

AGENTS OF CHANGE

Supporting SMEs through
apprenticeship brokerage
services

September 2025

By Sorah Gluck
and Holly Papworth





The world is changing fast and education needs to keep up. Edge is an independent, politically impartial education foundation. We want education to be relevant to the twenty-first century. We gather evidence through research and real world projects and partnerships and use this to lead the debate and influence policy and practice.

Edge believes all young people need to be equipped with the skills that today's global, digital economy demands, through a broad and balanced curriculum, high quality training, engaging real world learning and rich relationships between education and employers.

Visit www.edge.co.uk to find out more.

CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Executive Summary	5
Introduction	6
Why do we need a coordinated apprenticeship brokerage offer for SMEs?	7
Part one: Local and regional brokerage services	11
The Apprenticeship Hub Network	12
What type(s) of support is currently offered by brokerage services?	13
CASE STUDY: Apprenticeships are #MadeInNorfolk	14
CASE STUDY: One Front Door to Skills in Liverpool City Region	15
CASE STUDY: Brewed for Success – Developing Apprenticeship Pathways at the Bristol Beer Factory	17
What makes for effective delivery of local brokerage services?	18
Part two: For industry, by industry: sector-based brokerage services	20
Learning from the Past: Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs)	20
Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs)	21
CASE STUDY: On the right TrAC	22
CASE STUDY: CITB – A sector-based lens	23
CASE STUDY: Serving across sectors at Workwhile	24
Part three: The role of civic institutions: FE colleges and brokerage	25
CASE STUDY: Something in the water at Wigan College	25
Part four: A framework for national oversight	28
CASE STUDY: Apprentice Connect Australia	28
Conclusions and Recommendations	31
References	33

FOREWORD

Growing the supply of apprenticeships and training opportunities, meeting local labour market needs, and increasing employer investment in skills training requires connection between employers and their prospective apprentices and trainees – be they young people or adults. How to do that effectively is a question that unites hiring managers, schools and colleges, training providers, local and combined authorities and policymakers in Westminster.

As you will see in this report, Norfolk is just one example of the power of brokerage. We stepped up our services following the pandemic; co-creating an inspiring SME focused TV and marketing campaign, alongside providing a wide portfolio of practical and financial support for local SMEs. And it paid off – that year we saw an 18% growth in apprenticeships, compared to 9% nationally, and we've continued to see increasing numbers of SME-based apprenticeship starts since then.

There are similar intermediary services up and down the country doing equally amazing work – with initiatives often delivered by accessing short-term funding. Along with co-founding hubs in Solent, Manchester, Bristol and London, we created the National Apprenticeship Hub Network – bringing the opportunity for like-minded colleagues to share practice, lessons learned and opportunities for collaboration. We are an organic, homegrown network, made up of some truly incredible organisations creating valuable impact in their regional communities. I'm very proud of what we achieve, but goodwill and short-term funding can only take us so far. If we want a truly universal brokerage service, we need commitment from central government.

So, I'm really pleased to see this report from the Edge Foundation, calling on government to make sure every SME, regardless of postcode, can access the support they need to hire an apprentice.

Katy Dorman

Apprenticeship Strategy Manager, Apprenticeships Norfolk
(Norfolk County Council)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of the UK economy, yet their participation in apprenticeships has been in sustained decline. While successive governments have sought to simplify the apprenticeship system, the reality for many SMEs is a fragmented and complex landscape, with a lack of tailored support to help them engage with apprenticeships and skills training.

Apprenticeship brokerage services (intermediaries that connect employers, training providers, and prospective apprentices) have emerged across localities and industries as a vital bridge in this gap. But these services remain patchy, inconsistently funded, and vulnerable to policy churn.

This report builds on the Edge Foundation's earlier work, *Flex Without Compromise* (2024), to examine how a strategic, sustainable approach to brokerage can unlock an untapped supply of apprenticeship opportunities in SMEs.

Critically, polling conducted by the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC) in July 2025 for the Edge Foundation reveals the demand from SMEs for brokerage-style support. More than a quarter of businesses (26.7%) said that **tailored advice on understanding their skills needs and how apprenticeships could meet them** would be decisive in encouraging them to take on a young apprentice (aged 16-24). A further 42.9% said it would be a positive encouragement. These figures outranked other interventions like incentive payments (25.1%) or prior work-readiness training for candidates (25.3%).



There are pockets of great practice. Through case studies from Norfolk, Liverpool City Region, Wigan College, and sector-based initiatives like the CITB and Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs), we spotlight examples of brokerage services that are making a tangible difference in their communities, delivering growth in apprenticeship starts, improving retention rates, and simplifying engagement for SMEs.

However, the existence and effectiveness of brokerage services vary widely across the country. Employers in certain regions and sectors benefit from robust, well-resourced intermediaries, while many others are left **unsupported** in brokerage 'cold spots'. This inconsistency is compounded by **short-term funding models and a lack of national coordination**.

Drawing lessons from both domestic best practice and international models, particularly Australia's Apprentice Connect, the report sets out a blueprint for scaling up brokerage services. It calls for a **nationally coordinated, locally delivered system of apprenticeship brokerage, with a sustainable funding stream, to ensure every SME has access to high-quality, 'boots on the ground' support**. To realise this ambition, we recommend:

1. **Establishing a national framework for brokerage services** to guarantee a gold-standard offer across regions and sectors and sustainable funding.
2. **Targeting investment in expanding brokerage services to SME cold spots**, starting with areas without existing support and with high rates of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). This should lever existing expertise within established local and sector-based intermediaries, rather than duplicating provision, as well as the lessons from the Department for Education SME Brokerage Pathfinder. It must also prioritise establishing relationships to build trust with businesses, becoming a 'one front door' to help and support.

The Government's Opportunity Mission rightly identifies that growth will only be unlocked if every region and every business can access the talent they need. Yet, as *Flex Without Compromise* sets out, this will not happen unless we remove barriers for young people and employers alike.

Investing in brokerage is a strategic opportunity to **expand apprenticeship opportunities, support local economies, and equip the next generation with the skills for a changing world**, delivering not just numbers, but a system that is **flexible, inclusive, and sustainable**.

INTRODUCTION

In September 2024, Edge published *Flex Without Compromise* – a policy report with recommendations to reverse the decline of apprenticeship opportunities for young people, particularly at entry-level¹. This follow-up report turns attention to the **untapped supply of apprenticeships in SMEs**, exploring the **difference** that brokerage support services are already making, and how a more strategic, coordinated approach could **unlock employer investment in skills training** further.

Recognising the declining participation of SMEs in the apprenticeship market, intermediary and brokerage services have, in many parts of the country and industries, stepped in to coordinate the apprenticeship system, so that it is viable for all stakeholders.

PART ONE

In **Part One** of this report, we share a snapshot of some of the work being delivered by the **National Apprenticeship Hub Network** – a collection of brokerage services that are primarily managed and/or funded by local and combined authorities that have evolved out of necessity to deliver local authority and labour market priorities.

PART TWO

Part Two explores a **sector-based approach** to brokerage services that have a deep-rooted policy history.

