

[News story: UKHO apprentice wins Somerset Apprenticeship Award](#)

Sophie Prescott, UKHO Digital Marketing Communications Executive, has won in the 'Career Development' category at the Somerset Apprenticeship Awards, held at Haynes Motor Museum earlier this month.

The organisation was also shortlisted as a finalist in the 'Large Employer of the Year' category, and UKHO HR apprentice, Melanie Crysell, was nominated for 'Higher Apprentice of the Year'.

Chief Executive Rear Admiral Tim Lowe was delighted at the news, commenting:

It is great to see the hard work done by our apprentices and the wider team at the UKHO being recognised within the county. A huge congratulations to Sophie – I felt very proud reading and seeing her achievements being recognised in a very public forum.

Since joining the UKHO on an internship in 2016, Sophie has secured two promotions – most recently to the role of Digital Marketing Communications Executive. She is studying for a Digital Marketer apprenticeship and is one of over 50 apprentices across the organisation. The UKHO has offered an apprenticeship programme since 2016, offering the opportunity to study towards an industry-recognised qualification at advanced and higher levels across 15 different disciplines.

Following this success, Sophie was also invited to a celebration lunch in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen, as part of her visit to Somerset on 28 March. She was invited alongside 100 other guests from across the county to King's Bruton School, where the Queen opened the school's music centre and named a new Avon and Somerset Police horse during her visit.

[News story: Primary Authority supporting English tourism](#)

The English tourism sector touches everyone – visitors, residents, businesses and employees. It's one of the few sectors active in every part of the country. It's the third largest employer, every day supporting 2.6 million jobs and is a major employer of school leavers and young people and an incubator for entrepreneurs.

The visitor economy is worth £106 billion a year to England supporting thousands of businesses and impacting on the performance of supplier industries such as restaurants, pubs, farming, transport, retailing, sport, museums and galleries, the theatre and other performing arts.

[Primary Authority](#) enables businesses to form a legal partnership with one local authority, which then provides assured and tailored advice on complying with environmental health, trading standards and fire safety regulations that other local regulators must respect.

Partnerships can be formed with one business or with groups of businesses, such as trade associations, enabling the scheme to support sectors of importance to a particular region, such as tourism. There are several examples of Primary Authority partnerships across the tourism sector in England, including: National Trust, British Hospitality Association, Marriot Hotels, The English Heritage Trust, Fox Narrowboats Ltd and The Caravan Club Limited.

Another example is Cornwall Council, which developed a Primary Authority partnership with Quality in Tourism and adopted their Safe, Clean and Legal framework to protect its tourists. This will give the opportunity to help self-regulate the county's portfolio of short-term letting accommodation, in order to protect consumer safety.

Last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tourism, Leisure and the Hospitality Industry published a report on the sharing economy that highlighted significant concern among authorities regarding short-term letting accommodation.

Chief executive of the Office for Product Safety and Standards, Graham Russell, said: "In this case, Primary Authority offers a solution to a problem faced by councils, short-term letting associations, Destination Management Organisations and sharing platforms across the UK.

"It is a valuable tool for addressing local economic needs. Properly used it can help businesses comply with regulation and so underpin quality and safety throughout an industry such as tourism. Having a level playing field provides a boost for business confidence and encourages growth."

Primary Authority has a significant role in the [Better Business for All](#) (BBfA) programme which supports the simplification of the way regulation is delivered in local areas. Local BBfA partnerships bring together businesses and regulators to identify the issues facing local businesses and shape the provision of effective support services to them. Growth Hubs are including Primary Authority in their business support offer, in line with the government Industrial Strategy's aim of ensuring the scheme is available to every business.

More [information about Primary Authority can be found on GOV.UK](#) and there's [more about English Tourism Week at VisitBritain.org](#).

Follow #EnglishTourismWeek19 on Twitter.

[News story: Sherry Coutu CBE appointed as Non-Executive Board Member to DCMS](#)

The [appointment](#) was made, with the agreement of the Prime Minister.

Sherry Coutu has a deep understanding of the digital sector having been a serial entrepreneur, investor and non exec director of companies, charities and universities for 25 years. She chairs Founders4Schools, Workfinder, The Scaleup Institute and Raspberry Pi Trading Ltd.

