

South East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network Meeting

Thursday 16th July 2026

1130 to 1330 hours

MINUTES

Item	Actions
Updates and news Leadership introductions - Elizabeth Flegg welcomed attendees as SEAAN Chair. - Chris Davies welcomed attendees and noted the continued engagement with the network. - Phil Golding welcomed attendees and shared activity within the network as SEAAN Co Ordinator Housekeeping - The meeting was recorded for the purpose of producing notes and minutes. The recording/transcript would not normally be shared. - Attendees were asked to keep microphones muted unless speaking and to use cameras where possible when contributing. New ambassador introductions - Zoe Bolger introduced herself as Operations and Commercial Director at STM Mesmer Group. She explained that the organisation works as an education consultancy and is involved in T Level and apprenticeship activity, both as an employer and through its work with providers. - Hannah Purnell also introduced herself as a first-time attendee. Hannah works at FM Conway in learning and development.	None noted
Event feedback Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards - Melanie Ringer provided feedback on the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards. The event marked its 10th anniversary and was held at the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities at the University of Oxford. Around 160 guests attended, with 10 categories and an overall apprentice award. The event was described as a successful celebration of apprentices, employers and training providers. Chichester and Bognor Business Awards - Phil Golding reported on attending a Chamber Business Awards event, where SEAAN presented an apprenticeship award. The event provided opportunities to network with businesses and discuss apprenticeships. There was particular interest from businesses in apprenticeships and the Youth Guarantee, with follow-up discussions taking place with some businesses as part of SME engagement activity.. East Sussex Roadshows (Hastings and Eastbourne) - Phil Golding shared information about the 2 roadshows saying he was joined by Ellie Chapman and India Mckechnie (a SEAAN apprentice ambassador.) Together both events featured around 1000 attendees, and it was great to give so many young people and career changers impartial advice on apprenticeships and what routes they have to offer. India shared her journey into becoming an apprentice and helped to encourage individuals to follow her success story.	Continue to use relevant business and skills events to promote apprenticeships and engage with employers
Upcoming School events discussed	Discussed it being a quieter quarter coming up Work with more career's hubs

Item	Actions
Oathall College (West Sussex) – Post-16 Opportunities • 23rd September Haywards Heath College (West Sussex) – Apprenticeship Talk Yr12/13 • Date – TBC The Warriner (Oxfordshire) – Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Talk • Date – TBC	
Recognition – National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards and Top Apprenticeship Employers National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards • Chris Davies gave an update on the National Apprenticeship and Skills Awards. • The Southeast had a strong level of participation in the awards (3rd most entries) • The judging process is underway, with judges reviewing entries and meetings planned to determine winners and highly commended entries. Top Apprenticeship Employers • The group also noted the strong performance of Southeast organisations in the Top Apprenticeship Employers activity, including recognition for SMEs in the region. • LG Construction Carpentry Contractors Ltd – 1st • Forbury Gardens Day Nursery – 4th • Hopscotch Childrens Nurseries – 9th	
National Plans New Leadership team • Elizabeth Flegg shared details on the new leadership team • Kathryn Marshall (Lloyds) – National Chair Katie Rankin (Jet 2) – Vice Chair – Employer Leads Tegan Hinch (Santander) – Vice Chair – Apprentice Lead Sarah Moors (BBC) – Vice Chair – Multi-Region New Objectives • The national objectives are broadly continuing the previous approach, with targets around engaging schools and SMEs, plus a new focus on NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training). • For the South East, the target is to engage 247 schools and 200 SMEs over the year. The SME definition is reasonably flexible: if an SME had previously been supported through buddying but hadn't yet started an apprentice, and then subsequently starts one with the network's support, that can still count. • The NEET target was still awaiting clarification at the time of the meeting. • A new priority from the national leadership team is engagement with Youth Hubs. Katharine Marshall is particularly keen for the network to use the next quarter / summer period to visit Youth Hubs and talk to young people about apprenticeships in a more relaxed, accessible setting. • The meeting asked ambassadors to identify any existing Youth Hub connections and share them, so the network can build on activity already happening locally rather than starting from scratch. Examples already identified included: • Portsmouth – links through the City Council careers team.	Ambassadors who have local Youth Hub contacts should share them with SEAAN, and those who don't should consider whether they can support a local Hub. Send photos/footage of apprentices and ambassadors (with appropriate permissions) to the SEAAN team for sharing with DWP Start thinking about NAW 2027 activities and ideas over the summer.

