

# KITCHEN TALENT: TRAINING AND RETAINING THE CHEFS OF THE FUTURE

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## Foreword

There is a striking contrast between the findings of Centre for London's previous report – *Culture Club: Social mobility in the creative and cultural industries* – and this one. The problem with London's cultural industries is that they are almost too alluring. Work tends to be high status, stimulating, and relatively well paid. As a result, the sector is dominated by the sharp-elbowed, white, middle class graduates from the 'better' universities with ready supplies of financial, social and cultural capital. Breaking in can be very hard if you don't have the right connections, cultural references and family money.

Cheffing, on the other hand, remains a relatively low status and poorly rewarded career choice. This does of course make it easier for those with talent to get into catering courses, secure work and prosper. But getting a good education, finding a job with decent hours, good pay and a supportive culture can be hard. Colleges say they struggle to recruit motivated students. Employers complain that apprentices and graduates lack skills and commitment. Students and younger chefs – especially women – drop out of the sector at an astonishing rate.

There is nothing inevitable about this. Being a chef is not so very different from a graphic designer or a music producer. The range of opportunities, the demands of the job, and the skills and qualities needed in all of them are broadly similar.

No doubt the contrast has deep historical roots. In Britain cooking has long tended to be viewed as a feminine activity, so chefs, even male ones, lacked status – all of France's famous 18th century cookery writers were men; all of Britain's were women. But it is sustained by our system of education and by policy. This report sets out ideas that can help change the attitudes and practices that have held London's kitchens back for too long, so turning cooking from a trade into a creative profession. We believe that creating some great London food colleges is at the heart of this.

Both the challenge and the opportunity will be to make working in a kitchen as attractive as working in a theatre, digital agency or TV production company, while ensuring that cheffing remains truly open to people from all backgrounds.

Ben Rogers,  
Director, Centre for London

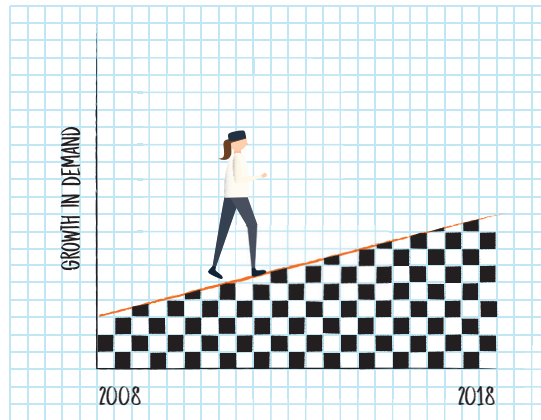


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## Demand for chefs in London has been growing fast

London has three times more chefs than 10 years ago (the number of chefs in the rest of the UK has doubled).



## But the sector struggles with both recruitment and retention

Industry experts estimate that 10 per cent of workers leave the profession every year - around 20,000 chefs.

# 10%

**A reliance on an international workforce**  
85 per cent of London's chefs were born abroad vs. 50 per cent in the rest of the UK.

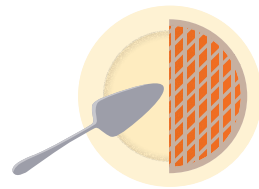


## This high turnover is being driven by...

### Low pay

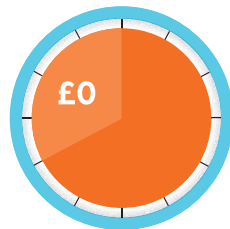
In 2017/18 half of London's chefs earned under £21,000 annually.

# £21,000



### Unpaid overtime and long working hours

Many chefs say their average working week is 50-60 hours.



### Lack of flexible working and sexism

Women make up only 15 per cent of chefs.

**'Women are approached immediately as inferior —some are treated as assistants.'**

Former Chef

And there isn't a steady supply of young chefs entering the profession...

## College catering courses have high dropout rates

9,000 young people are in their first year of a chef or cookery course but the number drops to around 6,000 in the third year.

**'Students aren't told how to deal with being mentally tired, when you're on the edge of burning out, when you need help.'**

Former Chef, fine dining

## Low take up of apprenticeships

660 people started a chef apprenticeship in London in 2018. London offers 21 per cent of chef jobs but 12 per cent of chef apprenticeships.



## London must act to inspire and equip aspiring chefs with the skills and experience to succeed...

- 16 colleges provide catering courses in London but none are hospitality specific.
- Establish a new 'London College of Food'.
- Create a long-term plan to help restaurants catch up with the Mayor of London's Good Work Standard.
- Establish a new Institute of Chefs and Cooks to spread best practice.





# Summary

## **London's food scene is booming, but is highly vulnerable to staff shortages...**

- The number of chefs in London has more than tripled since 2009.
- Growth has partly come from migration – 85 per cent of London's chefs were born abroad, compared to 50 per cent in the rest of the UK.
- This makes London's restaurant scene particularly vulnerable at a time of falling immigration and Brexit.

## **London does not do enough to inspire sufficient chef talent...**

- At an early age, young people seem to like the idea of becoming a chef, but as they grow up their ambitions change – partly because many young Londoners have few opportunities to develop food knowledge and experience the city's gastronomy.
- The offer of culinary training generally needs greater visibility.

## **Education and training do not meet the industry's needs...**

- London has a good provision of catering courses, including some of the best in the country – but catering colleges have high dropout rates.
- Most courses cannot provide the range of skills needed to thrive as a chef, such as creativity and resilience: these are best learnt in the workplace.
- The government apprenticeship scheme is not yet delivering for the profession, particularly in London. The city represents 21 per cent of chef jobs but only offers 12 per cent of chef apprenticeships.

### **...and the working conditions and pay make employee retention difficult.**

- The UK loses an estimated 10 per cent of its working chefs every year, or 20,000 chefs.
- London loses skilled chefs because of low rewards compared to the cost of living, and difficult working conditions.
- Lack of flexible working and frequent sexism in kitchen environments mean the sector misses out almost completely on female talent: only 15 per cent of chefs are women.

Fortunately, the profession can build on its many strengths, and is well represented by passionate, networked, creative and entrepreneurial individuals. There is also much that can be done to cultivate local culinary talent:

### **Inspire young people from an early age by...**

- Developing their knowledge of food, and of London's culinary scene.
- Promoting the culinary arts as part of London's creative industries, and chefs as one of London's main assets.

### **Improve chef education and training by...**

- Creating a more modular catering curriculum, with longer work experience placements and greater business involvement.
- Consolidating catering courses into a London College of Food, which aspirant chefs would join after completing a local course to develop foundation skills.

- Enhancing the status of apprenticeship qualifications to give them prestige on a par with GCSEs, A Levels and degrees.

### **Create better care for chefs at work by...**

- Encouraging the catering industry and the Mayor of London to draft a plan with the aim of securing wider commitment to the Mayor's Good Work Standard.
- Setting up a powerful professional organisation that reflects the growth of the culinary profession and its importance to the city. An Institute of Chefs and Cooks would build on existing organisations, unite the profession, promote good work standards and facilitate mutual support.



