



Improving Equalities in Apprenticeships

March 2008

1. Purpose of this report

This report presents a series of recommendations for actions to improve equalities in apprenticeships. These recommendations are for actions which should be undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and by the new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) which is currently being established as a distinct service within the LSC.

The recommendations in this report are based on a short research study carried out by the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG) Ltd in March 2008. The methods used in the research study are detailed in Annex One.

The LSC Equality and Diversity Committee are asked to adopt the recommendations in this report.

2. Background

The Government's strategy for the future of apprenticeships in England, *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking talent, Building Skills for All*, was published in January 2008. The national strategy sets out proposals for a major expansion in apprenticeship programmes, designed to make apprenticeships a mainstream option for all 16-18 year olds by 2013. To implement this, a new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) is being formed as a separate and distinct service within the LSC, and is expected to be fully functional by April 2009. From 2010, when the LSC ceases, the NAS will be housed within the new Skills Funding Agency. The NAS will undertake all the functions required to provide an 'end to end' apprenticeship service, including:

- Co-ordinating the funding of all apprenticeship places;
- Assessing potential providers for quality and value for money;
- A national information and marketing service;
- Establishing and maintaining a national matching service for employers and would-be apprentices;
- The specification and provision of all future management information, including key diversity information;
- Management of a task force initiative to overcome the particular barriers to the growth of the programme in London.

The national strategy acknowledges that there are serious inequalities within current apprenticeship programmes. In particular that:

- Black and minority ethnic (BME) young people are very under-represented in apprenticeships compared with their numbers in the population as a whole. BME people make up less than 3% of the apprentices in construction, land based industries, science, engineering and manufacturing, building services engineering, and hair and beauty.
- Females are under-represented in advanced level apprenticeships.¹ Females make up less than 2% of the apprentices in automotive skills, construction, and building services engineering.
- Disabled people are under-represented on apprenticeships.²
- Over 25s make up 87% of today's workforce, over 75% of the workforce of 2020 and 2.2% of all apprenticeships (of which all are aged 25-29 and none over 30) (2006 data).

¹ Advanced Apprenticeships include learning to Level 3, while Apprenticeships are at Level 2. For the period August 2007 to January 2008 a total of 115,654 people started on an apprenticeship, of which 78,982 (68%) were on an Apprenticeship and 36,672 (32%) were on an Advanced Apprenticeship; 44% of those starting an Apprenticeship were female, while 37% of those starting an Advanced Apprenticeship were female [figures from the Individualised Learner Record Database published at www.apprenticeships.org.uk/partners/frameworks/apprenticeshipsdata]

² The national strategy does not include any figures for the numbers of apprentices with disabilities.

Interviewees for this research stressed that the under-representation of female, disabled and BME people in apprenticeships is not a recent issue, but has been a long standing feature of apprenticeship programmes. There is a strong view that 'despite a million and one initiatives' there has not yet been any notable change in this. This view is confirmed by the data which are published on the LSC apprenticeships website. Table 1 shows the proportion of disabled, female and BME people starting an apprenticeship in 2002/3 and in 2007/8 for the ten apprenticeship frameworks which had the highest number of apprenticeship places in 2007/8.

The figures show a general increase in the proportion of disabled people starting apprenticeships (although it is not clear whether these data are comparable as the 2002/3 figures are for 'people with disabilities' and the 2007/8 figures are for 'people with a learning difficulty'). However, there have been declines in the proportion of disabled starters on construction and electrotechnical apprenticeships. Disabled people represent about 20% of the UK's working age population and 9% of adults aged 16 to 24.³ Compared to the national population figures, disabled people are particularly under-represented in the engineering and electrotechnical sectors, as shown in Table 1.

The figures for female starts show very little change over this five year period. Females are hugely under-represented in the 'traditionally male' areas of construction, engineering and vehicle maintenance, and hugely over-represented in the lower pay hairdressing and childcare sectors. A notable change is that the proportion of females in engineering has declined by over half from 6.0% in 2002/3 to 2.7% in 2007/8.

