticeship is a highly contextualised model of learning and, as such, should and will provide different experiences and outcomes for its participants. This should not mean, however, that 'anything goes'. That apprenticeship continues to have a shared meaning across societies round the world rests on an understanding that it involves an individual taking a supported journey whereby they gain the expertise necessary to work within an occupational field and build a platform of sufficient knowledge and skills to progress further. This poses a considerable challenge for employers who want to upskill their existing employees and accredit them for skills and knowledge they already possess. For an apprenticeship to be meaningful for an individual as well as their employer and to justify investment from the public purse, this report argues that employers and their training partners need to address how they might develop the characteristics that are central to an 'expansive' apprenticeship. To that end, we now propose a set of questions for organisations to consider:

Questions for adult apprentice employers

- If apprentices are existing employees, what additionality is being achieved by the apprenticeship over and above the accreditation of existing competences and how are their existing knowledge and skills being built on?
- Do managers and trainers understand the different kinds of knowledge and experience attributed to younger and older apprentices and how these can be utilised to support inter-generational learning?
- Is there sufficient time allocated for the development of new skills and knowledge to enable your apprentices to progress beyond their immediate job role and/or to take on higher levels of responsibility?

- If job roles in your organisation are pegged to specific grades, will the apprenticeship enable individuals to progress to higher grades?
- Do managers within the organisation understand the purpose of apprenticeship for older employees and the implications for the type and amount of productive work they are expected to perform?
- What do you want the apprenticeship to achieve that is over and above and different from your standard workforce development activities?
- Do the mandatory English and maths requirements of the government-supported apprenticeship provide a vehicle for identifying latent potential in your workforce and a means for motivating older workers who have been reluctant to engage with training for upskilling and/or retraining purposes?

8.16. The research findings and analysis of approaches to adult apprenticeship using the E/R Framework have enabled us to explore and draw conclusions in relation to the four hypotheses outlined at the start of our study. They confirm:

Hypothesis 1: that the nature and quality of adult apprenticeships varies in relation to the organisational and occupational context. Our research has also shown, however, that employers need to recognise that variability can occur within their organisations and, hence, some of their apprentices will be experiencing a more restrictive apprenticeship than they intended.

Hypothesis 2: that the availability of expansive adult apprenticeships is more likely to occur in sectors with a strong occupationally focused approach to workforce development, such as engineering, than in sectors where apprenticeship is aligned with job roles. Our research has also shown, however, that there is considerable scope within all sectors to use apprenticeship as a model of learning for upskilling and retraining the adult workforce.

Hypothesis3: that those adults who have been recruited to an apprenticeship in the form of a new job rather than as existing employees are likely to benefit more from the experience in terms of acquiring new skills and knowledge and greater satisfaction as learners. Our research has also shown, however, that this is because some employers (and their training partners) have adopted the term 'apprenticeship' to cover a range of work-based training activities including, in particular, assessing and accrediting existing competences rather than as a model for the development of substantive new skills and knowledge (see Hypothesis 4).

Hypothesis 4: that adult apprenticeship programmes are more likely to be of benefit to employers and individuals when employers are taking an active role as opposed to relying heavily on a training provider. Our research has shown that where training providers play a dominant role, this tends to be because the so-called apprenticeship is largely a vehicle for the accreditation of existing competence, albeit with some additional training to meet the English and maths requirements.

Summary of Key Findings

8.17. This study has shown that many adults across a range of sectors, regions and employment contexts want access to training opportunities so that they can improve their career and life chances. Moreover, many adults believe they have the expertise, experience and potential to make a productive contribution to their places of work and to the economy more generally. These findings point to a latent demand from adults for training and qualifications (including in English, maths and ICT) to support the fulfilment of their career

aspirations. The government-supported apprenticeship programme could be a major vehicle for providing those opportunities and for enabling employers to achieve their business goals.

8.18. As we noted in Section 2, the OECD (2013) conceives prime working age as an extended period from age 25 through to age 54. The accounts of our adult apprentices endorse this view, with respondents from their late twenties through to their fifties talking enthusiastically about their personal development and career aspirations. However, our evidence also suggests that the OECD's drawing of the boundary at 54 is too crude. Whilst a couple of our older male apprentices in *Transport* seemed to be content with their current status with little ambition for advancement, others in their fifties such as Sonia (*Hospitality*) had clear career goals and were looking for further training and experience in order to progress to managerial or professional roles.