# Introduction

There seems to be an ever-widening range of options for eating out in London – and in recent years, the city’s food scene has expanded beyond all recognition. The number of places serving cooked food in London (including restaurants, stalls, cafes, gastropubs, and takeaways) has increased by almost 50 per cent since 2001,<sup>1</sup> and for every year of the last 20 years there were more restaurant openings than closures.<sup>2</sup>

The city has been hungry for chefs: according to the Office for National Statistics, London now has at least three times more chefs than in 2009 (while the number of chefs in the rest of the UK has doubled).<sup>3</sup> This growth has made hospitality one of London’s large industries: in 2016, 55,000 chefs and cooks worked in the city, alongside 45,000 waiting staff and 50,000 kitchen and catering assistants. In total there are more workers in front of house and kitchens than there are graphic designers, lawyers and chartered accountants combined.<sup>4</sup> Once a byword for bad food, the city’s culinary scene is now a source of innovation, a creator of jobs, and an important export: visitors come to London to try its range of cuisines as well as to see its historical monuments.

Yet the “golden age” of London’s booming food scene may be drawing to a close.<sup>5</sup> 2018 saw a spate of closures, largely but not exclusively in “casual dining”, and reports of such closures continue.<sup>6</sup> Far from the all-time high of 2015 when Harden’s Guide recorded 3.2 independent restaurant openings for each closure, in 2018 there were 1.4 openings per closure – levels last seen during the recession. Restaurateurs say all their costs are rising simultaneously – rents, business rates, more expensive imported ingredients owing to weak sterling, and a higher minimum wage.

This makes London's restaurant scene particularly vulnerable to curbs in immigration and Brexit. According to the most recent data from the Office for National Statistics, around 85 per cent of London’s chefs were born abroad, compared to a figure of 50 per cent in the rest of the country.<sup>7</sup> This should not be a matter of surprise: even when Britain was a byword for bad food, London’s French, Italian, Indian, Greek and Chinese

restaurants were often the exception (even if some served ersatz fare that would have been unrecognisable in its “home country”). While London has recently seen a renaissance in English food, rooted in respect for local sourcing and traditional techniques, it is still a city whose culinary scene is as diverse and internationalised as its population. Almost anyone can find a restaurant in London where they can eat the food of home.

The profession’s internationalised workforce reflects this heritage, but also a chronic skills shortage that could be worsened by tighter immigration controls. Every year, the UK loses 10 per cent of its chefs due to attrition, and the best estimates suggest that the country loses chefs more quickly than it can train new ones in its catering colleges and through apprenticeships.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, skilled chefs have been on the government’s Shortage Occupation List every year since the list was introduced in 2008, despite open borders with the EU. And, incredibly, the most in-demand job title across London on job search website Indeed (the UK’s largest) is “chef”: in the year to September 2018, over two per cent of all job adverts in Greater London were for chefs.

At the same time, only 15 per cent of chefs in London’s kitchens are female, even though women make up the majority of school, hospital or office cook positions.<sup>9</sup> And many Londoners are seeking more meaningful jobs – roles in which they can see the fruits of their labour, interact with colleagues, or create a business of their own. The city’s higher-end kitchens are clearly missing out on a huge pool of potential chefs.

Brexit, and the tighter immigration rules announced by the government, will be a profound challenge for London’s culinary scene. In many regards, attracting and retaining chefs is a UK-wide issue, but it is one that disproportionately affects London, where one-fifth of the country’s chefs work. As a consequence, London should look at the issue of cultivating and retaining kitchen talent as a matter of urgency.

There are also new opportunities to build on. First, London is gaining more power over skills funding: from September 2019, the Mayor of London gains control of London's Adult Education Budget (c. £306 million a year), which funds the provision of education and training for learners aged 19 and over. The Mayor has also committed to a £82 million Skills for Londoners fund between 2017 and 2020.

Second, the government has introduced a new incentive for businesses to offer apprenticeships. Since 2017 an "apprenticeship levy" essentially requires larger employers (with a payroll over £3 million) to ringfence a portion (0.5 per cent) of their annual pay bill to fund apprenticeships within the company – or face paying the levy to government. The total levy is expected to ringfence at least £2.5 billion a year to fund apprenticeships. The government has committed to a review of the levy by 2020, and this could address whether the levy raised within specific regions or sectors could also be ringfenced.

This report looks at the issues facing the culinary sector through the lenses of competitiveness and inclusion. It asks:

- How can we preserve the dynamism of London's culinary scene – which is both a magnet for Londoners and visitors alike, and a part of the city's identity?
- How can we create good and rewarding jobs in the industry?

Restaurants have traditionally offered social mobility: they have low barriers to entry (no need for a university degree), yet provide workers with an opportunity to acquire skills and become leaders. However, as this report shows, the sector must improve on how it rewards and cares for its staff.

## Focusing on chefs

Centre for London's 2017 report *Open City: London after Brexit* highlighted the particular vulnerability of hospitality and catering industries to reductions in immigration.

Of course, hospitality and catering as a category spans hugely diverse careers and professions. This report focuses specifically on cultivating kitchen talent, and in particular creative food – "cheffing skills". Creative skills have been defined as "the ability to bring to life concepts that are novel and valuable, as well as creating 'unfamiliar combinations of familiar ideas' in ways that require a rich store of knowledge." These skills take time and effort to develop, but are also at less risk of automation.<sup>10</sup>

We chose to leave food production and front-of-house work out of the scope of this report, though some of our findings will have wider relevance. These jobs are also skilled and essential to the success of London's eating out scene: for example, front-of-house service requires high levels of social perceptiveness, which is amongst the hardest skills to automate. Production chefs or cooks need "highly methodical organisational skills, energy, accuracy, [and] attention to detail", but they are "likely to work with centrally developed standardised recipes and menus, producing food often in high volumes", according to the Institute for Apprenticeships. There are big challenges ahead in these positions too, and we welcome further research on how these might be tackled.

There is a broad spectrum of culinary workers. And there are other ways of thinking about the field, from amateur to professional and those in between – the Pro-Ams, "enthusiastic amateurs, pursuing activities to professional standards".<sup>11</sup> The dividing line between a chef and a production cook will always be a somewhat arbitrary one – particularly in London's fast-moving food scene – but for the purposes of this report, we focus on developing and retaining the chef talent that London needs.

**Chapter 1** explores the possible reasons behind the shortage of chefs, at a time when eating out has never been more popular and culinary talent shows are watched by millions.

- **Section 1** begins with the issue of prestige – many chefs deeply feel that their careers are not as valued in the UK as they are elsewhere; additionally, London does not seem to inspire enough local talent.
- **Section 2** shows that the rapid growth in eating out hasn't been matched by an expansion and improvement of culinary education and training.
- **Section 3** suggests that employers must do more to improve working standards in order to retain chefs, otherwise the industry will continue to lose skilled chefs as quickly as they can be trained.