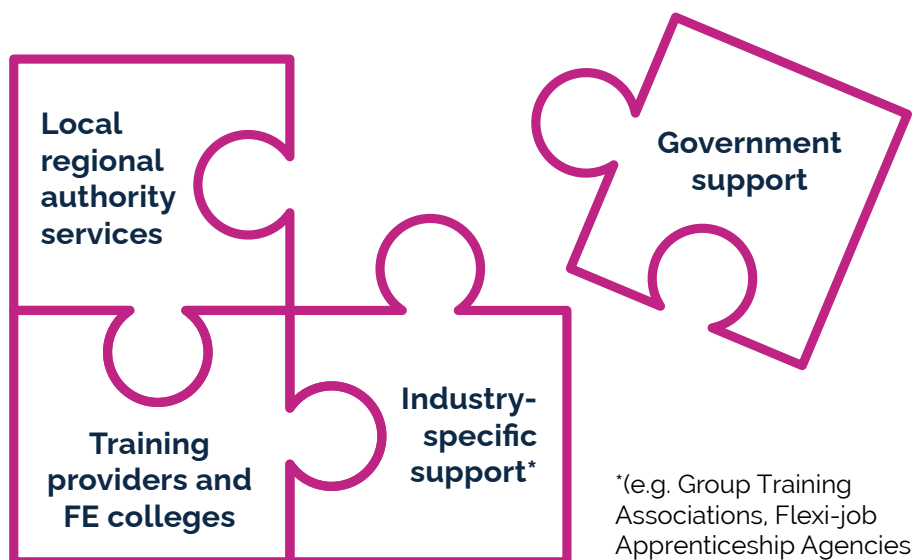
PART THREE

In **Part Three**, we look at how civic institutions, such as **FE Colleges**, are providing support for employers and young people in their communities.

PART FOUR

Then there's the question of the role of **national oversight** to coordinate brokerage services, which we explore in **Part Four**, drawing on international learnings from Australia.

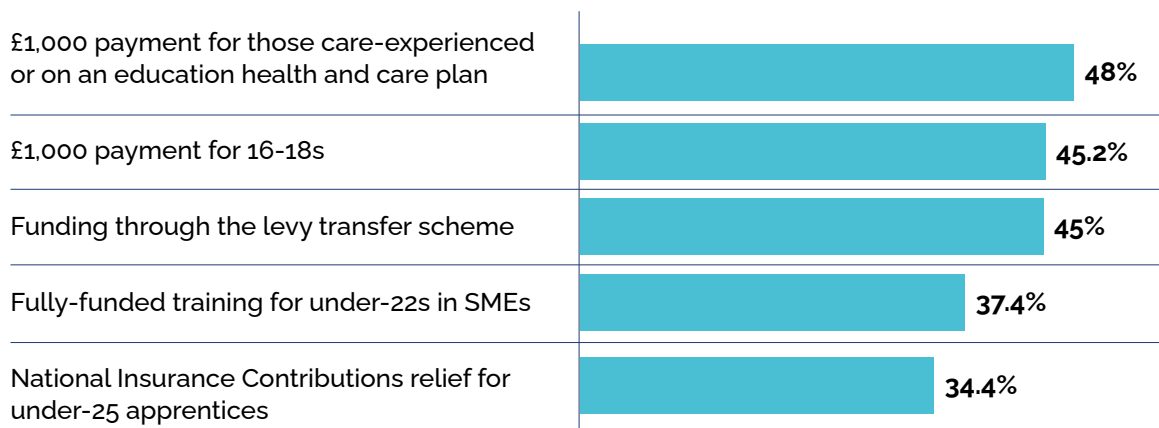
In each case, we reflect on the **lessons and limitations**, such as sustainable funding streams and the 'cold spots' – areas of the country where employers have no access to coordinated support around skills and apprenticeships. In the final section of this report, the **conclusion**, we set out **a roadmap for Government**: a new vision for delivering effective brokerage support services that will expand the supply of apprenticeship opportunities, especially for young people.



Why do we need a coordinated apprenticeship brokerage offer for SMEs?

Given the many demands on SMEs' limited time and resources, it's unsurprising that many of them struggle to stay up to date on the latest apprenticeship policy developments. Our polling with the Recruitment and Employment Confederation in July 2025 found that many SMEs were unaware of the government incentives available for those hiring an apprentice, including the £1,000 payment for those care-experienced or on an education health and care plan (48%) and those 16-18 (45.2%); funding through the levy transfer scheme (45%); fully-funded training for under-22s in SMEs (37.4%); and National Insurance Contributions relief for under-25 apprentices (34.4%).

SMEs may be unaware of existing apprenticeship incentives



REC polling of 234 employers in England, conducted for the Edge Foundation, in field 10-21 July 2025

The Government has taken welcome steps to reduce the administrative burden for SMEs hiring apprentices, including streamlining the digital apprenticeship service and making improvements to the apprenticeships payments system². The DfE has also utilised the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network to 'buddy' employer ambassadors up with SMEs to help guide them through the apprenticeship system, with the aim of supporting 3,000 SMEs by March 2026³. But well-intentioned efforts from policymakers to simplify the system are often poorly communicated and can end up complicating it further by adding another policy into the mix.

In 2022, the DfE developed its own SME Brokerage Pathfinder, commissioning brokers in four areas (Greater Manchester and East Lancashire, Merseyside and Northwest Lancashire, West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire, and the North East), selected on the basis of declining apprenticeship starts. But strict eligibility rules and a lack of resource required to raise awareness and build trust, undermined the Pathfinder's success.

Absorbing the lessons from the Pathfinder and established best practice presents an opportunity to rocket-boost the supply of apprenticeships, and there couldn't be a more opportune moment to do so:

1

Just **30%** of **young people** believe there are high-quality jobs available in their local area⁴. Nearly **1 million** young people are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). As Edge's *Flex Without Compromise* report⁵ sets out, we need a concerted effort to **reverse the decline** of apprenticeships available to school leavers *and* **better connect** young people with existing training and employment opportunities. Of those apprenticeships offered by smaller businesses, **92%** are held by 16-24-year-olds and they are more likely to have a presence away from the big cities than larger firms⁶.



2

According to a Department for Education (DfE) survey in 2025, **over a quarter (26%)** of **SMEs** are concerned about being able to recruit new employees with the right skills⁷. Greater support is top of mind for smaller employers to help them access the skills system. In polling conducted in July 2025 by the REC for this report, **more than a quarter (26.7%)** of businesses said that 'tailored advice and support around understanding your skills needs as a business and how apprenticeships can help you meet those skills needs' would be **decisive** in encouraging them to take on a young apprentice (aged 16-24), and **42.9%** said it would be an encouragement. The strength of this kind of support **outweighed** if the apprentice had already taken part in work-readiness skills training or a **Foundation Apprenticeship (25.3%)** and even **incentive payments (25.1%)** to take on an apprentice.



3

For **training providers and FE colleges**, SMEs are a crucial market – making up **99%** of all UK businesses⁸. Yet, the **smaller apprentice cohorts** and **limited HR capacity** typical of smaller employers, coupled with the **expansion of the apprenticeship standards available** (c.600), can make engaging with and delivering training for SMEs resource intensive or unfeasible.

4

Each of the above is mission-critical to **central and local Government**, whether that is realising the ambitions of the **Youth Guarantee**, reaching an **80% employment rate**, reducing our reliance on **immigration** or closing skills gaps in the local labour market to **unlock growth**.

The Edge Foundation is not alone in this call. In 2023, **IPPR** recommended that '*intermediaries should become an integral part of the policy solution, ensuring that all SMEs are able to access high-quality support*'⁹. And a separate 2023 report from the **Social Market Foundation** and **Speakers for Schools** pinpointed the range of brokerage organisations with overlapping remits of engaging employers with work experience and called for '*a single point of accountability for local coordination*'¹⁰.

