



**YOUNG
WOMEN'S
TRUST**

**THE REAL COST OF
AN APPRENTICESHIP:
ARE YOUNG WOMEN
PAYING THE PRICE?**

November 2018

INTRODUCTION

Context

The last year has seen the Government's reforms to apprenticeships come under increasing scrutiny as the growth in numbers has slipped back. This comes as quality of apprenticeships been called into question by the Education Select Committee.

Growing reputation

This report looks at apprenticeships in the context of these critiques and finds some room for optimism, but also significant remaining challenges that hold back too many apprentices, especially young women.

The reputation of apprenticeships has been growing and many young people now see an apprenticeship as a better option than university when it comes to planning their future. However, many still struggle to benefit fully due to financial insecurity resulting from low pay, a lack of clear progression routes and a lack of flexibility. Once again, our research shows that it is young women who struggle the most.

New polling for Young Women's Trust

Combining new polling of 500 current and former apprentices by ComRes with the latest data available from Government, this report highlights ongoing concerns about the ability of the apprenticeship system to provide opportunities for all young people to gain vital new skills and progress into high quality employment. Further insight was gained from speaking to current and former apprentices. Many of these case studies are included throughout the report, with the names changed to enable apprentices to speak openly about current or former employers.

The Government's reforms to apprenticeships, along with the introduction of T-levels, offer perhaps the best opportunity in a generation to create a system of skills development that serves both individual young people and the economy as a whole. However urgent change is needed to deliver on this potential as significant challenges remain.

OUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT:

- **Significant number of apprentices are struggling financially:** 84% of apprentices said they have faced a significant financial challenge. 6 in 10 (60%) also said they struggle to make cash last until the end of the month.
- **Progression is uncertain, especially for young women:** 2 in 5 of those who have completed an apprenticeship in the last two years are now unemployed or working in a sector not connected to their apprenticeship and earnings progression for women is lagging significantly behind that of men after they complete their apprenticeship.¹
- **Many employers continue to treat apprentices as second class employees:** 3 in 5 (60%) apprentices said they were paid less than non-apprenticeship colleagues despite doing identical work.
- **Apprentices with children face greater challenges:** In a number of aspects apprentices with children were seen to be worse off. They were more likely to report financial difficulties with 90% saying they had faced a significant financial challenge, particularly with regard to childcare.
- **Bullying, harassment and discrimination are rife:** More than half of apprentices (54%) spoke of being bullied by other staff. Apprentices with children also spoke about their experiences of maternity discrimination.
- **Positive views of apprentices:** Three quarters (77%) said their apprenticeship had given them new skills and 77% were proud to do an apprenticeship. Significantly, more than half (58%) of those surveyed said that apprenticeships were a better way to gain professional skills than university.

The changing perceptions of apprenticeships are welcome, and we must continue to build on this success. However, if apprenticeships are to live up to their potential and deliver the vital skills the economy needs, urgent changes are now needed to tackle the challenges outlined above. Apprentices need access to decent levels of pay and financial support. They need opportunities to access quality apprenticeships and progress, no matter what their background. And they need protection and support so that their apprenticeship is an environment in which they can flourish. This is true for all apprentices, but it is young women who are least likely to benefit from apprenticeships and who stand to gain most from these changes.

¹ Department for Education (2018) Further Education: Outcome based success measures, academic years 2010/11 to 2015/16 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748305/FE_learners__outcome_based_success_measures.pdf

1. IMPROVING PAY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The impact of low pay and lack of financial support for apprenticeships was clearer than ever in our latest survey. High numbers of apprentices (84%) said that they faced significant financial challenges and were only able to undertake an apprenticeship because of support from family. Apprentices were financially worse off than the wider population and, worryingly, levels of debt were much greater than that reported in our annual survey of the wider population of 18-30-year-old men and women.² This financial burden significantly impacts on the ability of apprentices to progress through to the end of their apprenticeships, with half of apprentices considering dropping out because they can't afford to continue.

The low level of the apprenticeship minimum wage (currently £3.70, rising to £3.90 in April 2019) is a key factor in the struggles faced by apprentices. Whilst some of the best apprenticeships pay well, huge numbers of apprentices continue to find it difficult to manage and it is vital that the Government now takes steps to increase the pay received by apprentices by abolishing the apprenticeship minimum wage.

But support must go beyond increased pay. Accommodation and travel costs were major concerns. Some employers offer loans to apprentices to help cover rental deposits or annual travel passes. Where employers can afford to do so this should be encouraged. However, many employers will struggle to meet these costs and there needs to be a systematic approach to providing apprentices with sufficient financial support.

The 2017 Conservative party manifesto promised to introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices so that travel costs did not prevent young people from accessing apprenticeships. This echoes recommendations Young Women's Trust has made previously³ and the Education Select Committee has recently called on the Government to act to provide support for apprentices' travel costs. We again call the Government to act on its manifesto commitment to go further also create a bursary fund to support the poorest apprentices.

