

Sir David Amess MP  
Karen Buck MP

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Dear Sir David and Mrs Buck,

At Enterprise Bill Committee on 11 February I promised to provide further information on the Government's actions to ensure apprenticeships are accessible for those with learning difficulties and disabilities and an update on the report "Creating an inclusive Apprenticeship Offer" by Peter Little (the 'Little Report').

This letter also provides clarification about how the Institute for Apprenticeships will be funded and more information about the role Trading Standards will play in enforcing the measure to protect the term 'apprenticeship' from misuse.

### **Little Report**

Since the Little Report was published in January 2012, the Government has embarked on a comprehensive apprenticeship reform programme. Ensuring that apprenticeships are accessible to those with learning difficulties and disabilities so that they can reach their potential and achieve a successful career is a key part of this reform process.

The Government believes that the overwhelming majority of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are capable of sustainable paid employment, with the right preparation and support.

Following the Little Report, the Government has taken a number of steps based on the recommendations made in the review.

The Government records and reports on the number and proportion of apprentices declaring learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these figures have recently been rising: from 40,130 (7.7%) in 2011/12 to 44,090 (8.8%) in 2014/2015. Figures for the first quarter of 2015/2016 show that the numbers continue to rise, with 10.2% of all starts being undertaken by those who have declared a learning difficulty or disability.

The Skills Funding Agency has published an evaluation of a series of Diversity in Apprenticeships Pilots that looked at innovative and alternative ways to increase the accessibility of apprenticeships for under-represented groups. Many of these pilots had a specific focus on accessibility for people with learning difficulties or disabilities. The evaluation suggested that organisations involved in the pilots had grasped the opportunity to experiment and/or innovate to better understand and improve delivery to meet the needs of under-represented groups. It was apparent that they had also generated a groundswell or local and, in some cases, national support.

In addition, progress has been made against the recommendations that promoting case studies and good practice was important in improving both accessibility and awareness of apprenticeships amongst those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The Government's Equality and Diversity Innovation Fund provided grant funding to education and training organisations to develop and disseminate innovative approaches to equality and diversity. The fund supported a number of projects focusing on disability and apprenticeships. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), which now has joined with other organisations to form the Learning and Work Institute (LWI), has produced an employer toolkit including resources and links to help employers of disabled apprentices. The Education and Training Foundation's Excellence Gateway contains a section on special educational needs and disability, with resources including research and case studies.

The Little Report also raised concerns about English and maths requirements and how this affects disabled people looking to progress onto apprenticeships. This recommendation has been addressed in full. Intermediate apprentices are required to achieve Level 1 (not Level 2) English and Maths in order to complete their apprenticeship. Moreover, Government does not set any minimum entry requirements relating to an apprentice's English and maths skills and expects employers to be flexible in recruiting apprentices with lower initial English and maths skills.

Progress has also been made in relation to reasonable adjustments. Apprentices can apply for Access to Work funding for adjustments to the workplace and training providers can use funding to support the apprentice's learning. Reasonable adjustments are available for any qualifications within apprenticeships to ensure the apprentice has the chance to show what he or she knows or can do, including English and Maths.

We will continue to meet with disabilities groups to ensure that persons with learning difficulties and disabilities receive the support they need to complete an apprenticeship and reach their potential.

### **Institute for Apprenticeships**

As a partner organisation of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Institute for Apprenticeships will be funded from core BIS funding. We will not be asking employers to contribute to its funding through the levy.

### **Protecting the term 'apprenticeship' from misuse**

The measure to protect the term 'apprenticeship' from misuse will apply to training providers. The measure will not apply in relation to employers who provide their own, fully funded apprenticeship schemes.

We intend to use Trading Standards to enforce the measure to protect the term apprenticeship from misuse, as this follows the precedent for providing similar protection for the term 'degree'.

We will appoint a lead local authority that will enforce the measure on behalf of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department will fully fund this. We have discussed this model with the Trading Standards Institute who agree that this is the most sensible approach. This will ensure effective enforcement whilst minimising burdens on other local authorities.

In addition, we are proposing that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) acts as the first point of contact on compliance. We are working with the SFA to scope this role as part of their wider complaints service for apprenticeship delivery. We will need to consider this further alongside the lead authority model to consider how we can provide the best value for money for compliance and enforcement.

I hope that you have found this information useful. I am copying this letter to all members of the Enterprise Bill Committee and to the Committee Clerks and will arrange for a copy of this letter to be deposited in the library of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anna Soubry', with a horizontal line underneath.

**THE RT HON ANNA SOUBRY MP**

Minister of State for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise

