

Increasing Employer Engagement in Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeships: Final Project Report

By Construction Youth Trust



Funder:

Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)

Funder contact:

Nick Edwards (Contract Manager)

Project start date:

1st March 2018

Project end date:

30th April 2020

Construction Youth Trust lead contact:

Deavon Sinclair

CITB Levy Paying Partner:

Kier

Date of project report submission:

| August 2020



Project Summary:

'Increasing Employer Engagement in Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeships' is a CITB-funded project working to increase the understanding, interest, and take-up of higher level apprenticeships in the construction sector.

The project was managed by Construction Youth Trust in partnership with Kier and supported by over 200 volunteers from 24 employers within the construction sector. Over the two year project span, events were delivered that engaged 2,012 students and 241 influencers (parents, guardians, and teachers) to inform and excite them about higher level apprenticeships.

In addition to recruitment work carried out directly by Kier, Construction Youth Trust and their supporters provided 1-to-1 long-term mentoring to 136 students who sought to secure a higher level apprenticeship in the sector. Mentoring provided personalised careers guidance and opportunities to engage with employers recruiting apprentices.

Delivering events and 1-to-1 mentoring has helped the Trust to identify effective methods for inspiring young people and their influencers about higher level apprenticeships in the construction sector. By working with socio-economically disadvantaged young people and groups currently underrepresented in the construction industry (young women and those from BAME backgrounds), the project has developed and piloted methods for connecting the construction industry with a more diverse recruitment pool. The project has also identified and explored current barriers to increasing apprenticeship take-up amongst young people.

Introduction:

In 2017, CITB estimated that the industry needed to attract over 36,000 new recruits every year for five years¹ to meet the construction sector's increasing skills shortage. In support of CITB's estimation, the Chartered Institute of Building surveyed 276 UK construction companies to identify specific occupations experiencing, or likely to experience, skills shortages in the industry². Based on this survey, the following professions were indicated as shortage occupations: quantity surveyor, civil engineer, chartered surveyor, construction project manager - each of which typically require a higher level qualification to enter. Higher level qualifications are classed as Level 4 and above, and have been traditionally achieved through the successful completion of a university course. However, when the Government launched its new vision for apprenticeship in 2015, new apprenticeships standards began to emerge as an attractive learn-and-earn pathway to higher level qualifications including degrees and professional status in many industries, including construction.

Amid a trade and professional skills shortage, the construction industry has also faced scrutiny over a perceived lack of diversity within the workforce. In 2016, the Construction Industry Council surveyed the demographics of those working in construction³, finding that only 11.3% of 91,308 individuals were from BAME backgrounds and only 14.2% of 207,564 individuals were female. When the figures are compared to the national UK workforce⁴, where 20% of those employed in 2018 are from a BAME background and 47% are women, a clear lack of diversity within the construction sector is apparent.

In addition to sector-specific challenges, the entire UK workforce is facing increasing pressure to improve social mobility. Socio-economically disadvantaged young people face significantly more barriers to reaching higher-paying senior roles than their financially better-off peers. In fact, only 1 out of 8 children from low-income backgrounds are likely to become a high-income earner as an adult⁵. A child living in one of England's most disadvantaged areas is 27 times more likely to go to an inadequate school than a child in the most advantaged areas⁴, which can limit a young person's access to comprehensive careers guidance and opportunities.

Higher level apprenticeships can be a powerful vehicle for social mobility, helping socio-economically disadvantaged young people overcome intrinsic barriers to class and economic progression. This is because, through an apprenticeship, many of the financial costs associated with gaining a higher level qualification are borne by the employer. Tuition fees are paid by the employer (usually via the apprenticeship levy) as opposed to the individual, and the individual will be paid a wage for the role they undertake during their apprenticeship. Each of the aforementioned construction industry professional shortage roles, identified by The Chartered Institute of Building's 2019 survey, are accessible through a higher level apprenticeship. Employing a young person on an apprenticeship also provides a company with a 'green' employee that they can mould to best fit their company

¹ 'Achievers and Leaver: Barriers and opportunities for people entering construction', published in 2017 by CITB, <https://www.citb.co.uk/documents/final%20achievers%20and%20leavers%20report.pdf.pdf>

² 'Shortage occupations in construction: A cross-industry research report', published in 2019 by The Chartered Institute of Building, <https://policy.ciob.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Shortage-Occupations-in-Construction-A-cross-industry-research-report-January-2019.pdf>

³ 'Construction Industry Council 'A Blueprint for Change'', published in 2016, <http://cic.org.uk/networks-and-committees/diversity-panel.php>

⁴ Data from Annual Population Survey in *Employment*, published in 2019 by Office for National Statistics, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/employment/employment/latest>

⁵ 'State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain', published in 2016 by Social Mobility Commission, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/state-of-the-nation-report-on-social-mobility-in-great-britain>

Despite the outlined economic benefits to young people, there is a notable lack of interest in and take-up of higher level apprenticeships amongst this group, with those under-25 comprising just 26% of higher level apprenticeships in 2016/17⁶. A 2019 survey of 538 students revealed that the large majority of young people view higher level apprenticeships as a ‘second-class’ option to gaining a university degree through the traditional full time pathway⁷.

