

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### SELECT COMMITTEE - APPRENTICESHIPS

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Apprenticeships held in the Swale 2, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 23 January 2013.

PRESENT: Mr K Smith (Chairman), Mr R H Bird, Mr A R Chell, Mr L Christie, Mr D A Hirst, Mr R J Lees and Mr M J Northey

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Policy Overview Research Officer)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **16. Interview with Danielle Sparkes, Senior Technical Clerk, and Mary Leadsham, Apprentice Technical Clerk, Building Control, Dover District Council** *(Item 1)*

**Please introduce yourselves and tell us how you came to be where you are.**

(DS) I am currently a Senior Technical Clerk in Building Control at Dover District Council. I started work at Canterbury City Council in a two-year Apprenticeship and was promoted after one year. In this Apprenticeship I achieved an NVQ Level 3 qualification. I found out about the Apprenticeship from the careers advisor at school. I worked for Canterbury City Council for six years and then moved to Dover District Council. I mentor Mary, and the other Apprentices at Dover have their own mentors. While I was working at Canterbury I did a degree in Business Admin, which took me three years. The City Council funded this.

(ML) I was in the sixth form at a Boys' Grammar School (GCSEs were undertaken at a Girls' Grammar) and was starting to follow the academic route on the way to university. I did one year of A Levels and then left to do work experience, initially with horses, which is what I thought I wanted to do at that time. I worked with horses for two years and then wanted to change to do office-based work. I looked at the job centre for information and found the Apprenticeship in Building Control. As I had never worked in an office I knew I would need to build up suitable skills and qualifications, and this was an ideal opportunity to do that. I have been in my Apprenticeship for 10 months, and have almost completed a Level 3 NVQ. I have looked around at other work opportunities and getting into other things certainly seems easier now I have this qualification. I have the NVQ and BTEC in Business Admin. I have done this in less than one year but that has been long enough for me to do it without feeling hurried.

**Does the time an Apprentice takes to complete an NVQ vary?**

(DS) It depends on how much time they can spend at work on gathering the evidence they need to build their NVQ portfolio.

**Did you have a choice of which college you went to, to do your training, and how did you choose?**

(DS) I was at Canterbury City Council in my Apprenticeship and they chose the college for me, based on the course I wanted to do. There were other colleges I

could have gone to but they chose the nearest one that had a good profile for that course. Dover District Council draws applicants for Apprenticeships from their Partner College – K College. The recruitment of Apprentices is college-led but the interview and selection process is employer-led.

**Were you pleased with the quality of the college?**

(DS) Yes, I had good support there. It's important to have a good quality partner college and college course.

**How would you identify or define quality?**

(DS) By the support that I had, and by the support I can see that Mary has had.

**When you were recruited as an Apprentice, how long was the placement for?**

(ML) Mine was one year. It ends in March 2013.

**What will you do next?**

(ML) I hope to get a job to continue in Building Control at Dover District Council, but they have to get funding for the role and advertise it first.

(DS) The Council has to see if the post can be justified first, then if it is they will look at funding and then advertising it.

**Can I ask you how much you are paid in your Apprenticeship?**

(ML) National minimum wage. I was told I was not on the Apprentice minimum wage.

**And how are you paid? Do you get a pay cheque like everyone else?**

(ML) Yes, direct from the District Council.

**So did you do Business Admin and Building Control? Or is one part of the other?**

(ML) I did Business Admin in Building Control. I am also doing an AAT accountancy qualification in my own time, by distance learning.

**The Richard Review said that qualifications should come from or be led by employers, getting together to set standard qualifications.**

(ML) I went to the Home Learning College to find my AAT course, and I saw there that they have Apprenticeships listed on their home page, so it seems that Apprenticeship training is being offered by a distance learning route.

**What did you think of the process you followed, once you decided to become an Apprentice?**

(ML) I thought it was quite straightforward. I was applying for lots of different jobs at the time, and I wasn't looking specifically for an Apprenticeship. I searched via the internet, the Direct Jobs website, which has a link to K College. I sent off my CV and went to an Apprenticeships day at the Job Centre, at which I met representatives from K College.

**How much of the learning aspect did you do at college, and how much at work, and do you think the balance between the two was right?**

(ML) Anything that was in the college course I was doing at work anyway, so there was a lot of overlap and I could use all my work as NVQ evidence.

(DS) There were a few bits on the NVQ evidence list that Mary couldn't give evidence for, such as 'resolving a conflict at work', as we haven't had any conflict! In that case you would just have to put down 'none experienced' for that piece of evidence or explain how you would deal with this type of situation.

**Does the college course teach you things that you might not necessarily need immediately but will do in the future?**

(ML) Yes, there were some bits, like taking minutes and notes, that I will probably need later but that I haven't made use of yet.

**What is covered by Building Control?**

(DS) The role of Building Control is to check that development complies with Building Regulations and Health and Safety requirements.

**Where do you see your career going from here? You started A Levels but opted out and have done an Apprenticeship. How does your journey compare to those of your friends who went to university?**

(ML) Mine has been different from theirs. Some friends continued with A Levels and went to university but have been unhappy with where they are. Two went to university but dropped out. Some say that going to university has not been helpful to them as employers are looking for practical skills. I feel I am better off as I have a mixture of academic qualifications and practical work experience. I am also doing a degree with the Open University so I will have that on my CV as well.

**As a mentor, were you part of the recruitment process that selected Mary, and how was the selection done?**

(DS) Yes I was part of it. The HR department at the District Council asked K College to put forward some students who might be suitable for an Apprenticeship.

**Did they give you a good selection?**

(DS) They gave the Council eight or nine names, from which we chose five to interview. We chose those five as they met the criteria we had set, which included GCSE Level 2 maths and English at grade C or above. Some lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills. We interviewed the five and rated them against our criteria. We could have gone back to K College if we had not been happy with the candidates they sent us, but we would have had to start all over again with them or another college.

**Was the District Council offered anyone who had learning difficulties or similar issues that would identify them as a vulnerable person?**

(DS) No, there were none.

**How would the District Council view taking on a vulnerable person? I am assuming they are an equal opportunities employer?**

(DS) Yes they are an equal opportunities employer. Any applicant would be measured against the same criteria, including GCSE Level 2 maths and English at grade C or above, but we would still consider others if they had other skills which we believed compensated for a shortfall in maths and English.

**The Select Committee has heard previously that GCSE Level 2 maths and English is a pre-requisite for an Apprenticeship. Can an Apprentice gain these qualifications *during* the Apprenticeship?**

(DS) Apprentices have an option of developing functional skills via a college course.

**Did all the five candidates you interviewed have GCSE Level 2 maths and English?**

(DS) One might not have done, I can't remember now, but as we selected them for interview we would have been interested in them for some other skills or experience that they could offer.

**How many Apprentices does the District Council have?**

(DS) We now have four.

**Why does the District Council recruit Apprentices? Is it as a form of cheap labour? What is their motivation?**

(DS) Because of the benefits it brings in the poor economic climate. They do save money on the low wage, so it improves their bottom line, but there are many benefits for the organisation, and Apprentices have been shown to deliver. They bring fresh thinking and new minds, which can help an employer cope with the fast pace of change. Apprentices are flexible and can fill skills gaps, helping an organisation to meet its business needs. The District Council realises the difficulties that young people have in finding work and gaining work experience, and also sees the benefits for itself.

**So that's why the District Council takes them on, but that's a public body. If you were a business person, why would you take on an Apprentice?**

(DS) They are a source of recruitment which takes only a low wage but which gets the job done. But the set up needs support. The employer gets support from the college, as a partner, and the Apprentice gets support from both, so no-one is on their own.

**And what about you, Mary – what do you see as the benefits?**

(ML) The employer can train an Apprentice to meet their business needs and fill a space that they have. As an Apprentice, you get a chance to prove yourself. It's a trial for both sides – you can see if it works out, and if it doesn't, for either side, it's not a long-term commitment. If you can then go for a full-time post, the employer has the chance to take on someone whom they already know and has been given the experience they need, and does not have the risk of taking on someone unknown.

(DS) I would add that Apprenticeships are a low risk option for employers.

**How many Dover District Council Apprentices have gone on to take up permanent jobs at the Council?**

(DS) Mary is the first Apprentice to be nearing the end of her placement; the other three haven't been here as long. I was the first Apprentice at Canterbury City Council and was promoted into a full-time job, and they funded my degree, so I was lucky. I was a guinea pig, but others who came after me also had offers of full-time jobs.