² Young Women's Trust (2018), It's (still) a Rich Man's World: Inequality 100 years after votes for women www.youngwomenstrust.org/still-a-rich-mans-world

³ Young Women's Trust (2016) Making Apprenticeships Work for Young Women www.youngwomenstrust.org/assets/0000/2906/Making_Apprenticeships_Work_for_Young_Women.pdf



OUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT:

Many apprentices are struggling financially

- 1 in 4 (27%) described their financial situation as struggling or just about managing.
- Almost half (46%) said they are in debt all the time.
- 60% say it is a real struggle to make their cash last till the end of the month.
- 1 in 3 women (30%) and 1 in 5 men (21%) had been forced to borrow money from friends or family to make their cash last.
- 84% said they had faced a significant financial challenge.
- 1 in 5 apprentices had skipped meals, 1 in 6 had become overdrawn and 1 in 10 had gone into arrears on their rent.

ALMOST HALF

OF APPRENTICES SAID THAT THEIR APPRENTICESHIP HAS HAD A **NEGATIVE IMPACT** ON THEIR MENTAL HEALTH



Low pay makes it difficult to cover essential costs – and it is worse for young women

- 2 in 5 (38%) apprentices said covering the cost of travel to work was a challenge.
- 41% of women and 32% of men said that they struggled to cover the costs of groceries.
- 31% of women and 24% of men struggled to cover housing costs.
- 1 in 4 (27%) parents said meeting childcare costs posed a significant financial challenge.
- 1 in 3 (29%) apprentices said the travel to work was the thing that caused the most difficulty financially.

Apprentices struggle with mental health and many consider dropping out

- Almost half (46%) of apprentices said that their apprenticeship has had a negative impact on their mental health.
- Half of all apprentices, and 3 in 5 apprentices with children (59%) said they have considered dropping out of their apprenticeship because they could not afford to continue.
- 58% of apprentices said they considered not even starting their apprenticeship because the low pay on offer would make it difficult for them to continue.

Increased pay and financial support would make a huge difference

- 80% of apprentices said that apprentices should be paid at least the National Living Wage.
- 1 in 3 (33%) said that increased pay would make the biggest difference to them financially.
- 1 in 6 (16%) said that free or discounted travel would make the biggest difference.
- 1 in 7 (14%) said food vouchers would make the biggest difference to their ability to cope financially.
- For 14% of parents access to free or subsidised childcare would make the biggest difference.

1 IN 6
APPRENTICES
SAID THAT
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RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Government should abolish the apprenticeship minimum wage:

Low pay is the biggest barrier to apprentices being able to manage financially. Raising the Apprenticeship Minimum Wage has strong support from small businesses with the FSB calling for the rate to be increased.⁴ Similarly, a survey of HR decision makers carried out for Young Women's Trust by YouGov found three quarters of respondents (72%) believed that the current apprenticeship minimum wage is insufficient to provide a decent standard of living.⁵

We believe that all apprentices should be paid at least the National Living Wage. This policy had strong support from apprentices with 80% in agreement. The wider population agrees with 83% of millennials and 89% of baby boomers supporting the policy.⁶ We appreciate that, in order to protect apprenticeship jobs, this increase is best achieved in a phased manner. The removal of the apprenticeship minimum wage should lead initially to apprentices receiving at least the under-18 rate in the first year of their apprenticeship. This should be followed by apprentices being paid at the minimum level for their age with the ultimate aim for all apprentices to receive the National Living Wage. The Government should set a target date for when it believes this is achievable.

The Government should create an apprenticeship bursary fund:

With half of apprentices saying their apprenticeship cost them more than they earned, we are concerned that the high costs will deter those from the poorest backgrounds from taking up the opportunity to develop vital skills offered by the best apprenticeships. Young Women's Trust supports the principal that the apprenticeship system encourages young people to invest in their future, but we believe this should be possible without forcing apprentices into debt. A bursary fund would improve access for the poorest apprentices and better enable apprenticeships to be a vehicle for social mobility.

The Government should honour its manifesto commitment to fund apprentices' travel costs:

Our survey found that travel costs were one of the most significant financial challenges to apprentices. The Conservative manifesto of 2017 included a pledge to "introduce significantly discounted bus and train travel for apprentices." We are now calling on the Government to honour that commitment and provide support for apprentices' travel costs as a matter of priority.

The Government should improve access to affordable childcare:

Government should support parents to undertake apprenticeships by working with local authorities to ensure local childcare provision is adequate and that apprentices are able to access childcare support even when working part-time. This should include renewed commitments to ensure funding for childcare is set at an adequate level and that apprentices are able to access free childcare regardless of the age of their child.

The Government should commission further research into apprentices and the benefits system.

