



The voice of specialist further education

## Technical and Further Education Bill

### Evidence from Natspec to the House of Commons Public Bill Committee

#### Summary

1. This submission focusses on the role of the Institute in ensuring that apprenticeships are accessible to a range of young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, in line with the recommendations of the Maynard review

#### About Natspec

2. Natspec is the membership association for organisations, including colleges and independent providers, which offer specialist provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Our vision is that all young people with learning difficulties or disabilities access high quality education and training, which meets their individual needs and supports their aspirations for skills, work and life.
3. Natspec members offer day and/or residential provision for students aged 16-25 with complex learning difficulties or disabilities who have an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP). The majority of places are commissioned by local authorities and funded through the Education Funding Agency (EFA) high needs funding system. Member organisations offer personalised study programmes, including supported internships, and a few offer apprenticeships.
4. Member colleges achieve good outcomes for students in living more independently and entering the world of work, but we remain deeply concerned that the employment levels overall for people with disabilities have remained so low – under 7% for those with a learning difficulty. Natspec supports the DWP campaign ‘Disability Confident’ and the overall ambitions of the government to increase the number of disabled people in work.

## **The role of the Institute**

5. Apprenticeships offer an important progression route for some young people with SEND, both with or without an EHCP, following time in further education, or alternatively a route for school leavers with SEND who need a work focussed placement. Unfortunately for many years this has not been an accessible option for many of these young people.
6. Natspec welcomed the [Maynard review](#) which clearly identified the barriers to participation and made a number of recommendations to improve access to apprenticeships which were accepted by the Minister for Skills and the Minister for Disabled People. Natspec is currently working with the DfE Apprenticeship Team to ensure that the recommendations about English and maths are fully implemented.
7. We note that relying on goodwill has not always been an effective approach to increasing participation. This bill affords a timely opportunity to enshrine the principles underpinning the Maynard recommendations in law, and we believe that the Institute should have a role in overseeing the accessibility of apprenticeships to people with learning difficulties or disabilities and in monitoring improvements in participation once the recommendations are implemented. We think the Institute should also have a duty to report to the secretary of state on the success of the accessibility arrangements.
8. It is not clear at this stage which aspects of the Maynard recommendations will need additional or amended legislation to support their implementation. Alongside an additional responsibility for the Institute to ensure accessibility, there is also an opportunity to include accessibility arrangements in the section on Apprenticeship assessment plans as 11 (7) (14). The Maynard review recommendation was that there should be changes to the method of assessments for English and maths for targeted groups, which would enable them to demonstrate the minimum requirements in the workplace, without completing a formal assessment.
9. We note the concerns of many members about the most appropriate forms of English and maths for young people on technical/vocational routes. The Maynard review recommended adjusting 'the minimum standard of English and maths required (to entry level 3) for a defined group of apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities who are able to meet the occupational standard but will struggle to achieve English and maths qualifications at the level normally required.' It is not clear if this change could be made through

this current bill, but it could be one of the issues on which the Institute reports.

### **General functions of education administrator**

10. We welcome the clause in Chapter 4, 22 (3) 'In pursuing the objective of the education administration set out in section 14(1)(a) the education administrator must, in particular, take into account the needs of existing students who have special educational needs.' we note that students with an Education Health and Care Plan will have had their place commissioned by their local authority. We would therefore see a role for local authorities alongside the administrator in ensuring their needs are met.

Alison Boulton, Policy officer

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