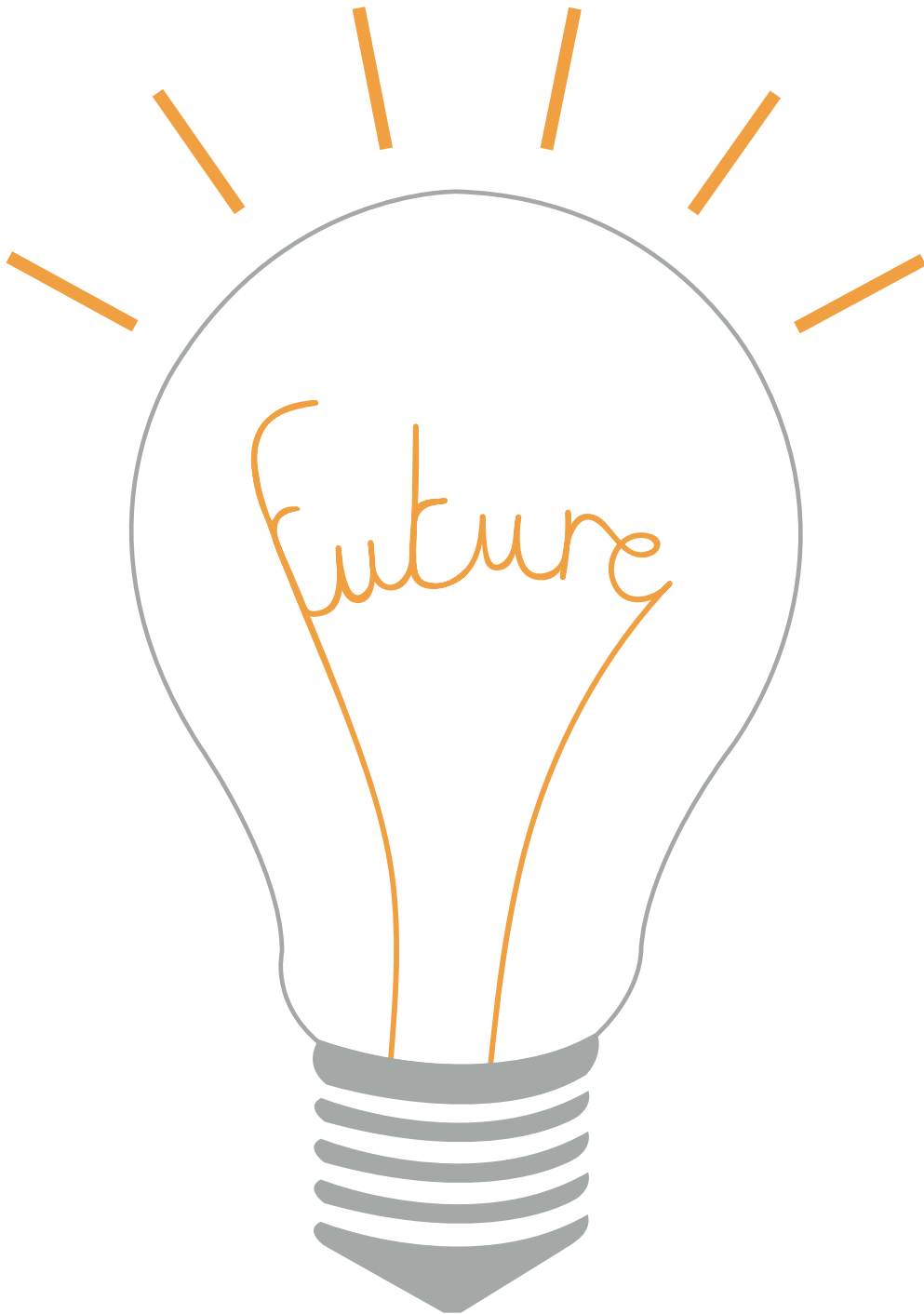


A White Paper to discuss

the future of

APPRENTICESHIPS

and attracting talent into the electrical industry



March 2017

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A White Paper to discuss

the future of

APPRENTICESHIPS

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Apprenticeships are something I have always felt very passionate about having experienced – and benefited – from the system myself. When I left school at 16, I was fortunate to get myself a trade apprenticeship and I’m proud to say the skills and knowledge I learned on the job have helped me get to where I am today.