PART ONE: LOCAL AND REGIONAL BROKERAGE SERVICES



“

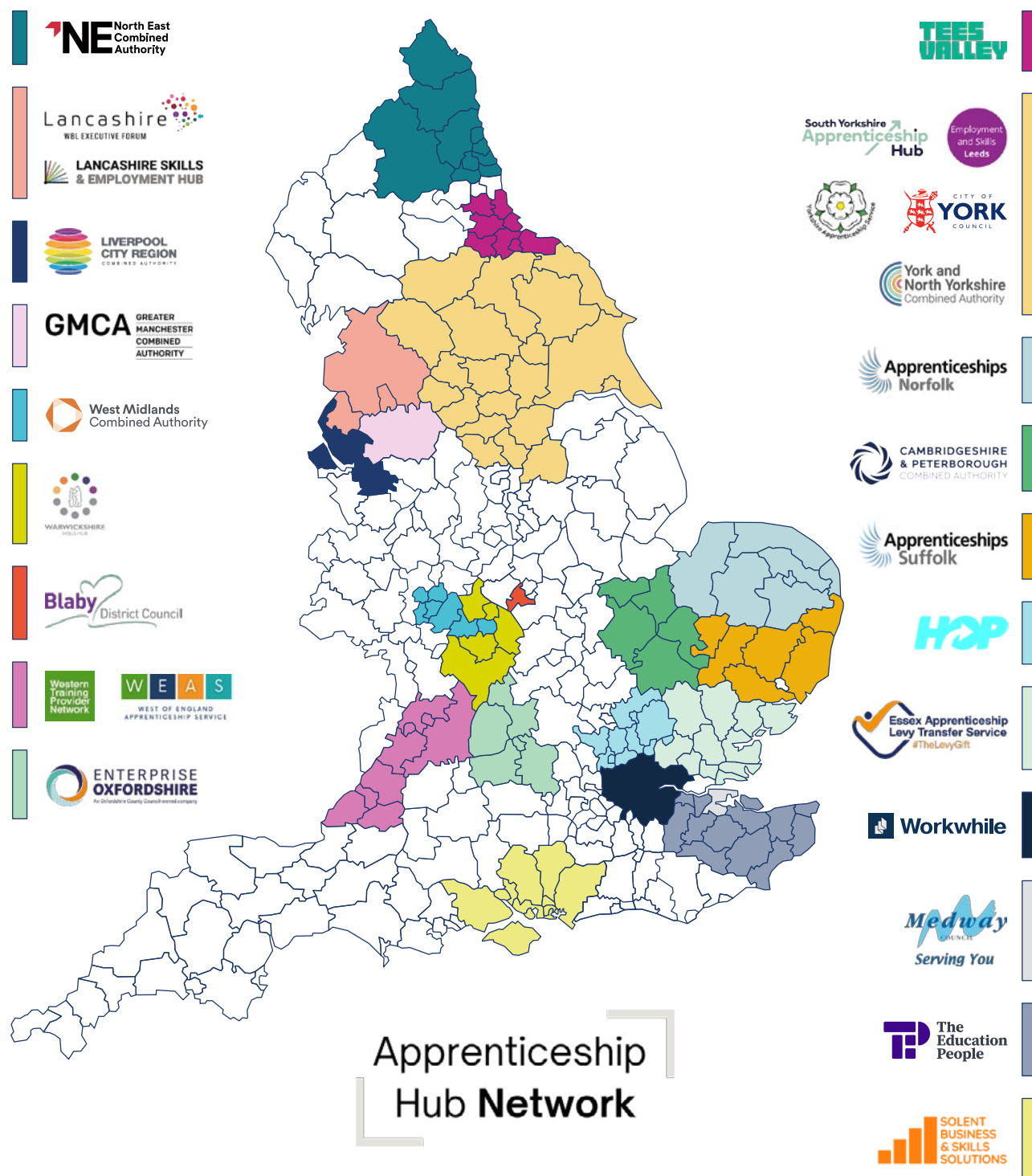
'The development of English intermediaries has not been a centrally planned or funded process, but a more organic response to employer needs and changing policy, where local or regional government, or industry bodies, have recognised the need for some kind of intermediary support.'

IPPR, *Join the Dots: The Role of Apprenticeship Intermediaries in England*, May 2023



The National Apprenticeship Hub Network

The **National Apprenticeship Hub Network (NAHN)** comprises around 25 organisations, services and projects providing free and impartial information, advice and guidance to businesses, predominantly SMEs, to champion and stimulate the growth of apprenticeships in their local area.



Katy Dorman, who leads **Apprenticeships Norfolk**, explained how the NAHN came into existence:



'After Covid, a few hub leads connected on LinkedIn; we all started to recognise that we were doing a similar thing - and that thing was brokerage - and there might be value in us coming together as a group informally, to share practice about what we're doing locally. There is absolutely no competitiveness as we're all working in different regions – just a shared purpose and desire to enhance our collective impact.'

NAHN members offer different types and varying levels of employer support; from helping employers to understand their skills needs and the apprenticeship offer, facilitating levy transfer and administering incentive payments, to organising B2B and training provider events, managing networks, delivering employer training and the ASK programme (which was defunded in August 2025).¹¹ The golden thread that all brokerage services have in common is being free and impartial.



What type(s) of support is currently offered by brokerage services?

	Raising awareness, understanding and communicating the benefits of apprenticeships and skills training (and policy changes), to employers, schools and colleges
	Working with employers to understand their skills needs and set out how and which apprenticeship standards/levels or other training programmes can help meet those needs
	Identifying a suitable training provider and connecting the employer
	Supporting employers with recruitment (e.g. job descriptions, advertising)
	Helping the employer to manage the bureaucracy around apprenticeships/ training programmes and access funding (e.g. handling paperwork, connecting employers with funding – levy transfer, incentives, grants)
	Employer training, mentoring and ongoing support

The following **case studies** detail the different ways these brokerage services are already making a difference in their community, delivering on regional skills priorities and shifting the apprenticeship landscape.

CASE STUDY: APPRENTICESHIPS ARE #MADEINNORFOLK

Through “hand holding” SMEs through the process of hiring apprentices, supporting apprenticeship seekers and developing a collaborative provider network, **Apprenticeships Norfolk** has contributed to hard-earned successes in expanding apprenticeship opportunities across the county. During 2021/22, in the height of post-pandemic growth, Norfolk saw **18% overall growth** of new apprenticeship starts against a national figure of 9% – and since then, continues to see a year on year rise in the number of SMEs starting new apprenticeships.

What's behind their success? Apprenticeships Norfolk (funded by Norfolk County Council) coordinates an extensive programme of **practical support** – free and impartial apprenticeship information, advice and guidance for businesses and access to their training provider network – **coupled with financial incentives** along with opportunities to **connect, inspire and celebrate success**. The service is much more than apprenticeship brokerage; it comprises a strategic portfolio:

- An award-winning **#MadeInNorfolk marketing campaign**¹², delivered annually since 2021 and co-created with SMEs (supported by Apprenticeships Norfolk). The campaign targets local SME business owners through TV and digital advertising, to highlight the transformative impact apprentices have had on their businesses.
- A **levy transfer** scheme¹³: at the time of writing, the scheme had successfully transferred over **£4.5m** of funding in just over 2 financial years – to over **220 businesses**, supporting over **440 apprentices**, from Level 2 through to Level 7. In terms of the 5% co-investment cost savings, this equates to **savings of c£225k** for receiving businesses.
- **Building Futures incentives scheme**¹⁴: SME employers recruiting a new apprentice can receive a £2,000 incentive payment, enhanced to £5,000 for 'dark green' apprenticeships, currently funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. As well as providing onboarding support, this project also provides employer training in mentoring and sustainability. To date, the project has seen over 60 new apprenticeship starts. An interim evaluation highlighted that 64% of recipient businesses had never hired an apprentice before.
- **Free tailored networks** for **training providers, employers** and **apprentices** in Norfolk: to encourage connection, collaboration and shared practice.
- The annual **Apprenticeship Norfolk Awards** recognises outstanding employers, apprentices and managers/mentors¹⁵ from across the county

CASE STUDY: ONE FRONT DOOR TO SKILLS IN LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

Access to skilled talent is critical for Liverpool City Region's ambitions for innovation-led growth. With over **49,000 employers** (approx. 400 levy-payers) in the region, making it easier for SMEs to engage with apprenticeships – and **keeping investment in the region** – has been central to the Combined Authority's 'one front door' approach.