Table 1 shows that there has been virtually no change in the proportion of BME people starting apprenticeships over this five year period. Compared to the BME population in England (11% of the total population⁴ and over 14% of the school age population⁵), BME people remain greatly under-represented in all key apprenticeship sectors. The figures in Table 1 show that there have been declines in the proportion of BME people starting apprenticeships in hairdressing, engineering, hospitality and catering and electrotechnical.

³ Disability Rights Commission, *Disability Briefing*, May 2007

⁴ Office for National Statistics, resident population estimates for 2005

⁵ The Business Commission on Race Equality in the Workplace, 2007, p11

Table I: Apprenticeship starts for 2002/3 and 2007/8

	Total starts Foundation Modern Apprenticeships Aug 2002 – Jul 2003	% of starts People with disabilities	% of starts Female	% of starts BME	Total starts Apprenticeships + Advanced Apprenticeships Aug 2007 – Jan 2008	% of starts People with a learning difficulty	% of starts Female	% of starts BME
Construction	10,536	10.0	0.7	2.5	13,351	9.7	1.6	2.5
Hairdressing	12,096	13.0	92.3	4.2	10,526	16.8	91.8	3.0
Engineering	5,768	5.8	6.0	3.4	9,569	6.9	2.7	3.2
Business administration	15,169	7.2	76.1	9.2	8,063	10.2	79.8	9.4
Children’s care, learning and education	5,324	16.4	97.0	8.5	7,594	18.3	97.3	10.9
Customer service	12,054	6.4	67.9	7.3	7,444	11.3	66.0	8.2
Hospitality and catering	20,608	8.2	52.1	4.0	7,167	10.6	50.4	3.4
Vehicle maintenance and repair	-	-	-	-	6,711	12.0	1.9	3.5
Electrotechnical	881	7.2	1.0	5.3	4,864	4.8	1.3	2.6
Retail	12,002	8.2	67.4	6.9	4,576	11.9	66.3	6.8

[Source: The Individualised Learner Record Database published at www.apprenticeships.org.uk/partners/frameworks/apprenticeshipsdata]

3. National strategy proposals to improve equalities in apprenticeships

The national strategy suggests that some barriers for under-represented groups will be addressed by the proposed reforms and improvements to apprenticeship programmes, including increasing the number of apprenticeships for those aged 25 and over, which may increase opportunities for BME groups that tend to enter the labour force later, and for those with care responsibilities. The strategy also sets out specific proposals to address inequalities within the expanded apprenticeships programmes, including:

- Continued LSC funding for apprenticeships aimed at priority adult groups, including women and ethnic minorities seeking to enter an atypical career;
- Developing 'critical mass' pilots in targeted areas for gender atypical, BME and disabled learners and their employers;
- The NAS will work with employers offering apprenticeships to develop equal opportunity recruitment policies;
- Each group of atypical apprentices will have a mentor, paid for by the NAS, to provide close support and intervention through their apprenticeship;
- The LSC to ensure that all employers comply with the £80 minimum wage for apprentices;
- The Low Pay Commission will be asked to conduct a review of apprentice pay in the future.

4. Research findings

4.1 Delivering the national strategy proposals on equalities

The national strategy makes a clear commitment to addressing the continuing inequalities in apprenticeships. This commitment is acknowledged and welcomed. The national strategy's proposals for improving equalities are also welcomed. While some of these proposals are clear and straightforward (asking the Low Pay Commission to conduct a review of apprentice pay, for example), others are less clear and will need further elaboration and discussion to turn them into practical actions. In particular, the proposals to develop 'critical mass pilots in target areas', including a London-specific campaign, need further development. There are concerns amongst stakeholders that there is a thin line between creating a 'critical mass' and creating 'silo sectors' where some groups

of apprentices become ghettoised. These concerns need to be fed into the detailed planning of actions in this area.