Sherry also serves as a non-executive member of The Royal Society, (Science, Industry & Committee), Cambridge University (Finance Board) and the London Stock Exchange plc. She has invested in more than 60 companies as an angel investor, including LinkedIn, Zoopla, Lovefilm, New Energy Finance, as well as five venture capital firms.

Digital Secretary Jeremy Wright said:

I'm delighted to welcome Sherry as a Non-Executive Board Member to the DCMS Departmental Board. Sherry brings a wealth of experience that will be incredibly valuable to DCMS, particularly in our ambition to bring the worlds of digital innovation and creativity together to help drive our future economy.

Sherry Coutu said:

I am thrilled to have been asked to contribute to the work of DCMS. The digital and creative industries are significant growth enablers for the competitive advantage of the UK at this important time in our history.

I hope to bring the experience gained from my work in academia, the tech industry and the third sector to encourage our young people to develop the skills and experiences that allow them to take on the jobs of the future, and support the work being done by the DCMS in this area.

As a philanthropist, she supports the Prince's Trust, the Crick Institute and Founders4Schools.

Sherry has an MBA from Harvard, an MSc (with distinction) from the London School of Economics and a BA (Hons with distinction) from the University of

British Columbia, Canada.

She was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to entrepreneurship in the 2013 New Year's Honours List and she has been awarded honorary PhDs from The University of Bristol, Manchester University and the Open University for her work in education and economy.

[Speech: Phil Beach CBE – A regulated approach to EQA](#)

I'm delighted to be here and very grateful to be able to address such an important group that has the interest of apprentices at the heart of what we all do.

I've followed the discourse of the last 2 days very closely and want to use this opportunity to explain how we are providing External Quality Assurance (EQA) when asked to do so by trailblazer groups. In doing so, I want to focus today on what Ofqual does in support of the Institute's overarching responsibility for apprenticeships quality. I want to do this so that trailblazers understand what we do and how it might help them, how we can and do work effectively with professional bodies and to give you all a sense of our approach to achieving assessment validity.

I'd like to explain how we've approached our EQA responsibilities, working closely with the Institute and tailoring our regulation to meet the needs of employers, professional bodies, training providers and of course apprentices.

As you may know, Ofqual is currently one of the 4 options that employers can choose from to provide external quality assurance for apprenticeship end point assessments (EPAs). We are the only statutory regulator for non-degree apprenticeships, which does mean we are different from other EQA providers and it is important to understand what that means in practice. But I also want to make the point that we haven't stuck to a rigid 'one-size-fits all' approach; I hope my remarks will help bring this to life.

Our credentials

If you know Ofqual at all, you will know that our expertise lies in assessment. Some observers have reached a conclusion that our experience and relevance is limited to GCSEs and A levels – that we are an examinations regulator.

I get the perception. Of course we know a lot about exams, and our work on GCSE and A levels gets high levels of attention every summer.

But our expertise is equally applicable to vocational and technical

qualifications that represent the significant majority of the regulated market. We oversee well over 6 million VTQ certifications every year. While it's true that Ofqual's initial focus was on GCSE and A levels, given that these were subject to national reform, we have pivoted in recent years to VTQ regulation that now accounts for the majority of our activity.

Whether qualification or end point assessment, there is a judgement to be made of knowledge and skills. How the assessment is designed, developed, and delivered has to be right – for the learner, the subject, the training provider and the employer.

By way of example, earlier this week I was involved in discussions with an organisation that wants us to regulate safety critical qualifications. They told me that their pass rate was nearly 100% – which sounds odd at face value. But context is everything and this qualification is all about occupational competence for practitioners. As such, the course has no set length. An experienced and quick learner might take a few months to pass, while another might take years to reach competence. That's OK! Our regulations allow this flexible approach, recognising the particular challenges and complexities of competency based assessment. Indeed, that was the subject of recent ground breaking research by our own Professor Paul Newton, which we recently published.

Let's consider next, an example of where effective regulation of vocational qualifications has had a positive impact on public safety. We have been working closely with the Security Industry Authority, the body that oversees licences to practice for private security guards. Why? Because this is a high risk industry, where there can be tragic consequences if, for example, door supervision isn't carried out effectively. We work very closely with the SIA to ensure that regulated qualifications provide this assurance of occupational competence.