Many young people also face parental pressures that push them towards the preconceived ‘traditional’ university pathway. CITB’s 2017 ‘Achievers and Leavers’ report revealed that whilst 92% of parents they spoke with viewed apprenticeships as a “good option”, only 32% thought this would be a suitable option for their own children¹. A survey of 1,000 parents of 11-18 year olds found that just 20% were even aware of higher level apprenticeships, decreasing to 10% for parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds⁸. This research helps to explain the current lack of take-up of higher level apprenticeships amongst young people and indicates that those who could benefit the most from the social mobility potential of higher level apprenticeships are likely the least informed of this route.

The research data referenced highlighted a need to introduce, inform and attract young people and their influencers to the higher level apprenticeships pathway. In light of this, Construction Youth Trust (the Trust) approached Kier, a company who have shown repeated commitment to offering higher level apprenticeships to young people, to develop a proposal for CITB funding that would target young people, specifically encouraging participation from young women, individuals from BAME backgrounds, and socio-economically disadvantaged young people through a series of meaningful engagements with the wider construction sector. This proposal would ultimately result in participants securing higher level apprenticeship positions with various organisations in the sector.

The Trust were primed for this approach because of their extensive history of successful engagement with inner-city secondary schools in London and North Kent, as well as their excellent relationships with construction companies that would facilitate the necessary industry collaboration. CITB approved funding for the delivery of the ‘Increasing Employer Engagement in Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeships’ project in 2018.

⁶ Data from Department for Education in ‘*Spotlight On... Apprenticeships and Social Mobility*’, published in 2017 by Skills Commission, https://www.policyconnect.org.uk/sc/sites/site_sc/files/report/469/fieldreportdownload/aspotlightonapprenticeshipsocialmobilityweb.pdf

⁷ ‘*The Future of Degree Apprenticeships*’, published in 2019 by Universities UK, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/future-degree-apprenticeships.pdf>

⁸ ‘*The Age of Apprenticeships 2017*’ published in 2017 by Chartered Management Institute, <https://www.managers.org.uk/insights/research/current-research/2017/august/the-age-of-apprenticeships>



Aims:

- Design and deliver activities that will increase the appeal of the construction industry amongst young people, identifying effective ways of promoting construction careers and successfully attracting young talent
- Prioritise engagement from young women, those from BAME backgrounds, and socio-economically disadvantaged young people
- Increase take-up of higher level apprenticeships in construction, particularly young women, BAME & socio-economically disadvantaged young people.
- Develop resources and good practice guidance for employers

As agreed with CITB, a measurement of success would be based on the achievement of the following project deliverables:

Project Deliverable	Minimum Target
Young people to take part in engagement activities	400
Influencers to take part in engagement activities	150
Young people to receive progression support	100
Young people to have site visits	150
Young people to take part in work experience	25
Apprenticeships applied for	60
Apprenticeships secured	45
Best practice guide	Completed by September 2019

Approach:

To achieve the project aims and ultimately identify effective methods for increasing the interest and take-up of higher level apprenticeships in the construction sector amongst young people, the Trust identified three key approaches:

1. Improving awareness of the sector and apprenticeship pathways

A lack of awareness of the construction sector and its career opportunities was identified as a key barrier to a young person's interest in the industry. To understand the most effective way to improve awareness, the Trust would develop 'briefing' activities that would inform young people about careers in construction and higher level apprenticeships specifically. These events would promote the opportunities available in the industry and provide a young person with the understanding required to pursue a higher level apprenticeship, including what opportunities are available and how to pursue them.

Within this approach, the Trust also recognised the importance of challenging the negative myths and misconceptions held about the construction sector and apprenticeship pathways specifically. Part of this would require securing support from those who influence a young person's career choices (parents and teachers), whose own negative perceptions can act as a barrier to a young person's pursuit of an apprenticeship in construction. Working with teachers would also help to ensure higher level apprenticeships are better promoted in schools in the future.

Throughout these 'briefing' activities, the Trust would work with inner-city schools that typically have higher BAME populations, as well as schools with higher numbers of students receiving free school meals - a statistic that is indicative of socio-economic disadvantage. By doing this, the Trust would identify effective methods for engaging these demographics of young people specifically.

2. 'Levelling the playing field'

Young people entering an apprenticeship directly from school can be underprepared for the requirements of the apprenticeship recruitment process. A lack of understanding or experience of completing a job application, attending an interview, or participating in an assessment centre can severely limit a young person's chance of success at each stage. There is also a growing awareness that traditional recruitment practices can inadvertently disadvantage young people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In order to 'level the playing field', the Trust would offer a programme of 1-to-1 mentoring and support for secondary school students seeking to secure an apprenticeship in the construction sector, prioritising under-represented groups and socio-economically disadvantaged young people. This mentoring would provide careers guidance, support apprenticeship applications, help a young person to prepare for interviews and assessments, and provide them with opportunities to experience the workplace and engage with employers. Each of these areas would work to help a young person overcome their specific barriers to successfully taking up a higher level apprenticeship. The mentoring programme would primarily work with students in Year 13, supporting them throughout the academic year as they seek to secure and start an apprenticeship after their studies are complete.