Almost half of apprentices (46%) said that their parents were reluctant for them to do an apprenticeship because of the impact on the benefits received by the family. Our previous reports also highlighted how benefits such as Care to Learn are not available to apprentices. The recent report from the Education Select Committee highlighted further concerns that the benefits system disadvantages apprentices on low income. We support the Committee's recommendation that the Social Mobility Commission conduct a study into how the benefits system helps or hinders apprentices and that the Government acts urgently on recommendations arising from the study.

4 www.fsb.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/8-in-10-small-firms-shun-zero-hours-contracts-while-employment-costs-surge

5 Young Women's Trust (2018) Working for Women? www.youngwomenstrust.org/assets/0000/8316/HR_decision_makers_report_updated.pdf

6 Young Women's Trust (2018), It's (still) a Rich Man's World: Inequality 100 years after votes for women www.youngwomenstrust.org/still-a-rich-mans-world

CAROLINE, 23, LEVEL FOUR, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION APPRENTICESHIP, PREVIOUSLY COMPLETED LEVEL TWO APPRENTICESHIP IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

“College ended up not being feasible”

I got really good results in my GCSEs but at the time I wasn't getting on with my parents and at 16 I moved out to live on my own. It meant that whilst my friends stayed on at school to do A-levels, I went to a local college to do mine. I did a term but trying to live independently meant that I was working two and at one point three jobs as well as a full-time college schedule to try and pay the bills. I got a bit of money off my council tax bill but was told I wasn't eligible for other benefits, so college ended up not being feasible for me. I quit A-levels and worked full-time in a café for about a year, but I realised that job wasn't going anywhere. I wasn't going to move up or anything, so I decided to do an apprenticeship. I thought it would be a good way to move up the career ladder without trying to balance earning and studying.

“The lack of any kind of parity of esteem was really stark”

My apprenticeship was easy to find but, because I'd already done GCSEs, I would rather have done a Level three or four straight away. There was very little opportunity to do that, so I started a Level Two which wasn't stretching – it wasn't even at GCSE level. The job side was enjoyable, but I can't really say anything positive about the qualification, it all felt very tick-boxy.

All my friends were doing A-levels and University and there's a huge stereotype about people doing apprenticeships and thinking they're for the less clever ones. I just felt judged, not only by peers and people thinking doing an apprenticeship meant I was less able, but also by the Government. If I'd have been going to University I would have been entitled to a loan and financial support. I had none of that and I felt the lack of any kind of parity of esteem between the two was really stark.

“I felt I was being punished for wanting a career”

For my Level Two apprenticeship, I was paid like £3 an hour. I saw myself doing a job where other people were paid a decent wage for only a really rubbish wage. I was living with a friend, so my rent was £250 plus council tax and bills. And I think I brought in £450 a month or something like that. I ended up working on the weekends as well, putting in like 65 hours a week. It made me really stressed.

I was in my overdraft and a couple of grand in debt by the end of it. I was just trying to get by, it wasn't anything extravagant. I felt punished for wanting to do a career and do well, whereas if I'd just stayed in a minimum wage job, I actually probably would have been fine.

“I felt taken more seriously”

My Level Four apprenticeship felt quite different. I was paid a really decent wage, around £23k a year so I felt much more taken seriously. Just because I was an apprentice I wasn't given any less responsibility than other people who were at my same grade so that felt much more professional. It has been a much more positive experience and I think a lot of that has been being paid well and feeling that I'm valued. However, in terms of looking for other jobs afterwards, I'm still not convinced that any employer would see it as equal to another Level Four qualification.

