

Learning by doing

Jean Anderson talks to learning providers about the options for entering and progressing in the industry

When it comes to addressing the skills gap in the hospitality industry it is gratifying to learn that experienced experts are ready to offer robust solutions for service providers.

Degree courses, apprenticeships and bespoke training is available for entrants into housekeeping and employers keen to 'grow their own' reliable workforce. The Government's Apprenticeship Levy, introduced in April 2017, aims to boost the numbers trained by providing a new pot of funding.

Adele Oxberry, founder and CEO of **Umbrella Training**, believes elite apprenticeships are at the heart of solving the skills gap, using the levy to invest into the right programmes and educating employers, schools and parents about the value of an apprenticeship.

"We have committed to doing all that we can to promote the fantastic apprenticeship opportunities hospitality offers.

"First, we work incredibly closely with employers to help them get to grips with the levy and how best to use it; ensuring they see returns through staff retention and productivity.

"This takes a whole company approach to achieve, with clear buy-in from the top, heads of departments and supervisors, and so we educate, train and support throughout our partnership so that everyone understands the benefits for themselves, and their people, and can deliver in the right way.

Adele Oxberry, founder and CEO of Umbrella Training



"And finally, we've recently appointed a dedicated recruitment and onboarding officer to build greater relationships with schools and youth groups to attract people into hospitality."

As well as promoting apprenticeships Oxberry is keen that the development of recruits "is an experience like no other".

"We work incredibly closely with our employer partners to ensure their apprenticeship schemes are more than the standard tick-box programme. Collaboration is key which is why we've been able to create value added experiences like our Tidy Angels Club, where our housekeeping apprentices can do things like visit linen and laundry suppliers, attend masterclasses on French polishing, floristry and bedroom design, and attend a workshop on first impressions.

"And it's not just housekeeping we do this for – we take the same approach for chef, operational, and managerial apprenticeships. We've had apprentices visit the Houses of Parliament to lobby with the British Hospitality Association.

"One of our apprentices won the Shine Awards apprentice of the year. Others have had hands on experience at a local farm, spoken at the Big Hospitality Conversation at City Hall and have been appointed ambassadors for apprenticeships. It's these extra experiences which bring the role to life and create greater engagement around the apprenticeship and our sector.

"With our unique approach to apprenticeships - combining the promotion with the experience – you can experience great returns: nine out of 10 Umbrella apprentices will achieve lifelong learning, sustainable employment and achieve their apprenticeship. So why wouldn't you use them as part of your talent strategy?"

Delia Cannings, who runs **Environmental Excellence & Education (3ees)** says that while the industry has seen the demise of some qualifications and reduce take-up of others "many committed employers continue to invest in their staff and purchase full cost courses."

She fears that funds available from the Apprenticeship Levy are not being used in the way intended. "We have much to do to ensure you use it or sadly you lose it."



Delia Cannings who runs Environmental Excellence & Education (3ees)

Cannings advises employers: "It is absolutely imperative that you do some research prior to engaging a training provider. To this end I have outlined the important steps to consider in an effort to ensure quality, professionalism and success.

"The most crucial element to ensure successful training outcomes is the suitability of the training environment."

This should be: "An environment which provides simulated settings to replicate that which you may find in industry, furnished with typical fittings and finishes all complimented by the use of reputable cleaning products, manual equipment and machinery will have a significant impact on the learners and will contribute in a meaningful way to their knowledge base and ultimate educational success."

The learning environment should also be comfortable for students, meet all their needs and provide all the appropriate materials for their course.

Said Cannings: "You only get one chance to make a first impression therefore pull out all the stops, go the extra mile, when you get it correct first time repeat business follows. Trust me on this matter, I have vast experience and continue to enjoy much success in the field of education and training. The secret of excellent results and repeat business is planning and preparation always remembers the old adage: 'Failure to plan is planning to fail'."

The development opportunities available include the following, explains Cannings:

Apprenticeships: The apprenticeship for housekeeping /cleaning staff consists of a technical certificate which is tested by an examination. Literacy and numeracy if required is embedded and is also evaluated through examination.

QCF Cleaning Qualifications: These have largely replaced the NVQ Cleaning and Support provision and have presented a more flexible approach to study and assessment through selecting



"When it comes to educating the wider population, we invest considerable time in visiting schools, businesses and creating partnerships with charities such as The Clink and Successful Mums, to share some of the success stories from our apprentices.

"Most recently, in collaboration with several hospitality employers, we created a virtual reality hotel for Skills London – the largest careers fair in the Capital – where those who were interested in a hospitality career could step inside, for example The Ritz London, and experience what it is like to be a housekeeper or waiter.

"This year, we'll again be embarking on our branded Routemaster school tour during National Apprenticeship Week (March 8, 2018), taking a variety of employer partners to schools across London and Kent to showcase our sector and share career stories.

appropriate study units which has widened the participation scope. The early indicators are that employers prefer this model.

BICSc Qualifications: These courses continue to be the bedrock of cleaning science provision amongst the range currently available is the Cleaning Professionals Skills Suite, the Health Care Cleaning Professional Certificate, the Housekeepers Proficiency Certificate and more recently available is the BICSc Practitioners Licence.

Environmental Awareness Qualifications: This area of study is focused on introducing the skills and knowledge to make a positive contribution towards the environment. Typical areas of study include: managing energy use, managing waste disposal, managing water use, managing the use of transport and reducing the risk of pollution.

Infection Prevention & Control Qualifications: This extremely popular programme enables housekeeping and cleaning professionals to understand how infection can be prevented and controlled in the workplace. The programme compliments many of the cleaning science courses available.

