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Over-60s ‘rebadged as apprentices’ to cut down wage bills

OVER-60s workers are being “rebadged” as apprentices, according to new figures.

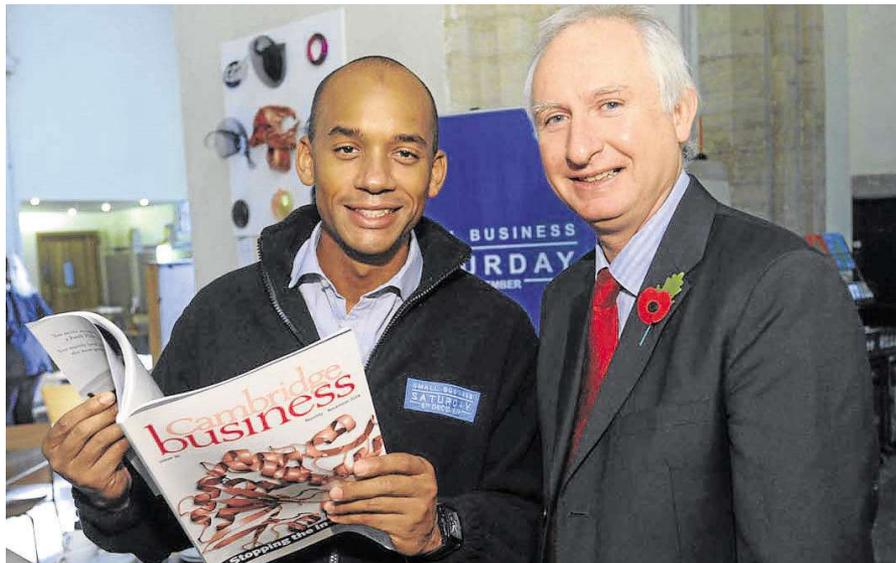
Between 2009/10 and 2013/14 the number of over-60s starting an apprenticeship increased by 520 per cent – 25 times more than the figure for under-25s, which grew by 21 per cent.

And the new figures show that 93 per cent of those aged 25 or older already worked for their employer before starting their apprenticeship, suggesting that many existing training programmes for people already in work are simply being rebadged as apprenticeships.

This is despite the fact that politicians have often tried to link apprenticeship starts as a solution to the problem of youth unemployment.

Many apprentices aren't receiving proper pay or training. A report from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, published last month, found that:

- The number of under 25 year olds starting an apprenticeship has fallen by over 1,000 in the last year.
- The number of 19-24 years starting one has fallen by over 6,000.
- 15 per cent are paid below the appropriate NMW (new minimum wage)
- Younger apprentices are more likely to be earning less than the NMW. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of Level 2 and Level 3 16-



18 year olds have non-compliant pay levels.

- 28 per cent of Level 2 and Level 3 apprentices who do not have a written contract are paid below the NMW
- And recent government figures have shown that 21 per cent of apprentices have received no formal training.

Commenting, Shadow Business Secretary Chuka Umunna MP (pictured left on a recent visit

to Cambridge) said: “To grow the number of high-skilled, better-paid jobs we need more apprenticeship opportunities – particularly for our young people. But we are seeing the numbers of apprenticeships falling and worryingly there’s been a significant drop in apprenticeship starts for young people.

“We’ve also witnessed the historic apprenticeship brand being tarnished as training for

employees who are already in work has been re-badged under the apprenticeship label. As a result, we’ve seen a huge spike in over-60s taking apprenticeships while the number of young people taking apprenticeships has fallen.

In October David Cameron said his Government would continue to promote apprenticeships in the next Parliament “and end youth unemployment”.



January blues offset by lure of a holiday

UNPRODUCTIVE and miserable on your first day back in the office? You're not the only one. Research commissioned by comparethemarket.com has found that UK workers are not all raring to go in the new year, with 44 per cent saying that they will not be productive and 47 per cent admitting that they are “still on holiday mode” on their first day back.

For many people, instead of working, it appears that around half of the UK adults will be spending their time online. The most popular activity today for unproductive workers will be planning their next holiday (34 per cent), closely followed by surfing websites (33 per cent), online shopping (31 per cent) and using social media (30 per cent). As the figures suggest, most indulge in more than one non-work related activity.

This “holiday mode” attitude can perhaps be best understood as an attempt to offset the infamous “January Blues”, as people try to make themselves feel better by planning another holiday as the realities of work bite. comparethemarket.com’s study certainly suggests this is the case, as over a quarter of respondents (27 per cent) said they will feel “gloomy” and a further 23 per cent said that they would be “exhausted”.

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