We recommend that the LSC should:

- Develop a detailed action plan which sets out how the actions proposed in the national strategy and the recommendations set out in this report will be delivered. The action plan should identify which actions can be undertaken by the LSC and which should be built into the NAS. The action plan should include dates for review of implementation, by the Equality and Diversity Committee and then by the Equality Performance Committee (as recommended below).
- Establish a Working Group comprised of stakeholders from national equalities groups, Sector Skills Councils, the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network, the LSC and others, to design the critical mass pilots. There should be a separate Working Group, or possibly sub-group, to develop the London-specific campaign.
- Design an evaluation framework for the critical mass pilots to ensure that each pilot is evaluated within a common framework in order that comparable data are produced which will enable the LSC/NAS to identify which measures have worked.
- Allocate sufficient resources to implement the actions to improve equalities set out in the national strategy and those recommended in this report.

4.2 Prioritising equality and diversity

This research found that this commitment was acknowledged and welcomed but there is a strong view that it is now time to 'raise the game' in improving equalities. To help achieve this, the NAS will require staff and resources to drive through action on equalities.

We recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:

- Appoint a NAS senior director for equality and diversity at national level, supported by a team of employer facing equality and diversity officers.
- Appoint managers for equality and diversity at regional or sub-regional level, to reflect the structure of the NAS.

- Establish an Equality and Diversity Performance Committee to advise the NAS. This should be comprised of external experts, modelled on the LSC Equality and Diversity Committee.

4.3 Efficient and effective data collection

The national strategy acknowledges that there are shortcomings in the current data on apprentices. It is not currently possible to identify whether under-representation of disabled, BME and females results from a low level of applications from these groups, or whether applications from these groups are less likely to be successful. There is a pressing need for fuller information in order to target actions where they are most needed.

Interviewees for this research also raised a number of concerns about the availability and reliability of the current data on apprentices, including:

- The LSC data on apprenticeships is inaccurate and is not sufficiently up to date to provide a useful tool for Sector Skills Councils;
- The LSC data only show starts and completions and do not give any information about what happens to apprentices in between these two points. It is not currently possible to identify at which point non-completers leave their apprenticeship, and whether there are discernible trends in non-completion for particular sectors or for particular under-represented groups of apprentices;
- The data on disabled apprentices are aggregated and do not enable any detailed analysis of patterns for particular groups of disabled trainees.

The establishment of the NAS offers a great opportunity to design in a data collection and retrieval system which supports the promotion of improved equalities within the apprenticeships programme. We consider that a very high priority should be given to ensuring that the NAS data system meets this need. To achieve this we recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:

- Consult with a wide range of stakeholders on what data should be collected, how data should be collected, and how data can be accessed by stakeholders.
- Build on work which has already been undertaken in this area, e.g. the apprenticeship tracking tool already developed by LANTRA.

- Consult equalities groups on the design of the data system in general, and in particular on the way in which it collects data on gender, disability and ethnicity.

4.4 Supporting and incentivising employers

The strong view from all those interviewed for this research is that employers are key to making apprenticeships work, and will be critical to improving equalities in apprenticeships. The LSC has had direct engagement with some companies employing apprentices through the LSC National Employment Service, which works with companies employing 5,000 or more. The LSC's relationship with smaller companies employing apprentices has been via learning providers who are contracted by the LSC to deliver the NVQ and skills training elements of the programme. The proposed new delivery system gives the NAS the lead role in employer engagement.

We support the specific proposal in the national strategy for the NAS to work with employers offering apprenticeships to develop recruitment policies that truly deliver equality of access. We also consider that additional actions should be taken to support and incentivise employers to recruit a more diverse range of people onto their apprenticeship programmes. We recommend that LSC and the NAS should:

- Actively promote to employers that a range of support agencies exists which can help them in this area. Such support includes, for example, advice on how to support the needs of trainees with disabilities, or the 'gender mentor' support which the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology is providing to the London Engineering Project. Promotion should be by the equality and diversity officers, through the good practice website (as recommended below), and via national, regional and sub-regional campaigns.
- Run a pilot project offering employers premium funding rates for particular types of trainee in sectors where they are under-represented. The pilot project should be carefully evaluated to identify (a) whether premium funding rates make a measurable difference to the proportion of under-represented people in this sector; (b) whether employers who increase the diversity of their apprentices maintain this diversity when the premium funding ends; (c) any unforeseen benefits or drawbacks of premium funding.

