

Amanda Spielman at the 2021 Annual Apprenticeship Conference

Good morning and thank you so much for inviting me to be here. I'm delighted to have this chance to talk about apprenticeships and the work we do inspecting them.

Six years ago, I went to a fascinating one-day seminar on apprenticeships. Lorna Unwin in particular gave a talk about the history and characteristics of apprenticeships, where I took many notes. Three points really stood out for me.

First, that an apprenticeship is a universally understood model of learning – apprenticeships are so much more than an administrative category or a branded product.

Second, that the best workplaces instinctively generate so much that matters for good vocational education: the sharing of knowledge, people learning from each other, repetition and practice, and building a culture in which mistakes and failure are permissible but to be learned from.

And the third point is about the sophistication of the education-work relationship in apprenticeships at their best. This relationship provides and recognises individual occupational development; it joins different expertise (such as from small and medium enterprises and colleges) in shared endeavour; it has an intergenerational dimension where older workers take responsibility for the development of the young; it provides a local context for people to work together for the benefit of communities.

While we negotiate the technicalities and complexities of standards and frameworks, end-point assessments, funding and levies, not to mention monitoring visits and inspections, it is good to lift our eyes to these enduring sources of individual and collective value.

The impact of COVID-19

It would be impossible for me to make this speech without first touching on the pandemic, which has clearly had a profound effect on apprentices, on training providers and on businesses.

We know through our interim visits and engagement with the sector that a so many apprentices had their training disrupted, and some have been furloughed and, in the worst cases, lost their jobs. For some, on-the-job training has ground to a halt as places of work have closed and industries have suffered. For others, off-the-job training has declined, especially in subjects where remote training just isn't feasible.

But I do want to thank the large proportion of providers who have worked incredibly hard to provide remote or online training opportunities for their

apprentices, where it is possible, and those who have worked with employers to make apprenticeships secure and successful.

I've been really impressed by the resilience of many apprentices, and the innovative changes made by providers to make sure that apprentices don't fall behind any further than is absolutely unavoidable in the circumstances.

We've also seen good practice from providers that have built efficiencies, particularly in their methods of assessment. And as we reflect on how the sector has coped, there is a chance to identify the most useful innovations; to adapt them; and to implement them in a post-COVID, face-to-face context.

Though we should be clear: remote apprenticeships are very much the second-best option, reserved for crises such as a pandemic. Face-to-face training for apprentices is still the gold-standard for most industries, which we absolutely must get back to as quickly as possible.

The economic impact of the pandemic of course has harmed many businesses significantly, and this has thrown the ecosystem of apprenticeships off kilter. We know that many providers have faced financial difficulty, including funding uncertainties. Likewise, providers have been worried about when they're getting their apprentices back and how they will make up for lost learning time.

Everyone knows the impact of the pandemic hasn't been the same across the board. Different apprentices have had different experiences, and some industries have struggled more than others.

We know that retail, hair and beauty, travel and tourism and hospitality and catering have been hit particularly hard. Some of the more practical elements of learning are just impossible to provide remotely. And where business premises have been closed, opportunities for on-the-job training have been scant.

Leisure and tourism is still facing a fairly uncertain future. Foreign holidays stay off the table for now. And even as we see a successful vaccination campaign drive down serious infections here, international travel will hinge on other countries' travel restrictions, which are out of the industry's control.

Of course, not all apprenticeships have dried up during the pandemic. Some have been going full-speed ahead, such as those in health and social care, where demand has been incredibly high. The challenges for many of these apprentices have been the opposite of those whose workplaces have shut – apprentice nurses and care assistants have had a real baptism of fire when it comes to on-the-job training. Many have reported long working hours and the kind of stress you might expect from working in a care home or a hospital during a pandemic.

These apprentices have had an accelerated workplace experience, but still haven't had the same opportunities for the theoretical, off-the-job learning that they also need to become well-rounded professionals in their field.

Other industries have been busy too. The closure of high street shops saw a boom in online retail, and in local and central government which have had to rethink the way in which they operate. All of this will have kept apprentices in these sectors incredibly busy.

Our work now

Clearly it's a tough time for many, and some of the issues that providers are struggling with are simply beyond their control. We're well aware of this and we're sympathetic to these external challenges.

You know that since September 2019, we have been applying the EIF – the education inspection framework – in our inspections of apprenticeships.