“Back then, learning a skilled trade was something to be proud of. Nowadays, things are very different for young people – vocational apprenticeships seem to be considered a lesser career option, reserved for those not clever enough for university. When did learning a skilled profession become so unappealing?”

“As a manufacturer and employer in the electrical industry, I see the need for more bright, young people who have the skills and aptitude to keep up with the increasing complexity of our business and the pace technology is advancing.

“To attract these people, we need to promote our industry and the diverse and exciting career opportunities we can offer. Getting apprenticeships right is very much part of how we can achieve this.

“In this white paper, we aim to set out the key arguments detailing the strengths and weaknesses of current apprenticeships, routes to learning and how we attract talent into the electrical industry. We will explore the opportunities available and discuss how we as an industry can stand together to upskill young people and deliver the talent that will drive the electrical sector forward in the future.”

GROUND

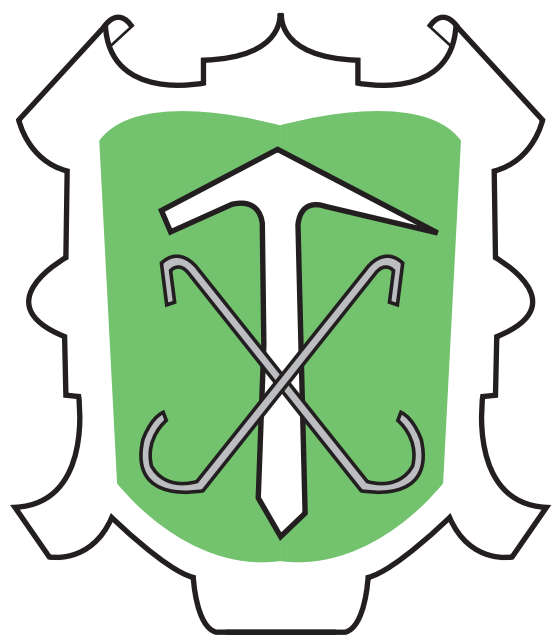
BACK

For hundreds of years, apprenticeships have been an important way for master trades and craftspeople to pass their skills on to the next generation.

While they may have evolved over time to meet changing socio-economic, political and educational agendas, apprenticeships remain an important part of the working world for many young people and an invaluable resource for the industries they go into.

In The Beginning

The earliest references in English history to apprenticeships date back to the Middle Ages, where the training of young people in trades and crafts was overseen by Medieval guilds. Back then, apprentices would be sent away from home to live with their master from the age of 10 or 12.



While there was no formal system in place to govern the process, agreements were drawn up to bind an apprentice to his master and vice versa; these laid out the master's duties to personally teach his apprentice and to look after their moral welfare, board, clothing and lodgings.

In 1563, the Statute of Artificers was introduced by the parliament of Elizabeth I, which included minimum standards for apprenticeships. The statute decreed that masters should have no more than three apprentices and that an apprenticeship should last seven years. The 1563 Act was later abolished in 1814 as the popularity of apprenticeships began to wane, due in part to conditions in factories and the exploitation of young apprentices.

Despite this set back, apprenticeships remained popular in certain trades, particularly those that required practical skills and those in newer industries like engineering, shipbuilding, plumbing and electrical work.

At the turn of the twentieth century, there were more than 340,000 apprentices in training every year, and by 1960s over a third of boys left school to become apprentices.¹

However, the heyday of apprenticeships in the UK was not to last. Employers began to criticise the system as being restrictive and unresponsive to the needs of industry and in 1968 the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Association concluded that an apprenticeship did not guarantee any particular level of skill or a pass in a test of ability¹.

With employers at odds with the system, fewer traditional trade jobs, the cost of apprenticeships and the rise in post-16 education, traditional apprenticeships entered a slow decline. **By 1990 the number of apprentices had dropped to just 53,000².**

Modern apprenticeships

In 1993, then-Chancellor Kenneth Clarke announced a new apprenticeships scheme called 'Modern Apprenticeships', designed to reverse declining numbers and boost work based training.