4.5 Reviewing funding mechanisms for disabled learner support

There is a particular issue regarding the apparent anomalies in funding support for disabled learners in Further Education colleges and those with Work Based Learning (WBL) providers, whereby WBL providers are less well funded and face a more bureaucratic process to access funding to support disabled learners. This may be a barrier to WBL providers recruiting disabled people onto apprenticeships.

We recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:

- Review the current arrangements for Additional Learner Support and seek input from experts on disabled learners to ensure that any new arrangements do not pose barriers to the recruitment and support of disabled people on apprenticeships.

4.6 Sharing good practice

There have been a great number of projects and initiatives undertaken by a range of agencies aimed at improving equalities in apprenticeships. Just a few of those we came across include:

- A series of same-sex taster sessions run by Wiltshire College which give young people an opportunity to try out subjects in non-traditional areas e.g. childcare sessions for young men, engineering sessions for young women;
- A project which organised placements in engineering companies for secondary school girls doing their Year 10 work experience;
- The suite of tools and resources developed by the Gender Equality Race Inclusion (GERI) project, which include guides for teachers and careers advisers on challenging gender and ethnic occupation stereotyping.
- However, there is no single place where information on these initiatives is drawn together, where other agencies can glean useful ideas about approaches which have been tried before. We recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:
 - Develop a website for disseminating ideas and experiences of what works in achieving equality and diversity in apprenticeships.⁶ The website could also be a location where employers and learning providers can access tools, resources and good practice. The LSC/NAS should actively promote the website to employers, learning providers, Connexions partnerships, and local authority Children and Young People Services.

⁶ This recommendation was also made in the Equal Opportunities Commission report *Gender Segregation in Apprenticeships*.

4.7 Raising awareness

There is a strong view from stakeholders that far more action must be taken to increase awareness about apprenticeships in order to attract and support a more diverse range of young people to apply. Many young people and their families are simply unaware of what apprenticeships are, how to apply for them, and what opportunities exist within the sectors which recruit and train new staff through apprenticeships. There is a need to raise awareness amongst:

- Young people themselves, particularly girls, BME and disabled young people;
- Their families, particularly those from communities where there is no tradition of taking apprenticeships or vocational training in the UK, which includes most BME communities;
- Careers advisers and others who advise young people on further education and career options, such as secondary school Year 10 work experience co-ordinators;
- Older people, who will be eligible within the new apprenticeship programmes.

This research has found that the Young Apprenticeship programmes appear to be effective in raising awareness about apprenticeships amongst groups of young people who tend not to apply. The Young Apprenticeship programme was launched in 2004 and enables secondary school pupils (aged 14 to 16) to study for vocational qualifications with training providers and in the workplace, for two days a week. Around 9,000 young people took up Young Apprenticeships in 2007. SEMTA, for example, report that 7.1% of those on the Young Apprenticeships in engineering are female, compared with 3.9% of females on Apprenticeships. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Young Apprenticeships programmes are increasing the diversity of applicants for Apprenticeship places, by feeding through a higher number of atypical applicants. Although further research is needed to substantiate this, the Young Apprenticeship approach points to the effectiveness of working with children at age 14 to raise awareness of the opportunities offered through apprenticeships. Stakeholders consider that young people have very fixed views by age 16, and that work with young people is vital to help challenge gender and ethnic job stereotypes.

We recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:

- Commission research with young people to determine the extent to which they currently obtain information on vocational options, the routes used by young people in order to obtain that information and the ways in which access to information may be improved.⁷
- Commission further research to examine the career aspirations of young people from BME communities. Some initial research in this area⁸ suggests that BME young people have the same range of career aspirations as white young people, yet there are strongly held views amongst stakeholders that BME people aspire to professional rather than vocational occupations, and therefore do not consider apprenticeships.
- Support a pilot project to raise awareness of apprenticeships within BME communities, working with BME young people and their families. The pilot project should be fully evaluated with a view to rolling out the successful elements of this approach on a national and long term basis.
- Work with schools, Connexions and local authorities to promote equality and diversity training for careers advisers. The LSC/NAS should actively promote the available tools and resources which have been developed to help careers advisers to challenge gender and ethnic job stereotyping (available, for example, on the GERI and JIVE websites, details in Annex One).
- Launch an initiative to raise awareness of the entitlements which are available to support disabled people to undertake apprenticeships.

