

The Butchery Apprenticeship Stakeholder Consultation Report



Produced in association with
The Worshipful Company of Butchers



Contributors

Survey respondents were given the option to contribute anonymously. The list below reflects only those participants who chose to leave contact details.

The Food and Drink Training and Education Council (FTC) would like to thank these organisations and individuals for their valuable contribution to the consultation:

Employers:	Apprentices:
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Cranswick Country Foods	Lucy Rowlinson
Complete Meats	Andre Ferguson
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The Institute of Meat	
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Food Manufacture Magazine	
Meat Management Magazine	
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The Institute for Apprenticeships	
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Linden Management	
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Reaseheath College	
Shropshire Training	
360 Recruitment	
Bridgwater College	
Workforce Training and Development	
Duchy College	

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Background

The contents of this report form the results of a stakeholder consultation, which ran from 11th February – 12th April 2019. The consultation was part-funded by The Worshipful Company of Butchers and commissioned by The Food and Drink Training and Education Council (ftc). Its broad objective was to establish levels of satisfaction with the butchery standard apprenticeship amongst the core stakeholders involved – employers, training providers, meat trade membership organisations and apprentices themselves. The Level 2 Butcher Standard apprenticeship is now three years on from launch and is due for cyclical review of its content by The Institute for Apprenticeships. During January-March 2019 the L2 Butcher Standard was subject to a funding review, alongside 29 other standards. Following a robust defence of the existing £9k funding rate by the trailblazer group (advised by FDQ) it has recently been announced that the Butcher Standard is one of only a small number in the review to retain its current level of funding. The importance of this cannot be overstated. The increased funding for butchery training is widely acknowledged to have been a ‘game changer’ and conducive to the development of the butchery apprenticeship standard in the beginning. With funding secured, the intention of this report is now to provide guidance to the butchery employer trailblazer group on the possible future direction of the butchery apprenticeship; to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of all stakeholders and is a credit to the industry it serves.

Approach

The project has been driven by online surveys using the Survey Monkey software, face to face and telephone interviews. Three bespoke surveys were created, tailored to each stakeholder group: employers, training providers and apprentices. Thirty- six employers completed the employer survey. They comprised: independent craft butchers (50%), meat processors (28%), catering butchers (14%) and supermarkets (8%). Thirteen training providers, colleges and employer-providers also completed an online survey. Twenty-nine apprentices, of which around 70% were craft butchers, 20% process butchers and the remaining 10% split between supermarket, wholesale and catering butchers, answered 10 questions on their apprenticeship. In all, between 80-85 stakeholders responded to the overall consultation.

Links to the surveys and interview requests were disseminated via direct mail to appropriate contacts through FDQ, National Craft Butchers, The Institute of Meat, Q Guild and the Project Manager. The trade press was briefed, and both Food Manufacture and Meat Management covered the story and included links to the surveys within their coverage. A news piece on the consultation also featured on the ftc website. Throughout the consultation social media was used to drive further engagement. Unless otherwise stated the comments refer to the Level 2 Standard. Only a very small number of employers have so far commenced apprentices onto the Advanced Butcher apprenticeship.

Executive Summary

The Level 2 Butcher Standard is viewed by many employers and training providers as still being a very new apprenticeship. Training providers especially seemed to feel it is still 'bedding in' and were surprised that it was already due for review. The broad consensus is that this is a successful apprenticeship and a step up from anything which has gone before. Inevitably, the fact that it is more comprehensive and challenging for apprentices means it can be more taxing to deliver. Some of the issues highlighted in the report are possibly 'teething problems' which in time will be overcome as all stakeholders become more familiar with the programme. The key findings of the consultation are:

- The *content* of the apprenticeship generates high levels of satisfaction amongst virtually all stakeholders
- The subject of the *structure* of the apprenticeship - Core and Options versus Sector Specific divides stakeholders
- IfA policy changes could impact decisions about the future structure and written format of the apprenticeship
- Some training providers are finding '20% off the job training' to be an unrealistic and burdensome requirement
- The logbook is a useful resource, though can be problematic for less academic apprentices. The English and Maths mandatory requirements present similar issues
- The Institute of Meat is respected by employers, but its perceived value and understanding by apprentices is of concern to some employers and training providers
- End-point assessment is respected and valued, but is not without 'teething issues'
- The Advanced Butchery Apprenticeship is taking time to embed across the industry. However, employers are universally positive about its availability and the progression opportunities it presents, even if unfamiliar with the detail of its content

Content of the butchery apprenticeship

Both employers and training providers were asked to consider the stated knowledge, skills and behaviours of the standard.

