

# briefings

## **Making work work for girls** **Young women and apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are crucial to the UK becoming a world leader in skills, says the Leitch review.<sup>1</sup> So a target has been set to increase the number of apprenticeships across the UK to 500,000 by 2020.<sup>2</sup> There are currently 249,000<sup>3</sup> apprentices in England and 16,000 in Wales.<sup>4</sup> In England, the Department for Education and Skills has also set a target to increase the number of apprentices who complete their programme from 50 to 75 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

If the Government wants to achieve this and increase equal opportunities for young men and women in apprenticeships, YWCA believes it must first tackle persistent gender and class inequalities. Otherwise, disadvantaged young women, by which we mean girls who are deprived of some of the basic necessities of life, such as money, education or influence, may miss out on some of these chances.<sup>6</sup>

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### What is an apprenticeship?

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Apprenticeships give young people the chance to earn while they learn. They are made up of Key Skills, a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and Technical Certificate. There is no fixed duration for an apprenticeship, although most last between one and three years. They can have huge benefits for the apprentice, the employer and the economy. They can be an important route out of poverty for young people, and are one explanation given for lower rates of youth poverty in Austria and Germany.<sup>7</sup>

Traditionally, apprenticeships were mainly available in the male-dominated craft and engineering trades. Today they span over 90 sectors, the most popular being engineering, construction, hairdressing, automotive, business administration, hospitality, customer services, electro-technical, health and social care and retail.<sup>8</sup> Although previously a private arrangement between an individual and employer, today apprenticeships are central to the government supported vocational education and training system.<sup>9</sup>





The family of apprenticeships in England include:<sup>10</sup>

- Entry to Employment (E2E) for young people who are not ready to enter into an apprenticeship. The equivalent in Wales is Skillbuild<sup>11</sup>
- Young apprenticeships, available to those aged 14 to 16. These are not available in Wales
- Apprenticeships resulting in a level 2 qualification. These are known as foundation apprenticeships in Wales
- Advanced apprenticeships resulting in a level 3 qualification. These are known as modern apprenticeships in Wales
- Apprenticeships for adults aged 25 and over. There is no upper age limit for foundation or modern apprenticeships in Wales.

This briefing will mainly focus on apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in England. We will refer to the situation in Wales where possible.<sup>12</sup>

## Patterns of segregation and exclusion

The number of young men and women on apprenticeships is now largely equal.<sup>13</sup> But the distribution of young men and women is not equal in all sectors and there are some that are traditionally dominated by just one sex. Women are overwhelmingly found in hairdressing, early years care and education and health and social care, and men in construction, engineering and the motor industry.

Women are more likely to do apprenticeships, and men are more likely to do advanced apprenticeships. Latest figures show that of the 100,000 young people on advanced apprenticeships in England, just 30 per cent are female.<sup>14</sup> Similar patterns are evident in Wales.<sup>15</sup>

The Government’s success in increasing the number of females taking part in apprenticeships has not been extended to black and minority ethnic young people. In 2006-7, only five per cent of people who started an apprenticeship in England were non-white.<sup>18</sup> As people who are younger tend to be more ethnically diverse than the rest of the population, this is particularly concerning: nearly 18 per cent of young women aged 16 to 24 are from an ethnic minority group compared to 11 per cent of women aged over 25.<sup>19</sup>

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC), responsible for planning and funding education and training for people in England, does not monitor the number of disadvantaged young people who enter apprenticeships. These are classified as young people with additional social needs. The scarcity of apprenticeship places and the push to increase completion rates is likely to mean that they are dominated by more advantaged young people. While Entry to Employment (E2E) is meant to be a stepping stone to an apprenticeship for disadvantaged young people, data available for 2006 shows that just 12 per cent of female leavers of E2E went on to do one.<sup>20</sup>

### Female share of apprenticeships and advanced apprenticeships in England, 2007<sup>16</sup>

Sector	Apprenticeships		Advanced apprenticeships	
	Total	% female	Total	% female
Engineering	8,353	3	16,689	2
Construction	22,755	1	5,204	1
Hairdressing	19,248	92	3,725	95
Automotive	1,988	1	6,255	1
Business Administration	4,548	82	10,877	77
Hospitality	10,679	49	4,066	50
Customer Service	9,620	68	4,284	72
Electro-technical	1,749	0	15,252	1
Health & Social Care	3,204	89	6,158	90
Early Years Care & Education <sup>17</sup>	8,261	97	7,491	98
Retail	5,685	66	932	68



## Apprenticeship pay: it's different for girls

Local LSCs are not required to collect information on apprenticeship pay.<sup>21</sup> Information on pay is not collected in Wales either. The only data available is from a 2005 survey of 5,500 apprentices in England.<sup>22</sup> The survey revealed alarming findings on female apprentices' pay.

There was a 26 per cent weekly gender pay gap, with female apprentices receiving on average £40 less a week than male apprentices.

