

# Apprenticeships



## Making apprenticeships and traineeships work for single parents

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## About Gingerbread

Gingerbread is the leading national charity working with single parent families. Our mission is to champion and enable single parent families to live secure, happy and fulfilling lives.

Since 1918 we've been supporting, advising and campaigning with single parents to help them meet their family's needs and achieve their goals.

We want to create a world in which diverse families can thrive. We won't stop working until we achieve this vision. Whatever success means for a single parent – a healthy family, a flexible job, stable finances or a chance to study – we work with them to make it happen.

## About this report

This review synthesizes what is currently known about single parents' take-up and experiences of apprenticeships and traineeships in Britain, with a particular focus on London.

On the basis of this evidence, we consider how far these schemes address the skills gap for single parents and their particular needs in relation to work and caring.

We showcase current examples of good practice and present a series of recommendations, to demonstrate how schemes could be better designed and delivered to address these issues.

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## Summary

Single parents have a particular set of characteristics and needs that affect the extent to which they can access and progress in employment; they tend to have fewer qualifications, are more likely to live in poverty and, by default, are less likely to be able to share their childcare responsibilities. However, Universal Credit has a requirement on claimants to secure and progress in work and to become more financially independent.

The current government focus on apprenticeships and traineeships has the potential to enhance single parents' take-up and progression in work. However, there is little evidence that these schemes have had a significant impact on single parents to date. Rather, we find substantial evidence of barriers that may be inhibiting single parents from accessing and progressing in these schemes. These barriers include a lack of advertised part-time vacancies (with companies tending to recruit existing employees as apprentices), low pay, especially in the first year, and insufficient childcare.

Specific examples of good practice showcase how these barriers can be overcome within individual schemes, including by making part-time and flexible opportunities available, by subsidising wages to increase accessibility for single parents and by demonstrating clear progression routes from the outset.

There are also a number of changes which government and employers could make to the design and delivery of these schemes to maximise their accessibility and value for single parents.

### **Key recommendations for change**

- Government should scrap the existing apprenticeship target measuring apprenticeship starts and introduce more nuanced indicators measuring apprenticeship quality, the availability of part-time opportunities and the proportion of external recruits. The public sector should lead by example in the development of part-time and flexible apprenticeships and this should be explicitly reflected in their targets.
- The DWP should set a priority to increase the skill level of single parents with pre-school children aged three and four, whose work obligations will change under Universal Credit, by better promoting and implementing available flexibility and easements (the ways in which 'lead carers' can be treated differently under welfare rules), to develop routes for single parents into a wide range of traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Career and skills support should be provided to all single parents who move onto job-seeking benefits, encompassing part-time skills training and support with childcare. This should include opening up access to the extended 30 hour childcare offer to those undertaking a traineeship.
- Further work should be undertaken to test and evaluate a range of approaches to incentivise companies to take on single parent apprentices, including subsidising participation, promoting part-time opportunities and other innovative ideas.

## Background

We first set out what is known about single parents' current skill levels and employment rates and outline how apprenticeships and traineeships could represent an opportunity for their take-up and experiences of employment to be improved upon.

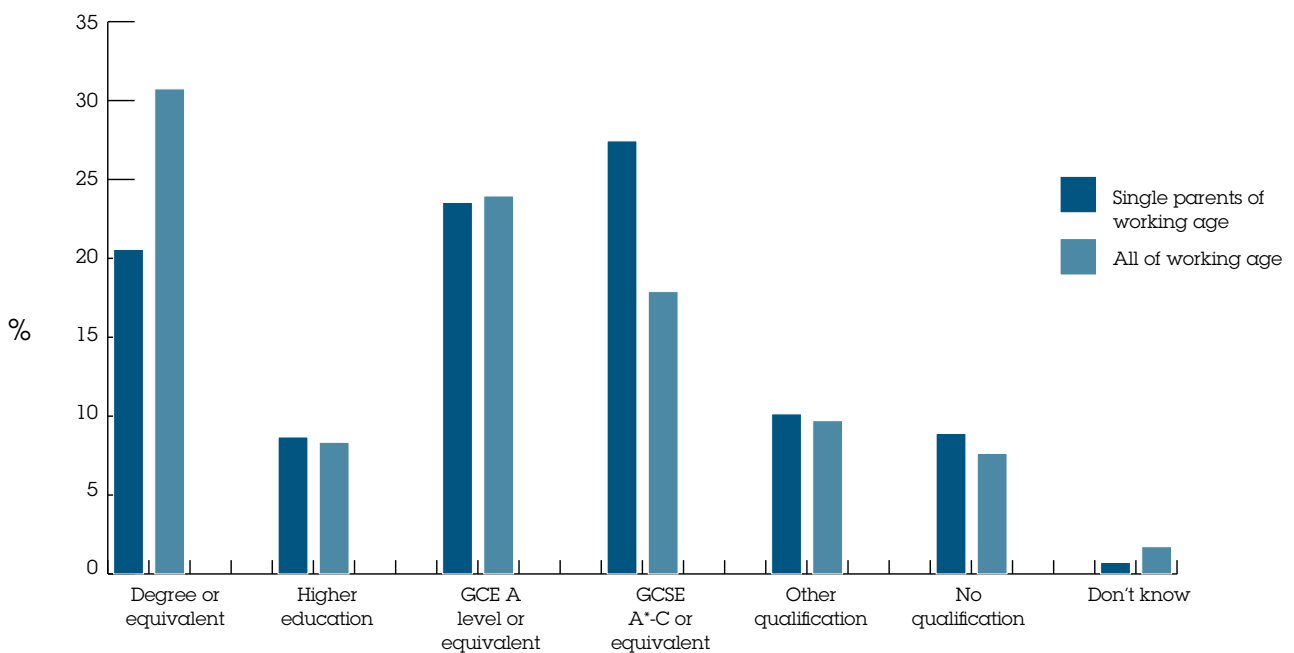
### Single parents' skills and needs for employment