**How many Apprentices did the City Council have?**

(DS) There was me followed by four others being recruited. Most of the posts, I think, were in customer services, but once someone is in the organisation, of course they have access to see and apply for internal vacancies.

**Were you given careers advice, information and guidance at your schools, and work experience?**

(ML) Yes, I was offered careers advice but it wasn't as helpful as I wanted. If you know exactly what you want to do they can help you look it up online, but I didn't know what I wanted so it wasn't much help to me.

(DS) I was told about Apprenticeships at my High School, which was helpful as it was at the stage when I was deciding my career path and the next step.

### **What about work experience?**

(DS) Yes, I did two weeks' experience.

(ML) I didn't get any at school as I left after the first year of A Levels and work experience was in the second year.

*The Chairman then addressed the Committee as a Cabinet Member of Dover District Council and invited the Select Committee to ask him questions about the District Council's Apprenticeships scheme.*

**Dover District Council is proud of its Apprenticeships scheme, which my Cabinet colleagues and I helped to shape. We seek to take on Apprentices as we feel we ought to have them, as we have an ageing population and need to get young people into posts. Apprentices stimulate change, which is good. I think four is a good number of Apprentices to have at once. I am keen for the District Council to keep hold of the Apprentices it has as they have already fitted in and we have developed them and trained them in the skills we want them to have.**

### **What is the cost to the District Council of the Apprenticeships scheme?**

(DS) We get Government funding for it.

(Chairman) For young people aged between 16 and 18, an Apprenticeship place is 100% funded by the Government. For those between 19 and 24, it is 50% funded. Over 24, there is no Government funding.

### **So could an employer choose only to engage Apprentices between 16 and 18, to get 100% Government funding and not have to put anything in themselves?**

(Chairman) Yes, they could do, but sometimes an employer needs someone who is more mature. Dover District Council will continue its Apprenticeships scheme.

(DS) It helps both the Council and young people in this tough economic climate despite ages/levels recruited.

### **I'd like to believe that employees think the same.**

(DS) I had this journey and was helped along by being an Apprentice. I would have struggled otherwise. I am very pro-Apprenticeships!

### **(question to the Chairman) Would Dover District Council consider taking on vulnerable learners as Apprentices?**

(Chairman) I hope that we would look at them equally.

(DS) If we had had any when we were recruiting Mary we would have looked at them equally and given them the same chance.

(Chairman) The District Council's equalities policy is very thorough.

(ML) It is very 'equal rights'.

### **Some learners will struggle and not have Mary's skills.**

(Chairman) You would have to balance the pros and cons and decide whether or not to employ them.

**We've heard about your journey so far. What would you have done had you not found an Apprenticeship?**

(ML) I would have gone back to working with horses!

**Dover District Council has four Apprentices; what percentage is that of the whole Council's workforce?**

(DS) The whole workforce is about 250 – 280 employees.

**When you left Canterbury City Council, did you have to pay them back any of the funding they had invested in you?**

(DS) Not for the Apprenticeship scheme as that was Government funded. I would have had to pay back some of my degree funding but as I was moving to another local authority (Dover District Council) I didn't have to as Dover took on my debt. If I had left after one year of study and not gone to another local authority that was willing to take on the debt, I would have had to pay back 100% of the funding in the first year, or 50% in the second year.

**What recommendation could the Select Committee make to improve the quality and quantity of Apprenticeships in Kent?**

(DS) Communication needs to improve, to colleges and to employers, to let people know about the benefits of Apprentices.

**Did the County Council, an employer or anyone else come to your school to talk to students about Apprenticeships?**

(DS) No.

**What message does the Select Committee need to give to the CBI, the Chambers of Commerce, etc, about supporting Apprenticeships? And who is the best person to give the message to? The message needs to be specific – not just saying that Apprenticeships are good but spelling out the benefits and giving more information about the pros and cons.**

(DS) Apprenticeships do not suit every type of business. If you can't get support to achieve the qualifications that you need, you won't finish the Apprenticeship, so the employer has to be able to offer sufficient and sustainable support for the whole period of the Apprenticeship. Apprentices bring fresh minds and other advantages like motivation and change, Building Control is a very complex area in which things move on very quickly, and Apprentices help us keep up to date with this.