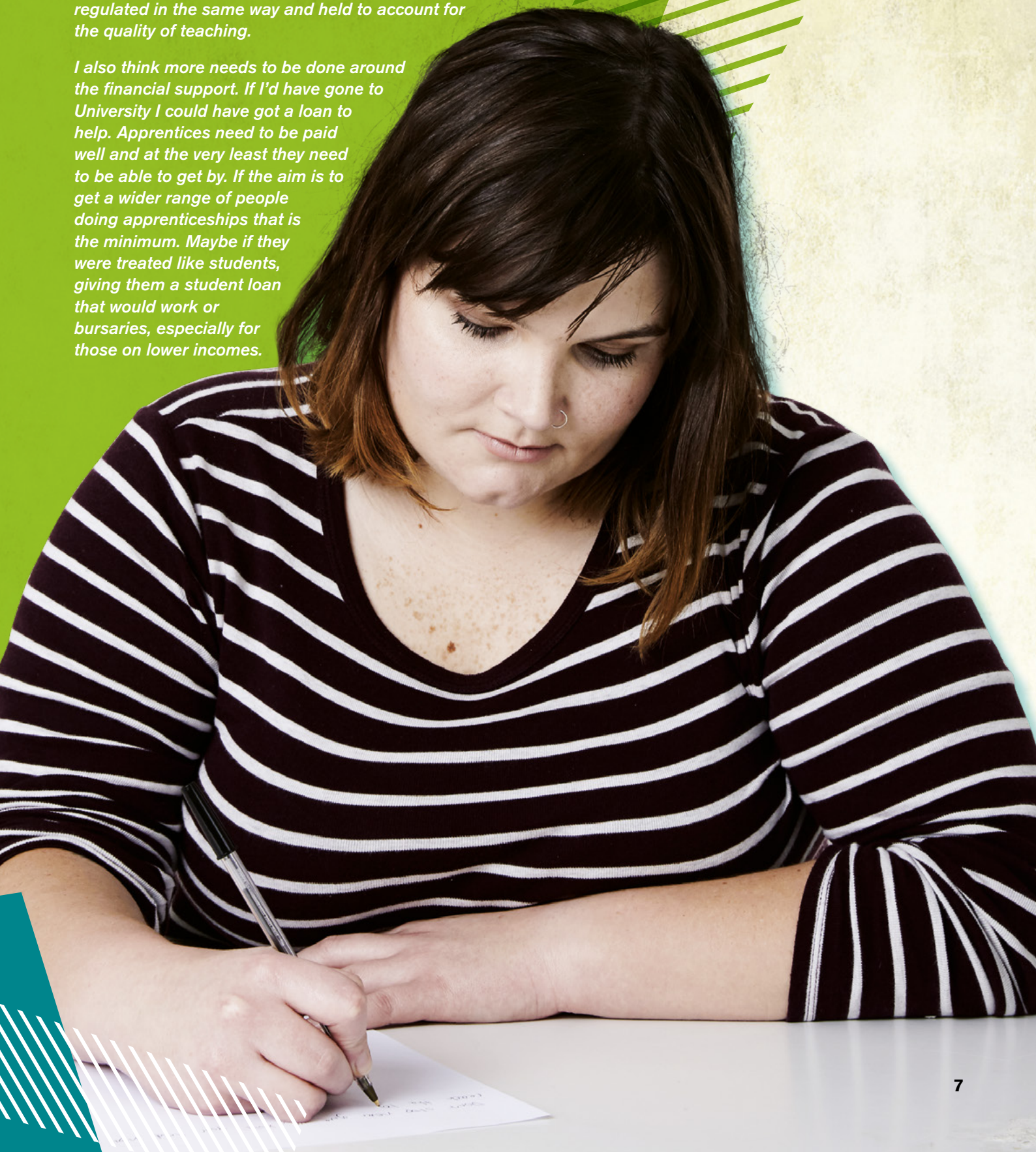
“It just makes you feel like cheap labour”

The second apprenticeship was better for me, but it was better for my employer too. With the first apprenticeship I had a quite a few days off sick because of my mental health, I was in a bit of state. Yes, they employed me after, but I ended up really resenting my employer, not recommending it. But the second one, I've been really loyal to them, encouraged other people to apply. I've been promoted twice and moved up the career ladder. I'm a real advocate, and frankly it's just because they paid me well, I was able to live and have a good life and get myself on my feet again, and really having that value was really important. With the way the first apprenticeship was, it just makes you feel not like cheap labour and not that they value your progression.

“Colleges are seen as the weaker half”

I think there needs to be a culture change in terms of the relationship between Higher and Further Education. Colleges are absolutely seen as the weaker half and if apprenticeships are to be seen as a viable option for a range of people that needs to change. Apprentices deserve the quality of education that universities get, and they should be regulated in the same way and held to account for the quality of teaching.

I also think more needs to be done around the financial support. If I'd have gone to University I could have got a loan to help. Apprentices need to be paid well and at the very least they need to be able to get by. If the aim is to get a wider range of people doing apprenticeships that is the minimum. Maybe if they were treated like students, giving them a student loan that would work or bursaries, especially for those on lower incomes.



LAUREN, 20 YEARS OLD, LEVEL TWO CUSTOMER SERVICE APPRENTICE

"I kind of stumbled across it"

I had been in college, but I didn't like my course, and I decided I was going to find a job. I hadn't worked before so when I was getting feedback from job interviews they suggested I go for a year's apprenticeship to get experience. I hadn't considered an apprenticeship, so I kind of stumbled across it but it seemed like it was going to be the best option at the time.

"I was left with pennies to live on"

I didn't go in blind. I knew it wasn't paid as the national minimum wage. I thought if I got that experience it was going to be easier to find a properly paid job. But it was a huge struggle. I was coming out with £350-£450 a month depending on how many hours I'd worked. I was living at home but had to pay board to my mum so by the time I'd paid that and travel expenses on top I was left with pennies to live on. I was literally working so I could afford to work if that makes sense?

"Things started to go downhill when I told my manager I was pregnant"

When I first started, it went brilliantly, I loved it, I was getting praise constantly. I was advancing very quickly. The money wasn't brilliant, and I wasn't left with much, but they always told me they would be keeping me on after the apprenticeship, which would mean more money. When I was about 7 months into my apprenticeship, my manager found out I was pregnant and that's when things started to go downhill. I'd been working 1-9pm, but once she found out I was pregnant she put my hours up to 45 hours a week and I was being made to clean with harsh chemicals that I shouldn't have been doing whilst pregnant.