The majority of single parents are highly motivated to work, wanting to provide financially for themselves and their children, with around two-thirds (67%) currently in paid employment (ONS, 2018). However, working single parents are disproportionately concentrated in low-paid work; just over half are in low paid work compared with 21% of main earners in couples (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2018). The pay gap between single parents and main earners in couples has increased from £3.59 to £5.86 an hour since 2001, with the pay gap between single parents and second earners having increased from £0.31 to £2.14 over the same period (ibid).

Clearly then, work is not necessarily a route out of poverty for single parents. In 2018, nearly half of children in single parent families lived in poverty, compared with one in four of those in couple families (25%) (ibid). In fact, this disparity has increased over the last five years, with poverty rates for children in single parent families rising by nearly twice as much as those for children in couple families (ibid).

Several factors explain single parents' concentration in low-paid work and the greater prevalence of poverty among this population. The Resolution Foundation has shown that low skill levels partly explain why some single parents face employment disadvantage; once single parents are in low-skilled jobs, they are likely to get stuck on low pay (Corlett, and Whitaker, 2014). As shown in Figure 1, single parents are less well-qualified than the working-age population as a whole. Almost half of single parents (46%) have a highest qualification at GCSE (Level 2) or below, compared with one-third (34%) of the working-age population.

**Figure 1 Highest educational qualifications of single parents, compared with working-age population (16-64 years). Source: Labour Force Survey, analysis of household data, April-June 2018.**



With just one available earner, single parents are already at a disadvantage in their ability to secure a decent income for their families. While the majority of single parents are already in work, welfare changes will mean an increasing proportion of the remainder, including those with very young children, will be expected to work. 73% of those currently impacted by the benefit cap are single parents and three-quarters (75%) of those single

parents have a child aged under five (Gov.uk, 2018). The main way for these parents to escape the benefit cap will be by moving into work for at least 16 hours a week (or the equivalent under Universal Credit). Furthermore, the roll-out of Universal Credit rules will see parents having to become job-seekers as their youngest child turns three (DWP, 2017), requiring an extra 165,000 single parents – a group already having to manage specific caring responsibilities on their own - to look for work . The DWP has identified that these parents are, on average, lower-skilled and have less work experience – presenting a combination of challenges (DWP, 2013).

### **Apprenticeships and traineeships: an opportunity for single parents**

Apprenticeships and traineeships are one potential route for single parents to increase their skills levels and work experience, and thus their ability to secure better-paid and more sustainable work.

#### **What are the differences between apprenticeships and traineeships?**

**Apprenticeships** combine practical training in a job with study usually outside the working environment. An apprentice will earn a wage but the minimum wage level is set at a lower level in the first year (£3.70 Apprenticeship rate in 2018) than the level for ordinary employers (£7.83 National Living Wage in 2018). An apprenticeship is open to people aged over 16.

**Traineeships** were introduced in 2013/14 to complement the apprenticeship programme. They are an education and training programme with work experience but are not paid. Traineeships are also limited to people aged 16-24 who are qualified below level 3 and are seen as a route into employment or an apprenticeship.

Appendix A provides further information on traineeships and apprenticeships including figures on uptake.

#### **Sources**

Become an apprenticeship, available at <https://www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide>

Find a traineeship, available at <https://www.gov.uk/find-traineeship>

The Government has made a commitment that apprenticeships will be at the cornerstone of their work skills agenda, with the Conservative Party setting a target in their 2015 election campaign to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships to achieve three million starts by 2020 (HM Government, 2015). An apprenticeship levy has also been introduced, set at 0.5% for employers with an annual wage bill of over £3 million. Smaller employers can access funds but, in order to do so, must co-invest 10% towards the cost of training.