**Do you feel pride in Dover District Council's Apprenticeship scheme?**

(DS) Yes, the Council became more motivated since having Apprentices, as they see the young people wanting to learn. It helps the organisation stay fresh.

**If the District Council were interviewing for a vacancy and they had to choose between an experienced Apprentice and a Graduate, which one would they choose?**

(DS) Practical work experience proves that someone could bring more benefit than could someone who has studied theory, so I think I would prefer to recruit the Apprentice. When I worked and did my degree at the same time, I was more in touch with the real world than other students who were not working. Those of us who were working and studying had more all-round skills than the full-time students.

**You have proven your academic ability and done work experience, so you have the benefits of both. I think I would choose the Apprentice as well!**

**Where are the other three Apprentices working in the District Council?**

(DS) One is in Planning, one in Accounting and one in the print room. The ones in Planning and Accounting are doing the same course as Mary, and the one in the print room is doing a different qualification.

**How would the District Council go about finding the people it needs with higher level skills, eg in accounting? To what extent would you train up an Apprentice and at what level would you want to recruit a ready-trained accountant?**

(ML) I think there's a limit to what employers should do, and plenty that a young person can and should do to move themselves forward. I am now in the first year of level 2 of my AAT and I will have started the second part of my degree, so I have not relied on someone to tell me what to do next. At school I thought they would give me this guidance but they didn't, so I've gone and found out about things and done things for myself. I picked up on distance learning because it suited me.

**You are obviously very self-motivated, but other young people are not and will not forge their own route as you have done.**

(ML) I just looked around online, using Google – this is easy to find and access.

(DS) Apprenticeships give you a start and you work up from there. Canterbury City Council carried on helping me beyond my Apprenticeship.

**What is the best route, do you think?**

(DS and ML) You can't give a route that will work for every job, and it depends on the young person and what they want, how much they are willing to do and want to do for themselves, etc.

(DS) You have to learn for yourself which route best suits you – no-one else can do that for you.

**How does an Apprenticeship compare to a degree course, in terms of student debt? Is it cheaper?**

(ML) Yes, it's cheaper. My Open University course is partially funded, which is dependant on my income. I paid for the AAT myself.

(DS) I managed to do my degree and then a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) without any debt, as Canterbury City Council funded me for both. I have all the skills I would have gained from a university course but with none of the debt.

**So if you take responsibility for your own education it's cheaper?**

(DS and ML) Yes!

**So a good message for young people seems to be 'if you are priced out of university, find your own options'.**

**Summing up, you have driven yourselves and found your own choices. Would you champion this same route for others?**

(DS) I became a mentor to Mary as I have experienced the apprenticeship programme.

(ML) It's good for an employer to train you well, but you have to be realistic about the level of what other people can do for you and what you need to do for yourself. You have to have, and use, your own initiative as well, and do some bits for yourself.

**What do you think about higher level Apprenticeships? How practical are they?**

(DS) An Apprentice would have to pass Levels 2 and 3 to proceed further, but if they are in a role which allows them to gather the evidence that they need, they can go on into a higher Apprenticeship. The level of NVQ is determined by the level of work which your employer can provide.

**When an employer takes on an Apprentice, are they creating a new job?**

(DS) Yes, an Apprenticeship is always a job and training, as a package.

**Would higher Apprenticeships be a big change?**

(DS) Yes.

(ML) NVQ Level 4 is a management level, so an employer would give that sort of post to existing staff. I think it's too advanced to be described as an 'Apprenticeship' due to the responsibilities they will have.

**Could you describe an Apprenticeship as the practical side of a degree?**

(DS) Yes, you could describe it that way as you are backing up what you are learning and putting it into practice.

**So you have an Apprenticeship and an NVQ that you are doing at the same time?**

(ML) An Apprenticeship involves an NVQ plus BTEC. The NVQ part is done at college and the BTEC part is the portfolio of evidence that you prepare from work.

**I hope you have enjoyed your Select Committee experience today. You've added a lot of good detail for the Committee about the personal experience and ability aspect of Apprenticeships.**

It's been fine.

(DS) A main message that we want to put across to the Select Committee is that Apprenticeships are a good thing, both for young people and for employers.