8.19. We also noted in Section 2, Walker and Maltby's (2012) use of the concept of 'successful ageing' as a means to challenge the traditional linear segregation of education, work and employment. They call for a more integrated understanding of how these activities can span and be woven through the whole adult life course, suggesting the importance of a public policy focus on health, well-being and engagement with life. Our findings support this argument. First, apprentices in our sample had diverse educational, employment and life experiences and it was not possible to predict their reaction to the opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship on the basis of their age, gender or background. Second, there was a desire from many of our apprentices to have access to career and learning opportunities throughout the life course. This was generally reinforced by organisational key informants who did not perceive age as a barrier to learning new skills, gaining formal qualifications or career progression (Section 6). The variety of experiences and perspectives of the adult apprentices in our study illustrated how problematic the traditional linear model of transition (education-work-retirement) has become (Vickerstaff and Cox 2005).

8.20. Nonetheless, being given the opportunity to participate in an apprenticeship, particularly as an older adult, had generated mixed feelings amongst our participants. The association of apprenticeship with school leavers or young people reflected the pervasive influence of age norms and perceptions of age-appropriate behaviour. Several of our respondents had to overcome negative feelings about starting an apprenticeship. Key informants were sensitive to this, suggesting that giving the programme a more neutral name was one way of overcoming resistance. The positive attitude towards adult apprenticeship displayed by managers challenged a dominant view in the literature that there is a gap between espoused policies on older workers, which indicate compliance with anti-age discrimination, and the workplace processes and practices which fall short. Our case studies provided evidence to counter the notion of a gap as we came across a number of what McBride (2011) called 'enthusiastic local actors' who provided strong and sustained encouragement and support to adult apprentices. In the *NHS Trust*, to some extent mirroring McBride's own study, it was learning and development professionals who had a positive effect on apprentices. In another example, *Transport*, it was a Union Learning Representative and staff in the longstanding adult education facility who performed this role.

8.21. Another important theme emerging from our review of the literature was the way in which males and females within similar life stages and ages are regarded differently in the workplace. Of particular interest is the insight that women of prime working age are more likely than their male peers to be working 'below their potential', under-utilising their skills and qualifications whereas this state was only associated with young or pre-retirement males. Our evidence on this issue was mixed. There were examples of women (e.g. Rebecca,

Hospitality) who conceived her employment in the pub primarily in terms of its flexibility, allowing her to work her part-time hours around her parenting and domestic responsibilities. Alternatively, Sally and Sarah (*Transport*) were frustrated at what they perceived to be limited career opportunities in the organisation following successful completion of their apprenticeships.

8.22. This study has enabled us, therefore, to explore and illuminate the complexities and dynamics of the relationship between ageing, training, work and career in the context of government-supported adult apprenticeship in England. An important contribution made by our case study evidence is the role of the workplace, organisational structure and culture and approach to workforce development in shaping key informants' and apprentices' experiences and perceptions of the benefits and challenges of the apprenticeship programme. The detailed analysis of the experiences and perspectives of our managers and apprentices in our case studies have helped build a richer picture of lived-workplace experiences and their meanings for individuals. Bringing the voices of adult apprentices, and their managers and trainers into the debate, challenges some of the key findings of the extant literature on older workers and training, opening up research questions and avenues for future exploration.

8.23. As the case studies have shown, organisations in both the public and private sector are experiencing serious challenges in relation to the retention of skilled workers. There is a growing awareness amongst employers that they need to upskill and retrain their existing workforces in order to stay competitive. For some employers employing and training older workers helps fulfil their commitment to demonstrating corporate social responsibility and engagement with their local populations. The elasticity of the government's apprenticeship programme means that it can be stretched to apply to this diverse range of purposes.

8.24. Yet, the flexibility which government currently affords employers and training providers has led to a visible lack of consistency in the quality and substance of apprenticeships. Some adult apprentices interviewed for this study have experienced little more than the accreditation of their existing knowledge and skills, with a distinct absence of significant new learning. For others, apprenticeship has provided a substantial learning journey enabling the development of new levels of occupational expertise and building a platform for further progression. We argue that this lack of consistency is a problem, both in terms of the potential wasting of public money, and because, as our case studies show, some organisations are missing the opportunity to fully capitalise on the value of apprenticeship for long-term workforce development and, hence, the improvement of their businesses.