As well as the overall apprenticeship target the Government has set an apprenticeship target within the public sector, applying each year between 2017 and 2020 (Gov.uk, 2017). All public bodies, with few exceptions, which have 250 or more staff in England, come within the scope of the target. The target requires that at least 2.3% of the public sector workforce in England be apprentice starts between 2017 and 2021, translating into 200,000 new apprenticeships (ibid).

Apprenticeships and traineeships could present a particular opportunity for single parents looking to enter the workplace or to increase their skill levels. In particular, they could be valuable to single parents with pre-school aged children who tend to be further from the job market, enabling them to improve their skills and ultimately obtain more sustainable work. This will be particularly important for single parents as their work obligations change under Universal Credit rules. Following the passage of the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016, Gingerbread worked with the then Welfare Minister Lord Freud, and across the political spectrum of Peers, to introduce special dispensation for single parents with the youngest children, to train. Parents with pre-school children now have the flexibility to undertake training for up to a year (as opposed to 10 weeks for an average job seeker) to increase their employment skills, rather than job seek . Traineeships could therefore be a vital way for single parents to build their skills in order to be job or apprenticeship-ready.

# Single parents, apprenticeships and traineeships: the evidence

## Uptake and characteristics

The proportion of single parents currently undertaking apprenticeships in Britain is very low. Around 1 in 200 (0.5%) single parents of working age (16-64 years) were doing an apprenticeship in the second quarter of 2018. This proportion had not increased significantly since the equivalent period in 2017. For both years, these proportions reflect the prevalence of current apprenticeships within the working-age population as a whole; we might have anticipated take-up among single parents being somewhat higher, given their concentration in the groups at which apprenticeships are aimed – those with lower skill levels and those who are younger.

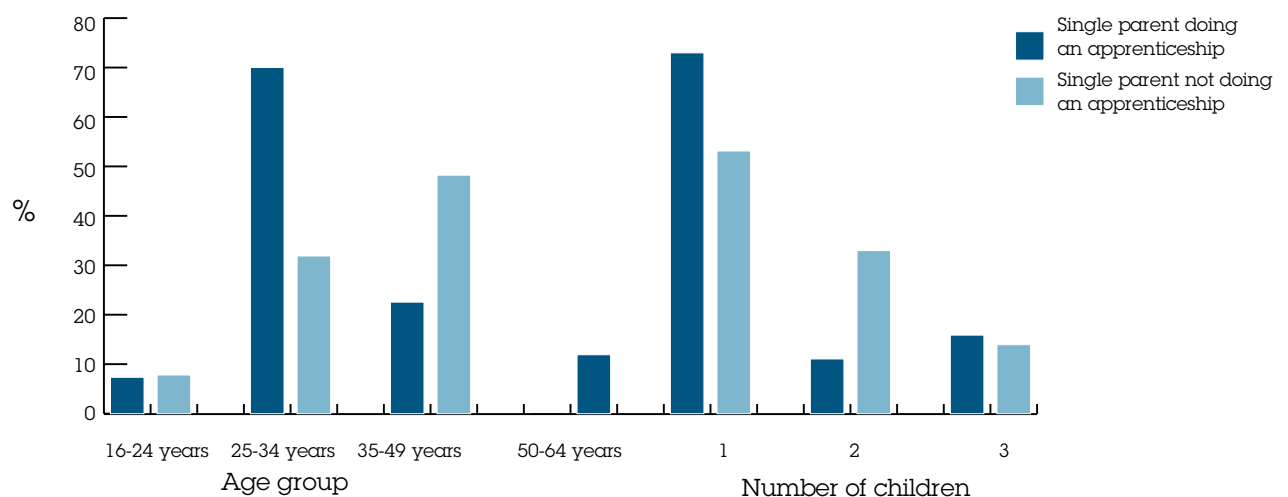
In London, more than double this proportion (1.2%) of single parents of working age were doing an apprenticeship in 2018 and this was also found to be the case for the equivalent period in 2017. The proportions of apprenticeships among the working-age population as a whole in London were comparable to those seen nationally however. This suggests that London has had particular success in enabling single parents to access apprenticeships; this may result from the particular efforts undertaken in the capital to make apprenticeships accessible and attractive to single parents, a number of which are documented below.