They had no sympathy or support and no risk assessment. One night the buses had been taken off because of the weather and I lived a half hour bus ride from work. I said I might need to leave early, and they didn't care. Despite me being heavily pregnant I had to make a 45-minute walk home in bad weather. They felt they could get away with treating me badly because I was an apprentice.

"We were cheap labour over Christmas"

I remember over Christmas we were short staffed. Rather than splitting the shifts evenly the extra hours were always on me and the other apprentice. They were putting our hours up because, as an apprentice, we were cheaper. It was literally because we were cheap labour for the Christmas holiday. Despite us doing the extra hours, ordinary staff got more in their Christmas bonus. The pay was awful, but as well as the wage, it just the way we were treated. It's almost like just because you're an apprentice you don't matter.

"I was going from one extreme to the other"

Because of the bad treatment, I didn't end up finishing my apprenticeship. They were telling me I wasn't pulling my weight, even though I was working all those extra hours and doing all I could whilst pregnant. I was really ill at this point and they told me they weren't going to keep me on after my apprenticeship. I actually ended up getting a temporary job for 6 weeks as I was heavily pregnant. I went from £350 a month to doubling my wage so it was like going from one extreme to the other.

"It gets you down emotionally"

My apprenticeship hasn't really given me any skills. I've now just started University, studying business management so I'm moving on, but it was tough during my apprenticeship. Being treated as cheap labour, it gets you down emotionally as well. You start to think that you're not appreciated. I wouldn't go back to an apprenticeship, that's for sure. Especially having my own place now, I couldn't even afford to do an apprenticeship, definitely not, the wages are just ridiculous.



MATILDA, 21, DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP, DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

“It hadn’t entered my mind”

I left school at 18, after getting my A-levels and started a Level Three apprenticeship in electric and electronic engineering and now I’m doing a degree apprenticeship on the Digital and Technology solutions course.

I had been all set-up to do a Geography degree. I went to a grammar school and that was just what you do from that school. Apprenticeships hadn’t even entered my mind, but a local employability scheme in my area links schools and businesses and my head was really turned by that. I arranged work experience placements and was offered an apprenticeship with one of the firms. I’ve learnt so much about the world of work and been able to work on some massive projects. If I can parallel that with what would have happened by going to University, there’s been a huge increase in professionalism and maturity and I’m more employable now than I would have been.

“Not the best entry level for me”

It hasn’t all been great. I was told I’d be on a certain amount of money, having lots of different experiences and getting a degree but the reality was quite different. On reflection, the Level Three wasn’t the best entry level for me. I found it considerably easier than my A-levels and it was a bit stagnant for a while. I thought I’d be further along than I am at the moment. But it has picked up over the past few months with the project work I’m doing.

“There’s a general lack of financial support”

There’s a general lack of financial support or life learning. There’s no wellbeing officers like at University. It doesn’t feel like you can sit down with your line managers and say I’m struggling to pay to live at the moment. I don’t think there’s enough support, especially as you can pay an apprentice less than £4 an hour. Would I be able to cope if I wasn’t living at home? Probably not! I’ve known people who have had to leave because they can’t afford to live. It’s sad to hear when it’s your friends going through that and they’ve had some particularly nasty experiences.

“Just because they have a degree they are valued more”

Lots of my peers on my college course have seen a massive jump in their salary when they qualified. The role I’m doing at the moment isn’t really that of an apprenticeship. I’ve stepped in as a design engineer and I know others are getting paid much more for those roles. It’s frustrating when I see people coming out of university and they are valued more than an apprentice. I look at what they are doing and how much more experience I have and it’s a little hard to stomach sometimes. There’s a lot less support for apprentices. There isn’t a scheme for development or a financial structure for apprentices.

“I have to say no to a lot of opportunities”

Living in quite a remote part of the country has had its difficulties. We’re in a small office in the South West which presents a challenge in itself. I’ve had to say no to a lot of opportunities because I can’t get the travel funding or time out. Everything happens in London, Birmingham or Derby. Even Bristol is over two hours away for me. There are lots of things I’d love to do but would have to fund it myself. I can’t necessarily justify paying for a train and an overnight stay in London which could come to several hundred pounds.

“Have you ever heard of a female engineer!?”

I don’t encounter many other women in work or college. I was the only girl in my class for the two years of my BTEC and there are two of us in a class of six now. I’m the only full-time female engineer in my office so it can be quite isolating. I had sexist remarks in college, I remember my name would be on the attendance list and some of the tutors would laugh and ask “have you ever heard of a female engineer” which was quite jarring in that environment. I had to put in a report against a fellow classmate. It was about then that I thought about leaving the qualification.