3. Working with employers in the construction sector

To support the programme, a steering group was set up to ensure employer input into the development and delivery of the project. The wealth of industry knowledge and experience of those involved ensured that the Trust's messaging to young people and schools was well-informed. A complete list of those involved in the Steering Group, including their job titles and organisations, can be viewed in Appendix 1. Industry advice was particularly important in keeping the programme updated on the development, approval and delivery of the new apprenticeship standards, which was not without its challenges.

An important focus of the programme was working with employers to pilot and develop effective methods of attracting diverse young talent and promoting higher level apprenticeships to young people. In addition to the production of this report, the section below outlines the suite of resources that have been developed and available are for use by the industry.

One of the challenges identified by the project was how complicated the new apprenticeship structure could be for smaller employers, particularly around funding with the launch of the new standards and the apprenticeship levy. To help more employers navigate higher level apprenticeships, the project would develop an 'Employer Guide' that would provide a comprehensive breakdown and explanation of what investing in an apprentice would require.

Project Results:

The table below outlines the minimum target and the actual achievement for each project deliverable. As shown, each target has been met and surpassed.

Project Deliverable	Minimum Target	Achievement
Young people to take part in engagement activities	400	2,012
Influencers to take part in engagement activities	150	241
Young people to receive progression support	100	136
Young people to have site visits	150	181
Young people to take part in work experience	25	34
Apprenticeships applied for	60	192
Apprenticeships secured	45	58
Best practice guide	Completed by September 2019	

In addition to meeting these deliverables, the project has achieved each of the initial project aims, discussed in detail below.

Aim: Design and deliver activities that will increase the appeal of the construction industry amongst young people, identifying effective ways of promoting construction careers and successfully attract young talent:

To improve the appeal of the construction sector, the Trust's approach first focussed on improving the understanding and awareness of apprenticeship routes into the sector. To achieve this, two activities were developed - Apprenticeship Briefings and Apprenticeship Masterclasses.

Apprenticeship briefings were 15 minute presentations delivered in schools to students and influencers separately. They provided a brief overview on what a higher level apprenticeship is, the opportunities available, what the recruitment process involves, and how to find opportunities. The Trust found these briefings to be a very effective mechanism for efficiently informing a significant number of young people about apprenticeships in construction. One student described this activity as "straight to the point and told us the honest truth", evidencing the value of shorter sessions when first engaging with young people. A teacher observing also described a Briefing as "a really useful summary of apprenticeships for students, with a good overview of entry routes and requirements".

Apprenticeship Masterclasses were employer-hosted events that provided more in depth information on higher level apprenticeships, employer presentations, and a Q&A panel with current apprentices. 72% of the young people who attended an Apprenticeship Masterclass event reported an improvement in their knowledge of apprenticeships. One student attendee wrote that "this workshop helped develop my interest and understanding in degree apprenticeships" and another wrote that the activity and advice helped them to "be more proactive with different pathways".

Targeting teachers, careers advisors and parents also secured support from those with influence over a young person's career decision to ensure the pathway could be better promoted in schools in the future. One teacher described the apprenticeship briefing as "persuasive, makes you think about the option [of higher level apprenticeships]". A parent in attendance at the Masterclass session also evidenced the success of this approach, writing "in the past I would never have encouraged anyone to

do an apprenticeship. But now I think it's just as good as doing a degree". The Trust's experience on the project has shown the merit of engaging influencers to increase to the long-term promotion of higher level apprenticeships amongst young people. As well as these events, through steering group support, the Trust were able to contribute to Target Career's '*Paths to Professional Careers – a Parent's Guide*⁹ to inform parents on apprenticeships.



Students and influencers being informed together an Apprenticeship Masterclass.

In addition to improving awareness, the Trust also used these activities to dispel negative misconceptions about apprenticeships and connect young people with the stories of current apprentices. Challenging misconceptions held amongst young people and their influencers helped to ensure that misunderstanding around higher level apprenticeships would not act as a deterrent for a young person. Involving current apprentices, through Q&A panels and networking, helped to connect young people with the real positive experiences of undertaking an apprenticeship.

Young people who attended a Masterclass appreciated the opportunity to connect with each apprentice's individual story, with the majority highlighting this as the most enjoyable part of the activity. One teacher in attendance described "a buzz in the room for the students" during this event. Hearing the real-life positive experience of a contemporary undertaking an apprenticeship proved to be easily more persuasive than simply listing the benefits of the pathway. One parent wrote that it was "very inspirational to listen to the apprentices on the panel", and a teacher in attendance described the masterclass as "a must-see myth busting event".