Our focus has been away from a reliance on data and statistics, looking in greater depth at the substance of learning going on – about curriculum and how well apprentices are equipped with the knowledge and skills to progress. Our EIF inspections have been well received by providers and we're keen to return to our routine inspection schedule as soon as possible.

But it was right for us to suspend our programme during the worst of the pandemic. It was right for us to do what we could to provide support for the sector and give assurance, although limited, for employers, apprentices and the government. Our remote visits in the autumn and our progress monitoring visits in the spring gave valuable insight into how providers were coping with remote or online delivery – and in how effectively apprentices were being supported. But just like apprenticeship training, inspection is best done face to face, so we're pleased to be restarting our work in a safe, sensitive and proportionate way.

In mid-March, we restarted new provider monitoring visits, on site, and we've completed almost 100 so far. It's a concern that about a third of providers we've visited had at least one 'insufficient progress' judgement. It's also disappointing that only a relatively small number of providers were making significant progress.

And let's be frank, this can't be blamed on COVID. This is the same pattern we were seeing before the pandemic. To have such a high proportion of insufficient progress judgments is troubling. The quality of apprenticeship training does need to improve.

And we know what can be achieved. We've been piloting our return to EIF inspections and we've seen some really impressive work. We've seen providers building ambitious curriculums and then planning training programmes collaboratively with employers and with apprentices – so apprentices learn the right things at the right pace.

We have seen some trainers develop apprentices' English and maths beyond what's required simply to pass qualifications, but rather to help them apply these skills in the workplace.

We recently visited a specialist gas-engineering training provider. Its

curriculum includes lots of maths, such as calculating ventilation requirements and heating inputs. Apprentices are taught to do these things without the use of a calculator, so they can sense check their answers in future. In that industry, getting calculations wrong could be life-threatening.

Some of the better programmes we have inspected have had great cooperation between employers and providers. This has helped apprentices to link their on- and off-the-job training and to apply their theoretical learning to practical situations. I'm encouraged that the FE White Paper referenced the importance of employers playing a central role in curriculum development. And I do believe that this is the way forward, but of course, in partnership with expert teachers and trainers.

Providers who understand their local jobs market deserve a lot of credit. A firm understanding of local and regional labour markets allows providers to plan programmes that meet local skills needs. This bolsters the odds of apprentices moving onto the next stage in their careers quickly and serves the needs of local employers and the community.

Of course, not every apprenticeship programme we inspect is perfect, and there are some common issues that are tripping up providers.

In the same way that those who build ambitious curriculums tend to do well, those that are overly reliant on standard training programmes don't always serve their apprentices as well as they could. Apprentices then don't get the opportunity to develop their wider knowledge and interests beyond the standard or framework. And replicating standard programmes without working with employers and taking local context into account can produce cohorts of apprentices who don't have the knowledge or skills required in their local job market.

A linked problem we see is a lack of high-quality careers guidance. Without this, apprentices don't understand their career options post-apprenticeship, either in their organisation or the wider industry.

Providers need to go beyond just getting apprentices through their training programme – they need to work with employers and their own apprentices to make sure they truly do gain the right knowledge, skills and behaviours to make their next steps successfully, and to thrive in a professional environment.

We'll be continuing with our programme of new provider monitoring visits throughout the summer. We are prioritising providers that haven't had a visit before, because it's important that apprentices and businesses know that the training they are getting is good enough. Similarly, we also plan to resume our EIF inspections to apprenticeship providers who have not yet received their first inspection following a new provider monitoring visit.

I'm pleased with the work that we do with the Institute, with Department for Education and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to enhance the quality of apprenticeship provision and to protect the reputation of

apprenticeships. We welcome the changes that the ESFA have made to the requirements to be accepted on to the register, but we know there is still much to do to get the quality of apprenticeship training to where we all want it to be.

Although it does take some work, a higher bar for entry onto the register is in everyone's interest. Initially, some providers were just not good enough to make the grade and so it's right to refresh the register and not make the same mistakes again.

And it's in all of our interests for the quality of training to be high – irrespective of the subject you're training for, the training provider you're working with, or the level of your apprenticeship.

And that leads me onto level 6 and 7 apprenticeships. This month, we assumed responsibility for the inspection of level 6 and 7 apprenticeships. For the first time, this means that all apprenticeship activity, irrespective of level or the type of provider responsible, will be evaluated through EIF inspection.

This will mean more inspections taking place in the HE sector, as well as with independent learning providers; but really it's just an extension of the work that we have been doing for a long time at levels 2 to 5. Our ambition is simply to make sure that all apprenticeship providers are held to the same quality standards. Whether it's a level 2 in hairdressing or a chartered manager degree apprenticeship, we want employers, providers and apprentices to be confident that they are being fairly held to the same high standards across the board.