4.7 Setting targets

There are mixed views on the value of the LSC's Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs) as a tool for improving equalities in apprenticeships. Some stakeholders see EDIMs as a useful mechanism for helping providers and employers to see what the position is in terms of how equalities groups are represented within sectors and within regions, and thereby focusing attention on how to improve the position. However, there are also concerns that the EDIM on apprenticeships places an emphasis on achievement rates which may be encouraging providers to recruit people who are most likely to complete their apprenticeship.

We recommend that the LSC and the NAS should:

⁷ This recommendation was also made in the Equal Opportunities Commission report *Gender Segregation in Apprenticeships*.

⁸ A report produced by the Centre for Research into Socially Inclusive Services in 2004, for example, see Annex One for details.

- Set targets for improving the proportion of under-represented groups who both participate in and achieve on apprenticeships. Targets should be determined at a regional or sub-regional level, to reflect the NAS structure, and should be specific to each apprenticeship framework. Initial targets should aim to increase participation and achievement rates to reflect the workforce proportions for disabled, BME and women employees in that sector. Longer term targets for apprenticeships should aim to improve on the workforce make up in sectors where the workforce does not reflect population diversity.
- Set targets for local LSCs/local NAS offices to recruit employers who make an active commitment to interviewing under-represented applicants.

5. Summary of recommendations

We recommend that the LSC and/or the NAS should undertake the following actions:

Delivering the national strategy proposals and the recommendations of this report:

1. Develop a detailed action plan which sets out how the actions proposed in the national strategy and the recommendations set out in this report will be delivered. The action plan should identify which actions can be undertaken by the LSC and which should be built into the NAS. The action plan should include dates for review of implementation, by the Equality and Diversity Committee and then by the Equality Performance Committee.
2. Establish a Working Group comprised of stakeholders from national equalities groups, Sector Skills Councils, the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network, the LSC and others, to design the critical mass pilots. There should be a separate Working Group, or possibly sub-group, to develop the London-specific campaign.
3. Design an evaluation framework for the critical mass pilots to ensure that each pilot is evaluated within a common framework in order that comparable data are produced which will enable the LSC/NAS to identify which measures have worked.
4. Allocate sufficient resources to implement the actions to improve equalities set out in the national strategy and those recommended in this report.

Prioritising equality and diversity in the NAS:

5. Appoint a NAS senior director for equality and diversity at national level, supported by a team of employer facing equality and diversity officers.
6. Appoint managers for equality and diversity at regional or sub-regional level, to reflect the structure of the NAS.
7. Establish an Equality and Diversity Performance Committee to advise the NAS. This should be comprised of external experts, modelled on the LSC Equality and Diversity Committee.

Establishing an efficient and effective data collection system:

8. Consult with a wide range of stakeholders on what data should be collected, how data should be collected, and how data can be accessed by stakeholders.
9. Build on work which has already been undertaken in this area, e.g. the apprenticeship tracking tool already developed by LANTRA.
10. Consult equalities groups on the design of the data system in general, and in particular on the way in which it collects data on gender, disability and ethnicity.

Supporting and incentivising employers:

11. Actively promote to employers that a range of support agencies exists which can help them in this area. Such support includes, for example, advice on how to support the needs of trainees with disabilities, or the 'gender mentor' support which the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology is providing to the London Engineering Project. Promotion should be by the equality and diversity officers, through the good practice website (as recommended below), and via national, regional and sub-regional campaigns.
12. Run a pilot project offering employers premium funding rates for particular types of trainee in sectors where they are under-represented. The pilot project should be carefully evaluated to identify (a) whether premium funding rates make a measurable difference to the proportion of under-represented people in this sector; (b) whether employers who increase the diversity of their apprentices maintain this diversity when the premium funding ends; (c) any unforeseen benefits or drawbacks of premium funding.