Liverpool City Region's Employer Brokerage Service began life in 2015 in Knowsley Council, demonstrating the art of the possible in local authorities. Now, the service operates across six local authorities to streamline and centralise skills support for businesses, and facilitating levy transfer, as well as supporting other funded training programmes (e.g. Skills Bootcamps, adult skills fund or private investment).

The '[Be More](#)' website and careers app pulls data about apprenticeship opportunities from national Government websites (like the Find an Apprenticeship Service), but with 'a localised flavour', as described by Joe Keegan, Employer Brokerage Service Team Leader, showcasing apprenticeship opportunities available in the area, with occupational mapping and insight videos to offer holistic support to applicants.

The Combined Authority also coordinates Apprenticeship Levy transfer from large to small employers. IPPR's research suggests that **for every £1 paid in tax, 96p is retained by Whitehall**¹⁶. And when it comes to apprenticeships, the Combined Authority estimates around **£200 million** from the region's levy payers has been retained by Treasury since 2017, when the Apprenticeship Levy was introduced. Keeping investment in the region has been a driving force behind the brokerage service.



'The big challenge was to get in front of levy payers. It's hard to get to the right decision makers and ask those questions about "are they fully utilising their levy for their own apprentices", and if they're not, "are they willing to transfer it out to other employees in the city region"?'

'The benefit for employers is clearly from the CSR point of view. For us, it was about really supporting those smaller employers who, in the main, couldn't afford to pay that 5% co-contribution and keeping the levy in the city region.'

Joe Keegan, Employer Brokerage Service Team Leader

Liverpool Football Club, the BBC, Amazon, B&Q and TUI are just some of the household names that have seen **more than £12 million** transferred between businesses through the scheme. Across the region, nearly half of apprenticeship starts facilitated through levy transfer are at Level 3 (45%), with over a quarter at Level 2 (28%), above national averages for these crucial entry-levels into employment. The health and social care sector has seen the most starts from the scheme (making up 51% of all starts), with early years and childcare (19%), professional services (16%), creative and digital (5%) and engineering and trades (5%) also benefitting.

Taking a holistic approach, joined-up with other support services a business might need, and making it as simple as possible for employers – large and small – to engage with the brokerage service has been key to untangling what can be a complex skills training offer:

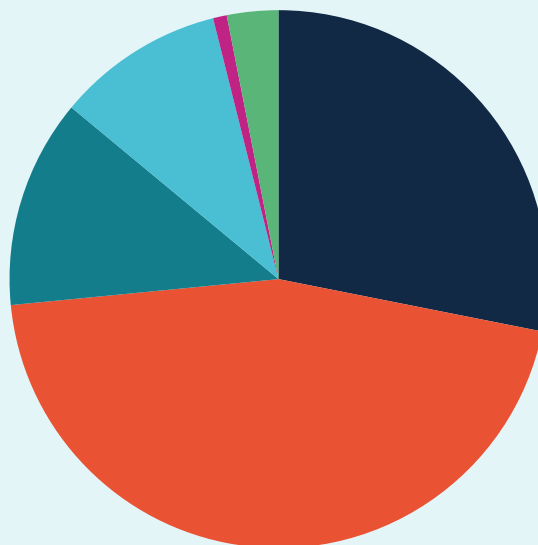
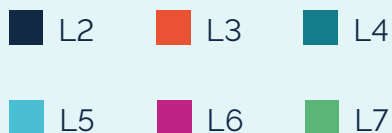


'We're seen as the first port of call. It's a very simple process for anyone looking to receive levy or transfer. They just complete a form with us and we work with them... It is more of a 'boots on the ground' approach than a system. We're picking up on everything that an employer might need in terms of skills and apprenticeships... and we can link them into other areas of the Combined Authority for any other advice.'

Joe Keegan, Employer Brokerage Service Team Leader



Levy Transfers – Starts by level in Liverpool City Region



CASE STUDY: BREWED FOR SUCCESS – DEVELOPING APPRENTICESHIP PATHWAYS AT THE BRISTOL BEER FACTORY

The **Western Training Provider Network** – part of the NAHN – is a 'not for profit' provider membership network that brings together around 45 education and training providers, awarding bodies and charities working with young people and adults across the West of England. Its regional apprenticeship services are funded by the Combined Authority and it helps local businesses navigate and benefit from the apprenticeship system through the **West of England Apprenticeship Service (WEAS)** and Levy Transfer Service. **Alex Richards**, Managing Director of the Western Training Provider Network, explained one element of the service which has been transformational for SMEs:

Recently, the WTPN worked with a local brewery, **Bristol Beer Factory**, to develop and implement a meaningful apprenticeship career pathway, tailored to align with their goal to open doors to the brewing industry for young people who often face barriers due to a lack of experience – creating inclusive entry points into a sector traditionally seen as inaccessible.

The WTPN team first analysed the business giving an impartial tailored guide to what apprenticeships might suit and then spent time researching potential training providers. After finding an excellent provider that could deliver the brewer apprenticeship locally, the WTPN provided comprehensive recruitment support, including shortlisting candidates, conducting telephone interviews, and facilitating the setup of formal interviews. They helped source funding through the **Share to Support programme**, ensuring that



'We wanted to show a business where they could hire [young apprentices] in entry level roles, but also how they could **retain** them longer and give those young people a chance to progress further within work with free training. So, we'd map out **entry points and progression** using occupational maps.'



financial constraints did not limit the opportunity. Thanks to a generous contribution from the University of Bristol, the full cost of training was gifted. This initiative not only supports the next generation of brewers but also reflects the company's strong ethical values and commitment to sustainable, community-focused growth.

Kari Halford, Community Events Manager at the Bristol Beer Factory reflected on the impact of the brokerage support:

“

'Jane and Katie from the West of England Apprenticeship Service have provided epic support. From answering our questions and offering advice when we first floated the idea of launching an apprenticeship scheme, to screening applications, to securing us levy funding partners. **We would have struggled to have done it without them.** Always friendly. Quick to respond. 100% professional.'



What makes for effective delivery of local brokerage services?

These examples serve to illustrate a 'gold-standard' level of brokerage support for SMEs – and that might look different in different parts of the country. But common to their approach to effectively help SMEs untangle a complex skills training offer is:

- **Boots on the ground:** For SMEs especially, making it as simple as possible to engage with the brokerage service often requires personalised, direct outreach, not just another email in the inbox. Even the evaluation of the DfE's Apprenticeship SME Brokerage Pathfinder noted that '*most brokers thought the most fruitful method of engagement with SMEs was face-to-face engagement.*'

- **Offering a personalised service:** Meeting the employer where they're at, understanding their wider goals and tailoring every approach.
- **Realising the long-term benefits of apprenticeships:** Not only helping businesses with filling immediate skills gaps, but also thinking about retention of the apprentice, including continuous skills development and progression opportunities.
- **One front door:** Joining-up apprenticeship brokerage with other business services to provide 'one front door' to holistic support.
- **Stepping up the bar when it comes to aspiration and promotion:** Raising the profile and prestige of apprenticeships, communicating policy changes, and marketing the support available to SMEs is often neglected as a priority in central Government budgets, but local brokerage services can be much better placed to understand their community and how they receive information best.

However, **the existence and level of support provided by local brokerage services is highly dependent on resource, how established that service is, the extent of devolution, and the priorities of local government in an area.** If all these things are not aligned, it can be extremely difficult for local and regional authorities to fund this 'gold standard' of support, particularly for SMEs, which can be more resource intensive.

