



Rt. Hon Anne Milton MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sharron Robbie
DCTPN
14 Glenhurst Road
Plymouth
PL3 5LT

9 April 2019

Dear Minister

I have been asked to write to you in my capacity as Managing Director of the Devon and Cornwall Training Provider Network (DCTPN). We are a not-for-profit organisation, which represents and supports more than 50 training providers from across Devon and Cornwall, including two universities, five FE Colleges and a wide range of independent providers.

Following the introduction of the Apprenticeship Reforms in April 2017, the post-16 education, training & skills sector has gone through major changes and is still, some two-years later, in a state of flux and uncertainty. A central pillar of the reforms was the introduction of a large employer levy. This was instigated to initially support the funding of some Apprenticeships, and now it would seem to fund provision in full.

We have become increasingly concerned over the continued funding issues surrounding Apprenticeships, and in particular we are troubled over the lack of funding that is available to small-medium-sized enterprises. As you are aware the business demographic here in the South West is one of mainly SME' – non-levy paying businesses – and to prevent these businesses from accessing the training and upskilling they require has a significant impact and long-term implications for the prosperity and social mobility of our region.

Access to training and skills is imperative for businesses and individuals alike, in terms of closing the skills gap, improving productivity and supporting individual and community economic stability and development. With SME' employers unable to access Apprenticeship funding we are seeing a reduction in the number of young people being able to access Apprenticeships, and with the number of Apprenticeship starts falling nationally since the introduction of the Levy this will only hasten the decline.

If the impact is being felt at this point by our members, the short to medium term future appears to be increasingly bleak, *"We do not anticipate awarding growth during the extension period unless significant additional budget becomes available. We will also stop funding over-delivery"* (recent update received from the ESFA to providers). The long-term impact is one with dire consequences for employers, apprentices, parents and our providers.



We hope this letter raises awareness of the issues being faced by employers and training providers alike, and would welcome further dialogue on how we can ensure that there is substantially more funding available for non-levy Apprenticeships in order to meet the demand from our young people and businesses, whilst meeting the needs of the South West.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sharron Robbie'.

Sharron Robbie
Managing Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mike Blakeley'.

Mike Blakeley
Chair, DCTPN