**Do you think many young people appreciate the chance they are being given, by being able to have an Apprenticeship? Do they see the benefits of it?**

(DS) I did, as I would not have been able to do a course and get the qualifications I have if I hadn't started with one and would have struggled to get into employment and be given the support I gained.

(ML) I appreciate it, and I know that other Apprentices I know agree. I also know that Dover District Council appreciates the Apprentices for what they do.

**Would you be a mentor again?**

(DS) Yes, I would. It's been really good.

**Would you be a mentor to someone else in the future, after your experience?**

(ML) Yes, I would.

**Is there a job description for a mentor? And do you receive any payment for doing it?**

(DS) No, to both questions.

**Would you be willing to write a paragraph setting out a 'job description' for a mentor, and send it to the Select Committee?**

(DS) Yes, I'd be willing to do that.

**And would you, Mary, write something which gives a view about how Danielle has been as a mentor?**

(ML) Yes.

**Thank you both for attending today to help the Select Committee with its information gathering.**

## **17. Interview with Anne McNulty, Executive Director, Education Business Partnership (EBP) Kent** *(Item 2)*

**Please introduce yourself and EBP.**

EBP Kent is a company limited by guarantee and also a registered charity. It has been in practice for 22 years.

**Can you tell us about Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)?**

IAG is a compulsory part of the offer for KS4 students (school years 10 to 13). There is much work going on in the county. It is not true, as some people believe, that nothing is available now that Connexions has ceased to operate. Schools are very creative and resourceful in developing programmes to deliver IAG and create a vision for their students.

This morning, EBP was in a school in Westgate, at which the whole day was given over to IAG. Representatives from 100 employers were in attendance, and by the end of the day, every student will have attended 4 workshops, covering all sectors, and spoken to 14 different employers. The whole school staff is involved, which sends the message to students that their progression is very important and valued by the school. During the day, every Year 11 student (180) had a one-to-one interview with an employer to help them understand what an employer expects. We will give them whatever range of information they require. EBP's work has not been damaged by the loss of blanket coverage; what is important is a detailed knowledge of Labour Market Information (LMI). LMI brings many good opportunities but it can be a barricade to overcome, and IAG is the means by which this barricade can be overcome.

EBP has full contracts to deliver IAG in eight Kent schools. One member of EBP's staff can speak Makaton, so we are able to include the Royal School for the Deaf as one of our customers. We find that parents often have out-of-date information, but some interviews are done with parents present too. From September, there will be some more IAG delivered directly from employers, which will further complement the work being done currently by schools, the EBP and employers. Delivery of good quality IAG needs visionary schools and committed employers and support of professional staff.

One employer has a £2m bid with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to do IAG work, which is very exciting.

LMI is a blueprint of IAG. LMI should not be a barricade to IAG but it is, in certain income sectors.

LMI indicates that the primary employers for East Kent and West Kent are different, ie in Thanet, a primary employer is the health and social care sector, while in West Kent it is an executive office job in London. We need to open the doors to enable aspiration, not raise aspiration.

**The Rotary Club where I am a member does mock interviews with students at schools in Thanet. We see a lack of confidence and self-esteem in young people, which seems to be a failure of the education system. This is worrying. I think it is difficult to match young people with jobs via Apprenticeships.**

Schools have young people for five hours every day, and they do a very good job at nurturing and supporting them. Thanet is the most challenged area in Kent, and if young people there don't have support they have a much bigger journey. You will find young people who lack confidence and self-esteem all over the county.

**I am also involved in a NEETs programme in Herne Bay. The help given to some young people is phenomenal.**

*Start of powerpoint presentation – slide showing range of programmes.*

There is a great range of programmes. For example, there is a programme in which 20 lawyers go into schools for one day a week to read with the children. Some children have increased their reading age by one year in the first term of the programme. Lawyers charge by the minute, so you can imagine how valuable their time is, but the confidence it has given the children is priceless, and a reading age of 11 is needed to do GCSE maths. The end game of all this is paid employment.

EBP's scope of work seeks to support this range of programmes. There are 80 programmes – some run by employers, some not.

*Slide showing chart with 'soft skills' down the side – literacy, numeracy, ICT, teamwork, communication skills, problem solving, etc.*

It is a big step for schools to do something which is not defined by exam results.