Across all of the delivered activities, 99% of students agreed that the activity had helped them to think about the career that they want to do. The Trust found that the concise overview of apprenticeship at Student / Influencer Briefings provided an effective mechanism to easily introduce significant numbers of young people to apprenticeships in construction, and the Q&A and networking interacting with apprenticeship Masterclasses were the best way to increase the appeal of apprenticeships. For young

⁹ Page 32, *Paths to Professional Careers – a Parent's Guide* published in Target Careers in 2019, https://targetcareers.co.uk/sites/targetcareers.co.uk/files/public/targetcareers-futurewise-paths-to-professional-careers_a-parents-guide-2019.pdf

people making the first steps towards their future careers, both of these activities delivered in tandem helped them to view higher level apprenticeships in construction as an attractive option for them.



Apprentice Q&A Panel at an Apprenticeship Masterclass.

Aim: Prioritise engagement from young women, those from BAME backgrounds, and socio-economically disadvantaged young people:

Throughout the delivered activities, when gender was recorded (1,708 of the 2,012 student engagements), 55% of the young people involved were young women. To increase the involvement of young women, the Trust delivered briefings to entire year groups, which removed the bias of working with individual subject classes or teacher-selected groups. In activities where young people were able to indicate their ethnicity on an evaluation form, 69% were also from BAME backgrounds. To engage those from BAME backgrounds, the Trust pursued engagement with schools in inner-city London who by their nature have high BAME cohorts. Across the two mentoring cohorts, 34% were young women and 79% were also from BAME backgrounds.

The Trust also targeted schools with higher than average proportions of students receiving free school meals. This statistic can be used as an indicator of economic disadvantage, and 18 of 20 schools that received a student apprenticeship briefing were above the 14.1% national average for secondary school students receiving free school meals¹⁰. 5 of the 7 London boroughs that the Trust works within

¹⁰ 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2019', published in 2019 by Department for Education, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812539/Schools_Pupils_and_their_Characteristics_2019_Main_Text.pdf

are also amongst the top 30% most deprived authorities in England¹¹, increasing the likelihood that those who the Trust engaged would be from a socio-economically disadvantaged background. In year 2 of the project, the 1-to-1 mentoring programme application form asked if a student was eligible to receive free school meals, and nearly a quarter of students disclosed that they were.

The year 2 application form also identified several other indicators of socio-economic deprivation. Young people were asked if they: are not currently in education or employment, are eligible for free school meals, are a young carer, are currently (or have ever been) in care, have ever been in trouble with the police. Of those who received 1-to-1 progression support in Year 2, 32% disclosed at least one of these deprivation indicators.

As shown by the demographic breakdown of the young people involved in the project, the approach employed evidently did help to maximise the involvement of young women and those from BAME and socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, and therefore fulfil this aim of the project.

Aim: Increase take-up of higher level and degree apprenticeships in construction, particularly young women, BAME & socio-economically disadvantaged young people:

Improving the awareness and appeal of apprenticeships, through the information activities discussed previously, is the first step to encouraging more young people to consider and subsequently take-up a higher level apprenticeship in construction. Working with young women and those from BAME backgrounds throughout the piloting of these activities has also helped to ensure that the approach developed works effectively to engage these underrepresented demographics.

In addition to these activities, the Trust's approach of 'levelling to the playing field' through a 1-to-1 mentoring and support programme worked to directly increase the likelihood of take-up of higher level apprenticeships in construction amongst young people. An apprenticeship is a job, and therefore the process for applying to an employer for an apprenticeship can be rigorous and demanding. While schools are well-positioned to support a young person with their application for university, we found many were ill-prepared to support young people who wanted to pursue the apprenticeship route. The 1-to-1 mentoring, and support programme was structured around addressing the factors currently limiting a young person's successful pursuit of an apprenticeship. For those who struggled with the demands of applications and cover letters, these were regularly reviewed by the Trust prior to being submitted, to improve the literacy and communication skills of the participants. For others who found interviews more challenging, mock interviews and chances to interact with employers through site visits and work placements helped build confidence ahead of real interviews. Alongside this, the Trust provided guidance to young people on what to expect at each stage of recruitment, particularly novel stages like assessment centres. This was found to be essential guidance as the majority of young people had no understanding of what these processes involved, which would have put them at significant disadvantage if they reached these stages.

In addition to informing on the recruitment process, the Trust found activities that gave young people practical experience of the recruitment process to be particularly valuable. The Meet-the-Employer events were particularly successful here. This event had a young person participate in interviews, presentations, and group tasks - activities that are all typically used in an apprenticeship assessment

¹¹ Based on local authorities' population-weighted overall index of multiple deprivation from *'English indices of deprivation 2019'*, published in 2019 by Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

centre. The event was observed by apprenticeship employers from the construction industry, providing students with personalised feedback on their performance that improved their ability to impress at real assessment centres in the future. One industry volunteer described a Meet-the-Employer event as a “very realistic, accurate representation of our own recruitment style”.



Young people completing a group task at a Meet-the-Employer session, observed by industry volunteers.