Item	Actions
• Basingstoke – an existing Youth Hub connection. • Hampshire – Chris has already delivered sessions with Hampshire Futures. • West Sussex – the larger Youth Hubs in Crawley and Worthing were identified as having capacity and being keen for an ambassador to come in and talk about apprenticeships. National Apprenticeship Week • NAW 2027 will run 8–14 February and marks the 20th anniversary. Ambassadors are encouraged to start thinking about activities and contribute photos/footage of real apprentices and ambassadors for potential use in the national campaign.	
Activity around the network Ambassadors shared a range of apprenticeship engagement activity across the South East, including: • Sharon Edwards – Engaged with Breakthrough Isle of Wight to raise awareness of apprenticeships among LGBTQIA+ young people aged 14–25, alongside school careers activity covering apprenticeships, applications and interview skills. • Kiera Head-Lewis – Supported school careers and speed-dating events, sharing her own apprenticeship experience, and worked with the Jobcentre to promote entry-level roles and apprenticeship opportunities in the film and television industry. • Paul Winter – Reported on the successful first Kent Apprentice Awards and highlighted the upcoming Kent Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony in October, which the network is supporting. • Gemma Lenton – Attended an Apprentice Challenge event at a Bracknell school and careers fairs, helping young people engage directly with employers and learn about career opportunities. • West Sussex – Continued engagement through school and information fairs, with ambassadors supporting young people to understand apprenticeship opportunities.	• Sharon to review/share the South East AAN LGBTQIA+ apprenticeship film. • South East AAN team to confirm arrangements for Chris to attend/present at the Kent Apprenticeship Graduation Ceremony. • Ambassadors to continue sharing and recording apprenticeship engagement activity through quarterly returns.
Feeding Back to Skills England • Impact of defunding: Ambassadors discussed the impact of recent changes to apprenticeship funding and the defunding of some standards. Concerns were raised that this is creating gaps in progression routes, particularly for young people who may start in entry-level roles but are then unable to progress through an apprenticeship pathway into higher-level or management positions. • Supporting young apprentices: The group highlighted the importance of employers having staff with the right skills to support, coach and mentor young apprentices. Key skills discussed included communication, building rapport, giving feedback, questioning techniques, coaching and mentoring, performance management and conflict resolution. • Potential alternative training: The group discussed whether relevant Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) from existing apprenticeship standards, including Coaching Professional, Team Leader and Operations Manager, could be brought together to create shorter apprenticeship units or more flexible training options. The aim would be to help employers continue developing the skills needed to support young people, even where a full apprenticeship standard is no longer available or suitable. • Alternative progression routes: Ambassadors shared examples of alternative apprenticeship standards and routes being explored by employers, including Service Designer, Improvement Practitioner and Junior Management Consultant, as organisations look for ways to maintain progression opportunities following the changes to funding. • Age eligibility: Concerns were also raised about the different age eligibility requirements attached to apprenticeship standards. The group felt that greater consistency could make the apprenticeship system easier to understand and could help ensure that younger people are not unnecessarily prevented from accessing higher-level apprenticeship opportunities.	• Explore the key KSBs from defunded apprenticeship standards that employers need to support and mentor young people in the workplace. • Explore relevant KSBs from standards such as Coaching Professional, Team Leader and Operations Manager, and consider whether these could contribute to a future apprenticeship unit or shorter training offer. • Ambassadors to share examples of how their organisations are navigating defunded apprenticeships, including alternative standards and approaches to maintaining progression routes for young people. • Use the feedback gathered to inform ongoing feedback to Skills England/DWP on the impact of defunding and potential apprenticeship units.
Apprentice Ambassador Training • Chris outlined plans for the South East AAN apprentice training programme, which is intended to support apprentices and provide them with additional	• Ambassadors to submit details/express interest in apprentices who would like to take part in the South East AAN apprentice