The availability of Apprenticeships depends on where you are in Kent. The Select Committee asked me to comment on how it could help improve the quality and quantity of Apprenticeships in Kent. We would seek to see all schools in the areas with really challenging LMI to have 10 Apprenticeships allocated to them each year. These Apprenticeships could be run in the same way as work experience is run now. This would be a chance to support young people and families in the right place to solve some of the County's economic problems. EBP can help improve the quality and geographical spread achieved, if only by a small amount. A small change can make a big improvement. We would need to get employers lined up in the right place but we could do it.

When a student works with an employer for work experience, they are more likely to be taken on again later as an Apprentice. Employers want and need the recruitment process to be as simple as possible, with minimal paperwork. In my opinion, Work Experience is an essential pre-cursor to an apprenticeship - training for employability.

Apprenticeships are not suitable for all, but if a young person wastes their opportunity to be an Apprentice, their family will lose out. In areas in which the LMI 'barricade' is most evident, people traditionally have the concept of employment being lifelong, 'from cradle to grave', and this has not changed.

**Some schools do not offer IAG to students and do not tell them about the opportunities for Apprenticeships. How could this be addressed and solved?**

Students would hear about Apprenticeships in Year 11. Schools have a legal obligation to tell every child every option. IAG must be impartial. In EBP I have not come across any school that was doing nothing, nor a school deliberately not telling students about opportunities.

**The Select Committee is seeing a varied picture; some provision is good and some is not. You have just told us that, overall, it's better than we thought.**

EBP only works with eight schools, so my experience is of a small sample. If you have asked students what IAG they have had, they are likely to have forgotten what they have had, so their answers will not always be reliable. Some of them just don't retain the information that they are given! To remember it better they need to have it in a different form, and it needs to be repeated at school, on a work experience placement, work-related experiences, visits, challenges, etc, so it sinks in. To have talks from local businesses (see EBP's Amazing People programme) would make the subject seem accessible and would show young people the local possibilities. We need people to see the value of Apprenticeships in an area of high deprivation and their role in addressing NEETs and some social problems.

**In disadvantaged areas (financially, and in terms of Ofsted/league tables) is it raising false expectations to advocate Apprenticeships?**

I don't see it like this. A child is a future economic citizen of Kent. League tables are based on results, not on progression. This is where the orchestration of ten apprenticeships matched to each school would enable aspirations and expectations.

**The Select Committee is seeing Ofsted next week.**

From September, IAG will be part of Ofsted inspections, so schools will be scored on how well they deliver it. Michael Gove has included destination data.

*Slides showing the benefits of Apprenticeships to employers and young people*

*Slide showing- the benefits of Apprenticeships to young people*

Respect is a big issue; young people seek respect and want to feel valued, and Apprenticeships give them a chance to have that respect and value. Quality is still a bugbear.

*Slide showing employer feedback*

From EBP, four people each visit six employees every day in Kent. One in six SMEs talks about Apprenticeships, and EBP records the feedback they give. Many

Apprentices require good maths skills; jobs in electronics and engineering all involve maths.

**Is there a mismatch and/or poor timing in terms of the September guarantee and setting up Apprenticeships?**

We would seek instant take-up of Apprenticeship places when they become available. The timetable for taking up Apprenticeships does not match the academic year. We need to fit around employers' needs and timings. The raising of the participation age (RPA) is a time bomb ticking! IAG should be woven in to raise students' awareness of their options. When an employer asks for Apprentices, we need to be able to respond quickly. We seek a chance for more students to re-sit KS2 numeracy and literacy, as there is a big demand for good basic skills.

**Building IAG into the RPA could be complex. How would it fit in – on top of the regular curriculum?**

Yes, but later on. It will be intensive but schools understand the needs of the cohort. IAG must respond to what a student wants, in their subject area. RPA adds an opportunity to work on students' employability and an extra chance to get key skills in place. Before leaving, students need to gain an understanding of the sector they wish to go into, and to have had some work experience. Employers say that young recruits are not work ready, but there are plenty of people already employed in their company who have poor numeracy and literacy skills; it's not just young people who are lacking! Attitude is everything; if young people arrive with the right attitude they can develop the other skills they need, with some support.