**Chapter 2** proposes solutions to these challenges – showing how London could be better at cultivating local culinary talent, and suggesting ways to raise work standards and make the sector attractive to all Londoners at a time of economic pressure.

### ***Research methods***

This report uses a mix of research methods. We sourced data on London chefs, their wellbeing, and pay from the Office for National Statistics, job search website Indeed, the CODE hospitality survey, and a review of existing literature. New data on apprenticeships and catering courses is provided by the Department for Education.

We then undertook 30 interviews with London chefs and former chefs, restaurateurs, food business entrepreneurs, and other industry experts. These interviews spanned fine dining, bistro and casual dining, street food and contact caterers. We also interviewed senior executives of catering colleges to review their understanding of the challenges of recruitment and retention.



**1.**

# The challenges

## Appeal of the profession

There is a widespread feeling among chefs, restaurateurs, and trainers that the main barrier to cultivating the next generation of chefs is something deeply ingrained in our culture – a lack of respect for food and cooking. They think this is made manifest in our school system, where there is a contrast between domestic science and arts teaching – the latter being much more respected and pursued as a GCSE subject – but also in the advice that parents and schools give to young people. The result is that employers say they rarely see young people entering culinary education or training as the result of an active choice.

Almost all of our interviewees mentioned three common views that make the chef profession unattractive in the eyes of young people:

1. Kitchen jobs are often low paid.
2. Kitchen jobs are associated with servitude, and not held in high social esteem.
3. Kitchen jobs aren't "a proper career", but a means to an end, a stopgap.

Yet younger children seem to like the idea of being a chef. A global study led by the OECD asked 130,000 British children aged between 7 and 11 years to draw what they wanted to be when they were older. "Chef" ranked at number 12 – though UK children were half as likely as young Swiss and Chinese children to express this preference.<sup>12</sup>

As children get older, their ambitions change. Psychologists at the University of Surrey surveyed 3,000 young people in secondary schools and colleges across England about their perceptions of eight occupations with the greatest skills shortages. The survey identified factors that may push young people away from the profession. Only 14 per cent of young people described chefs as "creative", and 44 per cent identified off-putting factors such as "working under

criticism”, “pressure”, “rushing about”, “the long hours”, “fear of mistakes”, “stressful”, “long nights and long hours”, “hot”, “unhappy customers”, and “getting shouted at by people like Gordon Ramsay”.<sup>13</sup>

Given the negatives associated with the profession, the importance of nurturing interest in food, and skill and enjoyment in cooking, becomes paramount.

These surveys shed light on the general aspirations of young people, but aspirations are shaped by lived experience. Interviewees pointed out how experiences of poverty and migration had an important impact on experiences of food outside the home: there is a gap between the profession they see and what is available. One interviewee suggested: “Very few young people from the Bangladeshi community are going into the sector. For them cooking is something their parents, or their grandparents do for a living, it’s the curry house. For them it is not an aspiration – because it is associated with migrants.” And with 40 per cent of the city’s children growing up in poverty, many are not introduced to the many flavours of London’s culinary scene.

Young people know about cooking, but the culinary profession is less visible. This is particularly true of the positives: the sense of achievement that comes with mastering a skill and seeing the fruits of one’s labour, or the camaraderie of working in a busy kitchen. Interviewees argued that the positives of being an “insider” in London’s restaurant scene don’t receive enough airtime.



There are plenty of perks in the sector but they’re not visible to young people who are 18 or 19. Like having encyclopaedic knowledge of food and wine, being greeted like a friend when you go out for food [...] but it’s difficult to package it in an attractive way.

**Former Chef, fine dining**

The lack of prestige and prestigious schools is a significant problem. But it is also an opportunity: the sector isn’t dominated by the sharp-elbowed middle-classes. “There are people [in kitchens] who haven’t had

the chance to train as anything else – it was their only opportunity. You can get a job with a criminal record.” The contrast with other cultural industries is stark: Centre for London’s *Culture Club* report found an urgent need to widen access to the city’s creative careers.<sup>14</sup> This report will make recommendations on how to raise the status of culinary arts and education, while ensuring that the sector remains accessible to all.

## Training

Cheffing is not often viewed as a career of choice. Too often, young people end up in culinary careers for lack of “better” options. In order to address skills shortages and cultivate local talent, London must inspire more children to want to work as chefs. But the city also needs to improve its culinary training offer.

This is a challenge common to all skilled trades. London boasts world-class higher education institutions – but has enduring weaknesses in vocational education, as the final report of the King’s Commission on London showed.<sup>15</sup>

The landscape of skills provision is complex and changing: responsibilities are shared between the government, which decides on policy and funding; regulators, who ensure quality of provision; and the many providers of courses and training. The latter include local authorities, further education (FE) colleges, private providers, and businesses (who employ and train apprentices). From September 2019, the Mayor will take over the Adult Education Budget for London from the government.

There are three routes to train as a chef in London:

- Many FE colleges offer culinary courses, and it is a popular route because the state funds the cost of training for most young people.
- There are also plenty of vacancies for those who are willing to learn on the job – apprenticeships with a small “a”.

- A third route is to work in a kitchen while earning a qualification – through a government apprenticeship.

National figures suggest that not enough young people go into culinary training to replace chefs leaving the industry. Industry experts People 1st estimated in 2017 that the UK loses around 20,000 chefs every year – approximately 10 per cent of the workforce. On the supply side, there were 9,000 young people in their first year of a chef or cookery course in UK catering colleges – with the number dropping to around 6,000 in the third year.<sup>16</sup> Add to that the 6,000 apprentices who started a chef apprenticeship last year (which an estimated 60 to 70 per cent complete),<sup>17</sup> and it is clear that, in the last two years, colleges and apprenticeships were far from meeting the country's demand for chefs.\*

Of course, these measures of headcount are blunt. And we do not know how many chefs train directly with their employers (our interviews suggest a lot do). However, on top of the annual 20,000 chefs needed simply to replace people leaving the sector, demand for chefs has been growing fast – and fastest in London.

There is little doubt that London must inspire more people in order to address its skills shortage. But the larger concern amongst chefs and restaurant owners is not the number of students completing culinary education (an industry-wide challenge), but that many young people coming out of training do not have the right skills to fit their needs or to thrive in the workplace.

## 1. College education

London has a large and diverse offer of training for chefs – out of 48 FE colleges, 16 provide catering courses. These courses were first set up by chefs to train future generations of chefs. Some students are highly ambitious

\*Chef apprenticeship starts have fallen from 12,000 in 2014. The main explanation for this fall is a change in government regulation, and the slow take up of the new system by employers. Still, there is a marked under supply of apprenticeships in London relative to the rest of the country (see Appendix).

chefs early in their careers, who want to accelerate development of their skills. But in general, culinary education does not meet employers' needs, and does not prepare young people well enough for chef jobs. 70 per cent of our interviewees felt that culinary schools didn't provide the chef training that the city needs, including several college course managers. Catering college graduates were, on the whole, in high demand. One course manager told us that "All students have a job before finishing the course, some a year before." But chefs and restaurateurs were often unconvinced by culinary education in colleges.