Under the new scheme, modern apprentices would be considered employees and paid a wage for their work. The written agreements between the employer and apprentice would be scrapped and the emphasis shifted from the length of service to qualifications, as modern apprentices were required to work towards an NVQ level 3 qualification (A-level equivalent).

Shortly after, National Traineeships were introduced at level 2 (GCSE

equivalent) as a progression route into apprenticeships for young people not ready to enter a level 3 programme.

The revitalised scheme had the desired effect and by the end of 1998, almost a quarter of a million people in England and Wales had started a modern apprenticeship¹. The majority of employers were small firms and the most popular sectors were business administration, engineering and retailing.

Modern apprenticeships went through numerous reforms during the 1990s and 2000s, including the introduction of a new framework to set out minimum standards to allay industry concerns over quality.



Apprenticeships today

In the last couple of years, apprenticeships have stayed very much on the political agenda as part of the Government's push to get young people into work.

In 2009, the National Apprenticeship Service was launched to oversee delivery of apprenticeships and a year later Higher Apprenticeships were introduced (foundation degree equivalent). The landscape for apprentices was changing and more over 25s signed up than ever before; the number of over 25s starting apprenticeships doubled between 2009/10 and 2011/12 to over half a million¹.

In 2012, new minimum standards were introduced to ensure that all apprenticeships last at least a year, provide 30 hours' employment a week and contain a minimum amount of guided learning.

In the same year, a Government commissioned review led by former Dragon's Den star Doug Richard called for employers to pay providers directly for apprenticeship training and

recommended making apprenticeships more employer-orientated. The Government's response to the Richard Review was the Trailblazer apprenticeship standards, designed by employers, to ensure the skills learned by apprentices matched those needed by industry. Trailblazer apprenticeships were part funded by the Government and first approved for use in November 2014.

2.4m apprentices started a placement under the coalition Government, and in 2015 the Conservative Government pledged to create 3m new apprenticeships by 2020² as a key part of their manifesto for re-election.

Speaking at the opening of an inquiry into how the Government would achieve this target, Neil Carmichael MP, chair of the Education Select Committee, said:

“ Our education policy needs to change truly to recognise the value of technical and professional education to young people, to society and to the nation's economy. Young people need to be equipped with the skills to succeed and apprenticeships have a vital role in achieving this objective.³ ”

Britain vs the rest of the world

One important question to address is how apprenticeships in England and Wales measure up to those of the rest of the world. Are there examples of best practice elsewhere that could be positively adopted by this country? Here, we look at Germany and USA as sources for comparison:



Germany

The German apprenticeships system provides a blueprint that many countries – including the UK – have tried to emulate. Germany has a dual education system, where young people can specialise in one of around 350 trades from baking and floristry to plumbing and industrial mechanics, and responsibility for their learning/training is shared between the state and industry.

The dual system allows an apprentice to spend at least one day a week studying in state-funded schools, while the rest of the time is spent learning on the job at a placement company. After three years, young people leave with a nationally recognised certificate for their chosen profession and have a wealth of experience on their CV. Two thirds of apprentices are hired by the company they train with, and Germany's youth unemployment rate is just 8 per cent⁴.

Overall, the German system is adept at allowing young people to move smoothly into skilled work but it is not without its issues. In recent years, rising numbers of students attending university is contributing to a shortfall of young people applying for apprenticeships. In 2014, there was a 4 per cent drop in the number of German students starting apprenticeships to 530,700 – the lowest level since reunification in 1990. Some 33,500 placements went unfilled⁵.



USA

The origin of apprenticeships in the USA dates back to the English settlers, who tried to replicate the apprentice system they had always known back at home in the New World. The settler's attempts to establish the same system in the USA did not enjoy widespread success due to various socio-economic and political factors, but apprenticeships did flourish in early settlements none the less.

By the turn of the twentieth century the USA had passed the Smith-Hughes Act (1917) to provide federal aid to vocational training, namely to fill the skills gap created by America joining WW1. In 1937, the National Apprenticeship Act (or Fitzgerald Act) was passed to regulate apprenticeships and on the job training. The Act set out minimum standards for apprenticeship programmes and was later amended to protect the health and safety of apprentices, encourage the use of contracts in the hiring and employing them and following the Civil Rights act, the banning of discrimination in selecting candidates for apprenticeships.