**Kent Further Education Colleges (KFEC) are doing much work on the RPA.**

EBP Kent has done a lot of work with Cummins Power Generation on Employability and is seeking accreditation by City and Guilds for work developed so students can do employability units whilst still at school and have some units already done ready to go with them to FE, Employment or on to their apprenticeship.

**What about traineeships? Where do they fit in?**

To achieve both quality and quantity is the key aim, but we see poor quality. If there were a Kent Apprenticeship which could set a high standard, it would set the bar high for others to aspire to. Training would have to be of a sufficient standard to be accredited and achieve the Kent kite mark. Employers would have to raise their game to meet the Kent standard; Apprenticeships could not be just for shelf-stacking or sweeping the floor in a hair salon.

**This seems a good idea but why should KCC be setting this standard? What role would Ofsted and the National Apprenticeships Service have?**

I believe the best national practice arises from the best local practice.

**What about mobility in Kent and across the UK?**

Some young people have a very limited life experience. Some 14-year-olds have not even visited places beyond their own town. They need something local which works for them, where they are.

**The Select Committee is taking a strategic, forward-looking view of the issues, and has in mind the redefining of issues set out in the Richard review. I am not sure how we will follow up what you've told us today.**

**I have read that McDonald's has a good Apprenticeship scheme.**

Yes, they have an excellent national training scheme, and are good at giving work experience. In terms of their value as an employer and provider of Apprenticeships, we can only judge them by their process, not their product. There are several other large companies – eg Boots, BT, Argos – which have outstanding Apprenticeship schemes, as they can offer a wide range of experience for Apprentices; in customer services, food preparation, marketing, etc.

**Whose job is it/should it be to pull this together, strategically?**

I believe it should be the KCC's role. KCC would have a strategic rather than an operational role, as local operational networks are already good. There is no one panacea, but Kent is the largest county in the UK and could blaze a trail. If a system were too generalised, we would miss out on local culture and styles around Kent. A system could be based on sectors. There are currently Apprenticeships available in ten sectors, but there are 40 other sectors in which they are yet to be developed.

**Who does EBP deal with at KCC?**

There are three deliverers in EBP's area but I last saw them in September. We never meet. I see Sue Dunn every six months or so. I would not want to be on any strategy group as this isn't necessarily the right role for EBP, but we do deliver quality with an eye on strategy.

**Do you link with any other local authorities, apart from the KCC?**

Some other EBPs work more locally in other areas, and support local authorities in different ways. It might be that EBP isn't doing what KCC wants it to do, in which case I would seek some direction as to what KCC wants us to do differently.

**Do you think KCC's involvement should be more strategic, rather than direct?**

KCC is the only organisation in Kent which is able to take an aerial view of the labour market. EBP is very flexible and will tailor its work and approach to support KCC's agenda if it can.

**The Richard review says purchasing power is in, or should be in, the employer's hands. What is your view on this?**

Employers would like to have that power, and some would manage it well, but it would be open to abuse. I always favour a mixed economy to get far reaching results.

**What about SMEs?**

SMEs might be able to manage it only as a 'satellite' provider, supported by a larger 'parent' company. The support of the parent company could be shared by a number of smaller companies.

**Is it true to say that Kent businesses do not pull their weight on Apprenticeships? Is there an element of larger companies not wanting to take on Apprentices as they feel they are bearing the burden of training up young people who would then be poached by their smaller competitors?**

There might be some who are concerned about this, but retention rates are good, which indicates that they are just as likely to benefit from that training input themselves.

**Does KCC reach all the many SMEs in Kent? We know that they make up 97% of Kent businesses.**

There are many organisations which speak on behalf of employers, but we get a better range of views when we speak to employers direct. Quantity does not equal quality, but there are some good examples. EBP has 14 staff, 7 of whom are on the telephone to employers all day, everyday, about work experience opportunities and other engagement opportunities.

**Do you have a matching policy and what is it?**

EBP Kent has a robust matching system in partnership with the schools and the employers.

**How many jobs do you not manage to match to?**

I have no idea. One manufacturer asked for three Apprentices, for which we sent them six potential students, but none of them stayed for any length of time.