Knowledge – The clear majority of employers who responded to the consultation are satisfied that it either *fully* (64%) or *mostly* (28%) reflects the understanding needed by a L2 butcher. Training providers echoed this, with all agreeing that the core apprenticeship either *fully* (46%) or *mostly* (54%) reflected the knowledge required. It is acknowledged that the apprenticeship is much more challenging and requires more in-depth knowledge than any previous programme. A small number felt this level of knowledge, especially for process butchers was unnecessary, but most echoed the sentiment voiced by Lee Gibson of 360° Recruitment, an independent training provider with national coverage,

"The butchery standard has helped apprentices to understand the whole process rather than just their own role. It has given them the chance to have a career rather than just a job."

Skills – Perhaps reflecting the larger number of craft butchers who completed the survey, over 80% of employers felt that the core skills *accurately* reflect the skills needed by a L2 butcher. One hundred percent of training providers felt the core skills either *fully* or *mostly* reflect competence requirements.

Behaviours – Almost 70% of both employers and training providers felt the core behaviours of the apprenticeship *fully* represent the behaviours required; with the remainder largely agreeing that the core behaviours *mostly* represent the requirement for a L2 butcher.

The apprentice survey asked the apprentices to consider how *relevant* the KSBs of the Butcher Standard had been in practice to their work. 59% answered ‘very relevant’ with a further 38% answering ‘quite relevant’.

Apprentices themselves were then asked the most practical of questions:

‘How useful has your apprenticeship been in helping you do your day to day job better?’

Almost three quarters of the respondents said their apprenticeship had been ‘very useful’, with the remaining respondents (all bar one) answering, ‘quite useful’.

“I have been able to apply what I have learnt into my work. This has given me a wider range of skills that are helpful to my employer.” (Connor Carrick, Cranstons)

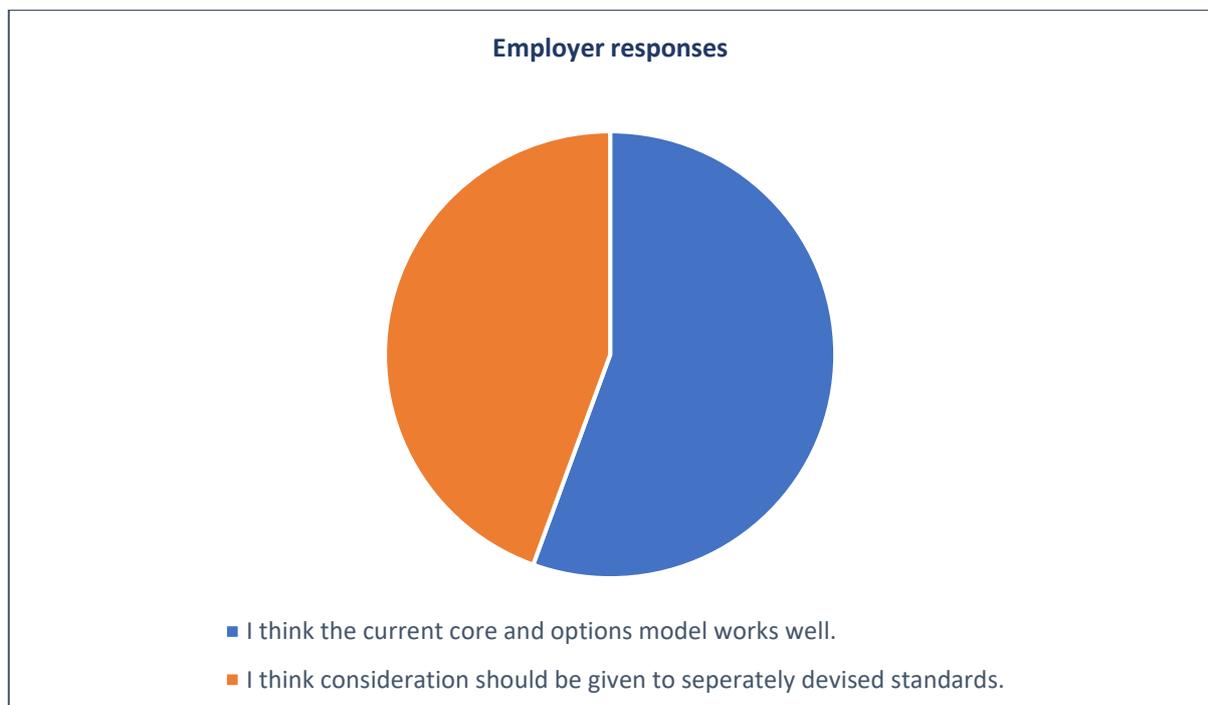
“I found it informative and extremely practical.” (Jack White, Cranswick)