As such, employers in some parts of the country are better served than others, with numerous and expansive 'cold spots', and larger employers are more likely to report feeling 'fully supported' by their local services.

To what extent, if at all, do you feel supported by your local services (such as local council, training providers etc) to help you understand your skills needs as a business and the training available to you?

	Region					
	<i>North</i>	<i>Midlands</i>	<i>South (excl. London)</i>	<i>South (incl. London)</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>Other</i>
Fully supported	29.0%	16.7%	16.3%	24.0%	36.2%	13.4%
Partially supported	30.9%	42.4%	30.6%	37.5%	48.4%	44.9%
Not supported at all	10.8%	19.1%	31.6%	20.0%	1.6%	13.5%
Don't know	29.3%	21.7%	21.5%	18.5%	13.8%	28.2%

To what extent, if at all, do you feel supported by your local services (such as local council/s, training providers etc) to help you understand your skills needs as a business and the training available to you?

	Employer size (no. of employees)		
	<i>0-49</i>	<i>50-249</i>	<i>250+</i>
Fully supported	17.6%	27.2%	46.0%
Partially supported	19.2%	10.9%	7.1%

REC polling of 234 employers in England, conducted for the Edge Foundation, in field 10-21 July 2025

PART TWO: FOR INDUSTRY, BY INDUSTRY: SECTOR-BASED BROKERAGE SERVICES

This patchwork of local and regional brokerage services is supplemented by a range of other intermediaries servicing specific sectors. These brokerage services – whether formalised or not – have faced continual upheaval as the subject of **continuous policy reform**. From Industrial Training Boards (ITBs), Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) to Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs) and Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs) – each serving a slightly different purpose.

Learning from the Past: Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs)

In 2009, in the wake of the financial crash, the UK government invested £7 million to introduce Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs), inspired by Australia's Group Apprenticeship Scheme, to expand apprenticeship opportunities and strengthen skills development in sectors deemed essential for national economic growth. ATAs acted as the legal employers of apprentices, placing them with host companies while handling payroll, HR, and pastoral care, reducing risks for SMEs and enabling flexibility. While they didn't have to be, they were often industry-specific. Early evaluations highlighted benefits in widening participation and lowering barriers for SMEs, but concerns soon emerged. Some ATAs adopted "light touch" models, offering low-quality, insecure placements with limited progression, prompting trade union criticism. Reviews, including the 2012 Holt Review, found the model valuable, especially in removing barriers for SMEs, but financially difficult to sustain and vulnerable to misuse. By 2015, limited monitoring and weak uptake (far below the 15,000 target) undermined confidence. ATAs were eventually phased out and rebranded as Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs) in 2022. FJAAs were designed to make short-term placements with employers easier through a more flexible brokerage model, along with a more formal regulatory system to ensure quality.

(This content was extracted from Edge's upcoming Learning from the Past paper on ATAs, written by Dr María José Ventura Alfaro¹⁷)

Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs)

Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agencies (FJAAs) were introduced by the DfE in 2022 to allow sectors with non-standard employment patterns to share apprentices. Similar to ATAs, the apprentice is hired by the FJAA, which then arranges placements with host businesses for the entirety of their apprenticeship programme. Each FJAA has to be approved by the DfE for their area and sector. In 2022 the DfE piloted a "portable" flexi-job apprenticeship model, where the apprentice can secure short-term contracts with various employers by themselves, without involving an FJAA. However, data obtained by FE Week uncovered that the pilot fell markedly short of expectations, failing to entice providers, employers, and apprentices.¹⁸ It remains ongoing, with no formal evaluation carried out to date.



One sector that is particularly interesting to view through the lens of brokerage services is construction, which is dominated by SMEs and has a strong history of hiring apprentices. In the construction sector, over three quarters (76%) of apprenticeships started are in SMEs, the vast majority of which (86%) are at Levels 2 and 3¹⁹. It is also a sector under the policy spotlight as it will be crucial to delivering the Government's promise to build 1.5 million new homes over the course of this Parliament. As such, there are a range of support services currently on offer to support the sector's strong SME population, such as flexi-job apprenticeships and the CITB's brokerage services.

CASE STUDY: ON THE RIGHT TRAC

Training and Apprenticeships in Construction (TrAC) is a Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agency (FJAA) which started out as a CITB Shared Apprenticeship scheme, then registered as an ATA in 2013, recognising the demand for short-term contracts in the industry.

SMEs across East Anglia, the East Midlands and the South-East rely on TrAC to navigate the apprenticeship system. TrAC's services include a recruitment and employment service for apprentices, finding and liaising with the training provider, and support with finding follow on placements with other host employers, which last a minimum of 6 months, with the option to renew.

TrAC take on many of the responsibilities of employing an apprentice, including sick pay, HR duties, and meeting regularly with the training provider and apprentice, which leaves SMEs free to run their businesses. While TrAC is not-for-profit, they do charge a small fee to employers to cover these costs. Since establishing the shared apprenticeship service, TrAC has **supported 559 apprentices across 361 host companies**.

TrAC is part of the **Built Environment Shared Apprenticeship Service (BESAS)**, a network of six, not-for-profit, construction FJAAs, offering geographical reach across England. Collectively, BESAS's members have delivered **over 5,500 apprenticeships across 700 businesses**, and boast **an average completion rate 10% above the national average**²⁰.



CASE STUDY: CITB – A SECTOR-BASED LENS

The **Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)** is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the DfE, supporting the construction industry in skills development and recruitment - funded by a Levy applied to some employers in the construction sector.

With the Government pledging to build 1.5 million new homes by 2029, CITB estimates that an extra 239,300 construction workers will be required, presenting a once-in-a-generation opportunity to recruit and train the workforce. SMEs will be crucial to filling this gap, as they make up a significant majority of construction businesses and consequently apprentice employers. In 2022/23 (latest data available), **76% of apprenticeship starts in the construction sector were employed by SMEs¹⁹**.

In 2022/23 (latest data available),

76%

of apprenticeship starts in the construction sector were employed by SMEs¹⁹

CITB supports SMEs through its **New Entrant Support Teams (NEST)**. These teams offer a suite of services to construction businesses:

- **Recruitment:** from advertising their vacancy through signposting to employer resources.
- **Funding:** access to CITB grants worth up to £2,500 per year per apprentice, plus an achievement grant of £3,500 (on successful completion of the apprenticeship).
- **Administration:** including paperwork and liaising with the training provider.
- **Mentoring:** ongoing pastoral support and mentorship training to increase retention and successful achievements.

NEST supported **4,128 apprenticeship starts** in the financial year 2024-25, a 76% increase compared to the previous year²². NEST is linked up with BESAS and will refer employers to local BESAS members where that model is more suitable to their needs. In addition, CITB has committed to doubling the size of its NEST team to support even more employers, particularly small businesses, to recruit and retain apprentices.

Deb Madden, Executive Director for Nations Engagement at CITB, said: *'A strong pipeline of apprentices and construction workers is required to build the millions of homes and hundreds of infrastructure projects needed. The significant support employers receive through NEST is essential. Our recent investment partnerships alongside the Government will help to continue the good work of NEST by removing barriers for employers, particularly small businesses, and support them to recruit and retain new entrants.'*

Both FJAAs and shared apprenticeship services have been subject to criticism in recent years, as they struggle with poor employer awareness and demand.²³

There are also great examples of brokerage services moving beyond a sector-specific approach.

CASE STUDY: SERVING ACROSS SECTORS AT WORKWHILE

Workwhile is an interesting example of a charity-based brokerage service. It started in 2019 as a pilot project called the London Progression Collaboration, incubated within the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) before becoming independent in 2025.