Those single parents undertaking apprenticeships in Britain in 2018 were predominantly doing so as part of their existing jobs; this was the case for 85%, compared with 90% in 2017. These proportions are somewhat lower to those seen among the working-age population as a whole (95% in 2018). Taken together, they imply that very few individuals are securing apprenticeships through applying from outside of organisations – although single parents are comparatively more likely to have done this. This is worrying on two counts, many current apprenticeships may simply be a rebranding of skills training for existing staff, and the apprenticeship system is not opening up opportunities for new recruits. For single parents, who are more likely to be out of work, these trends may be particularly problematic.

As shown in Figure 2, single parent apprentices in 2018 had distinct demographic characteristics, primarily as a result of their younger age profile. Their profile was broadly consistent with that found in 2017.

- 77% of single parent apprentices were aged 34 years or less (compared with 40% of single parents not doing an apprenticeship).
- Single parent apprentices were significantly more likely to have just one child (73%, compared with 53% of those not undertaking an apprenticeship).
- Single parent apprentices were more likely to have pre-school aged children, than non-apprentices.

**Figure 2 Profile of single parent apprentices, compared with single parents not undertaking an apprenticeship, 2018. Source: Labour Force Survey, analysis of household data, April-June 2018.**



The number of single parents undertaking traineeships is likely to remain very low. In 2017/18 there were 15,000 trainee starts, a decline from 17,000 in 2016/17. No breakdown is available in relation to single parents and government surveys do not ask about these schemes specifically. The current age requirement for traineeships to be aged 24 or less is a potential barrier to many single parents; given traineeships are intended to be a stepping stone to apprenticeships, which have no upper age limit, we would argue that they should mirror the lack of an age restriction.

## Barriers

We found evidence of a range of barriers which are likely to be impacting on the low take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships among single parents and, qualitatively, affecting the experiences of those single parents undertaking these schemes.

### Barriers specific to single parents

Three main characteristics of these schemes are likely to impact on single parents' take-up, the lack of advertised flexible vacancies, low pay levels and a lack of appropriate or matched childcare.

#### Lack of advertised flexible vacancies

Part-time work is particularly important for single parents as they balance a job with caring on their own; indeed welfare rules, shown below, state that parents with younger children are not expected to work full-time (DWP, 2017).

#### Hour's Rules under Universal Credit (You.Gov)

Age of your youngest child	Your responsibilities
Aged 3 or 4	Work a maximum of 16 hours a week (or spend 16 hours a week looking for work)
Aged between 5 and 12	Work a maximum of 25 hours a week (or spend 25 hours a week looking for work)
13 or older	Work a maximum of 35 hours a week (or spend 35 hours a week looking for work)

In order for most single parents, especially those with younger children, to be able to undertake an apprenticeship or traineeship, these roles need to be available part-time. However, the Government Apprenticeship Pay Survey showed that just 11% of apprentices are contracted for less than 30 hours a week, with just 3% working 16-19 hours per week (BEIS, 2017). Other research has similarly found that fewer than 1:10 apprenticeships are available for less than 30 hours a week (Young Women's Trust, 2017). New Government Guidance for employers (released May 2017) does include reference to apprenticeships being open to those wishing to work fewer than 30 hours. However, this has not yet translated into an increase in advertised part-time apprenticeships on the Government's own website (Gov.uk, 2019 i).

The fact that part-time opportunities are still rare will be a particular issue for single parents who are primarily trying to secure apprenticeships from outside of organisations - and consequently have little scope to request that an apprenticeship is open to part-time hours as an existing employee might. As previously stated, the vast majority of single parents who move into apprenticeships do so from existing jobs rather than from advertised vacancies. So, for external recruits looking for a part-time or flexible opportunity the way that apprenticeships and traineeships are advertised is crucially important. The 'Find a Job' Government jobsite contains a function to look for jobs with part-time hours (Gov.uk, 2019 ii). However neither the 'Find an Apprenticeship' (Gov.uk, 2019 i) or 'Find a Traineeship' (Gov.uk, 2019 iii) Government sites contain an equivalent function. Anecdotally, single parents who contact our Helpline tell us that they want to improve their skills, including through apprenticeships, but that most schemes are not practical because they do not see part-time or flexible advertised vacancies on offer.



The Young Women's Trust identified a barrier to young women with caring responsibilities in terms of accessing apprenticeships (Young Women's Trust, 2017). To promote diversity in apprenticeships the Trust recommended the need to make apprenticeships flexible and "promote the potential for part-time apprenticeships". Indeed, their survey of HR decision-makers concluded that, "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" (ibid).