### *Theoretical*

A widespread criticism of college training was simply that it takes place at college. Catering courses usually do not include any work experience, even though they can last up to three years. After completing courses, joining the "real world of work" is a shock for most college graduates.



Trainees don't understand what the sector is going to be, and aren't told how to build the resilience that they will need... how to do 4 or 5 days of 15-16 hour shifts. They aren't told how to deal with being mentally tired, when you're on the edge of burning out, when you need help.

### **Former chef, fine dining**

Employers are looking for aspirant chefs who have the resilience required to cope and can thrive in a constantly changing environment: filling in for colleagues, working around customers' allergies, or cooking in a badly equipped kitchen. They also need to work under pressure – deadlines become real. Employers argue that that no matter how thorough college culinary education is, it cannot provide the "real life" experience that is essential to developing their craft.

### ***Too narrow***

Employers and college course managers agree on another point – that most catering colleges today are not able to teach some of the qualities required to be a good chef. Their primary focus is on teaching technical skills, “what to do” – for instance knowing eight vegetable cuts or how to prepare specific sauces - rather than “how to act and react” – that is having a deep understanding of how flavours combine and chemicals interact. The skills that make a good chef go way beyond technical skills. Courses do not so easily teach thirst for learning, flair, teamwork, entrepreneurship, which all our interviewees agreed were the skills that make a good chef (see Figure 1). It is also essential for aspirant chefs to understand how to interpret and develop the concept of a specific restaurant and its cooking, in a market where differentiation is key, and be adaptable enough to pick up techniques easily. And some employers regarded the teaching of technical skills as outdated: too narrow in style (mostly French) and too broad in craft (all the way from soup to pastry making).

**Figure 1: What are the skills that make a good chef? Responses from 28 research interviews\***



\*Interview breakdown in Appendix. Responses were not prompted

### ***Lack of differentiation***

London is a global centre of education in many disciplines, yet its culinary colleges are invisible to young people and lack specialisation. In contrast to London's art schools, who draw students from across the city, the country and overseas, catering colleges tend to recruit locally – often within a radius of a couple of miles. This means they lose in visibility to employers and specialisation what they gain in local focus.

One culinary school does stand out: Westminster Kingsway College has been a UK leader for a century. But none of London's catering colleges – even the most recognised – are dedicated to cheffing. They are generalist colleges that offer chef or catering courses. Westminster Kingsway offers training courses in over 30 sectors – of which hospitality and catering is only one. Most of the chefs and restaurateurs we interviewed could name-check one or two colleges, but these are not household names. This means that some colleges struggle to recruit students, even onto their free courses.

The relatively low visibility of all but a few colleges (and the large number of them) also means that few businesses are enticed to work with them on shaping catering education – even though in London they may be just around the corner from one. It is revealing that celebrity chefs have preferred to set up their own chef schools for young people. But the shine of private culinary education is unavailable to most: courses at private culinary schools like Le Cordon Bleu London range from £18,000 to £35,000 for one year of study.

There also isn't enough differentiation between elite and general culinary education. All but a few London catering colleges attract students with a real passion for becoming a chef, as well as a lot of young people for whom cooking wasn't a first choice. This means that most catering colleges have to teach chefs with different aspirations – some wanting to work in high-end kitchens, others to become production chefs – often in the same course.

To some extent these are unfair criticisms. Colleges are facing strong headwinds: funding for further

education is lower than for higher education and the sector has suffered greater funding cuts in recent years.<sup>18</sup> FE funding is also calculated per student, meaning their incentive is to “fill classrooms” rather than provide learners with a higher quality experience. Government funding is also focused on young people rather than adults – this is an incentive to offer courses that suit 16 to 19 year olds rather than career changers or businesses. However, the Mayor of London has expressed an intention to focus funding more on economic and social outcomes rather than throughput when he takes over adult education funding in September 2019.

Despite these challenges, some colleges have made significant efforts to bring their education closer to the “real world of work”, to excite young talent, and to build up their brand. They engage in regular cooking competitions to motivate students, some of whom have beat working chefs to the top prize. There are plenty of initiatives to build on, we suggest how they can be supported in the second part of this report.

## **2. Learning on the job**

Most of the chefs and restaurateurs we talked to have learnt their craft “on the job” – and this remains an important route into the industry.

The advantage of learning on the job is that opportunities are easy to access: you can start with little knowledge but a lot of motivation and work your way up thanks to the mentoring of colleagues, while earning some income from day one. And the profession prides itself on rewarding hard work, team work, flair and entrepreneurship more than degree level education. Like other arts and crafts, chefs join a kitchen to learn a master’s technique, and employers tailor training to the needs of their kitchen: a chef told us how “you can learn so much on the spot if you find the right people willing to teach you.”

However, this arrangement does place the full responsibility for training on employers, and it does not work for everyone: internships in restaurant kitchens do not offer formal qualifications to young people who don’t

have them. Training is also usually narrower in scope: all practice and no theory can be limiting and frustrating for young minds hungry for development and responsibility.

Throwing novices in “at the deep end” is also a problem for some – 18 can be a young age to enter a high-pressure kitchen without dedicated support. And career changers also face a rough start. In-work training is patchy and rarely built into schedules. One chef who started cooking as a second career told us:



When they take you on, they expect you to be doing more without training you, because they see that you are older. They forget that you have to go through the same learning process as everyone else.

**Former pastry chef, restaurant chain, casual dining**

Yet the industry should be nurturing these adult recruits, who have gained maturity from previous experiences, and have made the active choice of going into cooking – especially since learning on the job is the main option for them to become chefs.

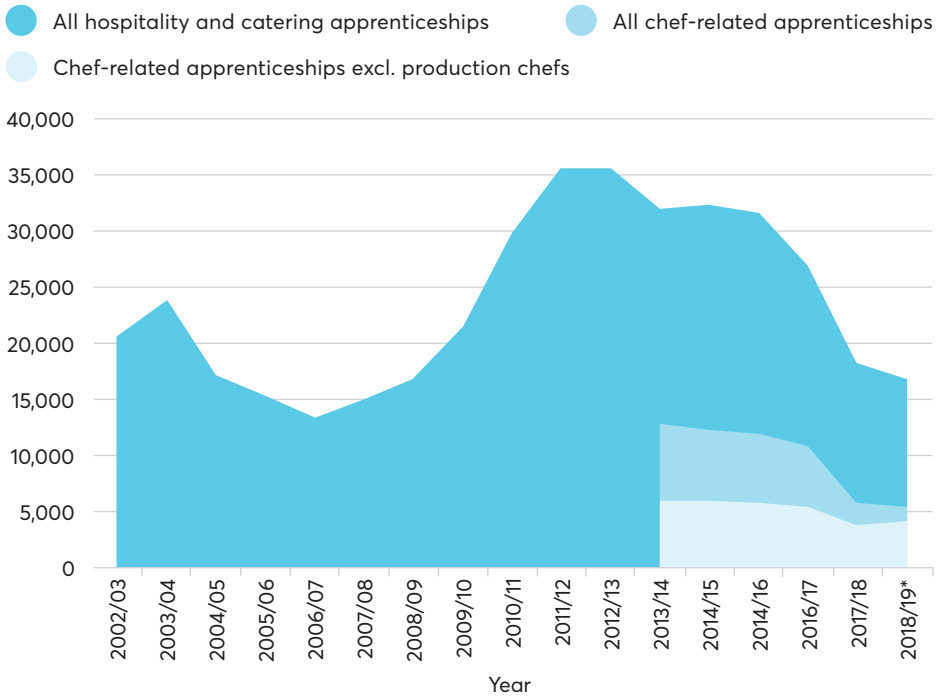
### 3. Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships have been promoted by the government as a way of mixing the best of classroom and workplace learning for a variety of occupations. Aspirant chefs work near full time (80 per cent of full-time hours) for at least a year while earning a qualification. Apprentices are overseen by training providers, who oversee the quality of training, while independent assessors award the qualification. Apprentices can often stay on with their employer afterwards as employees. This seems an appealing route, given that an apprentice gets paid training, a qualification, and potentially a job at the end.

