



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Office of Nadia Whittome MP
House of Commons
London
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The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education
Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
20 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

20 April 2020

Dear Secretary of State,

Funding for Apprenticeship Training Providers

I write concerning COVID-19 pandemic difficulties reported to me by independent training providers (ITPs) and non-college stakeholders in my constituency, many of which are businesses on the verge of immediate catastrophic failure.

Unlike FE colleges and schools, government funding for training is not guaranteed for ITPs. ITPs in Nottingham East such as HIT Training, National Hairdressing, and Training Academy and Advance Care Training, provide invaluable apprenticeship training and learning for employers in Nottingham. Therefore, the government's failure to provide apprenticeship funding to these organisations is causing serious cash flow problems and a risk of the discontinuation of their businesses, which will in turn have grave consequences for young people and our economy.

The root of the problem is the differential implementation of cabinet office guidance to departments protecting the interests of contracted suppliers in Procurement Policy Note 02/20: Supplier relief due to COVID-19. The Department of Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency have implemented this broadly in schools, colleges, and further education, allowing for the provision of remote learning. However, three days later, in Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for apprentices, employers, training providers, end-point assessment organisations and external quality assurance providers the government has misdirected itself in stating that policy "does not allow payment for services in advance of delivery", so funding for apprenticeships cannot be made until the training has taken place. Furthermore, ITPs have been

advised to furlough staff, bringing support to apprentices to a halt, at a huge cost to the treasury.

ITPs nationally support over three quarters of all apprentices and creating this unnatural division between the two stakeholder groups places those apprentices whose training is provided by an ITP at a considerable disadvantage by freezing their training when ITPs wish to continue to provide individual on-line training and mentoring. ITP businesses are at risk of closure due to lack of funding and, following the ending of COVID-19 lockdown when skilled workers will be required to drive the economy forward, and school leavers aged 16 years and 18 years will be looking for apprenticeships, not only will these workers lack the necessary skills to support businesses, but the ITPs may no longer exist to train.

I therefore urge you, as a matter of urgency to prevent the closing down of ITPs, to:

1. Constructively engage with the Association of Learning and Employment Providers to establish a consolidated approach to apprenticeship learning during this period.
2. Implement cabinet office policy set out in Procurement Policy Note 02/20: Supplier relief due to COVID-19.
3. Ensure that guaranteed contracted payments to schools and colleges is extended to ITPs and non-college stakeholders.
4. Reverse the decision to refuse to fund apprenticeship training until after the training has taken place, thereby allowing continued remote training and support to apprentices furloughed by their employers, or continuing to work, and saving the treasury the cost of furloughing staff.
5. As with school exams, to arrange for ITPs to assess an apprentice's qualification based on progress at work and course work grades where it is not possible to conduct an apprenticeship end-point assessment.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Nadia Whittome

Member of Parliament for Nottingham East