8.25. The organisational and individual evidence from our research demonstrates that apprenticeship is not easy to organise and deliver in the contemporary economy. Production imperatives and the pressures of competition make most forms of training a low level priority for many employers. Yet, as this study suggests, there is a considerable desire to make adult apprenticeship work. The key informants in our case study organisations gave a great deal of valuable time to discuss and debate ideas with us about how to improve their apprenticeship programmes. They deserve more support and a more enabling policy environment that acknowledges the importance of a commitment to a more robust concept of apprenticeship.

8.26.   The report demonstrates that employers and training providers could benefit from using the analytical power of Fuller and Unwin's Expansive-Restrictive Framework to evaluate how far their current 'apprenticeship' programmes actually equate to acknowledged apprenticeship characteristics.

Recommendations for policy and practice

1. The term 'Apprenticeship' is being misused. Fresh thinking, involving employers, providers and trades unions is needed to develop appropriate forms of publicly funded training to meet adult employees' demands for upskilling and retraining.
2. Government should review the current reliance on the achievement of qualifications as the measure that training has occurred. Accrediting adults for existing skills is worthwhile, but should not be classed as an apprenticeship. Adults value qualifications when they provide access to new learning.
3. Employers and providers are working together to meet the needs and build on the potential of an ageing workforce. This best practice needs showcasing and using as the catalyst for new approaches.
4. Adults want to improve their maths, English and ICT skills. Employers, providers and trades unions should be supported by government to meet this demand by ensuring that all forms of publicly funded training include opportunities to improve and practise these skills in the workplace.
5. Training providers and trades unions should use the considerable potential they have to ensure that adult apprenticeships involve substantial training.
6. Government and other stakeholders should review the extent to which publicly funded apprenticeship should challenge gender occupational stereotyping and lead to career progression for women and men.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A
Advisory Group

The following policy and practice experts contributed as members of the project advisory group during the course of the research.

Fiona Aldridge   NIACE
Chris Ball   TAEN (The Age and Employment Network)
Christopher Brook   Age UK
Fred Grindrod   TUC/Unionlearn
Benita Holmes   National Apprenticeship Service
Kirsi Kekki   TUC/Unionlearn
Katerina Rudiger   CIPD

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<u>**Does apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprenticeships in England**</u>
<u>**Interview schedule for Apprentices**</u>
<u>First interview</u>
(After opening explanation and thanks). This interview is designed to give you the opportunity to talk about how you came to be doing an apprenticeship in this organisation. This is your story - there are no right or wrong answers!

I will begin by asking you the following question and you can answer it in any way you like, starting at any point in your life: Please tell me the story of how you came to be doing an apprenticeship in this organisation. Was there a particular moment you remember?

Thank you for sharing your story with me, and just to reassure you that what you have said will be transcribed and stored in a file which is accessible only to the research team and will not be linked to your name. Any research outputs will be anonymised and so will not contain your own or your organisation's name.
I would like to take ten minutes to read through my notes so that I can ask you to tell me more about some of the things you have said. While I am doing this I would be grateful if you could complete this short form.

Thank you. I would like to reassure that the form will not have your name linked with it, and instead I will allocate a unique number for future reference.

Researcher picks up questions from narrative and concludes interview by asking for employment and education/training history if not already revealed through narrative.
Thank you once again for your time today. I hope you will be willing to continue with the study, and if you are happy to meet me again for second interview, then I will arrange this for (six months' time).
Before we meet again, I would like you to complete a 'learning log', which is designed to give us a further understanding of your work and learning environment. (An example is attached here). Each weekly log will take less than 10 minutes to complete, and requires mainly tick-box responses and comments where indicated. Once again I would stress that there are no right or wrong answers and the aim of the 'learning log' is to record an account of your experiences and activities in

connection with the apprenticeship (over a four-week period). You are free to decide which four-week period you choose, however I would ask you to return the completed log to me at the end of each week, using the envelopes provided and no later than (set date for one month prior to second interview).

<u>Closing pleasantries</u>

<u>Second interview</u>

The second interview encounter (which takes place approximately six months after the first interview) adopts a semi-structured approach, and the following questions are indicative, however will be informed by what apprentices have recorded in their 'learning logs':

1.Could you tell me about your main duties and responsibilities?

2.How would you describe a typical day?

3.To give me an idea of where your job fits in the organisational structure, could you tell me about the following:

      Who you report to?

      Are you part of a team?

4.Could you tell me about the kind of training you have had, for example:

      Going to college

      Going to an external training provider

      Attending training sessions run by your employer

      Receiving on-the-job training from a colleague

      Having one-to-one coaching with a mentor?