The value of experiencing the apprenticeship recruitment process is evidenced in the case study of Muaaz, a student involved in the mentoring programme, below.

Case Study – Muaaz:

Muaaz joined the apprenticeship mentoring programme after attending our apprenticeship masterclass session that was delivered in partnership with ISG. He had always been interested in a career in construction and the built environment, possibly as a civil engineer, however, didn't know the best way to pursue his goal, recognising that the traditional university route wasn't for him.

Whilst on the programme, Muaaz's ambition to become an apprentice was strengthened. Through the networking events, he was able to meet likeminded students, young apprentices and potential employers, which he says helped him get a sense of how the application process worked and better prepared him for the recruitment process.

The most helpful aspect of the programme for Muaaz was the opportunity to attend mock assessment centres. Being able to practice his teamwork, presentation and interview skills

within a simulated environment, helped Muaaz to feel much more prepared for the real thing. When he came to applying to actual apprenticeships, Muaaz felt calm, collected and prepared.

“What was great about the mock assessment centres was that the industry leading employers hosted the sessions, so they were able to offer great advice on how to improve and do better next time. Having such detailed feedback meant that I would not make the same mistake twice!”

Following a successful online application, supported by Trust staff, Muaaz was invited to attend BAM Nuttall’s assessment centre. The fact that he had met the team previously at one of the Meet-the-Employer events gave him an edge over the other candidates. Armed with experience of the process, had already made a good impression, and with constructive feedback he had worked on, Muaaz felt confident in himself and his abilities across all the tasks he was faced with.

“If it wasn’t for the Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship programme, then I feel like the journey of successfully finding the right apprenticeship would have had a lot more uncertainty. From the day to day support to the mock assessment centres, I was given assistance and feedback every step of the way.”

Muaaz is currently preparing for his A-level exams, having successfully been offered a Level 4 Civil Engineering Apprenticeship with BAM Nuttall!

Muaaz’s school Careers Advisor also provided feedback on the apprenticeship mentoring programme, describing it as a highly effective tool that teachers can use to complement a school’s careers programme:

“The programme supports both the learners and myself to develop an understanding and remain current with the application process. Things change rapidly and my hope is that next year, I will be able to be more involved in what takes place on your programme, to improve my own knowledge and ensure that it remains in line with industry.”

The Construction Youth Trust programme is a welcome asset to support careers leaders and really engage learners in the process from beginning to end, in an area away from college and gives them a direct line of communication with industry professionals. It also evidences their desire for independent learning and development outside of college, which again is often a requirement in the application process”

One observation from year 1 of the programme was that higher level apprenticeship roles, especially at degree level, are heavily over-subscribed. The extreme competitiveness of the application process meant that some young people did not make it through the initial screening of the employers’ traditional recruitment processes. In the second year of the project, the Trust piloted an adapted approach to Meet-the-Employer events that encouraged employers to use the activity to engage directly with the diverse group of young people involved in the mentoring programme, whom they could then consider for their own apprenticeship schemes. This involved making each event bespoke to an employer, and inviting influential early careers recruiters who had the power to accelerate candidates through their recruitment process.

The Trust found this approach was a better way to help socio-economically disadvantaged young people who were still struggling with the first stages of recruitment (applications and interviews) to

get the opportunity to impress a recruiter in a face-to-face environment. For several students in the second year of the 1-to-1 mentoring, this adapted approach led to invitations to apply for employer's apprenticeship programmes, advancement through the recruitment process, and on some occasions direct higher apprenticeship offers.



Interviews between young people and industry volunteers at a Meet-the-Employer event.

As a result of the 1-to-1 mentoring programme, and the activities piloting within it, the Trust has concluded the two most effective methods for increasing the take-up of apprenticeships amongst young people. Firstly, young people need to be properly introduced to the requirements of the higher level apprenticeship recruitment process to ensure they understand how to succeed at each stage and ultimately successfully take-up a higher level apprenticeship. The Trust found apprenticeship masterclass events and 1-to-1 mentoring guidance were both effective ways to inform young people about apprenticeship recruitment stages. Secondly, young people need to be prepared for the rigours of an employer's recruitment process, which is very different from the UCAS system. In order to improve social mobility, it is particularly important that the industry levels the playing field for young people from more disadvantaged background who are not always as well-equipped to compete successfully through an employer's typical recruitment processes. Likewise, if the sector wants to increase the diversity of its workforce, employers need to consider positive action to target, attract and support greater numbers of new entrants from underrepresented groups.

Aim: Develop resources and good practice guidance for employers:

Throughout the project the Trust, with support from industry volunteers, created several resources to support the delivery of activities. Employer collaboration was particularly valuable in the design of these materials. Kier were instrumental in developing the Meet-the-Employer assessment centre activity resources, and ISG were particularly helpful in developing resources to support young people to research and find apprenticeships to apply for.