Reviewing funding mechanisms for disabled learner support:

13. Review the current arrangements for Additional Learner Support and seek input from experts on disabled learners to ensure that any new arrangements do not pose barriers to the recruitment and support of disabled people on apprenticeships.

Sharing good practice:

14. Develop a website for disseminating ideas and experiences of what works in achieving equality and diversity in apprenticeships. The website could also be a location where employers and learning providers can access tools, resources and good practice. The LSC/NAS should actively promote the website to employers, learning providers, Connexions partnerships, and local authority Children and Young People Services.

Raising awareness:

15. Commission research with young people to determine the extent to which they currently obtain information on vocational options, the routes used by young people in order to obtain that information and the ways in which access to information may be improved.

16. Commission further research to examine the career aspirations of young people from BME communities. Some initial research in this area⁹ suggests that BME young people have the same range of career aspirations as white young people, yet there are strongly held views amongst stakeholders that BME people aspire to professional rather than vocational occupations, and therefore do not consider apprenticeships.

17. Support a pilot project to raise awareness of apprenticeships within BME communities, working with BME young people and their families. The pilot project should be fully evaluated with a view to rolling out the successful elements of this approach on a national and long term basis.

18. Work with schools, Connexions and local authorities to promote equality and diversity training for careers advisers. The LSC/NAS should actively promote the available tools and resources which have been developed to help careers advisers to challenge gender and ethnic job stereotyping.

19. Launch an initiative to raise awareness of the entitlements which are available to support disabled people to undertake apprenticeships.

Setting targets:

20. Set targets for improving the proportion of under-represented groups who both participate in and achieve on apprenticeships. Targets should be determined at a regional or sub-regional level, to reflect the NAS structure, and should be specific to each apprenticeship framework. Initial targets should aim to increase participation and achievement rates to reflect the workforce proportions for disabled, BME and women employees in that

⁹ A report produced by the Centre for Research into Socially Inclusive Services in 2004, for example, see Annex One for details.

sector. Longer term targets for apprenticeships should aim to improve on the workforce make up in sectors where the workforce does not reflect population diversity.

21. Set targets for local LSCs/local NAS offices to recruit employers who make an active commitment to interviewing under-represented applicants.

ANNEX ONE Research methodology

This research study was commissioned by the LSC Equality and Diversity Team and was carried out by BTEG Ltd during March 2008. The research was not intended to be an exhaustive inquiry into all aspects of inequality in apprenticeships, but rather to build on the evidence presented in *World Class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All* in order to develop a series of recommendations for the LSC and the NAS to take forward.

The research comprised:

1. A review of selected work in this field:

Miller, Linda et al. *Gender segregation in apprenticeships*, Institute for Employment Studies, Equal Opportunities Commission, 2005.

National Employment Panel. *60/76 The Business Commission on Race Equality in the Workplace*, October 2007.

BTEG. *National Policy Symposium on Modern Apprenticeships and Black and Minority Ethnic Young People*, unpublished report, 2003.

Rutherford, Françoise et al. *Employment Aspirations & Experiences of Black/Minority Ethnic Young People & their Parents in Glasgow*, Centre for Research into Socially Inclusive Services, 2004

2. Interviews with stakeholders:

Steve Price	LSC
Esther Cook	LSC
Melanie Cossey Haggart	LSC
Joanna Rowland Stewart	LSC
Helen Collier	UK Resource Centre on Women in Science, Engineering and Technology
Katie Couchman	Skills Active
Ian Carnell	SEMTA

Paul Sykes	Construction Skills
Derek Hartshorne	LANTRA
Alice Pennington	Skill
Peter Little OBE	In a personal capacity

3. Identifying existing tools and resources:

- The Gender Equality and Race Inclusion (GERI) project was funded by the European Commission's EQUAL programme (from 2001 to 2005) to help overcome gender and ethnic job stereotyping. The resources developed by the GERI project are available on-line at www.geriproject.org.
- The JIVE project was funded by the European Commission's EQUAL programme (from 2001 to 2007) to help increase the number of women working in science, engineering, construction and technology. The project produced a range of tools and resources which are available on-line at www.jivepartners.org.uk.