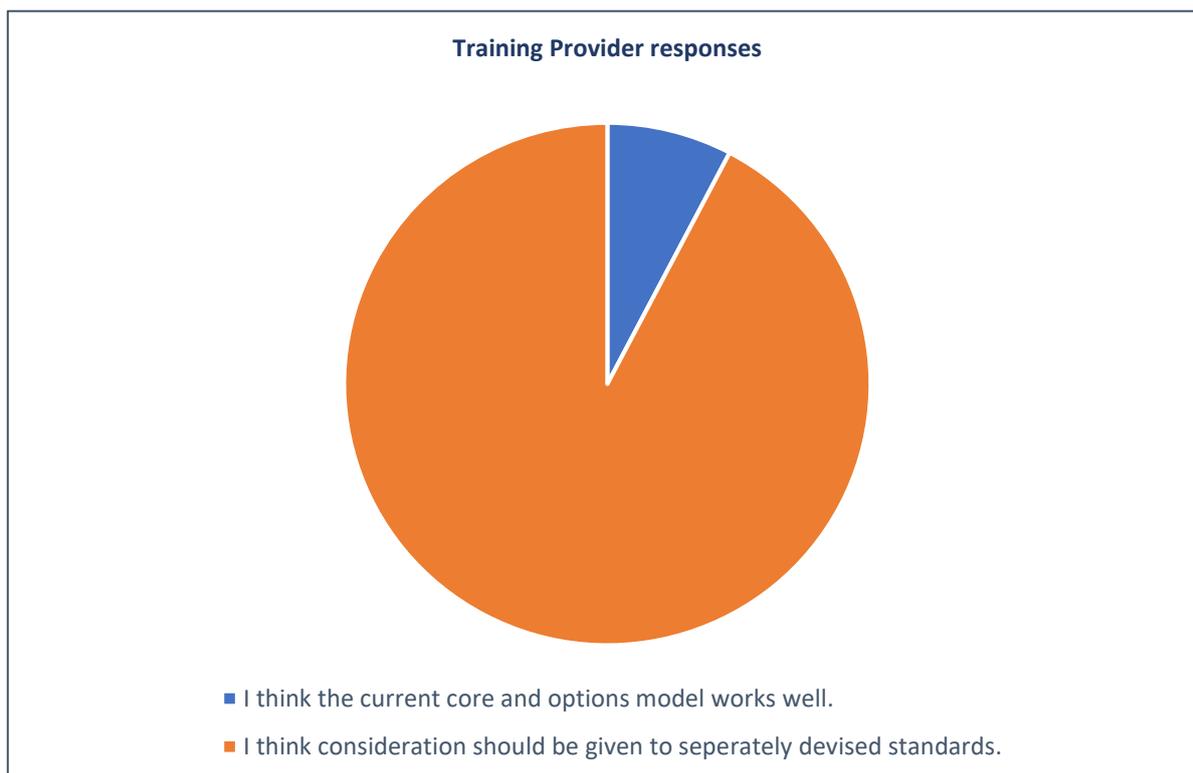
“It’s helped me progress my career and help others at work.” (James Marks)

Core and Options versus sector specific standards

Employers and training providers were asked the following question in their respective surveys:

‘The current L2 Butcher Standard is a single apprenticeship programme made up of core Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours supplemented with specialist retail or processing pathway, depending on the nature of the business. Do you agree with the current single industry standard, or should consideration be given to new separately devised standards, e.g. one for Craft Retail Butcher, Processing Butcher, In-Store Butcher, etc?’





This question divided stakeholders the most. The need for butchers to receive ‘all round’ training at this stage of their careers was recognised and viewed as a positive by many employers. Some employers also recognised that it was a duty of the apprenticeship to provide transferable skills for apprentices. Martin Jones, Deputy MD of Cranstons, made the point that in all industries apprentices needed to learn a broad range of skills to achieve their qualification. Even if they didn’t go on to utilise all those skills he felt it was more important to include them rather than ‘dilute’ the overall apprenticeship. Other employer comments included,

“The meat industry is a large sector and the foundation of the above core principles will give the apprentice chance to see which area they are most interested in. They should then be able to focus their learning in that part of the industry to forward their career” (Shaun, Dawn Meats)

“To have the title of butcher we need to set a high base level so the apprenticeship is something worth having” (John Mettrick, President, National Craft Butchers)

However, 46% of employers felt consideration *should* be given for sector specific standards. The sector generating the most response for a specific standard was processing, followed by craft, wholesale, retail (in store) and catering.