Yet take-up has been very slow. In England, only 5,700 people started a chef-related apprenticeship in 2017/18: of these, 2,000 trained as a production chef, i.e. reproducing standard recipes that have been developed in a central kitchen.<sup>19</sup> London is an apprenticeship dark spot. The city has the most chef jobs in the country (1 in every 5),<sup>20</sup> yet the city offers less than 12 per cent

of the country's chef-related apprenticeships. Only 660 chefs started a chef-related apprenticeship in London in 2017/18 (including 180 as production chefs). And remember that these are only starts – completion rates of chef apprenticeships are around 60 to 70 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Why are these numbers so low?

**Figure 2: Selected apprenticeship starts, England**



\*2018/19 estimates based on weighted data for the first quarter

Part of the reason is cost, which falls overwhelmingly on the employer. They pay a wage to the apprentice, meet the costs of in-house training (as another chef shadows and mentors the apprentice), as well as paying the training provider and examiners.

To encourage employers to provide more apprenticeships, the government has introduced two funding schemes:

- 1—Since 2017 an “apprenticeship levy” essentially requires larger employers (with a payroll over £3 million) to ringfence a small proportion (0.5 per cent of their annual pay bill to fund apprenticeships within the company – or must pay this levy to government. If a company chooses to use their levy by providing apprenticeships, government tops up the sum ringfenced by 10 per cent. As in other sectors, the employers we interviewed complained about the inflexibility of the levy: it only covers the cost of the training provider (that is, teaching time outside work), and the costs of the final assessment. The levy cannot cover admin costs, the apprentice’s wage, or the costs of shadowing the apprentice in the kitchen.
- 2—Smaller businesses (with a payroll under £3 million) do not have to pay the levy, and government subsidises 90 per cent<sup>22</sup> of the cost of external training (if the apprentice is under 18 this rises to 100 per cent plus a £1,000 top-up). The small business pays the apprentice a wage, as well as the costs of shadowing her in the kitchen. Despite government support, several interviewees suggested that this is a less attractive option to small businesses than recruiting an employee who can work full-time, without having to commit to a 12-month contract.

These criticisms of government apprenticeships – cost and inflexibility – are not specific to restaurants.<sup>23</sup> Both seem surmountable over time, though the provision of chef apprenticeships is likely to remain particularly low in small businesses. However, there is a deeper issue around the appeal of apprenticeships.

### ***Unrecognised qualifications***

Until 2017, it was possible to earn recognised qualifications such as GCSEs, A Levels, or NVQs by completing apprenticeships. This is no longer the case: apprenticeships now range from “Level 2 to 9”, with each level merely equivalent to recognised qualifications – and we were told that many employers don’t recognise the equivalence.

This is likely to affect who is attracted to chef apprenticeships. Several employers we talked to were demoralised by high dropout rates and noted that the calibre of apprentices put forward to them was on the whole not good enough (many lacking an interest in the job). However, it should be noted that the executive chef at one large high-profile restaurant was content with their apprentices: “In my kitchen 20 per cent of my staff are in the apprenticeship scheme or have been in the scheme – so that’s part of the foundation of my kitchen. Two guys directly beneath me have been through my apprenticeship scheme, through the Royal Academy [of Culinary Arts].”

Apprenticeships have a lot to recommend them: they provide structure and add formal qualifications to on-the-job learning. But they need to be made more attractive to employers. London also needs different and improved chef schools that match employers’ needs, prepare students for careers as chefs, and stimulate interest in food and cooking.

We should also recognise that training is only one part of the problem, and that we additionally need to look at restaurants’ ability to retain staff. Without retention, the industry will lose skilled workers as quickly as they can be trained. The following section sets out the details of this challenge.

### **Retention**

The growth of London’s food scene has been a boon and a wonder for the city but it hasn’t always been so for its chefs. News stories are filled with testimonies of how difficult being a chef can be: chefs speak of working under constant pressure,<sup>24</sup> having to sacrifice

family or social life,<sup>25</sup> and needing drugs to keep going.<sup>26</sup> Experienced chefs know this has always been the case – but younger generations of workers and diners are wondering why it *still* is.

Most restaurant kitchens have some difficulty retaining workers, and this is one of the main causes of London’s shortage of chefs.<sup>27</sup> We don’t have data on how many chefs leave (and when), but attrition is very high nationally (approximately 10 per cent leave the profession every year).<sup>\*</sup> Chefs also do not fare well on measures of life satisfaction and happiness – they are amongst the more “unhappy” professions on average, according to the Office for National Statistics (see Appendix).

This may come as a surprise given cheffing has most of the ingredients of a ‘good job’. Behavioural scientists find that three main factors drive fulfilment at work: purpose (seeing the fruit of one’s labour quickly), interaction (working as part of a team), and work-life balance.<sup>28</sup>

Cheffing scores well on the first two. Making a final product from scratch is a source of purpose, and so is fun and the adrenaline that comes with staging a culinary performance:



The reason you do cook is because you have a passion for food and want to bring joy to people. You can be creative and inventive, there’s no limit to what you can create once you’re a head chef, it’s your works of art.

**Chef, fine dining**

And the kitchen camaraderie has virtually no equivalent – in the words of one chef:



If someone is sick you come in and help. You feel closer to those people than your family because you spend so much time together – and because of that you’re willing to give up an off day to help that person.

**Former chef, street food entrepreneur**

<sup>\*</sup>See footnote 7

On top of this, London's eating out scene offers many opportunities to progress quickly, or become an entrepreneur, in a way that few sectors allow. Kitchen hierarchies have opened up and very few chefs are too young to lead or too old to create a business:



Now you can easily find head chefs who are 21 and haven't had those 5 to 10 years of hard slog getting to know each skill individually.

**Chef, casual dining**



A lot of people are looking at street food for a career change where they get to combine their love of food with the ability to make money, and run their own business.