      Completing course/apprenticeship work-books

      Doing any other kind of training or learning not listed above.

5.How much did you know about apprenticeships?

6.Had you ever thought about doing an apprenticeship before, at an earlier stage in your life?

7.Did you know any friends or family who had done apprenticeships?

8.Who did you talk to about doing an apprenticeship?

9.Did you have any expectations about the type of people that might undertake an apprenticeship?

10.Did you have any expectation as far as the qualifications you would obtain?

11.Did you have any expectations of the kind of training you would be given?

      Have these been met so far?

      Were there any surprises?

      Were there any disappointments?

12.How would you describe the training you have had in terms of its:

      Relevance to the job you are doing now;

      Providing skills for future employment;

      Providing a platform for promotion

      Enjoyment.

13.How would you describe the experience of being in a training environment?

14.Has the training changed the way you do your job?

15.Have you learnt new skills through any other ways – for example, from others doing the same kind of work?

16.Are there any other opportunities for you to learn in (the organisation)?

17.Do you have the opportunity to teach others in (the organisation)?

18.Can you give me some background to this organisation-what is it like to work and train here?
19.How does it compare to other organisations you have worked in?
20.Does the type of sector-private or public-make a difference do you think?
21.Can you tell me a little more about the particular department or section you are in? Who does what?
22.How would you describe your employer's support as far as your training needs?
23.Is your line manager/supervisor aware of how your training is progressing?
24.Generally speaking, do you think your employer is seen as supportive of training?
25.Do you think training is seen as adding value to the organisation?
26.Do you think training benefits you as an individual?
27.Do you think some groups have greater opportunities for training than others?
28.Are things the same for men and women do you think?
29.Are you aware of any opportunities for training or development after completing your apprenticeship?
30.Is your family supportive? (if they have a family!)
31.Do you see your apprenticeship as influencing your future work plans?
32.Could you imagine working in a different role or organisation?
33.Do you think you might take any further qualifications or training?
34.Thinking about your experience of the apprenticeship so far, would you recommend it to a friend?
35.What advice would you give them if they were undecided if it was right for them?
Finally, would you be happy to be contacted in the future if we were doing further research?

Does apprenticeship work for adults? The experience of adult apprentices in England.

Indicative questions for Line Managers/Supervisors

1. Could you start by telling me something about your role as a line manager/supervisor?
2. Could you tell me about the types of apprentices you are responsible for?
3. Are there any particular observations you would make in terms of managing apprentices of different age groups?
4. Do you think there are any special age-related considerations that need to be thought about – for example, as far as your communication style?
5. Do you think age is an important factor in terms of the way that work is allocated?
6. Do you think gender is an issue at all?
7. Can you think of any challenges you have faced when managing groups of older and younger apprentices?
8. Do you think a varied age dynamic provides a positive contribution to your team?
9. Do they all get on, or do different groups emerge?
10. When thinking about managing teams, do you think other kinds of difference between participants are more important?
11. Can you tell me how you keep up-to-date with individual's progress during their apprenticeship?
12. Are you asked to help with problems or issues that arise?
13. Who do you turn to when you are unable to help?
14. What happens when an apprenticeship is completed?
15. Does the organisation offer any training to help you manage apprentices?
16. Do you know how to advise apprentices about their opportunities after completing their apprenticeship?
17. Do you have any thoughts on the policy and approach towards apprenticeships in this country?
18. What advice would you give to David Cameron and his government?

Project Information Sheet

Study Title: Does apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprenticeships in England

What is the research about?

Traditionally, apprenticeships have been associated with young people, and in particular the transitions made from school to work.   This project, which is funded by the Nuffield Foundation, is investigating the experiences of apprentices in England who are aged 25 and over. Since the launch of the 'adult apprenticeship' programme in England in 2005, the numbers of adult apprentices have risen sharply. There were over 200,000 adults starting government-supported apprenticeships in 2012. However, we know very little about the population of adult apprentices and their experiences. This project seeks to fill that gap.

We will conduct our research in a range of public and private sector organisations where adult apprentices are employed. We will develop five organisational case studies, in order to provide a holistic picture of apprenticeships in the workplace. We will employ various methods including interviews with key policy-makers, observing the day to day activities of apprentices and conducting interviews with apprentices, trainer and managers, as well as analysing publicly available documents concerning apprenticeships and the organisations in which these are offered. The study will generate a rich account of the everyday reality of how apprenticeships are experienced in a range of organisations and the reasons why employers participate in apprenticeship programmes.