They offer a programme of support for SMEs to help them achieve 'apprenticeship-readiness'. This includes:

- helping them to understand their skills needs and match these to appropriate apprenticeship standards,
- support to understand the range of training providers on offer and choose a provider to meet their needs,
- navigating their digital apprenticeship service account,
- sign-posting to other employability-sector organisations who can support with recruitment, and
- brokering the transfer of unspent levy funds from a network of over 100 large employer partners.

They've also developed bespoke programmes for SMEs such as DevelopMentor, which offers free line-management training to London-based SMEs, many of which lack the resources to deliver this internally.

Since launching in 2020, they've created **over 2,400** new apprenticeships across **650 SMEs**. Over 87% of these have benefited people who are disadvantaged or marginalised in the labour market.

While the LPC pilot began with a particular focus on retail, hospitality and construction, Workwhile has since become 'sector agnostic'. According to CEO, Anna Ambrose, access to universal support trumps the need for a sector-specific approach:



'There is a bit of a danger of everything becoming very blinkered in terms of a sectoral approach, which rules out businesses that have great opportunities to create that don't fall conveniently inside those sectors and creates cold spots in a different way.'

Anna also believes their philanthropic funding *'enables our approach to be completely mission driven, but to be flexible and opportunistic within that. What drives us and our funders is creating good-quality and accessible opportunities for people who would otherwise miss out. That could be in green skills or tech, but it could equally be in early years or adult social care – and they're all sectors which are vital for communities everywhere.'*

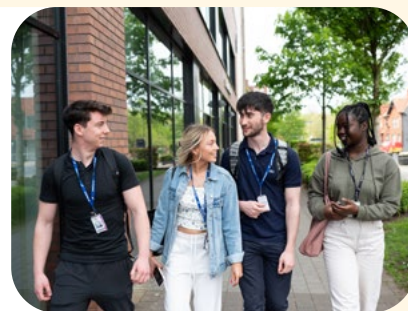
Sector-specific brokerage services should always have a place in the skills system. For construction employers for example, this is a case of getting something back from what they pay in through the CITB Levy and a chance to access expertise that is specific to construction skills needs. However, these sector-specific services must be in addition to, not a replacement of, universal brokerage services that all businesses should be able to access.

PART THREE: THE ROLE OF CIVIC INSTITUTIONS: FE COLLEGES AND BROKERAGE

According to the CIPD, only **one in four** employers recruiting young people think they are **well-prepared for the world of work**²⁴, while the IPPR has found that just **47% of 18- to 24-year-olds felt ready for work** when they left education²⁵. In *Flex Without Compromise* (2024), Edge reflected on the need to '**de-risk**' younger hires for employers to grow the supply of apprenticeship opportunities. One piece of that puzzle is equipping young people with the **essential, work-readiness skills** that we often hear employers (and others) perceive today's generation to lack.

The following case study demonstrates the role of FE colleges in brokering apprenticeships – not only in the direct sense of providing the training, but in offering a holistic service, often through their employer engagement teams, to ensure employers see young people as **essential** hires.

CASE STUDY: SOMETHING IN THE WATER AT WIGAN COLLEGE



One town bucking the national trends when it comes to apprenticeships is **Wigan**. Apprenticeship participation amongst 16-18-year-olds has increased by **47%** since 2021, representing **58%** of participation, and the **achievement rate** exceeds **71%**. An overwhelming **90%** of apprentices are employed by SMEs, with **42%** of apprenticeships in engineering, **35%** in construction and **11%** in professional services.

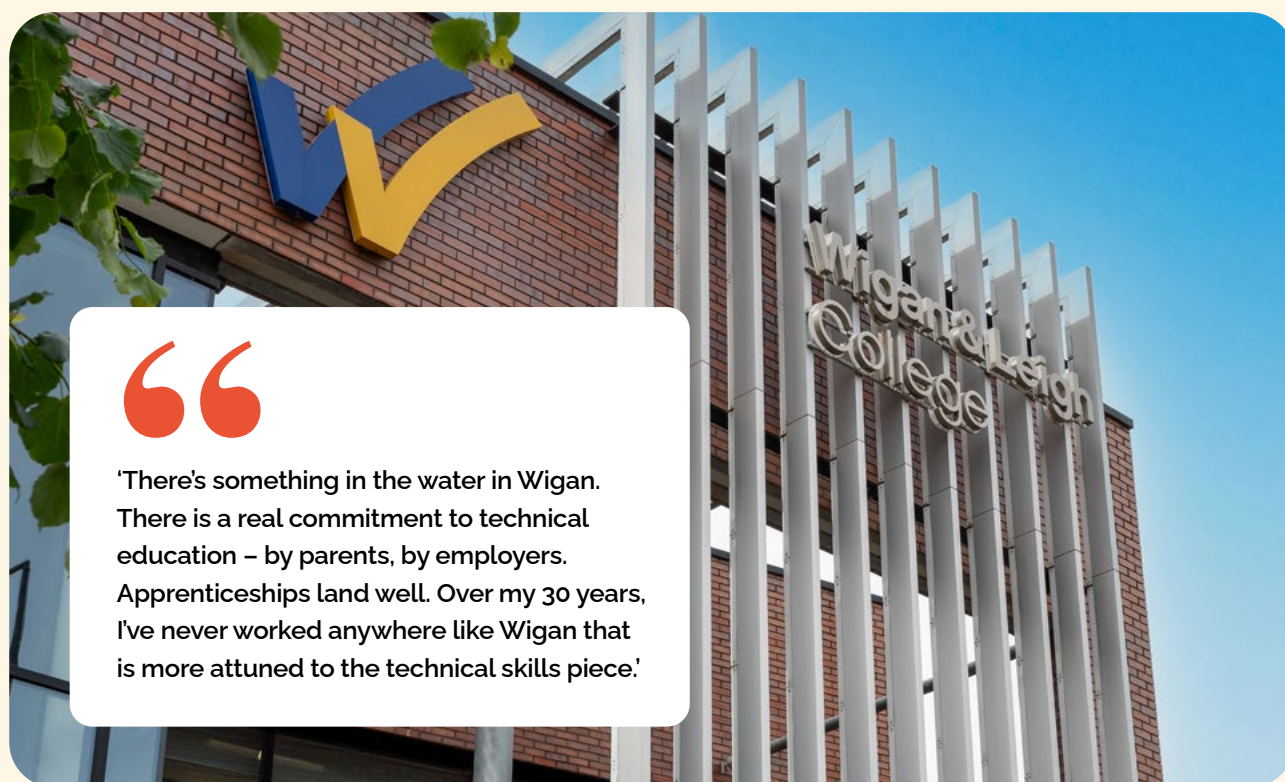
Anna Dawe, Principal and CEO at Wigan College, which is responsible for delivering much of the apprenticeship training, has been a real driver behind inclusion in the apprenticeships landscape. 30 to 40 young people that arrive at the college will go straight onto an apprenticeship. But, for those young people that may not yet be ready to start an apprenticeship, they are supported through a **pre-employability study**

programme comprising a full core qualification (at Level 1 or Level 2) and English and Maths. At the same time, students engage in work placements, CV and interview preparation with prospective employers – **a talent pool** of young people ready to hit the ground running.

When they are ready, *'we don't think twice about transferring students onto an apprenticeship, and yes, we may lose funding but why would we keep them on a study programme if it isn't right for them?'* says Anna. Employers are invited in during the summer term to interview potential candidates, taking much of the legwork out of the hiring. Not only does this give employers certainty in the learners, but it also *'gives students the confidence that we will find them an apprenticeship'*.

But this proactive, inclusive approach to apprenticeships and essential skills at the college cannot be responsible for Wigan's above-average apprenticeship figures alone. They depend on all the stakeholders in the system playing their part.

