

# Employer Support Workshop

Hosted by Yorkshire Learning Providers

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10.03.2023

Keep an eye on our socials for further events & workshops:





On Friday 10th March we held our first employer support workshop for West Yorkshire. The aim of this session is to showcase the different & vast support services and incentives for local businesses, to aid them with the recruitment, skills and apprenticeship needs.

We wanted the session to support business to business networking, but due to the snowy weather we had to move the session online, which was a shame but did not stop the session from being a great success.

The session started with the host, our Managing Director, Alex Miles, introducing the session and each of the guest speakers including -

- **Yorkshire Apprenticeship Service** - Jay Luke
- **Bradford Council** - Kirti Patel
- **Kirklees Council** - Hassan Daji
- **Leeds Council** - Simon Hewitson
- **Wakefield Council** - Gurpreet Singh Bansal
- **West & North Yorkshire Chamber** - Tim Gillies
- **The Construction Network** - Grant Hamilton
- **CITB** - Amanda Hasi
- **West Yorkshire Combined Authority** - Rachel Bonner
- **Yorkshire & Humber Apprenticeship Ambassador Network** - Jill Coyle



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Alex then shared the reasons and rationale for organising the session, and the importance of supporting skills, apprenticeships and training for a stronger workforce locally. This included discussing the following -

- Lots of recent research demonstrates employers are struggling to recruit or retain staff
  - Employers cannot release staff for training as impacts sales/profit
  - High appetite to increase skills uptake among organisations who already use apprenticeships - 32% will increase, 58% stay the same but mainly larger organisations
  - However, apprenticeship starts are on a decline
  - Few organisations are planning staff development over the next 12 months, with 54% of micro businesses having no plan at all
  - People with neurodiversity are routinely under-employed and there is a decrease in employed adults and apprentices from low-socioeconomic backgrounds
  - 9 in 10 workers will need to add to their skills - particularly digital skills & green skills
  - Biggest skills gap locally in digital - set to deepen as demand outstrips supply
  - SME £85 billion productivity gap due to gaps in digital skills
  - Only way to move business ahead is to think about growth & look to the future & improving skills
  - 80% of 2030 workforce are in work - so upskilling & reskilling is imperative
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The Yorkshire Apprenticeship Service aim is to support the discussions on The Why, through unlocking local talent, showcasing the great opportunities for apprenticeships and ensuring more people with the right skills are in the right jobs with the right support.

Alex shared the Department for Education (DfE) funding allocated to Yorkshire Learning Providers, that aims to support and grow apprenticeship take up by small to medium sized businesses across WY & SY. Through the Yorkshire Apprenticeship Service we will:

- Have dedicated support for and with engaging SME businesses
- Showcase apprenticeships across the region, local providers, talent pipeline
- De-mystify & myth bust apprenticeship funding & offer
- Gather local intelligence on barriers, challenges and solutions to App growth
- Act as a mentor and support for businesses

The funding is to target businesses or skills needs in key growth areas including -

**Engineering**  
**Manufacturing**  
**Construction**  
**Adult Social Care**  
**Digital**



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Alex shared the project runs for 3 years and will host a number of business & stakeholder network events, workshops and roundtables. Each session will be summaries through the use of blogs and tracked attendance via the project QR Code. If you want to find out more, please scan the code below -



Each of the guest speakers then had an opportunity to discuss their business support offer with a 5 minute introduction round before the group were moved into breakout rooms for further discussions.

All delegates were then moved into 3 breakout rooms hosted by YLP staff to further explore skills needs, apprenticeship barriers and possible solutions. We had some pre-populated questions set but the groups could discuss any topics they felt important. The questions we asked included -

- What industry are you from
- What are the key skills gaps you currently face
- What do you think your skills needs will be in the next 2 years
- Do you feel prepared for the changing industry landscape (industry 4.0 / digitisation, AI etc)
- Do you currently utilise apprenticeships to support your workforce - if so in what areas, if not why? Are you aware of the excellent apprenticeship standards available & providers locally?
- Do you prioritise training / CPD for staff (many SME's don't so don't feel bad) - what are the barriers to getting involved in training



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Many in manufacturing are in the autumn of their working lives - limited or no succession planning.

Digital - data science - there are more data scientist recruiters than actual data scientists.

Bradford the youngest city in the UK, yet still limited opportunities and many very hard to reach groups.

Lack of understanding as to apprenticeships still persists in schools - parents wanting “white collar” for their kids do not understand how manufacturing has changed or the professionalism of the careers available within industries often seen as low skill/dirty when this is not the case.

Getting into schools for truly meaningful conversations is still difficult. Threats to apprenticeship completions coming from jobs in Aldi or Amazon where young people can earn 2x/3x the salary - long term plans not for the young.

Opportunities for partnerships across the sector for the benefit of all involved.

Small employers & sole traders / business owners are genuinely confused over apprenticeships and how they work and costings involved. The employers in the group had spoken with several apprenticeship providers and there was confusion & disparity in relation to costs and also what’s available.

Recruitment is an issue for the right candidates for roles and commitment to working shifts in the H&SC sector often causes issues.

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Time for marketing is an issue for smaller employers and they recognise the need to do more around marketing and getting the right promotion out into the right places, so digital marketing apprentices can meet that need and business owners can then focus on getting the right candidates into the workplace.

It was highlighted from the Yorkshire Asian Business Association issues around recruitment for retail and hospitality due to the unsocial hours and low pay - significant sector issue.

For construction those coaching and mentoring skills were highlighted as very much needed especially for training apprentices and the lack of flexibility by staff to complete work outside regular working hours

Feedback from key stakeholders in the rooms also shared the heightened need for mental health support & businesses being cautious over employing people who may need extra support as they do not have the resources or knowledge. Many in the rooms didn't know that the training providers often offer and support these areas and the employers in having the right support in place.

The rooms discussed the continued disruption post covid and how smaller businesses' are unable to see longer term in relation to recruitment or training needs.

The CITB shared that many in construction do not have the budgets to support training and development or the salary issues to keep people retained in the sector.



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There was a definite consensus that supporting smaller businesses with mentoring and leadership support was needed if apprenticeship take up was to grow and there was a call for incentives to be put in place to support new businesses taking on an apprentices but for these not to be given at the start but at the end of the programme. Also training & development grants to help with the internal arrangements.

There was a call for a more streamlined and slicker process for onboarding with many small businesses opting out of apprenticeships because of the digital account or bureaucracy and examples of businesses in construction and social care not having the digital skills to support the needs of the digital apprenticeship account.

The combined authority shared the positive referrals and pledges for levy transfer and how we can ensure this offer is part of the discussions with small businesses and the huge opportunity apprenticeships provide.

The final word from the sessions was one we all took home, from Bradford Council on the greater need for collaboration and a collective responsibility to make apprenticeships and skills programmes a success at a local level. No single institution can solve the skills needs and we need to work together. They also mentioned that apprenticeships not only have a moral purpose, but they support social mobility and have an economic benefit and how often do we find programmes that support all 3!

Thank you to everyone who attended and presented. We value your contributions and everyone's time and candor in the breakout rooms.

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