**You say you want to see the bar set high to ensure good quality. How can KCC help with this?**

I would say that the word 'Apprentice' should only be used for a position which meets the standard of the kite mark, and that any position which is for less than one year should not be described as an Apprenticeship. It could be called a 'vocational opportunity' or an 'internship', but not an Apprenticeship. Apprenticeships present a golden opportunity to apply and enforce a kite mark system, and reserve the 'Apprentice' name for something of quality. A kite marked scheme will make quality easy to identify, as the calibre of that scheme will be clear for all to see.

**So would a role for the KCC be to approve and set the standard for the kite mark?**

Yes, I would say so. Apprenticeships should be defined by quality.

**How were the sectors chosen for Apprenticeships in Kent, and are they the right ones? Some sectors offer limited opportunities for growth.**

I think the digital and gaming industries should be included in the sectors list. There are companies at the cutting edge of research chemistry, and we should be able to make use of them to host Apprenticeships. Kent should shout about being able to offer this sort of opportunity. Kent could try something bold and new and make people think afresh. If every school were to commit to set up a minimum of 10 Apprenticeships with local employers, with EBP's support, and supply another 3 from within itself, eg in the school office, catering or IT services, it could guarantee being able to offer its students 13 Apprenticeship places every year. EBP's role in this would be to broker the 10 external placements for each school.

**Where will Kent be by 2018, do you think, in terms of engaging young people in jobs?**

Kent could copy Sweden, where 70% of young people learn at work. This suits a large number of young workers, and kinetic learning is the most common route. Young people there achieve very well under this system.

**With recent work by Richard, and Wolf before him, and traineeships and other work by the Government, there will be a period of concentrated work skills development.**

This activity is good, even if it isn't labelled as 'Apprenticeships', as it raises the profile of the issues. However, there will always be a proportion of young people who

are not capable of attaining anything more than the most basic employment as they will not be able to achieve the minimum levels in English and/or maths.

**What percentage is this, do you think?**

I don't know a figure, but it won't be very high.

**Those young people who are able and motivated will find work anyway, whether or not we help them with an Apprenticeship. But it seems that a growing number are not self-motivated.**

The programme of mock interviews organised by the Rotarians, which was mentioned earlier in the interview, sounds good, as this sort of scheme helps develop confidence and self-awareness. Having esteem, confidence and respect in employment is vital and we need to empower this via a series of practical opportunities that enable students to experience and practice their own employability skills. Something the EBP is hugely committed to.

**Can you tell us about EBP's employability centre?**

At the moment it's a virtual centre. If an employer seeks to take on staff, we develop those staff to the point of being hired. Employers seek EBP's input to help get young people ready for employment. In a way it's an 'employment school'. Its services are free to employers.

**How does this compare to work experience?**

Is it a 'safe medium' between school and employment.

**Can you guarantee a standard of training?**

We will support them but cannot guarantee that all will reach a set standard in a certain time. It gives employers a chance to flex their muscles and mould trainees into what they want. Young people preparing for work have to compete with their peers from Eastern Europe, who have a more highly developed work ethic.

**In Japan, I have seen a very specific approach to employment and work ethic, in which many 'small' jobs which are relatively unskilled are genuinely respected and valued as part of the workforce. Examples of these jobs include directing a delivery lorry or stopping pedestrians while the lorry is reversing, doorkeepers and lift keepers. There, what gives you status is not what work you do but the fact that you work at something.**

**Thank you very much for attending today to contribute to the Select Committee's information gathering.**

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**Apprentice Mentor – Job Description Summary**

- **Provide training for work tasks**
- **Set learning tasks for apprentice to complete**
- **Feedback on apprentices progress to line manager**
- **Complete college review/progress forms as the employer**
- **Complete witness statements for NVQ portfolio**
- **Provide support to apprenticeship throughout programme/contract**
- **Support college meetings/assessments**
- **Provide work tasks for apprentice which suit/back up units and evidence required.**
- **Provide one to one meetings to review training progress**

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## **Danielle as my mentor**

As my mentor Danielle has given me a lot of support within the various different tasks that I have had to do throughout my apprenticeship. Danielle supports me through giving me tasks to help towards fulfilling my evidence required in my portfolio. Danielle provides me with the training required in order for me to carry out general tasks that are needed in day to day office running. She will always make time, if I require it, even if this means that she has to take on more work. As well as supporting me for my college work she has been a great support to me personally. If I have any queries or need some support then I can rely on Danielle to help me.

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