

1. Introduction

- a. We submit this response as the not for profit Science, Engineering, Manufacturing and Technologies Alliance (Semta), an employer alliance which brings the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (AME) sector together to address its skills needs and reduce gaps and shortages, not just for now but also for the future.
- b. We welcome the setting up of this inquiry by the Sub-Committee for Education, Skills and the Economy. Given the splitting of responsibility for current apprenticeship funding amongst other policy areas across the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Department for Education (DfE), it is eminently sensible to have a Commons sub-committee of members of the two Select Committees covering this department and scrutinising the government's planned apprenticeship policy reforms.
- c. In our response to this inquiry, we will look at the following:
 - i. The context for apprenticeships in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
 - ii. The apprenticeship levy
 - iii. The Institute for Apprenticeships
 - iv. The Apprenticeship Delivery Board
 - v. Apprenticeship Trailblazers
 - vi. The three million starts target
- vii. Progression routes
- viii. Apprenticeships for 16-19 year olds
- ix. Promotion and advertising of apprenticeships
- x. STEM apprenticeships, girls and women

2. Context

- a. The Business Register and Employment Survey <u>data shows</u> that turnover per year in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering is £321 billion per year, 9% of the UK total, despite the sector employing just 6% of the total UK workforce (1.7 million people), which works out at £189,400 per employee compared with £157,700 per employee for the economy as a whole. Gross value added in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering is £110 billion per year, 11% of the UK total, which works out as £64,600 per employee (against £45,200 across the whole workforce).
- b. However, there is a looming skills crisis within the sector. Analysis within the EngineeringUK
 2016 annual report shows that there will be a need for some 182,000 people with engineering skills at engineering companies for each year to 2022. Filling that demand will generate an additional £27bn per year from 2022 for the UK economy.
- c. According to the 2015 UKCES Employer Skills Survey, manufacturing (the closest sectoral fit) has the fourth highest sectoral density of skills shortage vacancies, at 30%, while at 19% the sector has the second highest incidence of skills gaps of all sectors. Unlike the majority of sectors, that skills gap has grown since 2013. Manufacturing is relatively efficient at using its employees' existing skills 24% of employers report under-utilisation of those, which places it second only to agriculture (which for comparison has a 20% figure).
- d. Apprenticeships will be a crucial component of the sector's approach to meeting this skills need. Some 26% of the 1.7 million existing workers within Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering have completed apprenticeships, against just 10% of the workforce as a whole. Apprenticeships are a proven, valued and trusted way of meeting skills needs in the sector according to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' (BIS) 2013 analysis, 76% of employers offering apprenticeships on Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies frameworks had recruited people specifically for apprenticeships, while more than half of employers offering apprenticeships on those frameworks



had been doing so for five or more years. Happily, employers in engineering are doing relatively well at finding the right people to fill their apprenticeship programmes; 13% of engineering respondents to the CBI/Pearson Education & Skills survey said they had been experiencing difficulties in recruiting people onto apprenticeship schemes, against a third of firms across the economy as a whole.

e. According to government data, around a fifth of apprenticeship starts for Q2 2015/16 (August-October) were in Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies, underlining the importance of apprenticeships to the sector and the key role the sector will play in helping the government to hit its target of three million apprenticeship starts by 2020.

3. The Levy

- a. According to the response by the Skills Minister to a <u>Parliamentary Question</u>, in the 2014/15 financial year, an estimated 24.9% of total government spending on apprenticeships was on those in Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies £353m out of a total spend of £1.56bn. Given the proportion of funding being spent within the sector and the sector's relatively high turnover per employee, it is crucial that the levy works in such a way that employers are able to fund the apprenticeships they need to meet their skills needs.
- b. Within the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector, employer opinion on the levy is split. Half of those we asked when conducting our own research said that they did support the introduction of the levy, with a number saying their support depended on how the government defined "larger" (i.e. levy-paying) employers and with several welcoming the commitment to apprenticeships they expected this to engineer.
- c. The levy has been set at 0.5% of an employer's total payroll costs, a level which the government calculates will bring in £3 billion annually by 2020 and fully fund all apprenticeships across the United Kingdom. Employers in our sector who will be liable to pay the levy are already working out how many apprentices they will be able to fund through their apprenticeship vouchers and if there is a shortfall some are already looking at ways of getting back the funding through alternative means, e.g. by expanding their provision of 'white collar' apprenticeships although there is a bigger push to pass on underspend to supply chain employers and SMEs within the sector. Within our sector, employers have historically used apprenticeships as a way of training people to fill a job vacancy; they do not overtrain engineers as it is prohibitively expensive to do so. If they do provide other engineering apprenticeships, they do it for their supply chains.
- d. The Skills Minister recently confirmed that of the £3 billion set to be collected through the levy in 2020, £2.5 billion of that will be spent on apprenticeships in England, with the remainder divided up between Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and given to their devolved administrations. The funding formula through which this will be done has not yet been decided. The exact allocation of funding by nation needs to be made clear ahead of the introduction of the levy. Many employers in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering operate across borders and they need to know in advance how apprentices will be counted by nation, so they know exactly how many apprentices they will be able to take on at each of their sites. Meanwhile, although parties in Scotland and Wales are beginning to set their own targets for apprenticeship starts ahead of the elections to the devolved legislatures in those countries, the UK government needs to be clear on how it will ensure that the levy funds devolved are actually spent on apprenticeships that is after all what employers are paying for.
- e. There is a real appetite within Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering for a sectoral approach to the allocation of the funds raised by the levy. 41% of respondents to our own survey suggested that a portion of the levy funds should be spent on SMEs in a levy payer's supply chain or wider sector which is an approach that could be realised in those Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sub-sectors where apprenticeship clearing houses exist. Almost twice as many respondents to our own survey stated they wanted levy paying employers to be able to spend their



levy funds on apprentices not employed by themselves (47% against 29%), which further underlines the potential for a sectoral approach where larger employers take it upon themselves to recognise and meet the skills needs of their suppliers and of SMEs in their own sectors.

- f. Where levy is underspent, there is a split in opinion on how it should then be allocated. 37% of employers responding to our survey wanted it to be rolled into the following year's levy, while 34% felt it should be used to support supply chain and SME apprenticeships. We support the principle of rolling over the levy employers' need for apprentices can fluctuate from year to year and it's right that there should be flexibility built into the funding system for apprenticeships so that they can take them on as and when needed. We do however want to see a longer rollover period, given that apprenticeships in our sector can be expensive to provide and given that they typically take much longer than the one year minimum length required by government a Level 6 degree apprenticeship in engineering could take six years to complete. It could be that some employers will need to 'save up' their levy vouchers before they are able to afford to take on an apprentice, and they should have the option of doing so without losing part of the money they have paid in.
- g. The levy will only be paid by larger employers, defined as those with a payroll cost in excess of £3 million. However, according to the most recent Employer Perspectives Survey (EPS) more than nine in ten large (250 employees or more) employers in our sector currently offer apprenticeships against under six in ten across the whole economy. In other words, levy paying employers in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering are currently offering apprenticeships anyway they are doing their bit.
- h. According to ONS data, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering SMEs do offer apprenticeships at a higher rate than employers across the whole economy over four in ten do, while for all employers the proportion is below three in ten. Again, micro employers in the sector are more likely to offer apprenticeships (13.4%) than are such employers across the economy as a whole (10.3%).
- i. However, these employers are much more likely to have skills needs which are not currently being met. According to the most recent annual Manufacturing Survey, of 400 predominantly manufacturing and engineering SMEs 28% said issues with recruiting skilled staff were their main barrier to growth, while nearly a third of SMEs surveyed by Close Brothers last year said their workforce lacked the skills needed but of those expecting to take on new staff, only 5% were planning to take on an apprentice.
- j. Levy paying employers will be able to 'get back more than they put in' thanks to a 10% top-up to their monthly levy payments through the Digital Voucher Service, although the government has not yet clarified how this will work in practice if as a group levy paying employers want to get back more than they have put in, as additional funding will be required above that which is brought in by the levy. SMEs in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering need to know what will happen in this case, given that the Skills Minister has <u>explicitly stated</u> that levy payers will have "first dibs" on the funding. Respondents to our levy survey were clear 72% felt that government should cover any additional costs, with just 17% saying it should fall upon employers to do so.
- k. Without access to finance, employers in our sector could be priced out of providing apprenticeships given that the cost of doing so for a three year Level 3 engineering apprenticeship can be in excess of £100,000 even before associated costs like plant machinery and staff supervision time have been taken into account.

4. The Institute for Apprenticeships

a. We welcome and fully agree with the government's stated ambition for employer-led oversight and governance of apprenticeships. That is why we helped employers to put together and publish a proposed governance model for the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector,



<u>Apprenticeships for the future.</u> This genuinely employer-led and employer-owned proposal demonstrates that within our sector there is a strong appetite for ownership and governance.

- b. Although we are supportive of the stated ambitions for the Institute for Apprenticeships, we have several concerns regarding how it is actually going to operate in practice. Because the detail regarding the Institute was included in the government's amendments to its Enterprise Bill, and not within the Bill itself, they have not as yet been subject to the same amount of Parliamentary and extra-Parliamentary scrutiny of other government apprenticeship policies. The government must take care to ensure that it does not publish the finer details of its policies in such a way that employers might get the impression that it would prefer some of those details not to be subjected to full scrutiny and debate; employers within our sector are keen to engage and to make its policies work for them, but to do that they need to know exactly what those policies entail.
- c. The government's claim that the Institute will promote employer ownership of apprenticeship standards is tempered somewhat by the revelation that it will in fact submit all standards and assessment plans to the Secretary of State. True employer ownership would see employers having the final say on which standards and assessment plans are fit for purpose, as it is their skills needs which are ultimately going to be met through them. All Trailblazer standards and assessment plans currently become the intellectual property of the Crown, not of the employers again, we have concerns that government is not as yet relinquishing as much control in practice as the worthy rhetoric of Ministers implies. It's interesting too to note that new standards which are approved by Ministers will, once the Bill has passed, be treated as having been approved by the Institute before it is fully operational.
- d. There is, as yet, no long term plan and no governance model for the updating and maintenance of Trailblazers' intellectual property; for a sector like Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, having up-to-date competence standards is crucial, and employers want government to clarify what the plan for this is.
- e. We welcome the requirement for the Institute Board to prepare a report to Parliament each year. Given the scope of that report, which will include the progress made in accrediting standards and the Institute's responses to select committee recommendations, we believe there is a very strong case for ensuring that the sectoral representation of the Board is as broad and inclusive as possible if terms are to last for up to five years, and there are to be up to ten members, then we feel it is imperative that our sector has representation on that board given the amount of apprenticeship funding it currently receives, its value to the UK economy and its tradition of high-quality, employer valued apprenticeships.
- f. We have concerns that the Institute might feel directly or indirectly compromised by the ability of the Secretary of State to write to it to give direction if they feel it has not adequately discharged one of its duties. We do not want to see the Institute and the Secretary of State clashing and overly politicising the work and role of what is supposed to be an employer led, employer managed body. We believe that the government needs to clarify as soon as is practical the circumstances in which the Secretary of State might write to the Institute and the action they might be able to require it to take.
- g. We also have concerns regarding the power the Secretary of State will have to devolve their own functions relating to apprenticeships in England and to give written notice of further matters outside of its own remit to which it must have regard. We do not want to see the Institute becoming a dumping ground for contentious and controversial decisions for which government does not want to attract blame or criticism, and would greatly welcome any assurances the Secretary of State could give regarding this. The criteria for the Secretary of State being able to do this must be robust and must be published so that they are accessible to employers.
- h. We welcome the Institute for Apprenticeships being given the ability to set up committees including non-Institute members. This sort of flexible approach will be necessary in tackling issues which are sector-specific or which are more relevant to some sectors than to others.



5. The Apprenticeship Delivery Board

a. We are concerned that the way in which the Apprenticeship Delivery Board and Institute for Apprenticeships will interact has not as yet been fully thought through by government. The Skills Minister said in his response to a recent Parliamentary Question that it will be for the Chair of the Institute, once appointed, to decide how they should interact. We and employers in our sector would be appreciative if guidance were to be published which outlined exactly what the relationship between the two bodies will look like and how their remits will complement one another.

6. Apprenticeship Trailblazers

- a. The Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector has been something of a trailblazer for Trailblazers. So far, Semta has played a facilitating role in the Trailblazer groups for seventeen standards across the automotive and aerospace sub-sectors, and of those ten are already ready for delivery. This demonstrates a clear appetite within our sector to make this policy a success and to take ownership of standards.
- b. The stated purpose of Trailblazers is to 'put employers in the driving seat'. We support this aim it is intuitive that because employers use apprenticeships to meet their skills needs, employers should be developing the standards underpinning those apprenticeships. Although BIS has not recognised a formal role for Sector Skills Councils in developing the new standards, we have played and are playing an active role in the development of 22 Trailblazer standards across our sectoral footprint, and have done so because employers wanted us to do so and valued our expertise. In addition, we are the body which drew up the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, which employers value and wanted to use as the foundation of the Trailblazer standards replacing the old NOS-based frameworks, so our involvement has also helped to ensure continuity and stability.
- c. However, while we support the stated intention of this policy, in practice Trailblazer development has proven difficult. Advanced manufacturing and engineering sector employers involved in Trailblazer development groups have outlined a number of concerns to us, including chopping and changing of their BIS relationship managers and inconsistent guidance from the department. Lack of certainty in skills policy was given by a top concern when we conducted research with employers ahead of publication of our post-general election *Skills Vision* advice paper to government.
- d. There are also concerns regarding the proliferation of standards, which was explicitly intended to be curtailed under the new standards. A number of the outgoing engineering-related frameworks had a 'core and options' layout, because sometimes a number of different job roles can require similar skills and competencies. Having one standard per apprenticeship, while intended to make clearer to potential apprentices and to employers what different apprenticeships should include, could actually lead to further confusion and difficulties, and could even lead to deskilling of the workforce as there is no requirement to have common transferable skills across standards within a sector. We will continue to work with employers across our sector to help them to identify which apprenticeship standards they ought to be using to best meet their skills needs.
- e. A graded end point assessment remains a core requirement from BIS, but employers within the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector have been clear that this is not always the most appropriate way for an apprentice to demonstrate competence. A common refrain from employers when referring to the end point assessment is "you can either do it or you can't" an employer needs to have full confidence that an employee is fully competent in the skills they have acquired through their apprenticeship, because if they are not then it could genuinely mean the difference between life and death (e.g. where aeroplanes and automobiles are concerned). We and employers continue to make representations to BIS for Trailblazer groups to be able to decide for themselves whether a graded end point assessment is the most appropriate way to demonstrate an apprentice's competence and job readiness, because employers best understand what competence



looks like in their own sectors. This is one of the challenges that strong sectoral leadership on Trailblazers would be able to overcome - it is by its nature employer-led.

- f. In England the requirement for apprenticeship standards to have National Occupational Standards as their basis has been removed. In practice, many of the Trailblazer standards both within and outside of Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering have been partially or wholly based upon NOS. If NOS are retained in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Institute for Apprenticeships and BIS must ensure that there is cross-border compatibility and suitability. The Skills Minister said in the Commons on March 10th that he will work with the devolved administrations in those parts of the United Kingdom to ensure that standards are recognised across the United Kingdom, and we welcome this.
- g. Finally, we also have concerns regarding the complexity and onerousness of becoming an independent assessment body for Trailblazers. PEIs have serious reservations in taking on the role because the process is too expensive and too time-consuming. Organisations interested in becoming an independent assessment body currently have to apply for each individual Trailblazer standard they want to deliver and apply directly to the employer they want to work with after registering with and being approved by the Skills Funding Agency. In addition, there is an obvious disconnect between employers leading Trailblazer standards development not having the authority to choose the independent assessment organisations for those standards. We think a simpler solution would be for those interested in becoming independent assessment bodies to apply to the relevant Trailblazer group there are organisations capable of doing this job already in the shape of existing AOs which could have the capacity and desire to do it and would offer a ready-made solution to this problem.

7. Apprenticeship Trailblazers – SMEs and micro enterprises

- a. Concerns regarding lack of SME and micro enterprise involvement in Trailblazers are not limited to our own sector, but they are of greater concern within Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering given the make-up of the sector a majority of the workforce is employed by such employers, and they account for the vast majority of firms and the low apprenticeship take-up by them some 85% of employers within the sector currently do not offer apprenticeships. In many cases, these employers simply do not have the spare staff capacity to be able to send someone to London for an extended period of time so that they can have an input. The current Trailblazer standards for engineering-related apprenticeships only cover 5% of existing volumes, so there is a big gap in SME apprenticeship frameworks.
- b. Last year, in its <u>Report on apprenticeships and traineeships for 16-19 year olds</u>, the Commons Education Committee stated that "submissions to our inquiry suggested that larger firms have dominated the Trailblazer process", while going on to say that "some respondents questioned whether Trailblazers met the needs of all employers or just those involved in Trailblazers". Given the Skills Minister's acknowledgement that SMEs must have an input into apprenticeship standards, and his insistence that standards will only be signed off if there is evidence that SMEs have been consulted on their content, it is clear that the government has taken on board feedback from SMEs and from the early Trailblazer groups. To strengthen that requirement further, and give SMEs the confidence that they need that the new apprenticeship standards are suited to their particular skills needs, we would recommend that the government looks at how it can ensure SMEs are represented in the new Institute for Apprenticeships.

8. The three million target

a. According to the primary research we conducted during the government's consultation phase for the apprenticeship levy, 61% of employers support the target of three million new apprenticeship starts during this Parliament. A number of respondents, however, added further comments stressing that this should not have a negative impact on the quality of apprenticeship provision.



- b. While increasing the quantity of apprenticeship starts does not in and of itself mean that there will be a reduction in quality, care must be taken to ensure that this is not the case. We welcome the steps the government has already taken to ensure that there are minimum baselines of quality, such as the protection of the term "apprenticeship", the requirement that 20% of an apprentice's time be spent in off-the-job training and the requirement that an apprenticeship be a minimum of twelve months in duration this is something that employers within our sector support, according to our own research.
- c. Government must ensure that this baseline of quality is not weakened if it becomes expedient to do so in order to hit that target of three million starts. As <u>Sir Michael Wilshaw said</u> in his keynote speech to the Annual Apprenticeship Conference (March 2016), it's vital that high quality is ensured throughout the system, and in sectors like Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, where apprenticeships have traditionally been used as a way of ensuring the workforce has the right skills, that quality is there.
- d. While we understand the value of a supply side-led target, the government must ensure that within the overall three million target, effective modelling and mapping are done to see where the increase in numbers is likely to come from. Almost a third of apprenticeships started in the 2014/15 academic year were not completed, and if that pattern is repeated across 2015-20 it will mean some one million apprenticeships not being completed, wasting billions of pounds of employers' money and millions of hours of apprentices' time.
- e. There must therefore be a mechanism which ensures that where an apprenticeship cannot be completed due to an employer or training provider going out of business, that apprenticeship can continue. From our sector's point of view, given the skills gaps and shortages being faced we simply cannot afford to waste the talents of anyone who is looking to forge a career within it. One potential mechanism would be a clearing house, similar to the apprenticeship clearing house currently being set up by the Automotive Industrial Partnership and to the one soon to be set up in the rail industry, through which apprentices who have part-completed apprenticeships could then be matched to employers. Without qualifications and/or formal assessments points, however, people will be left with no evidence of their achievements and could therefore have no option but to start from scratch if an apprenticeship cannot be fully completed. This is one strong reason that a single end-point assessment is not appropriate within the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector.

9. Progression routes

- a. There remains an imbalance between how vocational and academic routes are perceived. The BIS Committee, in its response to the government's Productivity Plan, called for the government to "do more to promote both (academic and vocational routes) as attractive career paths and good drivers of productivity". However, the Skills Minister recently said he "(doesn't) care about the parity of esteem". Without that parity, it is difficult to see how apprenticeships will not continue to be perceived in some quarters as an inferior option to an academic route.
- b. Within Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, vocational and academic routes are seen by many employers as equal, and many of the larger employers' apprenticeship schemes are highly prized and oversubscribed an apprenticeship with one of those employers is seen as a 'badge of honour'. We have put together a route map which shows young people how an apprenticeship and a university education can lead to the same educational outcome (i.e. a degree), and many of the government's new degree apprenticeships have been set up with employer involvement in engineering-related disciplines.
- c. Government must be clear about how progression will be counted in the context of the overall target of three million apprenticeship starts, because if progression from Level Two to Level Three were counted as two apprenticeship starts, there could be a possibility that this would be used as one way in which the number of starts were inflated in order to meet that target. Where progression to a higher level is appropriate, employers should be encouraged to offer it to their apprentices but



it should be down to employer need and individual aptitude to determine whether or not this happens, not top-down incentives or inducements to do so.

10. 16-19 year olds

- a. For Q2 2015/16 (August-October), government data shows that more than half of apprenticeships starts on Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies frameworks were by those under 19 (16,640 of 31,400), which is a higher proportion than for apprenticeships across all sectors (59,700 of 153,100). This is a clear choice being made by employers in our sector who in many cases are faced with the issue of an ageing workforce and who really welcome the infusion of energy and new ideas that young recruits can bring.
- b. At present, apprenticeship funding is structured in such a way that it actively encourages employers to take on younger apprentices. The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) is worth £1,500 to employers with fewer than 50 employees and which are new to apprenticeships. We welcome the soon to be introduced employer National Insurance exemption for apprentices under 25, which unlike AGE will be available to all employers taking on younger apprentices. The government estimates that this will save employers over £100 million a year, which is a not insignificant amount of money in the context of the £3bn by 2020 which will be generated by the levy.

11. Promotion and advertising

- a. The 2015 Industry Apprenticeship Council annual report found that over three in five apprentices were partially or completely unaware of the range of career opportunities available in their chosen sector before beginning their apprenticeships. We know from our own discussions with employers that they are too often met with resistance when they approach schools to talk to young people about the apprenticeship programmes they offer. To that end, we welcome the recent announcement by the Education Secretary that schools will in future be mandated to allow access to employers offering apprenticeships.
- b. We also welcome the importance government places on National Apprenticeship Week and the regularity with which it promotes apprenticeships through news releases, ministerial speeches and Parliamentary activities. Indeed, the cross-party desire to boost apprenticeship provision and promote them as a genuine and robust alternative to academic routes is heartening and means that employers can have the confidence to set up apprenticeship schemes now which will reap benefits for those they take on regardless of which parties hold power. However, there are a other initiatives which would hugely benefit from stronger Ministerial support and media coverage, for example the Skills Show and the WorldSkills competitions (the "skills Olympics"). Greater support would lead to greater prestige and help to boost the numbers of young people considering apprenticeships.
- c. Apprenticeships must be widely advertised and the process of finding a suitable apprenticeship must be made as simple and intuitive as possible. Many employers do, of course, have their own online portals, including many in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, and in some subsectors like automotive and rail there are existing or plans for UCAS-style 'clearing houses', which could provide a template for others. The Find an apprenticeship service is easy to use and reasonably comprehensive and should be expanded to become a one-stop shop for apprenticeship providers and those looking to apply. Ease of application is especially important where young people are concerned excessively complicated and fragmented systems can be off-putting and might lead young people to apply for university, even if they'd be more suited to an apprenticeship, because the process is simpler to understand.
- d. The <u>latest Employer Skills Survey</u> shows that only 27% of manufacturing employers have increased their spending on advertising in the last two years, against 39% across all sectors (manufacturing is the best sectoral fit within the ESS). It is possible that employers in our sector have chosen to prioritise other areas of spending regardless, without effective advertisement of



their apprenticeship vacancies they will struggle to find the right candidates, and an online UCASstyle service could be the solution.

12. Girls and women

- a. According to BIS the numbers of female and male apprenticeship completions are roughly equal, so it doesn't seem to be the structure and approach of apprenticeships themselves that are failing to encourage girls and women to get into engineering. However, the most recent BIS data, for 2013/14, shows that there were 14,960 male starts on engineering apprenticeship frameworks but just 590 female.
- b. A number of initiatives have been set up to counteract the impression that engineering is a male profession, including the government's Not Just For Boys campaign, the campaign group WISE and a number of employer-specific programmes. Some employers in the engineering sector now operate ratio rules for open days and other engagement activities with educational institutions, where schools must give these opportunities to a 1:1 ratio of boys to girls, and this is paying real dividends in encouraging more girls to take up these opportunities. If the number of women in engineering were increased to match the number of men it would wipe out the skills shortage, so there is a strong commercial imperative for employers to do this sort of outreach work and rebalance their workforces. As a body providing sectoral leadership, we are committed to doing our bit at our recent Semta Skills Awards, there were female finalists in all nine categories and the overall 'Best of British Engineering' winner was a female graduate engineer.
- c. When it comes to making career choices the importance of strong role models for young people cannot be understated, and as an organisation providing sectoral leadership we always look to promote strong female role models in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering through apprentice case studies, promotional videos and literature. We also manage the STEM Exchange, a matching service for employers and Further Education through which FE institutions can access Continuous Professional Development opportunities with employers from across STEM sectors.