**Street food market manager**

But work-life balance is a major push factor and one of the main drivers of the sectors' retention challenge, alongside pay and working conditions. There are many skilled chefs in London who have chosen to move on. This report finds that London loses chefs at three specific life stages:

1. When moving from culinary education into their first kitchen job – they may experience intense pressure, long hours, poor mentoring, and harassment for the first time, as well as low financial reward.
2. When approaching or reaching “burnout”, after a few jobs or in a bad job.
3. When reaching a life stage at which the demands of family life increase.

## 1. The first job

### ***Working conditions***

Working as a chef is far cry from nine-to-five. Long hours, early and late shifts are a jolt compared to the 20

hours a week at culinary college, and most of these extra hours aren't paid.

Long hours and routine tasks can be supported for some time, but not without career prospects, opportunities for personal development and mentoring. Anecdotal evidence suggests that workplaces offering all three are rare – though practices vary hugely from kitchen to kitchen. Some high-end restaurants offer extensive induction, fostering close relationships between employees through good HR practices and even field trips.

Nonetheless in high-pressure kitchens a bad or overworked manager can cause young people to leave the industry after their first experience. One of the big turn-offs is ending up working in a “bad kitchen”, where harassment, abuse and general disregard for staff is left unchecked. A survey of chefs by CODE Hospitality, an industry body, suggests this is not an isolated issue. CODE have surveyed over 500 chefs UK-wide online, but their sample heavily represents London. Nine out of 10 staff who responded said they had “experienced or witnessed abuse in their careers”.

Women are more likely to experience negative behaviour. From subtle forms of discrimination to outright abuse, most kitchens are tougher places for young female chefs, holding many back from thriving. Earning recognition and respect from their coworkers is so much more difficult for female chefs, particularly in kitchens led by men or where men constitute a large majority.



Women are approached immediately as inferior – women are treated as assistants – always in [a] position of inferiority and always told what to do. It's demoralising. I worked myself in a restaurant for some time and I decide to give up because I couldn't stand the environment.

**Former Chef, fine dining restaurant**

Although a few workplaces achieve parity in their kitchens most of the time, the majority of professional kitchens are male-dominated. We know that this gap

reflects work environments rather than young people's career preferences: research has found that 95 per cent of teenagers see cheffing as a profession "equally for women and men."<sup>29</sup> Whether there are women in positions of leadership is particularly important to making kitchen environments less hostile to women chefs.<sup>30</sup> But some say it is too easy to get away with abusive behaviour in kitchens, perpetuating a culture where women have to leave their job to escape it.

### **Pay**

Food hasn't been one of London's high-paying industries. Some chefs are high earners but the bulk of chef jobs are paid the London average salary or less: in 2017/18, half of London's chefs earned under £21,000 annually, and 80 per cent earned under £28,000, inclusive of overtime and tips, according to the Office for National Statistics. And, while cooking may have achieved greater recognition, the financial rewards are unchanged. Strikingly, after adjusting for inflation, the average hourly pay for London chefs, including overtime and tips, was no higher in 2017 than in 1997.<sup>31, 32</sup>

At the same time, the cost of living in the capital has soared, with many workers trading off housing and transport costs.



When we started, our chefs could live in Shepherd's Bush for cheap – now they have to commute from far out.

### **Manager, fine dining restaurant**

The Living Wage Foundation, which calculates the cost of living in London, estimates that "a minimum budget for a single working-age adult is 47 per cent higher in Inner London and 35 per cent higher in Outer London than in the rest of the country". Yet the kitchen porter and chef jobs posted on the website Indeed only pay 8 to 9 per cent more than the UK average (see Figure 3).

This story of living costs eating away at earnings is familiar to many workers in London. Chefs in London have lower purchasing power than their counterparts in

**Figure 3. Pay offered on job postings, listed on Indeed job website (2016-2018)**

Job title (as advertised)	Pay offered in London	% above national average	Number of job ads in last 3 years
Porter	£19,155	8%	842
Chef	£23,776	9%	4,840
Line cook	£25,125	23%	11,281
Sous chef	£30,605	21%	7,907
Head chef	£36,635	19%	4,497
Executive chef	£50,830	22%	250

Source: Indeed

**Figure 4. Cost of living in London compared to average in the rest of UK**

		Cost of living premium compared to the rest of the UK
Single working-age adult	Inner London	47%
	Outer London	35%
Couple with two children	Inner London	22%
	Outer London	21%

Source: Living Wage Foundation

the rest of the country – but they stay in the city for its job opportunities and for the prestige that these can confer.

## 2. Burning out

Some restaurant kitchens are very quick to promote promising young chefs, and similarly chefs may choose to progress by setting up their own kitchen. In both cases, however, working hours increase substantially.

National statistics only capture paid overtime – they show that only 20 per cent of UK chefs are paid for between 45 and 51 hours a week, and 10 per cent are paid for more than 51 hours a week.<sup>33</sup> But in restaurants, existing research and our interviews suggest that unpaid overtime is seen as “part of the job”: the average working week is 50-60 hours in most restaurants, and it is not uncommon for it to reach 80-100 hours at busy times of year or when a colleague is ill.



The key to success is whether you can arm yourself with resilience before you become more senior and reach the cracking point.

**Former Chef, fine dining**

And when chefs need support, it often isn't there: the CODE survey found that a large majority of their junior chefs felt they lacked mental health support at work. The industry has not yet come to terms with its mental health crisis - as a chef told us:



A lot of chefs say they've struggled with school so it is important for them to do well in the kitchen. So people have very high personal standards because that is where your worth is reflected. When everything happens at such rapid pace, people take criticism very personally – you're thinking, what's wrong with me! I was struck by the lack self-worth and self-esteem amongst chefs, and they project this on each other.

Good chefs do not necessarily make good managers, particularly under pressure.<sup>34</sup>

Long hours are rooted in the business model of many restaurants. In a sector of serial entrepreneurship, short-termism can be a big driver of pressure on staff.



Often investors drive rapid expansion and 'move on' economic models, but this prevents [them] from forming institutions that are really good to their people.

**Self-employed Chef**

### 3. Settling down

Hard work pays off for those who make it, but long hours and evening shifts become a strain on family life when it requires most attention. Restaurant and pub kitchens are a great provider of full-time jobs, but they offer very few part-time work opportunities. Only 10 per cent of chefs work part-time – half the London average across all occupations.<sup>35</sup>

This makes combining cheffing and parenthood particularly challenging. Women returning to their jobs in restaurant kitchens are exceptions. Alongside the culture of machismo, lack of flexible working opportunities is a major reason for the gender imbalance in kitchens. Strikingly, women make up 15 per cent of London chefs, but the majority of the city's cook positions, which offer daytime shifts and more regular hours. One chef told us:



You love the profession so much - but if you constantly feel guilty about leaving your children behind you are not going to be a good chef – it's going to prevent you from enjoying the industry. People are taking jobs for which they are overqualified, because they want to be home on Saturdays. They want a family life. It's a shame because they are experienced and they could have helped young recruits.