Item	Actions
development and networking opportunities alongside their apprenticeship. - The training will provide apprentices with an opportunity to develop their confidence, skills and understanding of the wider apprenticeship network, as well as connect with other apprentices and benefit from the experience of the Ambassador Network. - The group discussed the proposed approach and the importance of ensuring the training is relevant and useful to apprentices across different employers and sectors. - Ambassadors were asked to identify apprentices within their organisations who may be interested in participating and to submit their interest so that the training can be planned and numbers confirmed.	training programme. SEAAN team to collate expressions of interest and confirm the next steps, including arrangements and dates for the training.
Collateral Phil introduced the new South East AAN promotional collateral available for ambassadors to use at events and activities promoting apprenticeships and the network. - New items include pens, trolley keyrings and stickers (coming soon). There are also water bottles, tote bags, mugs and notepads, which are intended in particular as recognition/rewards for apprentice ambassadors who support school visits and engagement activity. - Ambassadors were advised that if they are attending an event where promotional materials would be useful, they can contact Phil to request collateral, which will be sent out to them by post.	Ambassadors to contact info@seaan.co.uk if they require SEAAN promotional collateral for upcoming events or engagement activity.
AOB Assessing apprentice behaviours: Nicky White asked whether anyone had developed guidance or a template to help employers assess apprentice behaviours, following the introduction of new requirements from 1 August. Nicky referred to a template she had seen shared by Simon Ashworth on LinkedIn. The group discussed the limited information currently available and the uncertainty around how employers will be expected to assess behaviours as the new requirements are implemented. Future speaker: The group discussed the possibility of inviting Simon Ashworth to a future SEAAN meeting to provide further information and guidance on assessing apprentice behaviours. This was identified as a potential topic for a future meeting. Breaks in Learning / Digital Apprenticeship Service: Nicky also raised concerns about changes to the Digital Apprenticeship Service and the difficulties employers are experiencing in identifying apprentices who are on a break in learning or whose payments have been paused. The changes are making it more difficult for employers to monitor learners and complete financial and data checks. The group discussed the practical implications of the changes and whether the concerns should be raised through the appropriate channels. Future meetings: The group briefly discussed possible topics and speakers for future SEAAN meetings, including apprentice behaviour assessment and other apprenticeship-related updates.	- Explore inviting Simon Ashworth to a future meeting to discuss the assessment of apprentice behaviours. - Consider how the concerns raised around breaks in learning and the Digital Apprenticeship Service can be fed back to the relevant teams.
Date of next meeting Next meeting The next quarterly meeting is expected to take place in October 22nd /23rd	SEAAN to confirm the date and circulate details.

Attendees

Attendees		
Phi Golding – SEAAN Co Ordinator	Hannah Purnell – FM Conway	
Christopher Davies – SEAAN Apprentice Chair	Kiera Head-Lewis - Resource Productions	

Attendees		
Elizabeth Flegg – SEAAN Employer Chair	Zoe Bolger - SDN Mesma Group	
Chris Blackburn - Impellam Group	Christiane Galli - University of Oxford	
Abigail Wooster – The AA	Kate Berman - Olamalu	
Paul Winter - Orchard Community Energy Ltd	Rachael Parker - Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council	
Nicky White – NHS	Kirsty Thompson – Sainsbury's	
Karen Lyall - RNLI	Sharon Edwards - Isle Of Wight Council	
Melanie Ringer - Enterprise Oxfordshire	Lynne Rimmer - Brighton & Hove City Council	
Ricky Leaves – MCFT		
Kate Brady - Portsmouth City Council		
Gemma Lenton - Wokingham Borough Council		