In 2014 President Barack Obama pledged to double the number of US apprentices from 375,000 to 750,000 by 2019⁶. Currently, the number of apprentices stands at around 500,000.

For the electrical industry, young people interested in becoming electricians can join one of several programmes offered by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the National Electrical Contractors Association, and run by the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. No previous experience is needed and applicants must be 18 or over.

Apprentice electricians work 32-40 hours a week, paid and with benefits, under the supervision of a 'journeyman wireman'.

In addition, they need to spend an additional 8 hours in classroom training every other week. After five years (less for telecommunications) apprentices reach the level of journeyman wireman and they are considered highly skilled by employers. Other trade unions – carpenters, joiners, plumbers, welders, bricklayers, plasterers etc – all offer similar programmes.

Apprenticeships is actually one of the few areas which has been unscathed by austerity cuts. In 2015, the Government released its 2020 Vision for English apprenticeships, the blueprint for how it would achieve its objective to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships in England and reaching three million starts by 2020⁷.

From the outset, the Government has made it clear that apprenticeships must be seen as a high quality and prestigious path to successful careers, and that these opportunities should be available at all levels, in all sectors of the economy and in all parts of the country.

The report includes a reference to the financial impact of apprenticeships, which makes interesting reading indeed; **young people completing a level 2 apprenticeship can earn between £48,000 and £74,000 more over their working life, and between £77,000 and £117,000 extra for completing a level 3 apprenticeship. Level 4 apprentices**

could earn £150,000 more on average over their lifetime.

In July, Prime Minister Theresa May appointed Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP to the cabinet position of Apprenticeships and Skills Minister. Halfon is a real advocate for apprenticeships and it was central to his manifesto when he was campaigning to win his Harlow seat.

Halfon's interest in apprenticeships is more than just rhetoric to win an election. In fact, Halfon has been instrumental in setting up a parliamentary apprentice programme in partnership with the New Deal of the Mind Known charity, to offer 16-19 year olds the chance to spend up to three days a week working in Westminster with two days spent working towards a level 3 apprenticeship in business administration⁸.

One of his first duties has been to oversee the roll out of the Government's apprenticeship levy scheme, which comes into effect next year.

Apprenticeships levy

From April 2017, the way the Government funds apprenticeships in England is changing⁹. Some employers will be required to contribute to a new apprenticeship levy, and there will be changes to the funding for apprenticeship training for all employers. **The levy scheme builds on the experience of a large number of modern developed economies, including Denmark and France, who have successfully established similar levies and taxes⁷.**

The apprenticeships levy will require all employers operating in the UK, with a pay bill over £3 million each year, to invest in apprenticeships and it is hoped that the levy will generate £3bn for apprenticeship training.

The process is relatively straightforward. Once an employer has declared their levy to the HMRC, they can access their share of the apprenticeship funding pot. They will be given log in details for a digital apprenticeship service account where they can select an apprenticeship framework or standard, choose a training provider/s to deliver their training, choose an organisation to assess its apprentices and post apprenticeship vacancies.

Employers can only spend funds on training from a Government-approved provider and their apprentices must work towards achieving an approved apprenticeship standard or apprenticeship framework (although these will be phased out by 2020).



As well as working on an approved training scheme, apprentices must be employed in a real job, spend at least 20% of their time in off-the-job training and their apprenticeship must last at least 12 months.

Levy funds paid expire after two years, so the impetus is on employers to use the money they have paid for apprenticeships, or lose it.

The latest developments on the Apprenticeships Levy can be found here: <http://www.jtltraining.com/other-services/policy/apprenticeship-levy/>

Brexit

June 2016's European referendum verdict could be a line in the sand for British apprenticeships. **By 2019, Britain could be out of the European Union and potentially facing a huge skills shortage. We simply don't have the skilled labour to replace the European professionals we will be losing.**

The construction industry is understandably concerned. More than 100,000 construction workers from elsewhere in the EU were working in the UK in 2014, according to the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, as part of a 2.1m strong construction workforce. There is real concern that without access to a skilled workforce, Britain could stop building¹⁰.