The following resources were created during the project:

- Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Employer Guide

Available to download at: <http://www.constructionyouth.org.uk/resource/higher-level-and-degree-apprenticeship-employer-guide>

- Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Employer Guide

Available to download at: <http://www.constructionyouth.org.uk/resource/higher-level-and-degree-apprenticeship-student-guide>

- Apprenticeship briefing PowerPoint presentations
- Assessment centre activity resources

The Trust also used their experience on the project to input into work placement and site visit resources in development by Build UK.

The use of presentations and other documents improved the effectiveness of both the engagement activities and the guidance provided during the 1-to-1 mentoring programme. These resources can now be used by the Trust and their employer partners to continue to increase the appeal and take-up of higher level apprenticeships amongst young people.

The project also developed two guides: Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Student Guide and Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Student Guide Employer Guide. These guides are essentially an easy to read comprehensive handbook of information for students and employers respectively. They were developed collaboratively with members of the project steering group, Build UK, and Construction Industry Council members. These guides give employers, teachers, and careers advisors resources to reference in order to confidently promote higher level apprenticeships to young people they encounter in the future. Through these guides, the reach of the Trust's research and experience on the project has been expanded.



Trust staff using the Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Student Guide to help parents understand the apprenticeship pathway.

Funding Breakdown:

Please see below for the breakdown and schedule of the funding provided by CITB for this project, along with the required match funding and actual in-kind contributions for each quarter of the funding period.

The match funding in-kind contributions comprise the voluntary time given by industry professionals during the delivery of activities and participation in advisory meetings and steering groups, as well as event space provided in-kind during the project.

	Period	Funding	Required In-kind Contributions	Actual In-kind Contributions
P1	March 2018 – June 2018	£ 10,360	£ 3,500	£ 6,752
P2	July 2018 – September 2018	£ 10,400	£ 3,100	£ 3,275
P3	October 2018 – December 2018	£ 25,317	£ 12,703	£ 32,018
P4	January 2019 – March 2019	£ 32,081	£ 19,799	£ 49,352
P5	April 2019 – June 2019	£ 28,816	£ 18,314	£ 41,438
P6	July 2019 – September 2019	£ 20,415	£ 2,895	£ 22,701
P7	October 2019 – December 2019	£ 3,500	£ 0	£ 66,093
P8	January 2020 – March 2020	£ 20,686	£ 4,714	£5,550
	Total	£151,575	£65,025	£227,179

Project Review:

The success of this project is first illustrated by the achievement of each target deliverable, with engagement from young people and their influencers far surpassing the minimum goals, and the project aims. The Trust evidently developed a successful approach for exciting young people about opportunities in the construction industry. The effectiveness of the piloted approach is shown by the widespread positive evaluations, which illustrate the approach's ability to not only involve a large number of individuals in the project, but to provide them with an informative, engaging, and tailored experience.

The project has established a successful blueprint for operation which could be replicated by others wanting to engage with the stakeholder groups involved in the project and promote higher level apprenticeships. The approaches that have been developed and piloted can now be employed by the construction industry to support the promotion of construction careers and attract young talent to the industry.



Young person interacting with an industry volunteer an Apprenticeship Masterclass session.

The success of the project can also be gauged by the effective provision of 1-to-1 mentoring and support to over 130 young people. The project was able to provide personal guidance to a significant number of young people to improve their career prospects, and through this highlight the value of a tailored approach to increasing the successful take-up of higher level apprenticeships.

The case study below highlights the personal value of the support that the Trust was able to offer through the 1-to-1 mentoring facilitated by the project.

Case Study – Rana:

Rana joined the Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship programme after completing one of our Budding Brunels courses in 2018 and subsequently attending a Masterclass with several family members. Although passionate about construction and the built environment, Rana



had been unaware of different routes into the industry. She had been given a rough picture of apprenticeships at school, but they had always been presented to her as just the 'other option' to university. Through the programme, Rana now sees apprenticeships as having equal value to more traditional university routes.

The most useful thing Rana found about the programme was the sustained support she received from staff at Construction Youth Trust. As part of the programme, students interested in pursuing an apprenticeship within construction receive one-to-one mentoring and progression support throughout their application journey.

"The most useful thing for me was working with people who genuinely care because it really did motivate me to keep going despite how competitive the industry is."

For Rana, this sustained support has proved essential for keeping her motivated and focussed during what she found to be an extremely competitive process. She has especially found the weekly email updates about live apprenticeship opportunities a very useful tool.

"When working with you face to face, over the phone and via email you can really see how passionate and dedicated they are to help you reach your goals."

"With ongoing calls and emails to check in on you, that alone has helped me get where I am today. I have had many work experience placements all arranged by Construction Youth Trust which was very useful because by the end of the work experience I made great links with very important people that I was able to refer to when applying to do an apprenticeship at their business."

Rana is currently in Year 13 studying Business BTEC. She has reached the late stages of recruitment with two higher level apprenticeship employers and we are looking forward to this progressing after the government COVID-19 lockdown has been lifted and recruitment resumes.