So I would suggest that the regulation of assessment is just as applicable and important in vocational pursuits as in academic ones. And these examples also highlight the fact that we do engage with employers and professional bodies to help them get what they want.

A current example of this is our work with the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). Amongst other things, they are keen that, when setting new national occupational standards, awarding organisations (AOs) don't interpret them in different ways such that they might lack consistency and comparability. Clearly, this is important, particularly where these qualifications signal occupational competence to work in an industry.

Because these qualifications are offered by AOs, we can and will work with CITB, that represents many employers, to ensure that the qualifications offered by the 30 or so AOs support their needs and those of learners. We see this as just one example of working in support of professional bodies to ensure that assessments meet their needs. To provide the regulatory teeth to help them get what they want. This is regulation in support of professional bodies, not a replacement for them.

Regulation provides us with the means to improve quality and increase confidence in qualifications. It enables us to set high standards from the start and to use our powers to protect the interests of learners and bring things back on track when they go wrong – or when they look like they might go wrong.

Given this, you might expect that the organisations we regulate might not be very keen on us! But as one of them told me recently “regulation provides clarity, consistency and confidence for users in that market.” A cynic might suggest that an organisation that is already a member of the Ofqual regulated community would be keen to curry favour with the regulator! But recognition of the value of regulation is not confined to AOs. Several employers we have worked with have also voiced their support.

EQA – a regulated approach

So, how does that assessment expertise and those regulatory powers apply to our approach to EQA in practice? We have carefully created a new and tailored approach to ensure an effective quality assurance regime to secure the standards and safe delivery of apprenticeship EPAs, which dovetails with the roles of other agencies and, importantly, meets the needs of employers.

And that tailored approach reflects the fact that we can't, and don't, adopt a 'one-size-fits all' approach to regulation. We've worked hard to establish a flexible approach to EQA that recognises the varied apprenticeship assessment landscape.

Before we agree to provide EQA, we apply our assessment expertise to a technical review of the Assessment Plan – confirming that it is capable of supporting quality EPAs. We work closely with the trailblazer group of employers and the Institute, feeding back to them our advice, to ensure that the assessment plan meets everyone's needs and supports valid assessment – that is, the delivery of EPAs that test the right things, at the right level, wherever and whenever apprentices take the test.

Professionals work with us even more closely when we technically evaluate the EPA materials – a process undertaken by our assessment specialists working with relevant employer and subject experts who know best what should be being tested. So my thanks to those professionals ranging from customer service and conveyancing, to healthcare and horticulture. All these and more have worked with us over recent months to evaluate EPA materials.

This collaborative work has seen changes made to assessment materials before apprentices reach their EPA. The outcome is that apprentices on an Ofqual-regulated apprenticeship can be confident that they will be undertaking a good quality assessment. And employers and training providers can be confident that the assessment is fit for purpose, meets the requirements of the assessment plan and is comparable and consistent whichever EPAO is used.

EQA and recognition

Now, of course we can only regulate those organisations that we recognise – that is, those who we are confident have the capacity and capability to deliver EPAs safely. We look at every EPAO in our recognition process.

We have heard concerns about this process. But we should all have high expectations. It is in no-one's interest to allow organisations to deliver EPAs without confidence that they have the capacity and capability to do so. This would lead to a race to the bottom and the undermining of quality and we will not allow it.

Equally, we recognise that some EPAOs are a different beast to some of our existing organisations. We do understand that our regulatory approach for a niche EPAO might need to be different to an organisation delivering high volume qualifications.

So we streamlined our process and, since we did, we have seen a marked increase in organisations contacting us about becoming recognised. My guess is that those actively pursuing applications will all tell you that applying for recognition has challenged them, but they will also tell you that they feel appropriately supported.

We take a pragmatic approach to recognition. For example, we are currently working with an organisation operating in a niche sector – one that wants to offer EPAs against a single standard to around 40 apprentices per year. This established professional body may be small but they are certainly expert. They might not be familiar with our rules yet, but as long as they have sufficient resources and processes in place to deliver valid assessments, we will find a way to recognise them. We think that this flexible approach to recognition is an important feature of quality assurance that we provide.