“Diverse standards for craft, retail (in store) and process butchers would be beneficial” (Paul Took, Butchery Academy Training Leader, Cranswick)

“Being from a company that has both retail and catering sites the difference in specific jobs carried out between the sites is huge. There should be different standards” (Brendan Anderton Butchers)

“Whilst the pathways have proven adequate in differentiating and acknowledging the different types of butchery skills a separate code would allow for more detailed/focussed learning within a particular code” (Mike Roach, Dunbia)

In the survey training providers were more vociferous in their call for separate standards, with twelve of the thirteen respondents opting for this route forward. Yet after interviewing 6 providers there was more mixed opinion. Shropshire Training and 360° Recruitment both have large meat processors as customers yet are supportive of the current model. Some providers servicing meat processing customers undoubtedly feel that the existing apprenticeship is too much geared to craft butchery though.

“Although I feel the L2 works well I find that different businesses have a limited scope for the full programme to be completed. For instance, a pork producing plant will only butcher pork, but their emphasis will be on speed rather than craft.” (Philip Hand, Reaseheath College)

“For poultry processing the L2 Butcher Standard is an absolute disaster.” (Neale McArdle, Poultec)

Poultec’s comment may reflect the very different nature of poultry processing versus red meat processing. Generally, it is more heavily automated, requiring far less classic butchery skills. Poultec now deliver more ‘leadership and management’ apprenticeships within the poultry sector, though feel that a gap remains in the market for a practical poultry processing apprenticeship.

David Lishman, Chairman of Q Guild Butchers raised a very practical consideration. Splitting the standard would lower the number of apprentices on each new standard. If split, Lishman questioned whether some of the new standards would be financially viable for training providers to deliver.

How the Institute for Apprenticeships evolving policy could affect the butchery apprenticeship

IfA Senior Relationship Manager, Diane Wilford, was interviewed as part of the consultation. The IfA recognise that there has been much positive feedback in the meat industry (and indeed in Government) to the apprenticeship. The butcher apprenticeship was the first food craft apprenticeship to be approved back in 2015. Since that time, Wilford explained, IfA policy has evolved. The future description and wording of the butcher standard would probably need to be aligned to the current format, which maps ‘Duties’ clearly to knowledge, skills and behaviours and requires these to be ‘clear and specific’. She recommended that the trailblazer group review a more recently approved apprenticeship for guidance,

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/drinks-dispense-technician/>

IfA policy on Core and Options has also evolved; the ‘option’ should not be considered a specialism but as an occupation in its own right. Wilford’s advice to the trailblazer group would be to consider in detail each of the ‘options’ as a stand-alone occupation and see how much overlap there is with the core L2 Butcher. If there is overlap with most duties, then they should be part of the same apprenticeship. However, if most duties differ, or the option is a different ‘size’ to the core apprenticeship then they may need to consider separate apprenticeships.

Meeting the 20% off the job requirement

Providers were split over this issue – with 46% finding it ‘very easy’ or ‘quite easy’ to deliver and 54% finding it ‘not easy’ or ‘very difficult’ to deliver. Yet it is something apprentices themselves clearly value, with 93% of apprentices surveyed feeling their skills and knowledge had ‘very much improved’ or ‘quite improved’ as a result.

Common issues for training providers were:

- The location and number of apprentices requiring training. Some providers found it difficult to cost effectively deliver the quantity of training needed, when distances between sites was great and the numbers of apprentices were low.
- Interpretation of 'off the job'. If the term is taken literally, as in 'away from the workplace' providers struggled to meet the requirement, especially with smaller employers. However, many providers view the term more flexibly and see 'off the job' as anything requiring supervision to complete; therefore not part of the apprentice's current job role.
- Gaining employer 'buy in'. This seemed to be more of an issue with smaller employers. When asked about this, Roger Kelsey of National Craft Butchers, acknowledged that some employers might not properly commit to the ruling, saying that '*commercial realities take over*'. Jane Dale, of MEAT Ipswich said they were having to re-educate employers on their responsibilities for the apprentices learning.
- How to deliver this requirement for more experienced apprentices. Such apprentices often already have well developed butchery skills, making it difficult to add enough value to warrant 20% off the job training. One training provider commented that just as the duration of the overall apprenticeship is flexible, based on experience, so should the amount of off the job training.
- Capturing the 'off the job' learning. Both employers and providers said that whilst the logbook was a helpful reference guide, some apprentices struggled or were reluctant to complete it.