The concerns of the building industry are echoed by the electrical industry, which is also very much reliant on EU nationals to plug the shortage of skilled electrical contractors. While a full Brexit could be two years away, longer with any transition plan, it takes four years to train an apprentice electrician, so if we don't act now to prepare for tougher migration controls, the skills gap could be even bigger.

EVENT

ROUNDTABLE



THURSDAY

22ND SEPTEMBER

The political agenda is certainly driving the need for change in apprenticeships, but there is also an appetite in the electrical industry for a new approach to attracting young people into the sector and giving them the skills they need to shine.

On Thursday 22 September, Malcolm Duncan hosted a special industry event at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry to discuss the issues. The event was attended by people from all walks of the industry including electrical contractors, educators and trainers plus representation from the NICEIC, electrical wholesalers and distributor networks.

During the evening, speakers shared their unique insights into the challenges and opportunities the industry was facing. These included Liam Sammon, Commercial Director for training provider JTL who talked about the changing education landscape; Adrian Rees, General Manager at CEFCO who talked about careers and opportunities in the electrical industry; and Stella Hegarty, General Manager for HR at 3M who shared her experience on approaches to in-house training.

The ideas shared and debated in the roundtable form the basis of the next section of this white paper, addressing barriers to apprenticeships.

BARRIERS TO

University vs on the job training

In December 2015, UCAS reported record numbers of students being accepted to UK universities and colleges¹¹. **More than half a million 18 year olds entered UK higher education last year, an increase of 3.1% on 2014 and the highest number recorded.**

With more young people heading for university than ever before, having a degree doesn't carry the same weight it might have done thirty or forty years ago when only a select few went on to higher education. Young people find themselves competing with other graduates for work and discover that in reality they need more on their CV than a bachelor's degree to put themselves in an advantageous position with a prospective employer.

While the choice of degree subjects on offer is vast – appealing to the widest possible demographic – not all courses go far enough to align course content to the needs of the labour market or the skills required for particular job roles. **By not appropriately preparing graduates for the modern job market, it can be very hard for university students to fit into the working world.**

In a bid to try and stop students from paying tens of thousands of pounds on degrees which will not properly equip them with skills for the working world, a Government higher education white paper published in May 2016 sought to oblige universities to release data about what jobs and salaries students can move on to when they graduate their courses¹².

It seems only right that Universities must ensure that the graduates they are producing fulfil the needs of the labour market in the same way as apprenticeships do, focusing on key skills and sectors.

It is somewhat surprising that numbers for university courses remain so high, as the financials for a degree course are very much stacked against the student. Studying at university is expensive and according to the Sutton Trust, students can expect to leave with an average of £44,000 of debt¹³. While graduates enjoy a premium on their wages of around £9,500 per year¹³, in the short term they leave full time education laden with debt and with no guarantee of a well-paid job. Conversely, apprentices are paid a wage while they train and finish their placements debt-free with relevant skills and experience.

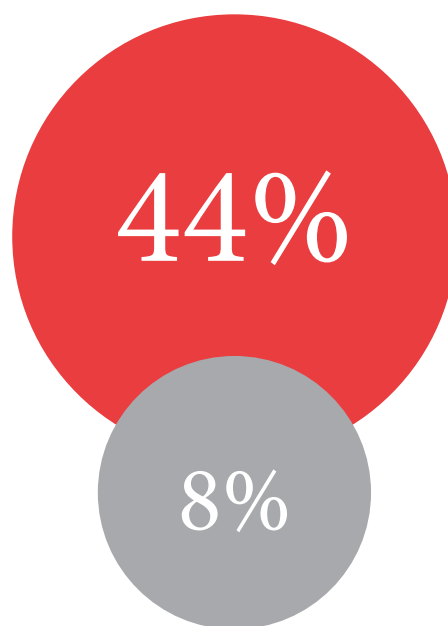
With the introduction of Higher and Degree apprenticeships and the ability for employers under the Trailblazer programme to create more Higher and Degree apprenticeships, young people no longer have to follow the traditional route of GCSE, A Level and Degree. At age 16 or 18, they can become an apprentice, knowing they are entering a pathway that will give parity to degrees, will better prepare them for work and will increase their chance of employment and promotion.

Vocational apprenticeships must be seen as a relevant and valid alternative for young people, letting horses choose their courses.