Committed AOs, with capable assessors

So we have in place important up-front checks of the EPAO and the EPA. And once an EPA is live in the market, we regulate it on an ongoing basis, bringing to bear the full range of our regulatory powers.

This includes the power to undertake audits. Over the last 6 months we've undertaken audits with 15 AOs across 5 apprenticeship standards. We've looked in particular at whether EPAOs have sufficient qualified resource to deliver EPAs – that is, experienced assessors available when required.

We have found some good practice in terms of EPAOs' commitment to employing competent independent assessors – including those that require assessors to undertake ongoing training and standardisation.

What's evident to us is that these AOs are taking steps to know where and when they will need assessors, and are making quite substantial efforts to ensure that those assessors are able to do a good job. That's not to say that there are no issues, and we've worked with AOs to ensure any necessary improvements are being made. And we will continue to keep this area under

review as volumes of EPAs increase.

Our other regulatory powers

But audit is just one of our regulatory tools. As the AOs in the room will tell you we can and do take other actions, including issuing directions and penalties. We've already deployed the full suite of regulatory powers to protect the interests of apprentices and employers.

For example we are taking action following a series of events that saw apprentices undertaking an EPA that were unable to upload their work to the online platform which meant their work was lost. This should not have happened and should not happen again. That's why we are taking regulatory action to achieve 3 aims:

- a. Most importantly, to protect the interests of those apprentices involved;
- b. to ensure lessons are learned so that it doesn't happen again;
- c. and to make sure other EPAOs learn from this mistake.

So what?

To conclude, the messages I'd like to leave you with are:

We have a well-developed, tried and tested approach to EQA that provides employers, training providers and apprentices with confidence that the EPA is all that it should be: that there is quality, reliability, consistency and comparability.

We take action up front to ensure that the EPAO and the EPA are fit for purpose. And we have the levers to address issues as they arise and get things back on track.

This approach works. We are hearing positive feedback from employers and others in the system – and we welcome any feedback you want to give us.

We are keen to work with professional bodies; we see regulation as a support to, rather than replacement for, these important institutions. In this context, we'd encourage trailblazers not to think of this as a binary EQA choice between regulation or a professional body – you can have both!

And finally I want to stress our commitment to supporting the Institute in fulfilling its remit to ensure the overall quality of the apprenticeship system.

Thank you very much for listening, and I'm very much looking forward to hearing your questions.

[Press release: Charity regulator warns trustees to protect their charity from non-charitable interests](#)

Charities are being told to ensure the close relationships some enjoy with non-charitable organisations are made clear to people outside their charity and never used to advance non-charitable agendas and interests.

Amid concerns that some relationships between charities and non-charities have damaged public confidence in charity, the Charity Commission has today published new [guidance](#).

The Commission says its casework has identified examples where charities have not managed their links to non-charitable organisations with care, in some cases allowing charities to be misused to further non-charitable interests, including commercial or private interests.

The regulator recognises that many charities work successfully in close partnership with a wide variety of non-charitable organisations, such as trading subsidiaries. These relationships can be crucial in helping a charity deliver on its mission for the public benefit.

The new guidance aims to help charities reap the benefits of such relationships while managing the risks carefully.

The Commission says the guidance will also allow it, and the public, to better hold charities to account against existing rules.

The new guidance does not set out new rules or regulations, but draws together relevant law and practice in setting out six principles to help trustees ensure their arrangements for working with a linked body secure the charity's interests and independence.

Helen Stephenson, CEO of the Charity Commission, said:

As regulator, we want charities to thrive and inspire trust, and we know relationships with non-charitable organisations can help a charity deliver on its purposes. But operating alongside other organisations should always be well-considered and trustees must manage the risks that can arise carefully, and with probity.

Charities hold special status in society and the public rightly have high expectations of them, including that they are driven only by their charitable mission and purpose and that they work to defend and promote their independence from non-charitable organisations at all times.

No charity should ever use or be used by non-charitable

organisations to pursue uncharitable interests.

The guidance is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and includes an infographic and checklist to help trustees check and review their approach.

Ends.