*The gender pay gap is the difference in pay that men and women receive.*

The lowest paid trainees worked in hairdressing, which was 93 per cent female. Their average take home pay was £90 a week. The highest paid apprentices worked in the electro-technical sector, which was 100 per cent male. Their take home pay was £183 a week.

Of the one-in-five apprentices receiving less than £80 per week, over 70 per cent were female. Half of the trainees in early years care and education and hairdressing earned £80 or less a week.

Young female apprentices were less likely to be paid for overtime. Eighty-three per cent of all male trainees who worked overtime were paid for it compared to 52 per cent of all female trainees.

Female apprentices' low pay is largely a result of the sectors young women train in. Firstly, as we have seen, more males than females enter advanced apprenticeships, which are better paid. Apprenticeships in the female dominated sectors are less likely to be available at NVQ level 3.

Secondly, initial pay rates are lower in female dominated sectors. The 2005 survey found that looking at level two trainees only, the two lowest paid sectors were early years care and education (£78 a week) and hairdressing (£86 a week) and the two highest paid sectors were electro-technical (£160 a week) and customer service (£155 a week).<sup>23</sup> Pay in retail (£120 a week) and business administration (£115 a week) were also relatively low. This is despite research that level two apprentices in retail and business administration – mostly girls – are able to complete many of the tasks of a regular employee earlier on in their training and because of this are lower cost to the employer.<sup>24</sup>

Thirdly, the sectors girls work in make them more likely to have non-employed rather than employed status, known in

England as programme-led apprenticeships.<sup>25</sup> This means that apprentices have not yet secured a contract of employment with an employer and receive support from the state rather than a wage. This can result in them receiving less money. In England, the average wage of an apprentice in 2005 was £137 a week<sup>26</sup>, whereas the maximum a young person's household can receive in state support is just over £90. Non-employed status is particularly common in the childcare sector, where employers can be reluctant to employ a young person until they are 17 because they cannot work unsupervised or be counted in staff ratios.<sup>27</sup>

The types of apprenticeships young women do not only effects their current pay, it also has long term financial implications. For example, girls are more likely to do apprenticeships than advanced apprenticeships, so are less likely to get NVQ 3 qualifications which are required for progression into higher education and professional programmes.<sup>28</sup>

McIntosh's<sup>29</sup> cost-benefit analysis of apprenticeships found that while there is an 18 per cent increase in wages for men who have done a level 2 apprenticeship, there is no increase for women.<sup>30</sup> This may be linked to the sectors men and women work in and the quality of the programmes they enter. McIntosh found that while high wage returns were found in the manufacturing industries, the same was not true of many of the service sector industries, where more women are found. However, McIntosh did find some positive results. He identified wage benefits for women doing level 3 programmes for the first time ever.





*"I think working with old people is one of the best jobs you could do. It is very important" (Kim, 18)*

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## Current legislation on apprenticeship pay

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Apprentices under the age of 19 do not qualify for the national minimum wage. Those over 19 do not qualify for the national minimum wage for their first year in employment.<sup>31</sup>

Since August 2005, all employers of employed apprentices in England have been required to pay a minimum of £80 a week in wages.<sup>32</sup>

From April 2006, non-employed apprentices aged 16 to 19 on programme-led apprenticeships in England receive Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) which is means-tested and offers a young person a maximum of £30 a week. Parents of unwaged apprentices can also claim Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit for them.<sup>33</sup> For young people from poor households this system is more generous than the previous system of training allowances, as the maximum a young person's household can receive has increased from £40 to just over £90 a week.

However, there are a number of problems with the new arrangements for non-employed apprentices. Firstly, they are very complex. Young people receive different amounts depending on the financial status of their household and whether or not they are the eldest child. Under Child Benefit rules, the eldest child receives £6 more a week than younger siblings.

Secondly, early research on the replacement of the training allowance with EMA indicates that training providers and employers are concerned that some young people will be deterred from applying for apprenticeships. The following concerns have been raised:<sup>34</sup>

- While EMA is paid to the young person, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit are paid to the household. This may result in the money not being passed on to the apprentice
- The EMA results in some young people getting £10 less in their pocket. Whereas the training allowance was £40, EMA is just £30 a week
- Some young people will receive no payment if their household does not meet the means test.<sup>35</sup> These young people are assumed to be receiving financial support from their families, but there is no guarantee of this
- Low payments may result in young people choosing to become NEET\* as they could get more money from signing on.

\* NEET stands for Not in Education, Employment or Training and is often used in government policy.

In contrast to the situation in England, there is no set minimum for waged apprentices in Wales. Employers can pay young people whatever they see fit until they reach the age of 19 and have been in employment for a year. Unwaged apprentices receive a training allowance, funded by the Welsh Assembly, of about £50 a week.

The different financial arrangements for apprentices in England and Wales are both unfair and confusing. It would be much easier to enforce apprenticeship pay if rates were set within the minimum wage structure, rather than by the LSC or Welsh Assembly.

