

# Apprenticeship Ambassador Network Newsletter

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Dear Ambassadors,

It has been some time since we issued our last AAN newsletter so one of my New Year resolutions is that we communicate to the wider Network on a more regular basis. COVID has not halted our work. Advocacy for apprenticeships is needed more than ever. The Government's decision to make skills a central feature of its 'Plan for Jobs' shows that apprenticeships are playing a catalytic role; in both driving the economic recovery and giving individuals the opportunities to progress in their careers.

I am also aware of how many Ambassadors have joined webinars with the ESFA policy teams to explore how the skills incentives are landing with businesses and young people – and how they can be strengthened. Throughout COVID, the Network's ability to offer in-depth 'insight' has been hugely valuable, and I know many of your observations and comments do reach the desks of Ministers. Government is listening to the evidence you provide.

In return, we want Government to be clear on the priorities for Ambassadors and we will be able to hear from our Minister, Gillian Keegan MP, at our AAN conference on 11 February. I have written more about the conference below.

Thank you for all your work as Ambassadors. I hope that, at some point in 2021, we can meet up in an actual venue and talk about connecting greater numbers of employers and young people with apprenticeships because we all know that makes great commercial sense.

## New Year Honours



I want to offer my warmest congratulations to **Neil Weller, Chair, London AAN** on his award of an MBE in The Queen's New Year Honours list for his remarkable services to education and skills.

Neil has successfully championed apprenticeship opportunities working at Troup Bywaters & Anders; culminating in securing the prestigious SME Employer of the Year title in the National Apprenticeship Awards twice in the last 3 years - which is an absolutely incredible achievement.

He has displayed considerable enthusiasm, drive, and knowledge as Chair of the London Apprenticeship Ambassador Network since March 2017; engaging new members and making great strides in integrating the Young Ambassadors into 'one' Network. This award is fitting recognition for Neil's overwhelming commitment to apprenticeships for employers and young people.



In addition, our **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough AAN Chair Stuart Gibbons** received an OBE for his impressive services to international trade as Managing Director of Le Mark Group. Many congratulations indeed to you Stuart and thank you for all that you do in your advocacy role as an Ambassador.

And there was also an award of a Damehood to **Irene Lucas** for her outstanding services to training, education, and to young people.

I can still vividly recall her superb speech at the Apprenticeship Ambassador Conference in Birmingham in 2019 when she enthralled and captivated the entire room of almost 180 attendees with her memorable stories and experiences of promoting apprenticeships. Her genuine excitement for young people and apprenticeships made a lasting impression. As owner of the Hays Travel Group, Irene has ensured apprentices have played a critical role in its business for 41 years! We are proud to include Irene as one of our Ambassadors.

### New Vice-Chair



I am delighted to confirm that **Lieutenant Colonel Ingrid Hall OBE AGC (ETS)** from the Ministry of Defence has secured the role as Vice-Chair of our Network.

Ingrid replaces Kathryn Porter who relinquished the position in December.

Ingrid has over 30 years experience in the Armed Forces and now leads its impressive and award-winning apprenticeship programme.

The British Army gained top spot in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers by helping over 8,000 apprentices gain new skills and progress in 2019-2020; with almost a fifth of its workforce currently completing apprenticeship programmes as part of their military training – in areas including engineering, telecommunications, logistics, construction, health and IT.

The Royal Navy achieved third place in the list; the Royal Air Force was tenth.

It's a real coup for the Network to have Ingrid as our Vice-Chair; her leadership, her commitment to social mobility and young people, as well as her desire to ensure we support employers of all sizes during these challenging times, will be invaluable.

### South East co-Chair

Regretfully, **John Druce** has stepped down from his role as co-Chair in the South East. John has performed magnificently in the role and has been a true and active champion of apprenticeships. He is one of those individuals who brings passion, energy and lots of humour to his work – especially at Awards events!

Not only has John achieved a significant amount of success in the South East, he played a pivotal role in shaping a considerable amount of our national activities. I want to thank him for all his endeavours and accomplishments.



Elizabeth Flegg will now serve as Chair for the entire South East region.

## **AAN Conference – February 11**

Like clockwork, we would traditionally hold our annual conference at the NEC in Birmingham at the same time as WorldSkills Live UK. Many Ambassadors would leave home before 6am to travel many miles to join us - until COVID arrived.

We did not hold an event in 2020 so we are moving to a virtual conference on Thursday 11 February – during National Apprenticeship Week 2021.

We will be joined by **Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Gillian Keegan MP**, as well as **Mike Cherry OBE, the National Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses**.

We are also going to be hearing from a selection of our Young Ambassadors who will talk about their experiences working during the pandemic as well as giving everyone the opportunity to take part in a choice of some exciting workshops.

The conference registration link – with a full agenda - will be shared with all Ambassadors this week.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the call.

Finally, I want to draw your attention to an excellent activity that has been shared below by Karen Kelly from the East of England Network.

And may I wish everyone a very Happy New Year!

Best Wishes,

Jason  
Jason Holt CBE  
Chair, Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

## **Apprentices Connect Together - ACT**

**Ambassadors: \*\*A National Apprenticeship Week offer for all of the apprentices in your business\*\* ACT to Ignite: Monday 8th February, 12:30 – 13:30pm**

We are inviting all apprentices to join a very special 60-minute (free) masterclass with celebrity coach, George Anderson, as part of celebrating National Apprenticeship Week 2021.

After a tough year in the workplace, a few of us decided we would love to do something big and bold for our existing brilliant apprentices around the country during NAW21, so we got to work exercising our persuasive powers! We'd love your help to get as many of your apprentices and those in your wider business communities to join a 1-hour session. If we only got 10% of apprentices that work in your businesses join, then we are already talking about 1000's of apprentices on a call - imagine! I think we can do better than 10% and we're not just inviting your apprentices, this is open to every apprentice in the country but we wanted our fellow AAN members to know about it first.

If it helps - here is some suggested text that you may want to use internally or edit:

{BUSINESS NAME} Apprentices. You already know how much we value your work and contribution to our business success. For the upcoming National Apprenticeship Week (8-14 Feb), we invite you to take an hour and join this livestream session with lots of other apprentices across the country.

The masterclass session, 'ACT to Ignite' will be held on Monday 8th February, 12:30 – 13:30pm and the workshop, will explore how you can develop positive daily practices to help you to:

- Cultivate a positive mindset and energy
- Stay focused
- Ignite inner motivation to spot opportunities and enhance your career

You can find more information and register here: <https://amazingapprenticeships.com/act/>

Once you've attended, we'd love to know to hear about any take-aways for your own wellbeing or ways of working.

Thanks again for your continued hard work and support, {AMBASSADOR/OTHER}

Any queries, please just ask: [eoekaan@gmail.com](mailto:eoekaan@gmail.com)

Many thanks Karen Kelly,  
Co-ordinator – East of England Apprentice Ambassador Network