2. IMPROVING ACCESS, QUALITY AND PROGRESSION

Reputation

Our research found encouraging signs that the perception about apprenticeships is changing. Notably the reputation of apprenticeships is growing amongst young people. Two thirds of apprentices said it was their first-choice option for post-16 education (63%) although this was slightly less true for women (59% of women said it was their first choice compared to 68% of men). Three quarters (77%) said their apprenticeship had given them new skills and 77% were proud to do an apprenticeship. Significantly, more than half (58%) of those surveyed said that apprenticeships were a better way to gain professional skills than university.

Quality

Despite this improvement in the reputation of apprenticeships amongst young people, concerns remained about the quality of many apprenticeships and in particular the preference given by employers to graduate routes.

Almost half of apprentices felt that their apprenticeship had been a waste of time and many said they had been paid less than non-apprenticeship colleagues despite doing the same job. Furthermore, there are still significant barriers to accessing apprenticeships for some. Young women remain less likely to think of apprenticeships as a first-choice option and are more likely to be undertaking apprenticeships in just a few relatively low-paid sectors such as health and social care and childcare.

Additionally, many of the case studies mentioned that they found it difficult to find opportunities locally at the right level. Those in rural areas were particularly affected but we heard many stories of people undertaking apprenticeships at a level that failed to stretch them or develop new skills. There was, more often than not a lack of clear progression opportunities, particularly in comparison to the routes many employers offered for graduate programmes.

1 IN 5
OF THOSE WHO COMPLETED
AN APPRENTICESHIP
IN THE LAST TWO YEARS WERE
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A FURTHER
1 IN 5
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APPRENTICESHIP



Progression

However, many apprentices did progress on to work or further training but, this progression was uneven, and many apprentices did not benefit. Our survey found that almost 2 in 5 (38%) of those who had completed apprenticeships within the last two years were out of work or working in an unconnected field, suggesting the skills developed on their apprenticeship hadn't been as valuable as they had expected.

The latest data from the Department for Education suggest that things are much worse for women, who continue to earn less than their male counterparts for years after they finish their apprenticeship.⁷ Much of this gender difference is a result of the sectors in which young women do their apprenticeships and suggests an urgent need to boost the pay in those sectors and tackle gender segregation.

There were also a number of reports of maternity discrimination and apprentices being forced to leave by their employer when they became pregnant. Parents also reported greater concerns about their mental health and the impact of bullying during their apprenticeship. The need for family friendly apprenticeships was evident to ensure that parents are able to benefit from the opportunities available under the apprenticeship programme.

⁷ Department for Education (2018) Further Education: Outcome based success measures, academic years 2010/11 to 2015/16 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748305/FE_learners_outcome_based_success_measures.pdf

OUR RESEARCH FOUND THAT:

Progression for apprentices is uneven – with women facing greater uncertainty

- 1 in 5 (19%) of those who completed an apprenticeship in the last two years were unemployed.
- A further 1 in 5 (18%) were working in a sector unconnected to their apprenticeship.
- 64% of female apprentices and 54% of male apprentices were worried about being unemployed after their apprenticeship.

According to Government statistics men's wages are progressing faster

- For Level Two apprentices, men earned a median average £21,100 compared to the £15,300 average salary for women (women earn 27% less/men earn 38% more) women only earn after 5 years what men earn 1 year after completion).
- For Level Three apprentices, men earned a median average £26,200 compared to the £16,600 average salary for women (women earn 36% less/men earn 57% more), women earn less after 5 years than men earn 1 year after completion).
- For Level Four apprentices men earned a median average £29,000 compared to the £25,200 average salary for women (women earn 13% less/men earn 15% more).
- Women's slower rates of earnings progression in general are in part down to the gender segregation with high paid sectors with good progression opportunities being largely male dominated. Just 4.2% of starts on engineering apprentices were made by women this year.
- However, as the table opposite shows, male apprentices progress quicker than female apprentices, even in female dominated fields.

Median salary post apprenticeship	Male	Female
1 YEAR AFTER		
Engineering	£26,400	£26,500
Child development and wellbeing	£12,600	£11,800
Building and construction	£19,500	£18,300
Health and social care	£17,600	£13,800
5 YEARS AFTER		
Engineering	£33,600	£31,300
Child development and wellbeing	£16,200	£13,400
Building and construction	£26,800	£18,600
Health and social care	£20,200	£15,500

Apprentices were worried about quality, with graduate routes being preferred by employers

- 60% said they were paid less than non-apprenticeship colleagues for doing the same work.
- 60% said they were given less responsibility than they were expecting.
- 57% of women and 43% of men said it did not fully meet their expectations for a fair wage.
- Just 53% said it fulfilled their expectations of a good career.
- 47% thought their apprenticeship was a waste of time.
- Just 1 in 3 (33%) expected to get high quality training.

Bullying and discrimination were rife:

- 54% of apprentices were bullied or talked down to by other staff during their apprenticeship (66% of parents).
- 43% were bullied by non-apprentice colleagues (54% parents, 37% non-parents).
- 46% worry about being bullied.
- 57% experienced sexist remarks (69% of parents).