Anna explained:



The Council understands technical education, and their warm words about apprenticeships translate into investment. In addition to Government incentives and the levy transfer scheme, Wigan Council launched the **Future Apprentices for Business (FAB)** grants programme in February 2023. Worth up to £5,000, the grants support SMEs to create new apprenticeships for 16 to 24-year-olds and pay at least National Minimum Wage (NMW), helping to attract and retain high-quality candidates.

The overwhelming majority of colleges recognise their role in meeting local, regional (**98%**) and national skills needs (**80%**), and the importance of retaining skills within their local area²⁶. Colleges' close employer partnerships – and dedicated employer engagement teams – allow them to act as the bridge between young people (and adult learners) and employers. They are well placed to offer employers tailored advice and guidance, acting as skills brokers to simplify the education and training landscape.

But whilst they have been encouraged to work more strategically with local employers through policy interventions, their role as brokers is not formalised or funded.



As Tracey Wood, Chief Commercial Officer at the Trafford and Stockport College Group, wrote for the Association of Colleges in April 2025:

“

'Without dedicated structures, support, and investment, expecting curriculum teams to carry this additional workload is neither fair nor sustainable.'²⁷

If we want colleges to collaborate meaningfully with local employers, especially SMEs, we need to **resource them appropriately** to do so.

PART FOUR: A FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL OVERSIGHT?

The examples thus far in this report demonstrate the difference that brokerage support services are already making to the apprenticeship landscape, in spite of constraints. It begs the question, what might be possible if there were a more strategic, coordinated framework for brokerage services in England?

In Australia, SMEs are more likely to hire an apprentice than in England, and by quite some way. By the end of 2023, SMEs accounted for **68%** of all apprenticeship starts in Australia²⁸, compared to just **37%** in England²⁹. But, you can't start an apprenticeship or hire an apprentice without an **Apprentice Connect Australia Provider** – centrally funded, locally delivered brokerage services. The following case study takes a closer look at this model.

CASE STUDY: APPRENTICE CONNECT AUSTRALIA



Apprentice Connect Australia (ACA) (formerly the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network) provides a completely free of charge service available to all employers and apprentices. While being centrally funded, it is available across Australia through providers in its seven territories, who are contracted by the federal (national) Government. Registration to an ACA provider is mandatory for all apprenticeship contracts.

ACA providers deliver support services, including facilitating the sign-up process, providing advice on Australian Apprenticeships, explaining roles and responsibilities, and offering in-training support that can include mentoring, counselling, and pastoral care, especially for apprentices most in need and First Nation apprentices. They also provide support before the apprenticeship begins, including school outreach programmes, careers advice, and talent matching. Importantly, they are responsible for **marketing apprenticeships** to employers, helping them to **understand what their skills needs** are, how apprenticeships can address them, and the **financial incentives** they would be eligible for.

Ben Bardon, CEO of the National Australian Apprenticeships Association which represents the organisations delivering ACA services explained:

“

'Employer incentives ... makes the marketing a bit easier, because the first thing you say is: "do you realise you could get 10 grand if you put an apprentice on or five grand if you put an apprentice on?" It opens the door and then you can have a decent conversation. That seems to me ... the missing piece in the UK system.'



While, historically, each territory had control of its apprenticeship provision, it was decided in the 1990s that there needed to be a unified approach to underpin the **quality** of apprenticeships, the **verification** that employers are meeting their obligations, and **a national salesforce** to drive uptake. The number of ACA providers per region varies according to population density. In areas with more than one provider, competition has helped drive growth:



“

'The providers themselves quite like the competitive environment. It keeps everybody honest, it keeps their sales teams driving to actually find those small businesses... if you set up a centralised bureaucracy to do it, it would be too slow and too unresponsive.'

Ben Bardon, CEO, National Australian Apprenticeships Association

ACA providers are funded through federal government grants which are **demand-led and uncapped**. Some of this grant funding is provided upfront, while the rest is drawn down over the five-year contract. To verify a valid employment relationship, providers facilitate a national training contract, which is a tripartite agreement between the employer, the apprentice, and the training provider. Providers also make sure that the working environment is safe and that the person who will be supervising the apprentice has the qualification that the apprentice is going to be studying. A significant amount of funding is earmarked for marketing their brokerage service, which includes substantial face-to-face engagement.

In addition to ACA, **6.6%** of apprentices are employed through **Group Training Organisations (GTOs)**³⁰. These intermediary organisations operate similarly to the FJAA model in England, where the apprentice is formally employed by the GTO, which then places them with host employers. The GTO takes on responsibility for the employer side of the training contract, including paying the apprentice wages and, at times, they also provide off-the-job training and pastoral care. Unlike ACA providers though, the service is not free as host employers must pay fees to the GTO. According to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, *'Apprentices employed through GTOs tend to have completion rates 5 to 9 percentage points higher than those directly employed by SME host employers, and 2 to 5 percentage points higher than apprentices with large employers'* although completion rates vary drastically across providers.³¹

Nonetheless, there are improvements to be made to the Australian system. Funding for ACA providers and GTOs is complex and often includes multiple funding streams and compliance rules. A Government consultation report from 2023 noted that:

“

'The split of responsibilities between the Australian Government, represented by AASN [Australian Apprenticeship Support Network] providers, and state and territory governments can cause confusion for employers and other users of the system.'³²



Another report from 2025 found that the apprenticeship system remains difficult to navigate, particularly for SMEs, with support services offering a stronger return on investment for employers than financial incentives. It recommended that an independent review be carried out 'of the design, efficacy and performance of the Apprentice Connect Australia Providers'³³

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, the existence and level of apprenticeship brokerage support is highly dependent on resource, the extent of devolution and the priorities of local Government in an area (in cases where brokerage services are supported by local or regional governments). As such, employers in some parts of the country are better served than others, and there are numerous and expansive 'cold spots' of support.

To get to a point where every SME that wants it has access to a full suite of support to understand their skills needs and the apprenticeship and training offer, regardless of geography or industry, we need all partners, including Government, to work towards an ambition for **a coordinated, fully funded system of apprenticeship brokerage services**.

In the **long-term**, that should be coordinated through a **national framework**, with a guarantee to all employers of high-quality support, delivered through a **network of local, third sector, and industry providers**, with a sustained funding stream. This will require careful collaboration between Skills England, the Department for Business and Trade, and, crucially, the Department for Work Pensions, particularly given their oversight of the merger of Jobcentres and the National Careers Service, as well as delivery of the Youth Guarantee. The beginnings of a framework are already in place through the Government's new Business Growth Service (business.gov.uk) – an online platform which allows businesses to find local support services in their area. However, while this is a big step towards helping SMEs find support, it's reliant on there being support services already there.

As a first step, the government might work with local partners to **establish services for SMEs in brokerage 'cold spots'** – areas of the country where employers are completely unserved with any support to navigate apprenticeships.

An even more granular approach might require looking at those cold spots with stark **opportunity gaps** – those parts of the country struggling most with **high proportions of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, or with significantly low levels of employer investment in skills training**.

In turn, to fully realise the potential of brokerage services, and to avoid repeating past mistakes, the ambition must be to **level up the offer of existing brokerage services**, so that every employer has access to gold-standard support.

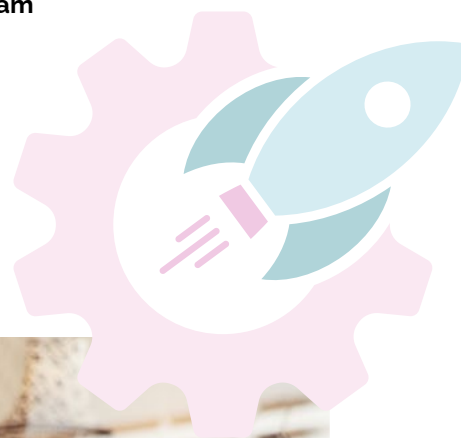
This certainly isn't about starting from scratch or duplicating provision. As this report demonstrates, we are in a strong position to **rely on the wealth of existing expertise, experience, and infrastructure**. A nationally coordinated system must include a mechanism for effectively sharing this best practice. But we also know that where brokerage services operate most effectively, all stakeholders are on board, so **co-designing a bespoke offer with local partners** – devolved authorities, colleges and employers – rather than assuming one-size fits all, will be key.