Findings and Recommendations for the Construction Industry:

In addition to identifying effective methods to increase the appeal of higher level apprenticeships in construction amongst young people, the Trust's experience delivering this project highlighted several potential barriers to the take-up of higher level apprenticeships in the construction industry amongst young people. Most significant were: the number of higher level apprenticeship opportunities available to young people, the competition for positions, and the demands of the recruitment process on young people at a pressurised period in their lives.

The delays in signing-off new higher level apprenticeship standards for delivery limited the options young people had available to them through the period of this project. This has been exacerbated by limited take-up of certain standards by industry, training providers and/or end-point assessors. For example, although many students were interested in the Level 6 Architectural Assistant apprenticeship, there were very few opportunities being offered whilst the programme was running. This meant many young people interested in the higher level apprenticeship pathway did not always have a role of interest, or many vacancies, to apply for.

The Trust also found limited apprenticeship take-up amongst SMEs in the construction industry. The apprenticeship levy is currently only paid on annual pay bills in excess of £3 million and therefore is only paid by the largest companies within the industry. There has been some confusion and uncertainty associated with funding for non-levy payers. This means that only the largest companies are financially invested and therefore incentivised to facilitate apprenticeships in their company. The majority of higher level apprenticeship applications made and roles secured by the young people on the mentoring programme were with large companies. Considering the number of SMEs within the sector, the barriers affecting SME apprenticeship take-up need to be looked at and addressed if the industry wants to increase take-up of the higher level apprenticeship pathway.

Limited opportunities means gaining an apprenticeship is an extremely competitive process. Data provided by the government shows that 23,450 applications were submitted for 3,900 higher level apprenticeship vacancies advertised on the 'Find an Apprenticeship' website in 2016/17. These figures result in just a 17% success rate – even before accounting for the large proportion of applications that are sent directly via an employer's website. Industry partners have informed the Trust that they can have multiples of ten times as many applicants as they have roles available. So whilst the industry is right in wanting to promote the apprenticeship pathway for all the reasons already mentioned, large volumes of applications already far outweigh current apprenticeship availability. This would suggest that promotion of apprenticeships is done side by side with increased apprenticeship investment from employers, to ensure the supply of apprenticeships can meet the growing demand for them.

As well as a competitive application process, the typical recruitment process for a higher level apprenticeship is significantly more challenging for a young person in comparison to a UCAS application, which is supported by teachers and enshrined in school processes. Although the Trust's engagement with influencers helped to improve school awareness of the higher level apprenticeship recruitment process, more work needs to be done to enlist the support of schools in apprenticeship applications. UCAS also only requires young people to write one personal statement for all the universities that they apply for (with interviews and other requirements at the discretion of the university), whereas each higher level apprenticeship application requires an individual application with different requirements decided by each employer. Further stages regularly then include online assessments, one or more interviews, and assessment centres – after which a young person may still be unsuccessful. It is a very long process that tests the commitment of even the most ardent apprenticeship advocates amongst young people.

This recruitment process is repeated for each higher level apprenticeship that a young person applies for, becoming a vast undertaking alongside completing their final year of school or college. For young people who struggle with the writing demands of applications, or become disheartened with repeated rejections and set-backs, this is a particularly challenging undertaking. Many of those on the 1-to-1 mentoring programmes were applying for university as a secondary option as well as higher level apprenticeships, so became familiar with the significant imbalance between the two application processes. Several young people also struggled with the written demands of completing applications and subsequently found it difficult to progress beyond this stage, despite of the support given by Trust staff.

The challenges of the higher level apprenticeship recruitment process led to several students choosing the full time university pathway over the apprenticeship pathway and to withdrawals from the mentoring programme in both years. Across both years, the primary reasons for withdrawing were interests deviating away from the construction sector, or students finding it difficult to manage school studies alongside the submission of apprenticeship applications – further supporting the previously highlighted observation of the intense requirements of higher level apprenticeship recruitment. Although the Trust began to identify and pilot approaches to help overcome these barriers to apprenticeship take-up, such as developing events that ‘skip’ stages of the recruitment, it might be useful for employers to consider creative ways of reducing the impact their recruitment practices have on the interest in apprenticeships and increasing the take-up amongst diverse demographics of young people.

With regards to the second year of the project, the recent COVID-19 situation has also resulted in a sharp decline in apprenticeship opportunities and in some cases a suspension of recruitment cycles altogether. This current issue, although unprecedented, has led several young people involved in Year 2 to turn to the full-time university offers they have received – a safer alternative in lieu of pursuing a higher level apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are a job and are only sustainable with a healthy economy, so a consequence of COVID-19 could be even fewer apprenticeships being offered now and in the immediate future, once again damaging the ‘apprenticeship’ brand people are working so hard to align with a positive message. Full time University in comparison is likely to be less impacted by the COVID-19 issue in terms of the ability to make firm offers to young people.

Each of the findings of this project highlight areas to address in order to effectively promote the industry and compete with other sectors to attract young talent. Approaches have been identified by the Trust that employers can use to aid industry engagement with young people. However further work is needed to address underlying barriers to the promotion and take-up of careers, particularly apprenticeships, in the construction industry amongst diverse demographics of young people.