RECOMMENDATIONS:

Schools, with the support of Government and should continue to improve careers advice relating to apprenticeships: Our research showed a worrying lack of awareness through schools about the possibilities of apprenticeships. The latest survey has shown improvements with a large number of apprentices saying that an apprenticeship was their first choice for post-16 education. Similarly, significant minorities said that teachers and careers advice in school were important in their decision – a change in emphasis on previous years. However, we are still concerned that young women are less likely to say apprenticeships are their first-choice option and that they continue to undertake apprenticeships in a limited range of sectors. We believe that further improvements can be made to careers advice to make young women aware of the potential for apprenticeships in a wider number of fields.

The Government should develop a UCAS-style portal for apprentices and technical education: There was some evidence that the Government's "Find an Apprenticeship" and "Get in Go Far" websites were encouraging young people to take up apprenticeship opportunities. 16% and 11% respectively said these sites were a big influence in helping them decide on what to do. However, this was much less influential than other sources of information. The difficulty in finding suitable opportunities even when using these sites and particularly in rural areas, was frequently raised by case studies. We recommend that the Government follow through on the commitment made in its 2017 manifesto that a UCAS style portal be developed to support potential apprentices in searching and applying for opportunities.

The Government should reinstate the Apprenticeship Diversity Good Practice Fund: To incentivise employers to take measures to increase diversity, the Government should reinstate the apprenticeship diversity fund with additional resources for employers and training providers. In order to ensure value for money, the ability to draw down this funding should be contingent on demonstrating measurable increases in diversity.

The Government should consider additional payments for employers recruiting women apprentices in male dominated sectors: Additional payments are currently made to employers and providers of 16-18-year-old apprentices to cover additional costs of recruitment and supporting younger apprentices. Young Women's Trust believes that similar justifications can be made for payments in certain sectors to cover the cost of positive action measures.

Employers should make greater use of positive action: Employers tell us that they are often wary about taking any steps to actively recruit women or provide additional support in the workplace because they are unsure of the law around discrimination and fear that they may inadvertently discriminate against potential male employees as a result. Legal advice received by Young Women's Trust suggests that despite this uncertainty there is much that employers are able to do. This could include: setting targets, reserving places on training courses, providing work experience opportunities, explicitly welcoming applications from women, providing mentors or adapting the language used in job adverts. These approaches should not be reserved solely for recruitment either, with efforts being made to ensure women are able to progress well after their apprenticeship.

The Government should endorse new guidance on the effective use of positive action. The wariness of employers to use positive action and the lack of awareness about the potential for tools such as the use of tie-breaker criteria limits the potential of existing legislation to enable change to happen. New guidance is needed to give employers confidence. This should be produced by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and be backed by the implementation of national and sector- based targets to ensure there is progression on tackling gender segregation in apprenticeships and beyond.

The Government should promote the potential for part-time apprenticeships: Many young people have told us that they want or need to work part-time but the lack of such opportunities in apprenticeships means they often choose another route which may lack training and future opportunities. In the survey of HR decision makers carried out for Young Women's Trust by YouGov, 54% of employers (including 65% in the public sector) would be willing to offer apprenticeships on a part-time basis but many wrongly believe there is little demand from potential apprentices for working arrangements along these lines. We believe that the Government should promote part-time apprenticeship, beginning with making it possible to search for part-time opportunities on the Find an Apprenticeship website.

The Institute for Apprenticeships should monitor the development of new apprenticeship standards and incentivise creating progression routes from Level Three through to higher level apprenticeships and beyond: Significant numbers of apprentices were unemployed after their apprenticeship or employed in an unconnected field. Case studies also told us that there were often insufficient entry points at an appropriate level and that progression from one level to the next was difficult to achieve. The Institute for Apprenticeships should use the system for approving standards to incentivise the creation of linkages between levels in the same apprenticeship field and work with sector bodies and those proposing standards to achieve this.

Employers should also demonstrate parity of esteem between apprenticeships and graduate routes and remove barriers to progression.

The central focus of apprenticeship reforms make apprenticeships more employer-led. This provides opportunities for apprentices to be even more valued by employers as they will bring vital skills and make an increasingly important contribution. Employers should ensure that opportunities to progress are open to apprentices in the same way as graduates. They should also work to remove barriers to women's progression.

Employers should publish their policies on discrimination, bullying and harassment and ensure apprentices are made aware of their rights and the processes for raising concerns as part of their induction.

RICARDA, 25, LEVEL THREE COMPUTER AIDED DESIGN TECHNICIAN

“Pretty much everyone I know went to University”

At school we were all just encouraged to go to University. They took the view that any degree was better than no degree and pretty much everyone I knew went to University to study whatever, whether it would be useful for them or not. I started a degree, but due to ill health I had to drop out. I was doing a number of admin roles, which were fine, but I wanted to find a trade that might enable me to become self-employed later on. An apprenticeship hadn't really been a possibility that was open to me before, but it seemed like a good option.