Overall, the apprentices who responded to the survey were very positive about the training experience:



The butchery logbook and mandatory qualifications

In short, the logbook is valued more by the employers and apprentices than it is by the training providers, whose job it is to get the apprentice to complete it. Over 80% of employers value the logbook both as a record of learning and achievement and a means of keeping check on their apprentice's progress. Two thirds of training providers saw value in the logbook, whilst a third did not. Daniel Ferguson-Mullings, of Bridgwater College, echoed the comments made by other providers when he described the logbook as,

“unwieldy and daunting for apprentices, many of which have poor pen skills”

Some training providers use the logbook more holistically. By uploading some of its content to digital formats, such as OneFile, Bridgwater College has had great success in getting apprentices to record and upload learning via their mobile phones.

The mandatory Maths and English qualifications also received some negative feedback from employers and providers. Several felt they were likened by apprentices to 'schoolwork'. John Mettrick, of Mettricks Butchers, Glossop, found that his apprentices were 'frightened' of attempting academic qualifications as they had bad memories of school. However, he recognised their importance for the apprenticeship, as poor basic numeracy is sometimes an issue. His suggestion for combatting resistance was to ensure numeracy learning was directly related to the job. At Mettricks, apprentices are given 'real life' mathematical tasks, such as calculating curing percentages. They have found apprentices learn more quickly and are less unnerved by the maths exam if they understand the practical application of the qualification.

Becky Dickinson, People Specialist, Morrisons, has found the Maths and English requirement a struggle for their process butchers, several of whom do not speak English as their first language. Morrisons recognise the importance of basic numeracy and literacy qualifications to the job though, especially from a health and safety point of view. Morrisons have had good results from their 'buddy scheme' to improve literacy skills, whereby non-English speaking apprentices are paired with local apprentices.

Institute of Meat membership

The question was posed as to how valued the membership of the IoM was as part of the apprenticeship. Whilst the majority of all stakeholder groups did appreciate the value in IoM membership, over 20% of apprentices stated that they didn't value the membership that much or at all. Between 23-24% of training providers and employers were ambivalent towards it. The survey commentary and interview comments suggested a concern amongst employers and providers that apprentices had little understanding of the role of the IoM, or that membership could be helpful to their career.

“As a member of the IoM myself I would like the membership to be valued more by the apprentices themselves” (Pete Horton, ABP Beef)

“I feel the IoM could be more appealing to apprentices as I feel the apprentices themselves do not value the membership” (Max, Brendan Anderton Butchers)

“I feel the young apprentices do not fully appreciate the role of the IoM even though as providers we promote them” (Jake Maddox, Shropshire Training)

One training provider suggested the annual IoM membership should be a reward for *successful completion* of the apprenticeship, rather than given at enrolment. At the beginning of the apprenticeship they felt it had little meaning to apprentices and was ‘lost’ in the busy first weeks when the apprentice was trying to absorb lots of new information.

End-point assessment

Views of end-point assessment expressed by employers and providers should be taken as indicative only, as the majority of the employer and training providers surveyed had apprentices still on programme – only 25-30% had completed their EPA.

The concept of a final assessment was broadly accepted as a positive change in the apprenticeship model, especially by employers. John Mettrick said it *‘made the apprenticeship something worth having’* As an ‘unknown’ some training providers were reserving judgement. Jake Maddox, of Shropshire Training, whilst supportive of the need for EPA, felt that the *‘sanitary, totally alien environment’* of the EPA *‘undoes all our work in building apprentice’s confidence’* and makes it impossible for apprentices to perform at their best. Maddox felt it was important for the industry to consider how important success in the apprenticeship is to learners,

“The apprenticeship represents an opportunity for young people to achieve who have not achieved at school”

Maddox appealed for apprentices to be assessed in an environment they were comfortable with, which in his view would yield better results and be less traumatic for the learner.

Diane Wilford at the Institute for Apprenticeships also said that as a rule the IfA now prefer work observations, rather than practical skills tests that are taken outside of the natural workplace. This was also because it is felt that apprentices are likely to perform better if assessed in their normal working environment.