Recent changes in the law in England mean that apprentice pay is likely to have changed significantly since the last pay survey was carried out, making an urgent review necessary. A review would identify the effects of the new arrangements on all apprentices but particularly young women, who we suspect will have been disproportionately disadvantaged because of their greater likelihood of being recruited to programme-led apprenticeships. A survey of pay in Wales is also necessary to establish pay rates of young female apprentices. This has not been done to date.

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## The effect of low apprenticeship pay

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We are very concerned about the low pay of many female apprentices.

### The gender pay gap

Low pay for female apprentices is resulting in a large gender pay gap. This needs to be tackled to promote gender equality and to properly value the work that women do. Caring and catering are essential work, just like plumbing and building. Girls need to be paid accordingly. Many of the young women we work with recognise the value of work traditionally carried out by women and want to work in these sectors. This is no justification for poor wages.

### Give girls a chance

Many of the girls we work with want to go into apprenticeships in female dominated sectors. They need to be protected from poverty. Approximately one million young women between the ages of 16 and 30 are living in poverty in Great Britain.<sup>36</sup> Don't they deserve a chance to work their way out of poverty?



**More than a quarter of trainees who dropped out of their training stated 'not getting enough money' as the main reason."**

### Doing an apprenticeship

Financial pressures mean that some disadvantaged young people do not have the luxury of being able to invest in their futures by doing an apprenticeship. They may be forced into jobs without training if it means receiving better pay right now, especially as a 16- to 17-year-old can receive a minimum of £122 through the national minimum wage for a 37 hour week. The average 16- to 17-year-old girl working full-time in fact earns £175 a week.<sup>37</sup>

#### Laura's story

*Laura trained as an apprentice for six months and received £78 for a 40 hour week. She really enjoyed the programme and was looking forward to eventually becoming a fully qualified travel consultant. But after being chucked out of her mum's house she was unable to complete her programme. Once she had paid for her hostel and travel, she barely had any money left.*

*"I didn't even have that long left to complete it really but I just couldn't do it."*

### The cost of staying on an apprenticeship

Only 59 per cent of apprentices currently complete their programmes.<sup>38</sup> We believe that low pay may be contributing to this. The National Foundation for Educational Research found that:<sup>39</sup>

- half of the apprentices surveyed were not satisfied with their pay - 28 per cent were dissatisfied and 24 per cent were very dissatisfied. Trainees receiving more money were significantly more likely to be satisfied
- over two-fifths of respondents were so dissatisfied with their pay that they had considered leaving their apprenticeship
- more than a quarter of trainees who had dropped out of their training stated 'not getting enough money' as the main reason.

#### Sian's story

*Sian gave up her hairdressing apprenticeship because of low pay which she felt was unfair given the amount of work she was doing. She calculated that she could earn more by working in a chip shop and going to night college.*

*"I'd work from 9am to 6pm sometimes and I'd have to clean the shop everyday, do stock checks, make sure everything was always clean, wash people's hair, make the tea, wash the dishes, I used to do quite a lot for £60 a week. Some people pay £60 for one haircut!"*

### Tackling stereotypes

Paying young people more in apprenticeships could help to tackle the imbalance of males and females in some sectors, and also tackle workplace gender stereotypes. For example, research by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) identified low pay as one of the main reasons that young men do not go into childcare.<sup>40</sup>

EOC also found that 69 per cent of girls and 71 per cent of boys said they could be tempted to train for jobs normally done by the opposite sex if they were given extra money to do so.

### What needs to change?

A number of positive things are already happening. The Low Pay Commission has recommended to Government that it reviews the national minimum wage exemption for apprenticeships in 2007.<sup>41</sup> The Apprenticeship Ministerial Steering Group has also announced that it will keep apprenticeship pay under review.<sup>42</sup>

YWCA believes that disadvantaged female apprentices should receive the equivalent of the national minimum wage so that they are not financially penalised by the decisions they make. The Apprenticeships Steering Group should conduct an inquiry into

- the gender pay gap in apprenticeships
- the impact of low pay on disadvantaged young women's entry and retention on apprenticeships
- sector segregation by class and gender.

This information should be used to inform the Low Pay Commission's 2008 review of the national minimum wage and apprentices. We also feel apprenticeship pay would be more likely to be equal and easier to enforce if it was the same across the regions. This would mean it being set within the national minimum wage structure.

The Learning and Skills Council and Adult Learning Inspectorate should monitor the number of disadvantaged young women entering and completing apprenticeship schemes to ensure that they are not excluded.

Girls need to be told about the different pay rates between the industry sectors so they can make informed choices about work and training and understand the long-term implications of those choices.

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- <sup>6</sup> The Learning and Skills Council's definition of Additional Social needs resembles YWCA's client group. See LSC website at <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>
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YWCA's campaign about women, work and worth.

This briefing written by Louisa Darian, YWCA's poverty officer.

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