### **Low pay**

Single parents tell us that apprenticeships can be out of reach because of low hourly pay, particularly during the first year. The current minimum wage rate for an apprentice is £3.70 per hour in the first year (Gov.uk, 2019 iv) compared with a National Living Wage rate of £7.83. In their survey of young people, the Young Women's Trust found that three-fifths of young people aged 18-30 who did not undertake an apprenticeship had been put off by the very low levels of pay (Young Women's Trust, 2017). Low pay is likely to be an even more significant issue for single parents who need to support their families and pay towards childcare. The Young Women's Trust found that 43% of young people reported that the costs of doing an apprenticeship, such as travel to work, buying clothes or the cost of childcare, were higher than their earnings, rising to 60% among those who are parents. We would logically expect even higher rates among single parents. So, for at least a majority of single parents, the cost of doing an apprenticeship would be likely to be higher than their pay. Moreover, as detailed below, few apprenticeships undertaken by single parents lead to sustainable long-term employment, making a short period of low pay even less attractive or sustainable.

Traineeships are classified as volunteering and are currently unpaid. As detailed previously, single parents with pre-school aged children are able to undertake training for up to a year, rather than job-seek, if the training would increase their prospects of more secure employment. However, traineeships are likely to be out of reach for many of these single parents, unless they can be supported on out-of-work benefits. There are no current figures on the number of single parents who have been encouraged to undertake a traineeship using the training flexibility agreed by Lord Freud.

### **Lack of childcare**

Single parents are usually more reliant on childcare than coupled parents in order to manage to work (Gingerbread, 2018). In order for single parents to carry out apprenticeships or traineeships, childcare needs to be open and affordable. However, it is unclear how current childcare rules could enable single parents to participate in these schemes.

Current childcare provision does not include any free childcare for parents with a child aged under two. For parents of disadvantaged two year olds, 570 free childcare hours per year are available. This is usually offered as 15 hours a week over 38 weeks of a year but a few providers do offer more flexibility in how the hours are used, including fewer hours per week across the whole year. It is unlikely that this provision would match the hours required for a single parent to undertake a traineeship or an apprenticeship. Alternatively, a single parent with a child aged two could request access to the Flexible Support Fund through the Jobcentre to help pay for childcare; however, this is a discretionary fund and there is no evidence that jobcentres are consistently giving access to this fund, especially for longer-term childcare costs.

There is provision for all three and four year olds to have access to free childcare for 570 hours a year (as with the two year old offer, providers tend to offer this as 15 hours in term time over 38 weeks of the year). The Government has introduced an additional 15 hours of free childcare for parents who work at least 16 hours a week at the National Living Wage (or similar under Universal Credit). However, single parents with a child aged three or four would not be able to access this provision in order to undertake a traineeship because this scheme is classified as volunteering. Single parents of three and four year olds may be eligible to receive the extended childcare offer of 30 hours (Gov.uk, 2019 v) if they are undertaking an apprenticeship for at least 16 hours and are paid at the National Living Wage (including at the lower rate for apprentices). However, the lack of clear information on the apprenticeship site and a lack of a link to childcare provision could mean that many single parents are unaware that they could be eligible for this support.

A single parent with a child up to the age of 16 could access childcare support under legacy benefits (at a maximum of 70%) or under Universal Credit (at a maximum of 85%) but, even with this subsidy, the unpaid nature of traineeships and the low pay, particularly in the first year of apprenticeships, would make childcare unaffordable and put these forms of training out of reach for many single parents.

### General barriers

In addition, there are broader cross-cutting concerns about apprenticeships and traineeships that need to be considered if they are to be a good route of training and development for single parents.

#### Apprenticeship opportunities are too narrow for many women including single parents

Single parent apprentices are currently concentrated in a small number of sectors – suggesting that the range of apprenticeships they access, as well as their overall level of engagement, need to be expanded. The Young Women's Trust found that female apprentices remain focused in a narrow number of sectors (Young Women's Trust, 2017). Nearly two-thirds of work in just five sectors, with 27% working in health and social care (DfE, 2019). Apprenticeships in these sectors tend to have lower hourly pay and will inevitably lead to lower-paid work. Unless this trend is addressed, this will limit the potential of apprenticeships for many women (including single parents) both in terms of their longer-term pay and prospects. If apprenticeships are to be a route to improved skills and higher pay, then better careers support is needed to encourage single parents to consider a wider range of sectors. The National Careers Service could be well placed to offer such a service for unemployed single parents through Jobcentre Plus. The Sutton Trust, working with researchers at LSE, has called for better careers advice that does not reinforce gender stereotypes, to try to prevent gender segregation in apprenticeships (Cavaglia et al., 2017); this should include clearer careers information, including information on the potential careers, salaries and prospects associated with particular apprenticeship sectors.