We will organise an event in conjunction with the Nuffield Foundation to present our findings to a national audience. We will utilise the potential and capacity of social media, including Twitter and Facebook, to disseminate the project's outcomes to the wider community.

Research Team:

Dr Gayna Davey, University of Southampton

Professor Alison Fuller, University of Southampton[16]

Professor Pauline Leonard, University of Southampton

Professor Lorna Unwin, Institute of Education, University of London

For further details and enquiries about the project, please contact:

Dr Gayna Davey

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[16] Alison Fuller moved to the Institute of Education, University of London in September 2013

Participant Information Sheet (Apprentices)

Study Title: Does apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprenticeships in England.

Research Team: Dr Gayna Davey, Professor Alison Fuller and Professor Pauline Leonard (University of Southampton), Professor Lorna Unwin (Institute of Education, University of London).

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

Traditionally, apprenticeships have been associated with young people, and in particular the transitions made from school to work. This project, which is funded by the Nuffield Foundation, is investigating the recent and rapidly increasingly phenomena of the 'adult apprentice'. We want to explore how apprenticeships are experienced and perceived, gaining views from apprentices like yourself and those involved in the scheme due to their role within this organisation.

Why have I been chosen?

Your organisation has been chosen as one of five case studies across England. We are contacting you as an adult apprentice and hope you will share your experiences, views and perceptions with us.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to an initial one-to-one interview and a second, approximately six months afterwards. The first interview will last around an hour and a half and the second is anticipated to last no more than an hour. Finally, so we can understand your day-to-day experience of the apprenticeship, we would ask you to complete a 'learning log' for a four-week period. A copy of the 'learning log' is attached and as you will see it mostly requires a box ticking, and some space for your comments. Because we are interested in your experiences, views and perceptions there are no right or wrong answers; we just want to gain an understanding of what apprenticeship means for you and how it all works in practice.

A researcher will contact you and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about the project and your involvement. The researcher will explain how the information you provide will be treated and stored confidentially, and that you will not be named in any reporting process. You will be invited to read and sign a consent form to indicate that you have understood what is involved and your right to withdraw from the process at any time, and without giving any explanation.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?
Your involvement will contribute to the quality and usefulness of the research findings and outcomes.

Are there any risks involved?
There are no risks involved.

Will my participation by confidential?
Your interview will be recorded and transcribed and this record will be kept strictly confidential, on password-protected computer files which are accessible only to members of the research team. The recording of your interview is only to make it easier for researchers to transcribe the content of the interview and the recordings will not be available to anyone outside the project team. Any recordings or transcriptions will be stored in accordance with University of Southampton's Research Governance Procedures. As required by the Data Protection Act, we will not pass on any person-identifiable data to any external agency. We will write a report for the project and we will also use the research for articles in academic and professional journals. Any references in reports and articles to data gathered will be anonymised - no reference will be made to you or your organisation by name.

What happens if I change my mind?
Your participation in this research is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the process at any time. If you do so, all record of the information you have provided will be destroyed and it will not be referred to in the research.

What happens if I have a complaint?
In the event that you have any concerns or complaints about the way the research has been conducted, please contact: Professor Ros Edwards (R.S.Edwards@soton.ac.uk)

Where can I get more information?
A project information sheet is attached, which gives more details about the research. A member of the research team will be happy to answer any further questions, and in the first instance please contact Dr Gayna Davey (Research Fellow).

CONSENT FORM

Does Apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprentices in England. This form aims to ensure that you consent to take part in the project and that you agree with the ways in which the information that you give us today will be stored and used. Please read this information carefully and if you agree with all the points, print your name and sign below.

I understand and agree that:

My participation in this study is voluntary and that if I wish to withdraw from the study or to stop the interview, I may do so at any time without giving any reasons.

Please tick & initial

Information given will be treated confidentially and anonymously.

Please tick & initial

I understand that my response will be anonymised in reports of the research.

Please tick & initial

I have been given the opportunity to ask any additional questions that I have had about the project and what I am expected to do and these questions have been answered by a member of the project team.

Please tick & initial

I consent to being contacted again during the project for clarification of points raised in the meeting.

Yes□
No□
□

I, _____, have read and understood the above information and agree to participate in this project: **Does Apprenticeship work for adults? The experiences of adult apprentices in England.**

Name _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _   Signature _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

Date _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _