

# Keynote: Access, Participation and Levelling-Up in Technical Education, including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

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*I will be exploring how UVAC rejects a blinkered approach that focuses on social mobility measures in isolation. Instead, we argue that recommendations for supporting social mobility and levelling up must be determined in the context of the role and purpose of Apprenticeship in increasing productivity, supporting diversity in the workforce and enabling our public sector employers to recruit and train the nurses, police constables and social workers they need. The role of Apprenticeship in the Levelling Up Agenda should also be supported nationally and developed locally in this context. UVAC has called on Government to adopt an ambitious approach. Instead of seeing Apprenticeship as a programme primarily for young people to enter lower level jobs, we argue that Apprenticeship should be an aspirational all age programme that supports individuals from all backgrounds to gain the high productivity craft, technical and professional jobs the economy needs. Crucially, this means substantially more has to be done to support individuals from more disadvantaged backgrounds to access higher level Apprenticeships. Among other measures, UVAC proposes ensuring Apprenticeships at all levels form part of a skills ladder and that apprentices unambiguously gain the knowledge and skills required to progress in their careers.*

**Keywords:** UVAC, Apprenticeships, Levelling, Skills, Access

## Biography

Mandy has 30 years' experience of leading and negotiating skills policy, strategic planning and performance management in economic development, vocational education and training reform. She is a sound and respected resource for those involved in the development and

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delivery of apprenticeships at the higher level having led national policy, managed the Coalition Government's successful Higher Apprenticeship Fund and revised the Specification of Apprenticeship Standard in England (SASE) leading to the opening up of pathways in higher level learning for apprentices beyond Level 3 and into a work-based route through to professional, senior technical and managerial occupations and, where appropriate, professional accreditation.

Having worked extensively with government departments, providers in further education, higher education institutions, awarding organisations, professional bodies and public and private sector employers, Mandy has developed effective business and commercial partnerships. Mandy specialises in research, leadership of strategic projects and in skills policy advice, development & implementation including advocacy and lobbying. Higher and degree apprenticeships and higher technical, professional education and skills are Mandy's fields of interest.

Having worked with the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) since 2012, both inside and outside of Government, Mandy became its director of policy and operations in 2017 and, in October 2022, its first female chief executive. UVAC on behalf of its 80+ university members, has been championing Degree Apprenticeships since their introduction, and the value of vocational education for over twenty years and is regarded as the most authoritative voice on all strategic and operational aspects of higher and degree apprenticeships in England.