APPRENTICESHIPS

Perceptions of young people and parents

Research from Santander UK found that only 44% of 15-16 year olds are familiar with apprenticeships and only 8% consider them an alternative to university¹⁴. Since when did learning a skilled profession, with the option to run your own business, become so unappealing?



15-16 year olds:

Familiar with apprenticeships

Consider them an alternative to university

One reason for this may be down to outdated perceptions of apprenticeships from both young people and their major influencers – their parents.

The parents of many 16-18 years today will have been raised in an era when a degree guaranteed you a job. Naturally that's what parents want for their children – a solid education and good career prospects – but they may not be aware of all the alternatives available, so educating parents may be equally as important as educating young people about vocational pathways.

One major misconception of parents and young people is that apprenticeships are only for those who aren't academic. This simply isn't true. In the electrical industry, the increasing complexity of installations and the introduction of smart technology in many homes and businesses means that the work of an electrician requires a great amount of skill and knowledge.

Higher apprenticeships are also available, which are degree equivalents providing alternative routes into professions such as accounting or law. Apprenticeships are a mode of learning, as rich and diverse as degrees, and certainly not a measure of intellect or capabilities.

Some people think that apprenticeships are just a way of employers getting cheap labour or someone to make the tea. This is also unfounded. The standard wage for an apprentice aged under 19 is £3.40 per hour, but most companies will pay the national minimum wage – it is certainly not cheap to have an apprentice.

As well as paying a proper wage to their young recruits, employers are also obliged to provide the necessary on-the-job training an apprentice needs to complete their qualification. Unless it's a catering apprenticeship, rounds of tea are definitely not on the syllabus.

There seems to be a much greater lean towards university as the preferred route to finding a good job with prospects. What many overlook is that apprentices work for a specific company for at least a year and have time to prove themselves to their employers, which can often lead to the offer of a permanent position at the end of the apprenticeship.

A hangover from the apprenticeships of yesteryear is the misconception that they are jobs for the boys. While industries like construction, engineering and the electrical trade struggle to recruit women into apprenticeships – and in general – this is not for a lack of trying. One obstacle to young women going into a traditionally non-female sector jobs is their parents.

A report published in 2014 by Women in Science, Technology and Engineering, found that “mothers, in particular, need to know their daughters could be happy in a career from physics/ in engineering, and that the working environment would be supportive”¹⁵. Being a minority in any sector is tough and for many mothers, they need reassurance that their daughters would not be discriminated against before promoting a male-dominated vocation as an alternative to university.

From looking at the misconceptions that exist around apprenticeships, it is clear that more must be done to help young people make informed decisions. This must start with schools, who have a prominent role to play in helping to guide young people into the further education routes that are right for them.

Ministers believe that in some schools, apprenticeships and other technical and professional routes are only promoted to the lowest achieving pupils, creating a two-tier system of careers advice¹⁶. To combat the “outdated snobbery” against technical education, the Government is looking to legislate so that technical colleges and companies providing apprenticeships can get into schools to give careers advice to pupils.



This kind of early access to young people is supported by the electrical industry, and would provide a golden opportunity to promote vocational careers to both boys and girls to dispel misconceptions and increase diversity.

The industry could take this outreach programme a step further by leading workshops – perhaps linked to relevant subjects of study like science or technology – to not only build relations with schools but also to demonstrate electrical work in action and provide encouragement to young people with a natural aptitude for the work.

Fit for purpose

The electrical industry is crying out for young people with the skills and aptitude needed to keep up with the increasing complexity of the electrical sector and the pace that technology is advancing. While aptitude is something that can be identified early on by educators, the provision of relevant skills training falls firmly with apprenticeship providers and employers. Are modern electrical apprenticeships fit for purpose?

In recent years, the introduction of Trailblazer Apprenticeships, led by employers, has gone a long way towards ensuring the course of study for apprentice electricians properly prepares them for the realities of the working world and the technologies they will be faced with. We are in the era of the ‘smart installer’ and apprenticeships must be flexible and adaptable. With Trailblazers, new technologies can be easily integrated into the programme of study.