From an apprentice’s point of view almost half those completing the survey had completed their EPA, with most of the remainder in the second year of their apprenticeship. Over 90% of the total respondents said they felt ‘very’ or ‘quite prepared’ for their EPA.

Morrisons and End-point Assessment

Morrisons have around 180 butchers on the apprenticeship programme, 160 in-store butchers and 20 process butchers. Of this number 14 have now completed their EPA. Overall Morrisons are very satisfied with the apprenticeship programme, with Becky Dickinson commenting that,

“Of the three craft apprenticeships, butchery, fishmonger and bakery; butchery is by far the best”

This was mainly a reflection on the fact that butchery was more straight-forward to deliver and manage within store and that end-point assessment can be completed in one day, unlike the bakery and fishmonger EPAs which take place over 2 days.

However, Morrisons do have some concerns arising from their initial end-point assessments. Primarily these surround the issue that customer service skills and counter display do not comprise part of the in-store butcher EPA. Both are very important to Morrisons and Becky Dickinson felt that they must also be important to independent retail butchers. The lack of observed customer service also causes a logistical problem at EPA, as in Morrisons this takes place in a 'live environment', in a segregated area, but still behind the counter. At times, if other staff are busy, an apprentice, even on EPA, might be required to serve a customer. Dickinson was adamant that,

"We would never train our colleagues to ignore a customer under any circumstance."

This obviously breaks the flow of the EPA and disadvantages the apprentice. Dickinson said this problem would not occur with the fishmonger or bakery EPA, as observation of customer skills forms part of the assessment. Morrisons also asked for more specific descriptors to be used on the grading criteria, to help apprentices understand what they need to do to achieve the highest grade.

Advanced Butchery Apprenticeship is universally welcomed, if not universally understood

The employer survey asked,

'Would you consider the Advanced Butcher apprenticeship for your apprentices at some point in the future?'

It is perhaps a measure of how well regarded generally the L2 Standard is that almost 90% of the employers responded with a resounding 'Yes'.

This enthusiasm was echoed both in interviews and post survey conversations with employers. In fact, several employers requested information on the apprenticeship. Worth noting though is that awareness of the advanced butcher apprenticeship is at a lower level than the intermediate apprenticeship. This is not surprising, given that the L2 has had over a year's head start on the advanced apprenticeship. Furthermore, revisions to the assessment plan effectively put the apprenticeship 'in limbo' for several months, making it difficult to promote. Now the revised assessment plan is fully approved, awarding and end-point assessment organisations may promote it more proactively.

The Institute for Apprenticeships advised that the changing format of apprenticeship standards (as mentioned earlier) might also impact on the Advanced Butcher Standard. Their recommendation was for the trailblazer group to review both the L2 and Advanced together, rather than in isolation. The IfA will be looking for an explicit and marked difference in the duties of an advanced butcher, which map into 'specific' knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Conclusions and Recommendations

With the apprenticeship still in its infancy – only 25-30% of employers and training providers apprentices had completed their EPA, it would be foolish to draw absolute conclusions. The consultation has however established that this is an apprenticeship being widely embraced by the meat industry, and though not perfect, marks a significant step forward for the industry. Described by the Chairman of The Q Guild as '...a better and more focussed apprenticeship' it is both restoring

the mastery of traditional butchery skills whilst educating the apprentice on the wider meat industry.

The pretext of the reformed apprenticeships was that they should be 'by employers for employers'. Of the employers who responded to the survey, 78% felt that the Butcher Standard Apprenticeship was 'much' or 'somewhat better' than the framework it replaced.

The final question in the apprentice's survey was perhaps the acid test of their particular experience,



Based on the learnings we have explored, it is recommended that consideration be given to the following recommendations:

1. Consider the viability of the process and in-store butchery routes as separate apprenticeships, in line with industry and Institute for Apprenticeships comments. The ability of training providers to cost-effectively service sector specific apprenticeships should form part of that consideration.
2. Work with End Point Assessment Organisations to establish workshops or forums for training providers on the topic of 20% off the job training. This would give clarity on what constitutes 'off the job' and enable the sharing of best practise.
3. Improve the Institute of Meat's connections with apprentices. Some of the training providers may be open to visits from the IoM to promote the value of membership.
4. Review the log book with a view to condensing and re-ordering its contents. Ensure content is suitable for uploading to a digital file.