**Former pastry chef, restaurant chain, casual dining**

There are career paths that do allow chefs to combine their craft with daytime or part-time work: street food, high-end catering positions, and entrepreneurship can give more agency over schedules. Some restaurants are also offering more family-friendly business models – these will be key to improve gender equality in restaurant kitchens.

Increasing efforts to inspire a new generation of chefs and provide them with adequate training will come to nothing if cohorts of chefs leave kitchens after a few months' or years' work because they've had enough. Young people may be dismissed as “snowflakes” by kitchen veterans – but in a time of full employment,

kitchens already struggle to retain people with the talent and commitment that cheffing demands, because rewards and working conditions don't measure up to those offered in other sectors. There is a lot of variation: the tightly-knit, family-like character of the sector allows for very poor practices, but also some really good businesses. It is worth noting that those with good practices did not have much difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff.



# 2.

# Solutions

## Inspire more chefs

Many UK children seem to like the idea of becoming a chef, but as they get older their ambitions change. Cultivating local talent will require building up children's knowledge of food and providing them with insights into the city's gastronomy through greater outreach, so that talented young people actively choose cooking rather than falling into it.

**Recommendation 1:** The industry should expand programmes that introduce young people to food, cooking and London's culinary scene.

The culinary industry should work with London schools to introduce young people to chefs and the city's eating out scene. London could build on "Adopt a School", a programme set up by the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts, who have been running sessions in schools introducing children to chefs and to cooking for 40 years, and reaches over 50,000 children a year.

There is evidence that such programmes, if they are thorough, are effective in developing children's diets as well as their knowledge of food. Research from 2017<sup>36</sup> measured the impact of a weeklong intervention for 9- to 11-year-olds in a British school. Results from a questionnaire delivered before and after the intervention found not only an increase in vegetable consumption after sessions with a chef, but also significant changes in attitude towards food, and an increase in cooking confidence amongst pupils from deprived areas.<sup>37</sup> Coupled with school visits and taster sessions at London culinary institutions, such programmes would encourage young people to value the culinary arts, see the creativity behind them, and develop an interest in food and cooking.

Another initiative is the Hackney School of Food, a cookery teaching space opening in 2019, where "5,000 children – and many of their families – from schools and

communities across inner city London will be taught to cook savoury, nutritious, low cost meal each year.”

**Recommendation 2:** The Mayor of London should front campaigns and events to promote the London food scene and chef jobs.

Whilst arts are looked after by the Mayor of London and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, not much has been done to promote the culinary arts at a time when London is establishing itself as a destination for chefs and food.<sup>38</sup> Eating out is a staple of life in the city, a strong generator of identity and attractor of visitors. The Mayor of Paris meets and greets chefs at industry events and decorates Parisian chefs with the city’s badges of honour – but photos of the current Mayor of London with the city’s chefs are hard to come by. London’s chefs should be celebrated as some of the city’s most valuable assets by the Mayor and the economic development agencies (the London Economic Action Partnership and London & Partners). Responsibility for London’s culinary arts should also be added to the brief of the Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries.

### **Better training for chefs**

The UK is not training enough chefs to replace those leaving the industry – but policymakers should not simply focus on training higher numbers, given the high dropout rates in early years of college and in apprenticeships. Instead, quality of training should become paramount, and we believe that learner numbers will follow.

London colleges have longstanding experience in delivering culinary education, and there is no shortage of willingness among chefs and former chefs to plough their expertise back into training the next generation. But currently, most employers do not rely on apprenticeships or catering college graduates for recruitment. Our findings suggest that culinary training should evolve to better meet employer and learner needs.

As the Mayor of London gains control of adult education spending, now is the right time to define a new vision for London's culinary schools.

**Recommendation 3:** The Mayor of London should work with government to reform catering education – making it more modular and interspersed with work experience.

Trainers, chefs and restaurateurs agree that the ideal training for a chef includes work experience in a variety of kitchens, while making the time for trainers and mentors to pass on the principles behind food selection and cooking, as well as giving advice on how to work under pressure and in teams.

Some interviewees also suggested that the cooking techniques taught at school could be made simpler. Employers said that they need future chefs to be introduced to simple cooking techniques using fewer ingredients, whereas currently in colleges they learn more complex recipes that they “won't need” in most workplaces. College education should focus on adaptable skills: for example, understanding the building blocks of flavours, techniques and ingredients that chefs can combine to create new dishes. Developing skills in food sourcing – a deep understanding of food chains, locality and seasonality – will be at the core of these adaptable skills, for chefs to be able to innovate with ingredients and anticipate trends. Teaching could also include field trips: London has grown a rich offer of artisanal food making – from vegetable growing to artisan bread and dairy producers – that college teaching could make more of.

**Recommendation 4:** Catering colleges should work with the Mayor of London and the industry to develop a two-stage culinary education system with a new “London College of Food”.

Some catering schools generate huge demand. Ecole Ferrandi in Paris turns away 7 out of 8 applicants to its chef course and 10 out of 11 aspirant pâtissiers, and has doubled the size of its anglophone course in ten years. Last year, the school trained 4,300 adults – 300 of whom are international students from 30 different countries. Ecole Ferrandi is owned by the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry – an indication that it is seen as essential to the city’s economy. Not all chef schools overseas are forward-looking and some are pricey. But it is time for London culinary schools to reflect the city’s innovative food scene.

Some of London’s catering colleges clearly stand out in terms of quality – and their principals have told us that their students usually find work even before finishing the course. Overall, however, they teach a very diverse range of students, some to become master chefs, others to become production chefs. More specialisation could go a long way.

Catering college should consider copying the model of arts schools by adopting a two-stage system. In their first year, aspirant chefs would study foundation level skills, with courses widely available across London as they are today. That will mean that most 16-year olds will be able to access a foundation culinary course in their local area. The foundation courses would be aimed at stimulating young people’s interest in food and cooking and build up their self-confidence. They would be delivered with support from local restaurants and food businesses (they could “adopt” a course).

Aspirant chefs who complete the foundation course would then be guaranteed a place at a one of London’s catering colleges. We also recommend that these are brought together as a “London College of Food”, to create a networked institution focused on gastronomy, with several campuses across London – following the model of the University of the Arts London. London’s catering courses are a strong base to build on, since most have well-equipped training kitchens, student-run restaurants, and some, like Westminster Kingsway College, have been leaders in the UK for over a century. But they need a critical mass to succeed.

Setting up an institution dedicated to culinary teaching would not only boost the sector's image: it would also ensure that there is a dedicated resource to engage food businesses in teaching and apprenticeships. A London College of Food could centralise and grow the provision of apprenticeships through partnerships with businesses. Having a bespoke institution will create a focal point for partnerships with UK universities and other international culinary schools. Last but not least, it would become a recognised brand for UK and international students.

These changes will have cost implications: culinary training is one of the more expensive college courses per student, given the cost of food, equipment, and the need for kitchen space. However, we believe a London College of Food could attract greater business investment and demand from adult and international learners, potentially achieving efficiency gains. International students could cross-subsidise domestic ones.