“I wasn't sure what my rights were”

There were a few raised eyebrows from friends and family when I suggested I wanted to do an apprenticeship in carpentry or joinery or as an electrician. But I looked at the Government website and couldn't find anything in those fields of work. I was about to give up on the idea when I found this advertised in my local paper. It was advertised as an apprenticeship for a CAD technician, and I've now been qualified as an architectural technician doing computer design, but in an architect's office.

When I started I wasn't sure where I stood or what my employment rights were. I didn't understand whether I was an apprentice or a salaried member of staff or a part time student. I'm not even sure it was ever an official apprenticeship under the recognised apprenticeship scheme or whether they just titled it as an apprenticeship. I'm still working at the company, but my apprenticeship has probably officially ended-if it ever officially began!

“I was expecting a bit more”

I was hoping my apprenticeship would teach me new skills and there would be someone there to help me develop. I wanted someone to be able to challenge me and help me progress in a career but instead I felt they could just let you trundle along. I was expecting a bit more support and mentoring which didn't happen, especially later on in the apprenticeship.

“I'm still earning less than in my admin jobs”

Now that I am qualified I am given more responsibility. At the moment we don't have, we have new an architect, but he's younger than me and doesn't have much experience so I'm actually teaching him stuff. But I haven't seen that level of responsibility reflected in the amount I'm paid, which is difficult to take. I've had to organise every kind of appraisal I've had and negotiate my own pay, always. That's been quite difficult. And I still haven't reached the salary that I was on before in my admin job when I wasn't qualified or experienced.

“Living at home is the main reason I've been able to do it”

University was a struggle financially so being able to work and study was part of the attraction of an apprenticeship. It has still been a struggle sometimes though. I live at home luckily, so that's been probably been the main reason I've been able to do it in the first place. I have an interest free overdraft which I use quite a lot which makes it manageable, but it isn't always easy.

“It's hard to be taken seriously”

It's quite a male dominated field. There's not a lot of young women that are working on the construction side, or the architectural side, it's mainly men. So, that is quite challenging. Sometimes it's hard to be taken seriously, if you, I don't know. People might not consider your opinion or acknowledge a contribution you've made. Or there's just a lot of “banter” I guess you'd call it, which can be kind of distracting.

It would make a huge difference if there were more women there. It's strange, most of the people on our payroll are women, but they all work in the administration side of the business, but it's run by men, most of the people who work for us are also men, the culture is very male. I don't know, I think it's just really hard as a woman.

KATIE, 20, LEVEL TWO, CUSTOMER SERVICE APPRENTICESHIP

When I left school, they never gave us any advice about apprenticeships. I went into sixth form and it didn't work out so I dropped out so I was about 17 when I started the apprenticeship. I was looking for a job and the apprenticeship came up, but to be honest with not being in school, I just needed the money. I was expecting that they'd keep me on after my apprenticeship and that I'd get a qualification that would help me in the future.

"Most of that went on bus fare"

The pay was a challenge. I was being paid the apprenticeship minimum wage so was only getting £400 a month, and most of that went on bus fare. Even though I was living at home and my dad was working, he didn't have much money. My mum was unemployed, so it was a big struggle. Some days I didn't even have dinner it was that bad.

I know some people who did apprenticeships with the council who got higher pay, but everyone I know in retail had bad experiences like me.

"Just get rid of her"

When I was about four months into my apprenticeship I got pregnant with my son. When I first told my boss, she was Ok with it, but the owners of the business told her to just get rid of me. That didn't happen, and I ended up staying until just before I was due. About half way through my pregnancy though, I had to put my hours down to part-time which meant I was only on £200 a month, so whilst the hours worked out better for me, the pay became even more of a struggle. I felt like I was working for nothing.

"£50 a day for childcare – that's like a full wage"

I finished work in January and had my son in the March. I went back in May to finish the apprenticeship for two days a week. Even that was a struggle with childcare. I was relying on my mum and dad which wasn't ideal because there were weeks when things came up and they couldn't look after

him. And childcare is really expensive, round here it's about £50 a day which is like a full wage. I've had no support to cover the cost of childcare. It's why I'm going into back into education through university, because I know I can get childcare funded.

"I thought I'd be stuck there forever"




I didn't really gain any skills from the apprenticeship that I could take to other jobs. There were just two of us in the shop, both apprentices. I had been working hard and obviously I was pregnant as well. I looked for other options and there weren't any other apprenticeships that offered part-time hours for mothers. At the time, I thought I'd probably be stuck in the shop for ever because there was no career progression.





Young Women's Trust,
Unit D, 15-18 White Lion Street,
London N1 9PD

e: info@youngwomenstrust.org
www.youngwomenstrust.org

 @ywtrust
 www.facebook.com/youngwomenstrust
 @youngwomenstrust

Young Women's Trust is the operating name of YWCA England & Wales.
Charity number 217868. Company number 137113.