The Government's plan to promote accelerated two-year degree courses, alongside the more traditional three and four year courses, is welcomed by the **Edge Hotel School** which has been successfully offering this model for five years.

But while the Government talks of the financial benefits to students of shorter degrees, Edge principal Andrew Boer, knows that the appeal is far wider than just saving on hard cash.

Boer said: "The adage 'too good to be true' has often been applied by students and parents to the offer of two year accelerated degrees with the assumption that a lower duration programme equates to lower academic standards, less class contact or an inferior service.

"Nothing could be further from the truth.

"We are immensely proud that our courses are validated by the **University of Essex** (22nd in The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide) and the University, justifiably, requires us to maintain their high academic standards.

"The contact and applied learning time for two year degrees is similar to those of 'conventional' degrees and, for the avoidance of doubt, whilst most students were sitting around at home at Christmas, our two year degree students were continuing their studies and working in our four-star hotel, **Wivenhoe House**.

"Ironically not only do many students actually enjoy working over this period but they feel that this demonstrates both their commitment to the course and our industry as well as their professionalism. The 94 per cent employment rate of our graduates attests to the fact that this opinion is reflected by employers too.

"Our students on the hotel management or the events management with hospitality courses still enjoy 10 weeks' holiday spread through each year and many spend a proportion of that vacation time taking up work experience opportunities at potential employers. They return to the course even more enthused than before."

Boer agrees with the government's suggestion that accelerated courses could lead to an increase in applications from mature students.

"Every year we see students arrive who have been enjoying careers in the hospitality industry but who have hit a wall because of their lack of qualifications. A traditional three or four year course does not appeal to them but an intensive two year degree where they can keep their hospitality skills up to date while improving their academic qualifications is ideal.

"For some students, a more relaxed schedule with long vacation periods where they can 'find themselves' is an attraction of student life...and

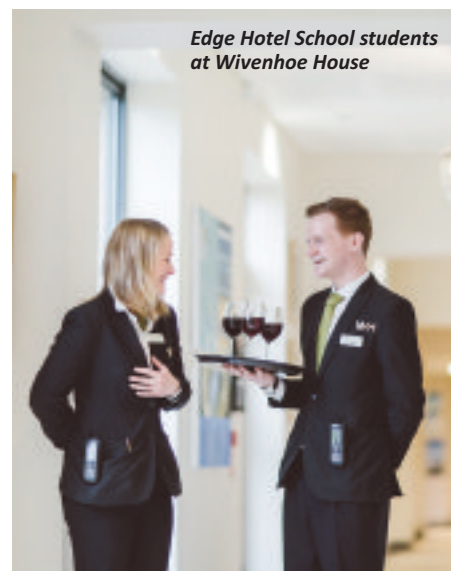
indeed, so it should be. This said, there also needs to be recognition that other students are keen to manage their time, have the commitment and maturity to study intensively and to gain entry to their chosen profession in a shorter time period.

"Indeed, a Department for Education commissioned study of accelerated degrees identified that 'the students accepted on these programmes were very academically capable, and providers felt that this delivery model is best suited to the brightest and most driven students because of its intensity'."

Eden Hotel Collection works closely with HIT Training to provide tailor-made development opportunities for staff across its eight-strong boutique hotel portfolio.

The award-winning hotel group first joined forces with HIT Training last year when it launched its bespoke training facility – **Eden Chef Academy**. It is now recruiting its second cohort of

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Edge Hotel School students at Wivenhoe House



Edge Hotel Students in the classroom



Edge Hotel School students put the finishing touches to a dining room

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apprentice chefs (both internally and externally) and has launched two new apprenticeship standards – Commis Chef (level 2) and Hospitality Team Member (level 2) – aimed at providing strong and clear career pathways for its wider team.

HIT Training works in partnership with Eden Hotel Collection to identify its ongoing training needs and tailor its programme accordingly. The apprenticeships are delivered by HIT Training through a combination of one-to-one tutorials, classroom sessions, workshops and e-learning, and supported by the hotels' general managers, who act as mentors and provide workplace guidance.

Jill Whittaker, managing director of HIT Training, who points out that an estimated 500,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the sector in the next five years, said: "The Apprenticeship Levy has provided a real opportunity for employers to build on the training they offer to their staff.

"One of the big added bonuses of working with a specialist provider is that we can help to explain the levy, how to set it up within your business, how to maximise the funds generated and how to raise the profile of your investment in staff development.

"We've advised Eden Hotel Collection on how to forecast levy contributions to ensure they can train the most people at the most cost-effective rate. This means they can keep the flow of their



Jill Whittaker, managing director of HIT Training

apprenticeships consistent, offer more training opportunities to their staff and in turn cultivate a team that feels valued and motivated."

Laura Godman, learning and development manager at Eden Hotel Collection, said: "We've always invested in training and it's important to us as a business that we work with a company that is an expert in its field.

"HIT Training offers us a truly personalised approach and the fact that they are based throughout the country is incredibly beneficial as it means we can offer the same high-level of consistent training to our employees, no matter which of our hotels they work at."

Godman continued: "The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy and new standards has been a big change but HIT Training has been there to guide us through the entire process. They've provided an exceptional level of care and have helped us to formulate the best route for our apprentices, changing over from the old frameworks to the new apprenticeship standards.

"Our hotels are very individual but we've been able to ensure our learners can develop the industry skills they need to grow in their roles, at the same time as taking ownership and creating their own character to fit with their hotel and its boutique brand values."



Cherie Watts, an HIT Training graduate, at work