



**East of England**

All Party Parliamentary Group

**Co-Chairs** Peter Aldous MP and Daniel Zeichner MP

**Vice-Chairs** Lord Alan Haselhurst and Baroness Janet Cohen

*Letter sent by email on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2024*

Dear Luke Hall MP and Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Further Education

**REQUEST TO MEET**

**Review of Progress Towards Levelling Up in The East of England:**

***Report Back on 'Towards a Strategic Framework for Levelling Up Skills' from the East of England Levelling Up Delivery Partnership***

**Held 15:30 to 17:00 on Monday March 18<sup>th</sup>, Thatcher Room, Portcullis House**

Congratulations on your recent promotion to Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Further Education.

Your predecessor Robert Halfon MP, was kind enough to speak at the East of England APPG meeting on skills in July, after which it was decided that partners from across the region - Chambers of Commerce, local authorities, Universities, Further Education colleges and private providers with some support from officials in DfE - would work together on a report '***Towards a Strategic Framework for Levelling Up Skills in the East of England.***'

Unfortunately, he was not able to join us for the launch of this report ([short version](#) and [long version](#)) earlier this month. As you will see from the attached minute of the meeting Claire Paul, Assistant Director for Skills at Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority, presented slides - [here](#) - and Seema Malhotra MP, the Shadow Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Further Education, spoke.

We would now like to request a private meeting to discuss in detail the three main issues raised and the reports' main recommendations. In brief these were:

**1. *Increasing apprenticeship uptake as it is the second lowest of all English regions***

The report identifies 8 barriers to more apprenticeships, including: the need for system-wide leadership and strategic focus; training money levied in the region is not fully invested back into the region; the Maths and English element of assessment leads to low completions; the lack of parity of esteem between traditional university degree routes and degree apprenticeship routes.

The report makes ten recommendations of which the three most important are:

- a) Further devolution of all post 16 skills funding
- b) Incentivise companies to a) volunteer their staff to provide teaching support on apprenticeship courses in key sectors; and b) encourage their UK supply chains to hire apprentices
- c) Tackle the practical barriers which prevent young people from taking up apprenticeships

## **2. *Getting Further Education and other Skills Infrastructure and funding right***

Three main challenges are identified in the report: lack of infrastructure, widespread teacher shortages and insufficient and inflexible funding. A number of specific recommendations were made as follows:

- a) Increasing the Adult Education Budget in the East of England to support infrastructure projects including at least one more Institute of Technology
- b) Greater funding and/or flexibility of funding to allow providers to:
  - o deliver the courses in skills that are in reality needed rather than just deliver qualifications
  - o allow adults to acquire a free second Level 3 qualification (A level, T level or NVQ), which is meeting a skills need linked to the local and/or regional economy
  - o support initiatives to recruit and retain teaching staff within skills shortage areas.
- c) There needs to be a region-wide plan to meet the need of Health and Social Care skills across the East of England.

## **3. *Other actions required to level up skills***

The following three barriers to the further uptake of skills, especially by young people, were identified: an increasing number of young people not in education, employment or training; a lack of access to employability skills training to progress into the workforce, including training in Maths and English; and a lack of awareness of training/earning routes available post-16/-18.

A range of 'best practice' actions that the region is already taking forward are identified in the report along with recommendations for Government action, summarised as follows:

- a) The Government's planned 'one stop shop' website, which will 'join up' and present the various support services and training opportunities available, should be launched as soon as possible.
- b) We welcome the launch of the DfE's Skills for Life website and encourage the Government to avoid single 'product' campaigns (e.g. T levels) in favour of a 'know your options' approach
- c) Funding for transport for young people to industry placements (for T levels; 45 days+ and work experience) and to meet the costs of travel to first jobs should be provided

***In conclusion the overwhelming messages that arose from the meeting were:***

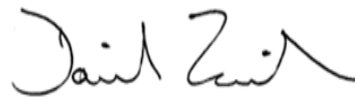
- a need for a strategic system wide approach that creates a more joined up and simple system for people to navigate
- reform of apprenticeship provision and the levy to allow greater flexibility and to ensure monies are spent as well as parity between apprenticeship and 'normal' degrees
- the need for more careers advisors and more financial help with transport costs for young people in order for them to take their first steps to realising their talent
- the need for more devolution, both of funding so Combined Authorities and Upper Tier councils have a single skills funding 'pot' but also the ability to link skills with regeneration, transport, housing and health policy at the sub national level.

We would envisage being accompanied at a private meeting with yourself by Cllr Matthew Hicks, Chair of EELGA and Claire Paul from C&PCA. Please could we ask that your officials liaise with Steve Barwick of the East of England APPG Secretariat – who has sent this email on our behalf - regarding finding an appropriate time and date that would suit all our diaries.

We look forward to hearing from you



**Peter Aldous MP**  
Co-Chair  
East of England APPG



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