These services should be integrated with **other, existing local support services a business might need**: the one front door aspiration makes it as simple as possible for employers to engage with a brokerage service, whilst **industry-specific** expertise can continue to be harnessed from sector-

specific bodies. While support on apprenticeships should be offered at minimum, this should over time extend to other elements of the skills system including skills bootcamps, T Levels, and work experience placements.

Too often, skills policies – be that new services, qualifications, incentives or support – are poorly communicated to employers and underutilised. This not only wastes precious time and money in the public sector, but erodes employers' confidence in the training system. **Upfront investment in marketing brokerage services to effectively raise awareness of their existence, the benefits, and how to access support will be key.** There is potential to promote these services directly to employers when they sign up through Companies House, possibly by way of the Business Growth Service to demonstrate the 'one front door' approach.

And, finally, but perhaps most importantly, **a sustainable funding stream** would safeguard the reliability of the offer for employers, affording providers the time and space to establish the service and build trust.



REFERENCES

- ¹ Edge Foundation, 2024, *Flex Without Compromise - Preserving Apprenticeships for Young People Under a Growth and Skills Levy*. Available at: <https://www.edge.co.uk/policy/reports/flex-without-compromise/>
- ² Department for Education, 2025, Written Parliamentary Question 61532. Available at: <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2025-06-20/61532/>
- ³ Department for Education, n.d., *Apprenticeship Ambassador Handbook*. Available at: https://assets.ctfassets.net/8kbr1n52z8s2/CMIuBmUlBXB2LYztiK4oN/94ea42191529fa12886fc9f1cb555d/Apprenticeship_Ambassador_Handbook.pdf
- ⁴ Youth Employment UK, 2025, *Youth Voice Census Results 2025*.
- ⁵ Edge Foundation, 2024, *Flex Without Compromise - Preserving Apprenticeships for Young People Under a Growth and Skills Levy*. Available at: <https://www.edge.co.uk/policy/reports/flex-without-compromise/>
- ⁶ Federation of Small Businesses, 2019, *Fit for the Future*. Available at: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/resources/policy-reports/fit-for-the-future-MCMF6NVPZGVND4RCFZHM2RVHDE4U#:~:text=Ensuring%20small%20employers%20are%20able,introduction%20of%20the%202017%20reforms>
- ⁷ Department for Education, 2025, *SME Skills Horizon 2025*. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/679201a1b1e4f5cbd3a34e37/SME_Skills_Horizon_2025.pdf
- ⁸ Department for Business and Trade, 2024, *Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2024: statistical release*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2024/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2024-statistical-release>
- ⁹ IPPR, 2023, *Join the Dots: Apprenticeship Intermediaries*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/join-the-dots-apprenticeship-intermediaries>
- ¹⁰ Social Market Foundation, 2023, *Learning from Experience*. Available at: <https://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Learning-from-experience-March-2023.pdf>
- ¹¹ The Apprenticeship Skills and Knowledge programme provided DfE funded support to schools and colleges to help them raise awareness of apprenticeships and technical routes.
- ¹² Apprenticeships Norfolk, 2025, *Made in Norfolk*. Available at: <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/made-in-norfolk>
- ¹³ Apprenticeships Norfolk, 2025, *Levy Support Scheme*. Available at: <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/levy-support-scheme>
- ¹⁴ Apprenticeships Norfolk, 2025, *Building Futures*. Available at: <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/buildingfutures>
- ¹⁵ Apprenticeships Norfolk, 2025, *Apps Awards 2025*. Available at: <https://apprenticeshipsnorfolk.org/Apps-Awards-25>
- ¹⁶ IPPR, 2023, *Exposed: The Gap Between Levelling Up Rhetoric and Reality*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/exposed-the-gap-between-levelling-up-rhetoric-and-reality>
- ¹⁷ Alfaro, M. J. V., 2025, *Apprenticeship Training Organisations*. Forthcoming at: <https://www.edge.co.uk/research/learning-from-the-past/>
- ¹⁸ Patel, A., FE Week, 2023, *Portable flexi-jobs apprenticeship pilot flops*. Available at: <https://feweek.co.uk/governments-flexible-apprenticeships-targets-being-totally-missed/>

References

- ¹⁹ Department for Education, Apprenticeships in England by industry characteristics, 2022/23. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-in-england-by-industry-characteristics/2022-23>
- ²⁰ Built Environment Shared Apprenticeship Service (BESAS), 2025, *Prospectus*. Available at: <https://www.besas.co.uk/BESAS-Prospectus-2025-1.pdf>
- ²¹ Department for Education, 2025, *Apprenticeships in England by Industry Characteristics 2022-23*. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/permalink/9013a110-d7ff-49a2-c69c-o8ddaa184212>
- ²² CITB, 2025, *Specialist New Entrant Support Team Helps Over 4,000 Apprentices Join the Industry in 2024-25*. Available at: <https://www.citb.co.uk/about-citb/news-events-and-blogs/citb-s-specialist-new-entrant-support-team-helps-over-4-000-apprentices-join-the-industry-in-2024-25/>
- ²³ Patel, A., FE Week, 2024, *Shared apprenticeship scheme barely meets half its recruitment target*. Available at: <https://feweek.co.uk/shared-apprenticeship-scheme-barely-meets-half-its-recruitment-target/>
- ²⁴ CIPD, 2024, *The Changing Face of the Youth Labour Market*. Available at: <https://www.cipd.org/globalassets/media/knowledge/knowledge-hub/reports/2024-pdfs/8735-changing-face-of-the-youth-labour-market-web.pdf>
- ²⁵ IPPR, 2025, *Towards Universal Opportunity for Young People*. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/articles/towards-universal-opportunity-for-young-people>
- ²⁶ Association of Colleges (AoC), 2025, *Colleges Best Placed to Lead Business and Skills Innovation Revolution*. Available at: <https://www.aoc.co.uk/news-campaigns-parliament/aoc-newsroom/colleges-best-placed-lead-business-and-skills-innovation-revolution>
- ²⁷ Association of Colleges (AoC), 2025, *From Transactional to Transformational: Rethinking Employer Engagement in FE*. Available at: <https://www.aoc.co.uk/news-campaigns-parliament/news-views/aoc-blogs/from-transactional-to-transformational-rethinking-employer-engagement-in-fe>
- ²⁸ Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO), 2024, *Apprentices and Trainees Employed by Small Business*. Available at: <https://www.asbfeo.gov.au/small-business-data-portal/apprentices-and-trainees-employed-small-business>
- ²⁹ Department for Education, *Apprenticeships in England by Industry Characteristics 2022-23*. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-in-england-by-industry-characteristics/2022-23>
- ³⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2025, *Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeship, Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System 2024 Final Report*. Available at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report>
- ³¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2025, *Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeship, Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System 2024 Final Report*. Available at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report>
- ³² Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Australia), 2024, *Future Directions for Australian Apprenticeship Support Services: Consultation Paper*. Available at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/future-directions-australian-apprenticeship-support-services-consultation-paper>
- ³³ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2025, *Skills for tomorrow: Shaping the future of Australian apprenticeship, Strategic Review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System 2024 Final Report*. Available at: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/australian-apprenticeships/resources/strategic-review-australian-apprenticeship-incentive-system-final-report>