Achievement of CITB Strategic Objectives:

In their 2018-21 Business Plan, CITB outline three strategic priorities for ensuring the construction workforce has the right skills today and in the future: Careers, Standards & Qualifications, and Training & Development. CITB's 'Careers' priority outlines a goal for construction and the built environment to present itself as an inclusive and dynamic industry that provides rewarding careers, with an ultimate ambition that employers have a talent pool sufficient to meet the recruitment needs of the industry. This strategic priority acknowledges the current and future skills shortage prevalent in the construction industry, which was a founding influence of this project.

To contribute to CITB's careers strategy, this project has delivered a programme that has both promoted construction careers to young people beginning to make their career decisions, and directly contributed to the successful take-up of higher level apprenticeships in construction.

A series of school engagements and employer-led information events provided a platform to inform young people, their parents, and their teachers, about careers in construction. The information events specifically highlighted higher level apprenticeships - which appeal to a more practical, work-based preferred style of learning - to young people who may have been deterred by the typical full-time university pathway into professional roles within construction. Each of these endeavours worked to remove specific barriers to a young person's pursuit of a career within the industry, with the expectation that this could encourage more young people to consider a career in construction and the built environment in the future.

The project has also supported CITB's careers strategy through the delivery of 1-to-1 progression support to over 130 young people seeking to secure a higher level apprenticeship position. This support provided application guidance and advice on the recruitment process, and facilitated direct engagement between young people and industry employers - all in pursuit of increasing the young person's individual chance of success in securing a higher level apprenticeship.

Although direct impact is limited to the cohort of students that we engaged with, the project has evidenced the wider interest in higher level apprenticeships amongst young people and developed effective methods to facilitate engagement between young people and industry recruiters. The Trust believe this facilitation can help the construction industry to better engage with future talent, and increase the interest in and pursuit of careers within construction in conjunction with CITB's careers strategic objective.



Product:

Alongside the delivery of engagement events and the provision of 1-to-1 support for young people seeking to secure a higher level apprenticeship role, this project has facilitated the development of two guides informing on higher level apprenticeships. As outlined previously, the two guides provide employers and young people with detailed information on the facilitation and pursuit of a higher level apprenticeship.

Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Employer Guide

Available for download from: <http://www.constructionyouth.org.uk/resource/higher-level-and-degree-apprenticeship-employer-guide>

Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship Student Guide

Available for download from: <http://www.constructionyouth.org.uk/resource/higher-level-and-degree-apprenticeship-student-guide>



Acknowledgements:

Construction Youth Trust would like to thank the following organisations for their support during the 'Increasing Employer Engagement in Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeships' project.

Construction Industry Training Board

Kier

Steering Group Members:

Anthony Childs	Tony Ellender	Rebecca Lloyd
Daniel Chow	Noora Kokkarinen	Angela Ringguth
Mike Cox	Tom Lane	Paul Skerry
Ian Dickerson	John Laverty	Fred Titterington

Schools and Universities:

Ark School	Harris Academy Bermondsey	Robert Clack School
Aston University Engineering Academy	Highbury Fields School	St John's Catholic Comprehensive
Camden School for Girls	Jo Richardson School	St Martin in the Fields High School for Girls
Dagenham Park Church of England School	Lambeth Academy	St Saviour's and St Olave's School
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College	London South Bank University	Thamesview School
Fulham Enterprise Studio	Morpeth School	University Academy of Engineering South Bank
Hammersmith Academy	Oaklands School	University of East London



Industry Organisations:

Ardmore Construction	Greater London Authority	Overbury
Balfour Beatty	Institute of Civil Engineers	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Balfour Beatty VINCI	ISG	Sir Robert McAlpine
BAM Nuttall	Keltbray	Tideway
BuildUK	Kier	Tideway East
Canary Wharf Group	Mace	Tideway West
Careers & Enterprise Company	Morgan Lovell	Waterman Group
Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists	Morgan Sindall	Wates
Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers	Multiplex	

Appendix:

1 - Steering Group Members

Project Steering Group Members		
Name	Organisation	Role
Anthony Childs	Sir Robert McAlpine	Head of People Development & Operations
Daniel Chow	Greater London Authority/ Careers & Enterprise Company	Senior Enterprise Coordinator, Construction Lead
Mike Cox	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors	Future Talent Manager
Ian Dickerson	Kier	Heading of Learning Funding
Tony Ellender	Balfour Beatty	Emerging Talent Manager
Noora Kokkarinen	Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists	Assistant Education Director
Tom Lane	Tideway West	Skills, Employment & Legacy Manager
John Lavery	Institute of Civil Engineers	Head of Qualifications
Rebecca Lloyd	Kier	HR Early Careers Project Manager
Angela Ringguth	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers	Professional Development Consultant
Paul Skerry	BAM Nuttall	Early careers and Professional Development Manager
Fred Titterington	CITB	CITB Advisor, South London Region