Keeping apprentices up to date in a fast moving sector, like the electrical industry, can however cause other problems for educators. Although it is certainly not the case across the board, many technical colleges have older fixtures and wiring installations for students to practice on, which limits the scope of their learning and doesn’t give them hands on experience of the products they are likely to be working with in the future.

Some training providers have agreements with manufacturers to ensure the latest products and equipment is available, and arguably this kind of arrangement would work well for state colleges and private providers alike. Exposure to the latest products not only encourages future generations to be early adopters of new technology, but it also builds brand loyalty for manufacturers willing to put their hand in their pocket to support training centres and colleges.

Aside from the technical expertise required to succeed in the electrical industry, one important question centres around whether apprenticeships should include other useful skills to help apprentices once they are in the real world on their own. For example business acumen, marketing, how to do quotes, time management, even customer service are all valuable – and transferable – skills.

This may be more of a barrier to employers than the training provider, as adding extra elements to the curriculum would mean releasing their apprentice for more periods of time – a particular issue for businesses with third and fourth year apprentices who are able to do quite a bit of commercial work – and essentially equipping them with the tools to leave the business and set up on their own.

Ultimately, we need to get the programme of study right for apprentices and give them all the tools they need to succeed.

Demand from business

While the political appetite for apprenticeships is certainly there, its employers who take on apprentices, not politicians. In 2014/15, some 8,000 electrotechnical apprenticeships were started – by comparison, starts for construction apprenticeships totalled 17,000 starts¹⁷. To increase the number of starts, we need to ensure the right opportunities exist for young people and that means getting businesses on board to increase supply.

Let's take a closer look at the businesses that operate in the electrical sector; an estimated 88% of employers training electricians with JTL (the country's largest training provider of electricians) are micro-businesses, employing just 0-9 people. Research suggests they are time pressured, concerned about the commitment of taking on an apprentice and there are lots of misconceptions about how the process works. For every apprenticeship position that is advertised by JTL, there are at least three candidates going for it.



While micro-businesses are clearly the target market to take on apprentices in the electrical sector, they will remain unincentivized by the Government's forthcoming Apprenticeship Levy, which presently misses the mark for smaller employers.

There are many benefits of having an apprentice as part of the team, from plugging skills shortages and reducing staff turnover to injecting fresh ideas into the business and increasing productivity. To help businesses understand the benefits and how the process works, there needs to be a dialogue between potential employers and training providers where accurate information about apprenticeships can be exchanged.

One way to do this may be to encourage electrical businesses to attend careers events, where they can speak to different providers, learn about the financial side of it and also their obligations to provide on the job training, before deciding if it's right for their business. Understanding that time-poor electricians may not have the capacity to attend their local jobs fair, we also need to investigate appropriate means to approach them on their own turf.

This could be achieved by providing training information hubs at electrical wholesalers. With 2,000 locations UK-wide, these hubs would give businesses advice on taking on an apprentice and also provide ongoing support to ensure the training arrangement would be successful and both parties had a positive experience.

The way forward

Can the electrical industry **unite** behind one single **vision**, one action plan for **change**?



The roundtable event **brought together people from across the industry** to discuss the inherent issues of apprenticeships and attracting talent into the electrical sector. While the participants there on the day were from diverse corners of the industry, there was a common theme during the event and this was **collaboration**. If we are going to create lasting change, it's going to be a **team effort**.

Getting the apprenticeships formula right will benefit every part of the electrical industry, so there is certainly a common goal. We have power and influence in numbers. **Perhaps there is not one solution, but many solutions where we each have a part to play; manufacturers supporting colleges, wholesalers supporting trainers, apprentice employers supporting schools, businesses shaping apprenticeships.**

We need to show young people what is so special about the electrical industry and really sell our business to the next generation. There is more to the electrical sector than sparkys – we are wholesalers, contractors, technicians, sales and marketing, designers, manufacturers, engineers. Apprenticeships are the key to opening these many doors of opportunity, and this white paper is the first step towards improving the apprentice experience for young people and giving them the tools needed to shine in our industry.

