

National Society of Apprentices Travel Research

NSoA Travel Research key Findings

Our Apprentices

It's hard because I spend over £25 a week on traveling and I only get £86.40 a week. I never really have much money after buying basic things.

An Apprentice

Our Apprentices

The Society

The National Society of Apprentices was formally launched in February 2014. We are working with more than 120 training providers and employers, representing over 150,000 apprentices from across all sectors and industries, across the whole of the UK.

We'd like to thank our partner employers, trade unions, colleges and training providers for supporting their apprentices to participate in the society and promoting this research.

Membership of the society is free to training providers but we think it's important to be honest about money. The society is funded by the Apprentice Extra card. A society for apprentices, run by apprentices and paid for by apprentices.

I believe the National Society of Apprentices is an important step to raise the profile of apprentices and help them to achieve the respect they deserve.

Siobhan Knott: Apprentice and NSoA Leadership team

Who took part?

Over 3000 apprentices took part in our travel research over the summer. Two thirds of these were reached through the Apprentice Extra card, the rest through Social Media and support from training providers, colleges and trade unions.

To get a better idea of who our membership are we asked what kind of apprenticeship they were on. Around 80% worked fulltime and were visited by their assessors in work, 15% were on day release schemes and the final 5 % were on traineeships or other pre apprenticeship programmes.

Whilst more familiar apprenticeships in business administration, construction, engineering, social care as well as hair and beauty were most numerous amongst respondents we were also pleased to see participants from smaller frameworks such as green keeping, veterinary nursing and the creative industries; from level 2 to level 5.

Finally 67% of our apprentices are aged 16-21. The Apprenticeship Pay Survey released last year showed that in addition to 3 in 10 apprentices being underpaid that this was more likely for younger apprentices. Indeed almost 70% of younger hair dressing apprentices were not being paid the minimum wage.



It's a struggle just getting there

The Apprentice National Minimum Wage is £2.68, in that light £24 per week seems an awful lot.

So what do apprentices say?

How do apprentices get to work?

Method of Travel	Total Respondents
Drive myself in a car	1,002
Public bus / coach	648
Walk	545
Train / Metro / Underground	467
Get a lift with someone	393
Not applicable	188
Bus / coach organised by college / training provider / council	117
Cycle	116
Taxi / minicab	69
Motorcycle / moped / scooter	53
Ferry	6

Note: Many apprentices are using more than one form of transport to get to work.

There is some regional variation in this. As expected apprentices in London and other metropolitan areas use public transport more frequently. Similarly apprentices in the South West are more reliant on using the car to get to work.

On average apprentices are travelling half an hour to get to work and three quarters of an hour to get to their college or training provider.

Whilst preparing the survey we met groups of apprentices who travelled over 300 miles to attend block release training. These apprentices spoke about valuing the specialist expertise of their provider. With training provision chosen by the employer it is concerning though that little thought is sometimes given to the distances travelled by apprentices.

This story illustrates that there is no room for complacency:

My training provider promised it would be in Leeds, which isn't far away from me but then as soon as I signed up they said my training course was moved to Stockport which cost me £79.80 a week

Cost of Travel

Across the UK apprentices are paying an average of £24 per week in travel costs. The Apprentice National Minimum Wage is £2.68, in that light £24 per week seems an awful lot.



An apprentice on NMW would need to start work at 9am on Monday, work all day and then again on Tuesday until 10:18 just to earn enough to pay for travel. In the course of the research we received over 25 pages of stories describing how difficult it was to pay for travel. Here are just a few of them:

Lack of financial support to help with travel expenses creates a great deal of stress and worry which then reflects and interferes with all other areas of your life. Without a credit card I would not be able to afford to pay the petrol to get me to work and college, but then there is the struggle to pay off the debts that build up.
Apprentice East Midlands

When doing my apprenticeship I am not financially able to just work this job, I also work part time at a supermarket 12 hours a week on top of my 42 hour apprenticeship work load. This enables me no time to complete course work out of work, but it is essential I keep both jobs to ensure I can pay my bills at the end of the month.

Project Management Apprentice

I worry a lot about my money situation ... it puts a hard strain on me. Getting to work each day financially is a struggle.

Health and Social Care Apprentice

There are of course examples of parents, providers and employers who support the cost of travel for their apprentices:

Catch 22 are awesome and have really helped me with being able to afford my scooter. Would 100% recommend. Catch 22 have been a life saver and I've enjoyed being part of the apprenticeship.