#### Decline in the number and quality of apprenticeships

Despite the Government's prioritising of apprenticeships they are numerically in decline. There has been a 34% decrease in the number of apprenticeship starts in 2017/2018 compared with the same period in 2016/17, and corresponding to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy (July 2018) (DfE, 2018). The Apprenticeship target is too narrowly focused on the quantity of apprenticeships, and is not accompanied by additional targets to guard against a decline in quality. There has been an 11% decrease in the number of traineeship starts during this period and a lack of detail about who is undertaking traineeships

Some researchers have argued that, since the introduction of the levy, some employers have sought to rebrand existing training, although there has historically always been a tendency for organisations to do this (Richmond, 2018). They conclude that this is causing apprenticeships to be increasingly accessible to older people within organisations, and so not opening up opportunities for external candidates. The same researchers express concern about the quality of apprenticeships, identifying a greater number of lower-skilled apprenticeships with shorter training courses including in the area of shop work and for receptionists in hotels (ibid).

The Sutton Trust has argued that only good quality apprenticeships will lead to improved employment and pay prospects (Cavaglia et al., 2017). Through tracking 565,000 young people, they found that there are some good quality apprenticeships - but far too many fail to provide sufficient training or access to skilled work. Other research has concluded that, in order for the quality of apprenticeships to be improved, there needs to be an arm's length body to oversee and assess, as is the case in other European countries such as Germany (Richmond, 2018).

#### Unclear routes between unemployment, traineeships and apprenticeships

While traineeships could be a vital way for single parents, particularly those with pre-school aged children, to build their skills in order to be job or apprenticeship ready, it is unclear how single parents might access a traineeship when they are unemployed - and so establish a pathway to an apprenticeship. While the guidance refers to a trainee having the possibility of access to childcare costs, it is unclear how this might work in practice and how a part-time traineeship might be agreed (National Apprenticeship Service, 2016). Opening up traineeship opportunities for single parents with pre-school aged children with childcare support and a route to apprenticeships

could improve the work prospects and financial security of many single parents. In terms of increasing access to childcare this could include opening up the extended 30 hour childcare offer or earmarking money from the Flexible Support Fund to enable single parents to undertake a traineeship.

The Sutton Trust found that the current apprenticeship programme does not include an expectation of progression (Cavaglia et al., 2017). This is at odds with the education system in England and Wales where there are clear routes of progression through GCSE's and A-Levels, to degrees and higher degrees. Without such clear routes, the Sutton Trust conclude that too many apprentices get stuck in a lower-level apprenticeship, usually at level 2 and then simply 'tread water' - creating an arbitrary 'glass ceiling' for many. They found "just one in four young apprentices progress from level 2 to level 3" (ibid).

### **Training – not just apprenticeships**

While apprenticeships are potentially a valuable way to upskill the workforce, single parents and others might want to choose a different route to improve their prospects. This is evidenced from calls to our helpline and the downloading of higher and further education factsheets from our website. Some single parents want to improve their skills and prospects by going down the more traditional route of A-levels or equivalent, to undertake a degree or a vocational course. It is important that these routes to improving skills are also encouraged and supported.

London companies have called for more flexibility in the use of the apprenticeship levy, in order for money for upskilling to be used in other ways (London Councils, 2018). They identify that they want to be able to use the levy to spend on pre-employment training, to get people ready for an apprenticeship. This might be a valuable opportunity to support single parents who need pre-employment training or potentially to support those single parents who want to undertake a traineeship as a route into employment or as a stepping stone into an apprenticeship.

## Current good practice

Given these barriers, and the potential of apprenticeships and traineeships to be a major source of training and progression for single parents, we next showcase five examples of good practice that, if developed further and replicated by others, could encourage some of these barriers to be overcome.

### **Camden Council's programme**

Camden Council has demonstrated that it is possible to have a successful part-time apprenticeship programme aimed at parents (NEF Consulting, 2016). In order for parents (in practice, all of whom were mothers) to participate, the Council made up the difference in the Apprenticeship Minimum Wage, up to the level of the London Living Wage and provided targeted support for the mothers as they had been out of the workforce for some time. They worked with local businesses to pilot a project providing ten flexible adult apprenticeships for mothers. In the programme evaluation, the employers spoke highly of the programme because it enabled them to access high quality adult apprentices. The evaluation also showed that the programme offered good access for mothers who were positive about the programme as it supported their job outcomes and helped with their confidence (ibid).

However, the programme did involve a financial outlay for Camden Council of slightly more than £14,000 per apprentice, in the support offered to mothers while on the apprenticeships and the Council making up the difference in the hourly pay. Feedback from the Council emphasised that the initial outlay should be seen in the context of longer-term cost savings locally and nationally, in terms of mothers moving into more secure and better-paid work.

### **London Councils: leading by example**

In terms of leading by example, councils in London are well placed to develop schemes and speed up positive change for single parents in the capital. In addition to having shown themselves to be innovative in introducing flexible and part-time working in London, London Councils have already led the agenda to develop better apprenticeships for single parents.