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Notes

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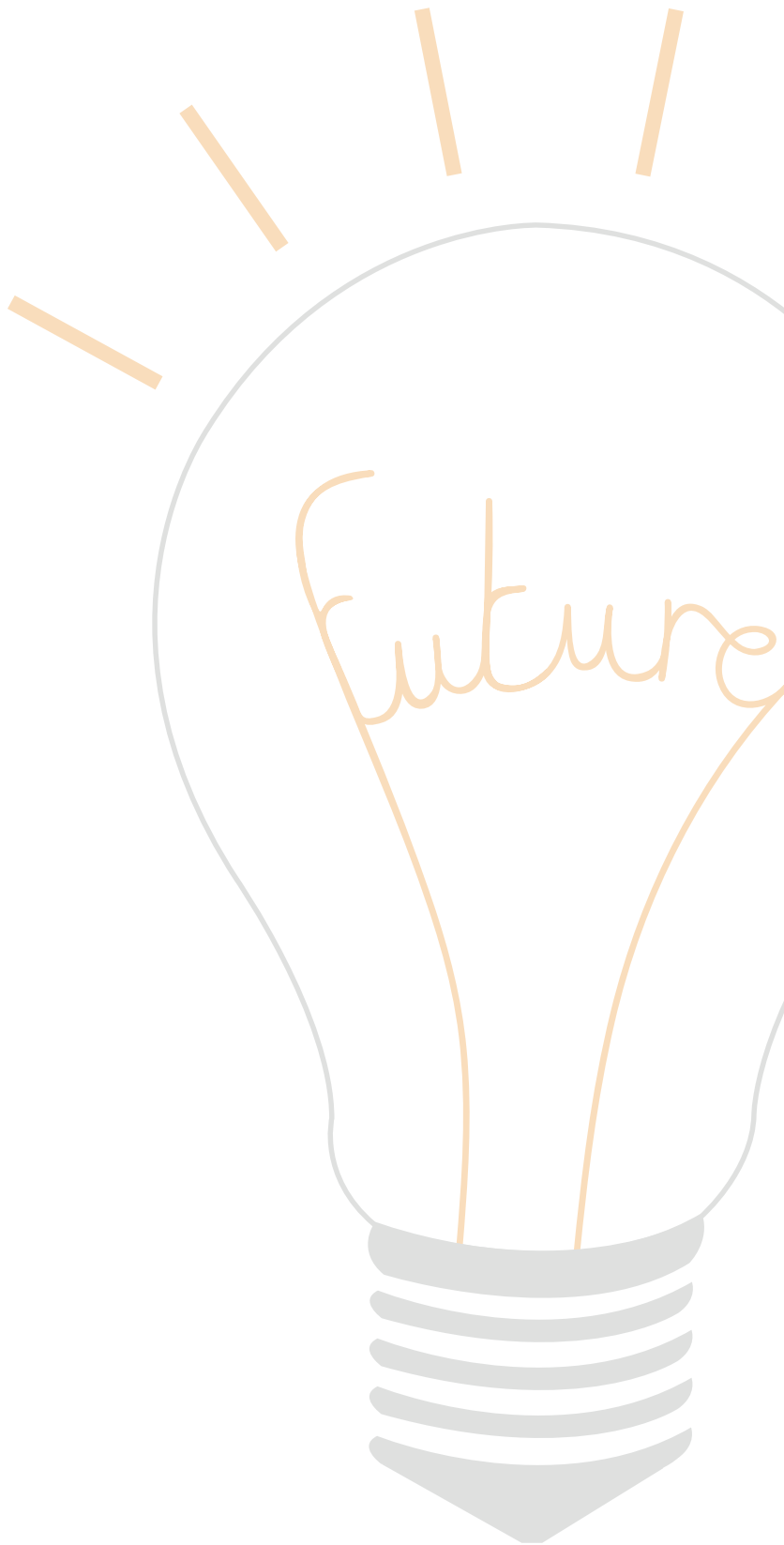
For Professionals... Since 1857™

*This report was compiled as part of **Super Rod** and Klein's ongoing commitment to supporting apprenticeships in the UK.*



The project was started with the commitment to equip new JTL Apprentices with a FREE starter tool kit for the year. This is part of a wider ambition to increase the skills level within our industry.

*The 3rd ToolKit giveaway will take place on March 9th, 2017 to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week. You can follow the national roll-out on social media by following **#ToolKitThursday**.*



APPRENTICESHIPS