We will carry on monitoring and evaluating all our work and sharing our findings with the sector. And, of course, we will carry on working with sector bodies, such as the Institute for Apprenticeships, the Office for Students and The Association of Employment and Learning Providers to improve quality.

Looking ahead

For many in the sector, we are now in a period of recovery: recovery in the sense of filling apprentices' learning gaps, but also wider economic recovery, which powers the sector.

There's still some uncertainty; we're not out of the COVID woods yet; but I think there is plenty of scope for optimism. For the vast majority of apprentices, their experience this week will have been much closer to 'normal' than it was last April. I very much hope we won't see another wave of redundancies, furloughing or training breaks.

The latest DfE data shows that the number of apprenticeships starts is gradually recovering, moving towards pre-pandemic levels. We're not quite there yet – understandably – but the sector is moving in the right direction.

I started this speech by talking about the significant value in

apprenticeships and that's never been truer than today. As we navigate the economic fallout of the pandemic, on top of the skill and labour shortages we expect from Brexit, never have we been more reliant on a generation of apprentices to fill in the gaps and reinvigorate our economy.

Increasingly, I think employers see apprenticeships as a valuable approach to recruitment. Particularly when working with a good provider, employers can develop their own staff, impart their professional culture and values, and future-proof their workforce. And by the way, we have our own apprenticeship programme at Ofsted, of which I am very proud.

Thank you once again for inviting me to speak today. I am happy to now take questions, but I did also want to highlight that my colleagues, Richard Pemble and Kate Hill, are running several workshops throughout this week – please do join for those valuable sessions if you can. Thank you.

[The Rt Hon Lord Geidt appointed as Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests](#)

Press release

The Prime Minister has appointed the Rt Hon Lord Geidt as the new Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests



The Prime Minister is pleased to announce that he has today appointed Lord Geidt to serve as the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests (28 April). Lord Geidt is a Crossbench Member of the House of Lords, a Privy Councillor and a former Private Secretary to The Queen. He brings a distinguished record of impartial public service and experience of Government to bear on the appointment. The Prime Minister is grateful for Lord Geidt's willingness to assume this important role, and for the particular contribution it will make to the maintenance of the integrity of the Ministerial Code.

Consistent with the new [terms of reference](#) for the role of Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests, and subsequent to the Cabinet Secretary's evidence to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on Monday, the Prime Minister and Lord Geidt have agreed that Lord Geidt will begin by ascertaining the facts surrounding the refurbishment of the Downing Street flat and advise the Prime Minister on any further registration of interests that may be needed. In doing this, Lord Geidt will draw on the work presently being undertaken by the Cabinet Secretary, to coincide with the publication of a new List of Ministers' Interests.

Biographical note

Lord Geidt was for ten years The Queen's Private Secretary until 2017. His present responsibilities include being Chairman of King's College London and Chairman (International Relations and Corporate Responsibility) at Schroders plc.

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[Appointment of Suffragan Bishop of Lynn: 28 April 2021](#)

Press release

The Queen has approved the appointment of the Venerable Dr Jane Elizabeth Steen as the next Suffragan Bishop of Lynn.



The Queen has approved the nomination of the Venerable Dr Jane Elizabeth Steen, MA LLM PhD, Archdeacon of Southwark, in the diocese of Southwark to the Suffragan See of Lynn, in the diocese of Norwich, in succession to the Right Reverend Cyril Jonathan Meyrick who resigned on 25th January 2021.

Jane was educated at Newnham College, Cambridge and trained for ministry at

Westcott House, Cambridge. She served her title at St John the Baptist, Chipping Barnet, in the Diocese of St Albans and was ordained Priest in 1997.

In 1999, Jane was appointed Chaplain to the Bishop of Southwark in the Diocese of Southwark. In 2005, she became Canon Chancellor at Southwark Cathedral, also serving as Diocesan Director of Ministerial Education and Canon Theologian.

In 2013, Jane took up her current role as Archdeacon of Southwark.

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[Highways England announces new archaeology framework](#)

Press release

A new framework will help us work directly with archaeological contractors



New suppliers could be unearthing new discoveries over the next few year

Highways England is pleased to announce the award of a new, four-year archaeology framework. It offers the successful suppliers the opportunity to work with the government company in protecting and enhancing the environment, which includes the country's unique cultural heritage and buried archaeology, while improving England's motorways and major A roads.