Councils in London have demonstrated their ability to innovate with apprenticeship design, including through the Camden Council scheme above. Other Councils have led the way in promoting flexible employment through their Timewise Accreditation (Timewise, 2017). Islington, for example, has become accredited and offers flexible working both for its existing workforce and new recruits. Croydon Council are also running an apprenticeship scheme where they will accept requests from those who need to work part-time.

In addition, councils in London are public sector employers and must adhere to the public sector apprenticeship target. Only four boroughs met or exceeded the 2.3% public sector apprenticeship target in 2017-18. By offering a wider range of schemes, including flexible part-time models, and thus appealing to a wider range of applicants, London Councils could ensure they have a greater chance of meeting the target. As well as encouraging apprenticeships amongst businesses in their respective boroughs, Councils in London also have the capacity to create apprenticeships within the Councils themselves. Camden Council has already demonstrated innovative approaches in this area, which could be scaled up across London Boroughs. Camden currently has an apprenticeship scheme involving the facilitation of 250 apprenticeships each year (60 within the Council itself). Roles are varied and are at different levels within the Council. Camden has greater control over the apprenticeships within the Council and has continued to promote part-time opportunities including term-time apprenticeships. In addition, Camden works with learning providers (who provide off-site training to apprentices) and are able to tailor study for part-time apprenticeships.

### **Barclays**

Barclays' apprenticeship scheme, documented on their website as shown in Figure 3, is a good practice example that clearly demonstrates both the opportunities for accessing a scheme and subsequent progression routes. It is emphasized that very different people undertake apprenticeships with Barclays and that their pool of applicants is diverse. Barclays is explicit about the routes from traineeships through to apprenticeships. Their website

facilitates the matching of an individual's current skills to an appropriate programme. A similar website could be developed by You.Gov to showcase and thus encourage diversity, and to highlight the available progression routes. Gingerbread would like to see other private sector companies following the lead of Barclays, to be open to a wide selection of apprenticeship candidates and clear about progressions from this scheme to better-paid work.

### Figure 3 Extract from Barclays website

“Who can be an apprentice

Anyone. You could be 16. 60. Returning parent. Retiree. You might have disabilities. You might be an ex-soldier, a student, a carer. For us, there's no such thing as an average apprentice. There's no average age. No average background. No experience you need or qualifications you should have. All you need to do is find your path – with a little help from our current apprentices.”

Source: Barclays website

## The Civil Service National Trade Union Agreement

The Civil Service in England has a target of 30,000 apprenticeship starts by 2020. It has worked with the trade unions to embed fair practices and promote good quality training and support (TUC, 2018). It is positive that the agreement secured recognises the potential for apprenticeships to improve diversity and longer-term career pathways within the Civil Service. In order to address the needs of those with caring responsibilities, the agreement states that apprenticeships can be undertaken on a part-time or flexible working basis. Specifically, it states that unions should urge employers to “consider the use of part-time or flexible hours for apprenticeship roles, to enable women with childcare responsibilities to take up apprenticeships” (ibid).

### Developing a model of part-time and flexible apprenticeships

Recent Timewise et al research considered approaches for opening up flexible apprenticeships to a cross-section of people including carers, those with disabilities and parents (Learning and Work Institute et al., 2018). The research examined the development of a model for part-time apprenticeships in London, aimed at supporting greater access for those who are currently under-represented. The purpose of this exercise was two-fold - to address the needs of individuals to re-enter and progress in work and to support businesses to address skills shortages in London. The research concluded that there is value in developing this model for both new starters and existing staff to up-skill. In particular, it identified the potential for such apprenticeships to be developed in sectors and occupations offering better wage returns and with subsequent progression opportunities to at least Level 3.

Another strand of research involved exploring models for part-time apprenticeships with employers. While some employers recognised the value in part-time and flexible models of apprenticeships, others were resistant, due to concerns about the additional management time and resources required. There were some concerns about how external training providers would accommodate a variance in hours for part-time study over a longer period. A number of potential solutions to these issues were identified; some employers saw that difficulties could be addressed by creating apprenticeship roles in areas where there were already part-time workers and by engaging with training providers that had experience in offering flexible study including, for example, the Open University. Other employers were already offering digital or online learning which could be adapted to allow staff to train at their own pace. In view of the investment needed in part-time apprenticeships, employers thought that roles that they offered should be focused at intermediate or advanced levels (Levels 2 and 3). Despite the aforementioned challenges, employers viewed the development of this approach positively, particularly around supporting new talent and diversity.

## Next steps: what can be done differently?

Apprenticeships and traineeships have the potential to be valuable schemes to increase the skills and job prospects of single parents. Below we set out changes that might help this potential to be further realised.

