

Apprenticeships / Pre-Apprenticeships, and Community Education

18/12/18

AONTAS has identified a number of issues that impact on the potential take-up and participation of apprenticeships and traineeships

From a learner perspective:

1. **Gendered nature of apprenticeships.** Concern that **women have less opportunities** for apprenticeships; and that apprenticeships are not effectively targeted to welcome women; this all means that apprenticeships are not a real option for many women
2. Concern over the **perceived increased academic nature and requirements** regarding taking up apprenticeships
3. Concern that apprenticeships are becoming **more closely aligned to higher education** and traditionally working class people are being pushed out (real or perceived)
4. Concern about **lack of prerequisites** of English and Maths for apprenticeships which leads to learners not being prepared for their apprenticeships and therefore not being able to effectively participate
5. Concern that the **lottery process for participation in apprenticeship courses** is not equitable or engaging, particularly for adult learners. Learners with families who are required to move may not be able to participate due to limits on entry in certain regions of the country. (An example identified through the National Further Education and Learning Forum in 2018 is Cork based learners who want to engage in apprenticeships, but having to go to Sligo or Baldoyle training centres, therefore incurring significant costs of relocation – this is not a feasible option for those with a family)
6. For adults wishing to change career and take up apprenticeships, a constant element of adult learning is a **fear of ageism and a fear of returning to learning**. This needs to be faced at all levels of engagement with adult learners, to help give them the confidence to participate.

Potential Solutions

Community education can contribute to widening access and retention to and within apprenticeships and addressing the above issues, specifically focusing on:

1. **Bridging the gap between school and apprenticeships.**
Basic general learning has been proven to support learning to learn skills, builds confidence, provides a learner-centred support for completing academic requirements of accredited provision so that further academic courses become a real possibility for learners

2. Gendered nature of apprenticeships

Issue: women are disproportionately underrepresented in apprenticeships.

Community education is very much focused on women's rights to education and offers a learner-centred provision that meets their needs, builds confidence, learning to learn skills and offering the accredited prerequisites for further courses. This is identified in the [Irish Times article](#) shared with yourselves last week.

***Future potential:* Community education and pre-apprenticeship courses. Bridging the divide, supporting progression and widening participation.**

Community education could offer subject specific pre-apprenticeship courses depending on the needs of the local community and the local apprenticeship offering. It is already happening with An Cosan. AONTAS could work with policy makers and community education organisation members who have the scope, capacity, interest and potential to deliver specific pre-apprenticeship programmes that have a specific focus on:

- Women who would like to engage in an apprenticeship but would like the learning to learn skills before entering an apprenticeship programme (also community education offers childcare to make this a reality)
- Those who left school early and require greater academic support
- Those who have been out of education for a long period of time and require development of their skills before returning to full or part-time formal education
- Those who have multiple issues, addiction etc, and can be supported through a variety of services to work towards taking on an apprenticeship

Learning from our partners

A potential model would also draw on the experience of our counterparts, the Learning and Work Institute in the UK – who have been very involved in pre-apprenticeship development.

<https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/our-work/work-and-careers/pre-apprenticeship-programmes/>