The £195 million-pound framework has been awarded over three lots to the following companies:

Lot 1 – under £2 million

- Connect Archaeology LLP

- Infra
- AMS (Archaeology Management Solutions)

Lot 2 – £2 million to £5 million

- Headland
- OCA
- Aecom
- MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology)

Lot 3 – over £5 million

By having the framework in place, archaeology contractors, working directly with Highways England, will support the initial design stage of road schemes in the road investment strategy. This in turn supports how projects proceed through the planning stages, including what mitigation work is needed. The framework will bring multiple benefits to Highways England across cost efficiency, delivery of improvements and safety on site. The contract is available to all Highways England schemes, and can also be used by the Regional Delivery Partnership (RDP), Delivery Integration Partners.

Catherine McGrath, Category Manager for Ground Investigation and Archaeology at Highways England says;

We're delighted to announce the new framework; it's the first of its kind in the archaeological sector for Highways England and enables us to develop direct relationships with archaeology contractors, developing greater efficiencies. We look forward to working with the successful suppliers.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

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[Five things you didn't know about](#)

Analysis in Government Month!

Analysis across government is being used more than ever in policy, decision making and the media, and there has been so much fantastic work across the Analysis Function that is worthy of sharing and celebrating. Because of this, we have planned a full month of activities and broad engagement across government and beyond!

Remember that all analysts within government are members of the Government Analysis Function and part of this event is about connecting with fellow analysts and finding out more about your role within the function.

If you are not an analyst, you are still very welcome to come along, we have a really diverse line-up of content so there is hopefully something for everyone! Let's find out what's on offer throughout the month, shall we?

1. We have over 25 blog posts to share with you

To share and showcase the breadth and variety of work going on across the Analysis Function, we'll be sharing a selection of 'Five things...' posts each week.

From learning how the UK is helping to modernise official statistics in the developing world to finding out more about the Government Actuary Department – there's something for everyone.

We can't wait to share them with you!

2. You have the opportunity to connect with analysts across government

Throughout the month we are spotlighting and showcasing the work of analysts across the Government Analysis Function and other areas of government. There are spotlight sessions on each of the professions, webinars on analysis in local government, a Census showcase, and panel sessions to hear from the wider analytical and user community. For more information on the sessions, go to our [Eventbrite page](#).

There is also the opportunity to join Coffee Connect. This is a great chance to meet and be introduced to a wider network and make connections in different departments and professions. No matter your grade or where you work, whether you want to learn more about others colleagues' careers and experiences, or whether you are simply missing casual conversations in the office kitchen, this is for you!

You can sign up by emailing analysis.function@ons.gov.uk. Each month we will randomly match you with another analyst and then it's over to you! Get in touch with your match and arrange a time to chat about whatever you want.

3. We are hosting a hackathon

A 'hackathon' is a unique opportunity to get 'hands on' with data and work collaboratively with different people, on a real-life issue. It is an opportunity for you to have a break from your day job and try some new technical skills whilst working with analysts from other departments and professions.

We will be using a range of datasets to answer different research questions posed by departments across the day, focusing on either data visualisation challenges or methodology and analysis challenges. Sign up now to [book your place!](#)

4. There are opportunities for free learning and development

We have plenty of free learning and development opportunities and sessions being held this month, including information on Success Profiles and how to apply for jobs within the Analysis Function, Compelling insights through data visualisation, how to make spreadsheets accessible and so much more.

For more information on the sessions, and to book your last-minute place, go to our [Eventbrite page](#).

5. There are award winners amongst us!

After the inaugural launch of the Analysis in Government Awards last year, we have some brilliant examples of award-winning work from across the Analysis Function that we want to share with you.

We are holding webinars on each of the five award categories:

- Impact
- Communication
- Innovation in methods
- Investment in people
- Collaboration

To sign up to a session, go to our [Eventbrite page](#).

We're so excited to celebrate all the hard work and achievements from across the Analysis Function – we hope you are too! Make sure you keep up to date with all the latest news and webinars throughout the month and get involved as much as possible. You can do this by following [@gov_analysis on Twitter](#), signing up to our monthly newsletter via analysis.function@ons.gov.uk and checking out the latest news and event information on [our GOV.UK web page](#).

Here's to the first Analysis in Government Month!

Holly Butcher and Shamel Pepper-Grainger work in the Best Practice and

Impact Division at the Office for National Statistics