### Recommendations

Scrap the existing apprenticeship target and introduce more nuanced indicators

- The existing apprenticeship target measuring apprenticeship starts has prioritized quantity at the expense of quality and should be replaced with a set of more nuanced indicators. These could measure: apprenticeship quality (to take into account the development of skill levels focusing on progressing people up to Level 3); the availability of part-time opportunities and the proportion of external recruits. The public sector should lead by example in the development of part-time and flexible apprenticeships (with councils and the civil service playing this role in the capital) and this should be explicitly reflected in their targets.

Greater encouragement and support for single parents with young children to move into an apprenticeship by promoting existing flexibility and easements for single carers

- The DWP, through Jobcentre Plus, should play a key role in encouraging single parents with the youngest children to improve their skills in order to secure better-paid work. The DWP should set a priority to increase the skill level of single parents with pre-school aged children whose work obligation will change under Universal Credit, by better promoting available flexibility. They should develop routes into apprenticeships for this group, particularly through traineeships, and communicate this to potential applicants effectively, drawing on the example of the Barclays apprenticeship website. They could also pilot a route into traineeships and apprenticeships with support from the National Careers Service for parents of three and four year olds. The upper age limit for those undertaking a traineeship should be abolished.

Careers and skills support for all single parents who move onto job-seeking benefits

- Every single parent who moves onto job-seeking benefits should be offered careers guidance specifically focused on skills and told what support they could be offered to increase their skills, including financial and childcare support. Any such careers advice will need to focus on a wide variety of further and higher education courses, traineeships and apprenticeships and should follow the Sutton Trust recommendations for promoting greater gender equality in training and career choices.

Developing approaches to incentivising companies to take on single parent apprentices

- Further work should be undertaken to test a range of approaches to incentivise companies to take on single parent apprentices, including subsidising participation, promoting part-time opportunities and other innovative ideas.

## Appendix A

Apprenticeships take 1 to 5 years to complete depending on their level.

Levels of apprenticeship

Apprenticeships have equivalent educational levels.

Name	Level	Equivalent education level
Intermediate	2	GCSE
Advanced	3	A level
Higher	4, 5, 6 and 7	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

## Appendix B

Numbers of apprentices and traineeships 2017/18 (Dept. for Education National Statistics)

There were 290,500 apprenticeship starts reported so far for the first three quarters of the 2017/18 academic year, compared to 440,300 and 384,500 reported at this time in 2016/17 and 2015/16, a decrease of 34.0 and 24.5 per cent respectively. There have been 158,300 levy-supported starts so far, of which, 137,200 were reported in the first three quarters for 2017/18.

There were 1,410,000 apprenticeship starts reported to April 2018 since May 2015 and 3,787,600 starts reported to April 2018 since May 2010.

Apprenticeship participation data reported for the first three quarters of the 2017/18 academic year show

- 753,200 participants on an apprenticeship, a decrease of 14.4 per cent from 879,500 reported at this time in 2016/17 and a decrease of 7.5 per cent from 814,400 reported at this time in 2015/16.
- Of the 753,200 participants, 349,600 were at intermediate level 342,700 were at advanced level 73,600 were at higher level 160,500 were aged under 19 592,700 were aged 19 and over.

Traineeships 2017/18

There are 15,000 traineeship starts so far in 2017/18, compared with 17,000 at this time in 2016/17, a decrease of 11.4 per cent.

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## Footnotes

i From 2008, 'Lone Parent Obligations' (LPO) reforms gradually removed entitlement to Income Support – therefore requiring many non-working single parents to claim Jobseeker's Allowance and comply with full job-seeking conditions instead. Initially, single parents lost Income Support eligibility when their youngest child turned 12. Through successive waves, by 2012, this changed to when their youngest child turned five. This trend has continued under subsequent governments. From April 2017, under Universal Credit, parents whose youngest child is: aged three or four: must look for work (instead of five or older under Income Support) Aged two: must take "active steps" to prepare for work (e.g. regular work-focused interviews and can be obliged to undertake training).

ii Lord Freud agreed in March 2017 that the following should be included in adviser guidance at Jobcentre Plus "For responsible carers with a child aged 2 to 4 there should be greater acceptance and encouragement for them to participate in training that is longer than the normal short term training courses. Where the work coach is satisfied that the course/training will significantly increase the claimant's chances of securing work by the time their youngest child reaches school age, the work coach is able to switch off or adjust the claimant's availability/work search requirements until the training has been completed."

iii Gingerbread analysed Labour Force Survey household data for April-June 2017 and April-June 2018, to examine the prevalence of apprenticeships among single parents, compared with the working-age population as a whole and the characteristics of single parents apprentices.

iv This was discussed at a meeting with Helen Illes in March 2018.

# **Gingerbread**

Single parents, equal families

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