Business Admin Apprentice

It would help to have some financial support towards my travel to my workplace. Living in Essex and needing to commute to London, I must pay £440 per month on my season ticket. Earning just £840, I'm spending more than half of my wage on travel alone.

I don't think London-based apprenticeships like mine should be London-exclusive as opportunities should be open to all, however, if I wasn't fortunate enough to live at home with support from my parents for accommodation and food, I'm not sure that I would be able to do this apprenticeship purely on a financial basis.

Creative Industries Apprentice

The impact of support



When asked if they received any financial support towards the cost of transport to their training provider or college, 70 per cent of respondents said they did not.

Similarly 78 per cent of those surveyed said they received no financial support towards the cost of transport to their workplace.

However, of those that do receive support almost 80 per cent said it was very important to them.

The most common form of financial support was reduced fares, followed by lift from parent, guardian or family member and then bus/travel card or pass.

58 per cent of apprentices said that this financial support covered the entire cost of their travel.

These figures demonstrate the lack of financial support available but the importance of it to apprentices when it can be obtained.

I think that apprentices should have any transport costs paid for as wages are too low to be able to afford anything else once transport is paid for. £110 a week is not enough to pay for basic needs.

Wellbeing and stress

Whilst the overwhelming majority of respondents said they were overall satisfied with their life (75 per cent), a significant number expressed concerns over their financial situation. Forty per cent said they felt they have little control over their financial situation and 41 per cent said they regularly worry about not having enough money to meet their basic living expenses such as rent and utility bills.

I'm enjoying my apprenticeship and NVQ, however worrying about my financial situation and transport situation is a regular occurrence.

Those who received financial help with their travel were marginally more likely to say that they are able to concentrate on their apprenticeship without worrying about their finances.

Volunteering

Across all forms of transport apprentices reported having little time to volunteer, if they wanted to. Apprentices who received no financial contribution to their travel expenses felt this more strongly. Forty- two per cent of those who did receive financial help said they had time to volunteer, compared to 30 per cent of those who received no help.

Similarly those who received financial help with their travel had more time to play sport and pursue their other hobbies. This may be because they are working fewer hours as they spend less money on travel, or because they save time by receiving lifts to their college/ training provider or work.

Making choices

The most concerning finding of the research is that apprentices are basing their choice of apprenticeship not high quality careers advice nor on their own career aspirations but on what apprenticeships they are able to afford to get to.



Almost half of apprentices (47%) said that the cost of public transport had influenced their decision on where to do their apprenticeship. With a further 20% saying that poor public transport infrastructure had had an impact on their choice of apprenticeship.

I live in a rural area so it had to be where the bus service could get me to.

East Midlands Apprentice

What is to be done?

Apprentices are rightly proud of what they do. NSoA believes that excellent apprenticeships should be available to all.

NSoA Leadership Team

Recommendations

Action 1

Apprentices in Northern Europe travel at a reduced rate on all public transport.

Introduce and publicise an apprentice concession rate on public transport



Action 2

The Apprentice Oyster Card makes a massive difference to apprentices, but only for 1 year and only if you live in London

Apprentice Oyster Card should last the length of the apprenticeship. Apprentice Oyster Card should be available to apprentices working or learning in London.

Action 3

One of the recurring messages from apprentices is that they feel that their learning choices are not as valued as those following a full time route at college or university.

Extend the travel support available to Full time FE students to apprentices

Action 4

Currently full time students over the age of 26 are entitled to apply for a young persons rail card.

Make the young persons railcard available to all apprentices

Action 5

Apprentices said that they wanted to cycle to work but didn't feel safe doing so.

Further extend cycle lanes and routes across the UK.

Action 6

Clear information advice and guidance is important if apprentices are going to be able to make informed choices about where they learn.

Training providers should tell apprentices how often they will be expected to travel to training and where this will be.

Action 7

There are things we can do too. The apprentice extra card already provides some discounts for leisure travel, we can do more.

NSoA will work with Apprentice Extra and commercial partners to identify ways of reducing the costs of travel for apprentices.

The government is rightfully focussing on getting more young people into apprenticeships but access to apprenticeships should be available to all.

The minister for work and pensions told people to "get on the bus to find work". Apprentices have found work, got to the bus stop but can't afford the fare.

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