These priorities should inform future spending through the Adult Education Budget, which the Mayor will be managing from September 2019, as well as the broader strategy for skills delivery in the capital.

**Recommendation 5:** The government should allow greater flexibility in the apprenticeship system by: allowing cities to retain unspent funds from the levy, facilitating levy transfers from large businesses to social businesses, and reviewing the incentives to pursue apprenticeship qualifications.

There is a clear shortfall in apprenticeships in London. One issue raised by the King's Commission on London was that there is not enough city-wide planning to increase the provision of apprenticeships in skill shortage areas. We endorse the King's Commission recommendation that London should keep unused funds from the apprenticeship levy to improve the capital's offer.

Throughout our research we have gathered evidence that the qualifications earned by completing an apprenticeship lack the recognition needed to draw in learners and employers in greater numbers, particularly among small businesses who do not pay the apprenticeship levy. In its upcoming review of apprenticeships, the government should consider how to raise the profile and recognition of apprenticeship qualifications, so that they become as prestigious as the equivalent GCSEs, A Levels and degrees.

In the last few years, a great number of charities and social businesses have used cooking as part of “return to work” schemes. Because these businesses make considerable investment in training their staff or providing them with working hours that suit them, they often rely on subsidy. Large businesses who pay the apprenticeship levy can directly donate a quarter of it to small businesses who don’t. If businesses agreed to transfer this funding to charities and social businesses providing such training, this would help the profession as a whole, as well as the direct beneficiaries. The London Progression Collaboration, led by the Mayor of London, is a promising intervention beginning in 2019: business advisors will help larger hospitality employers make better use of their apprenticeship levy.

## **Better care for chefs**

Training alone won’t create rewarding and fulfilling chef careers. London can become much better at keeping its skilled chefs or attracting them back after a break.

### ***Improving working standards***

Working standards vary hugely from one food business to another – and those that treat their staff well have fewer issues with recruitment. Fortunately, there has been a flurry of chef-led initiatives and events promoting business models that allow for shorter working hours, flexible working, better pay, and a more respectful working culture.<sup>39</sup>

The first step must be to learn from the restaurants that do not have an issue recruiting and retaining chefs.

This may be on account of prestige, a good reputation for looking after their workforce, better than average working conditions or because they have put in place a chef talent programme that develops and nurtures their workforce.

One of such programmes is Dishoom's continuous training and professional development schemes. Dishoom, a London-born chain of restaurants offering Indian-inspired food, was facing a large skills gap. The restaurant management shifted its approach to recruitment, and created formal ways to hire people who are "unskilled" and train them to Dishoom's segment of the market, and offer routes from junior chef to head chef. The first scheme is a "52-week training rotation", which includes weekly sessions introducing new starters to other kitchen stations, for instance making breads or start creating curries. The second scheme, Kitchen Academy, is a 12-month development programme to sous chef level that chefs join internally. The chefs visit factories, markets and see how other kitchens operate, and are progressively awarded more responsibility. Finally, Dishoom's head chef programme aims to plug skill gaps in leadership for rising chefs who do not have much managerial experience. These initiatives have meant that last year, Dishoom did not hire any of their sous chefs and head chefs externally, and found that their staff turnover was lower than average.

There is no doubt that innovations in staff development have cost implications. Those businesses operating on very small margins believe that they cannot afford to offer better working conditions, especially at a very difficult time for London restaurants. But among the businesses that take a longer-term view of their economic model, there is a strong feeling that these investments in staff will be recouped in the long run by attracting the best talent and incentivising them to stay.



Our labour percentage is high – could we cut our costs on labour, could we take a chef out? It might still work. But that’s not how we want to operate. We don’t want to put stress on our team. We want to have big enough teams that people can take two days off in a row, instead of a Monday and a Thursday.

**HR manager, restaurant chain, casual dining**

Many businesses are taking initiatives to improve their ability to develop chefs, and learn from those that treat their staff well. There are organisations offering resources to help them do so. The Sustainable Restaurant Association has put together good practice and benchmarking tools to make food service businesses more sustainable – which includes promoting good HR practices. Hospitality Speaks, an independent platform launching in spring 2019, will publish “working solutions and innovations (...) from employers leading by example” and create “a safe online space to share anonymous stories of bullying, harassment and discrimination.”

These projects are essential to increasing the public accountability of hospitality businesses, and we think that the Mayor could take these initiatives further and incite hospitality business to work towards meeting the Mayor’s Good Work Standard.

**Recommendation 6:** With London’s restaurants and food businesses, the Mayor of London should draft a long-term plan to help them collectively catch up to the Mayor’s Good Work Standard.

The Good Work Standard “sets the benchmark that the Mayor wants every London employer to work towards and achieve”. For instance, the Mayor expects employers to introduce family-friendly working practices, offer development opportunities such as high quality apprenticeships, and take a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying. The Standard also includes “paying all staff the London

Living Wage”, a salary calculated to reflect the “real cost of living in London”, which is around 30 per cent higher than the national minimum wage. Only a handful of London restaurants and food businesses are currently meeting the Mayor’s Good Work Standard, and we acknowledge that meeting it will take time given the costs involved.

**Recommendation 7:** Set up an “Institute of Chefs and Cooks”, a large membership organisation that can:

- Serve the purpose of a “mutual organisation”, encouraging and enabling chefs to help their colleagues and aspirant chefs at crucial life stages through mentoring and financial support.
- Influence policy, promote the profession, and shape college and apprenticeship programmes.
- Spread best practice in terms of working conditions and training programmes.

Chefs are a highly networked profession with a strong collective identity. But given the huge growth in the number of chefs in London, there is potential to set up a stronger organisation enabling mutual support, building on existing structures such as the Craft Guild of Chefs, the Institute of Hospitality, and the Royal Academy of Culinary Arts.

There are trade bodies representing hospitality and catering businesses – the largest is UK Hospitality – we recommend an institution that represents the chef profession, a “home of chefs” that supports them throughout their careers. The Craft Guild of Chefs is currently a tiny grant-making body – its education grant totalled £7,500 last year. Yet there is huge potential to support aspirant chefs into training and excellence programmes, or simply to provide assistance with the capital’s high housing costs at certain life stages. For example, the Association des Cuisiniers de France

draws funding from large food businesses and has been able to offer housing to young chefs upon their arrival in Paris. A powerful institution would also give the profession a strong voice and an overarching structure to promote the good work and training practices that do exist, shape education at the London College of Food, and influence policy.

### **Conclusion**

London has grown a world-renowned food scene, but the city struggles to cultivate culinary talent and retain its skilled chefs. For the Londoners seeking more meaningful, creative and sociable work that rewards motivation rather than academic achievement, this is a missed opportunity. But it also is a great loss for a sector that sheds talent every year and misses out on many skilled female chefs. Falling EU migration and Brexit make the issue more pressing, and the Mayor's interest in good work and adult education creates an opportunity to make cheffing an aspirational and rewarding career that can underpin London's continuing culinary renaissance.



# Appendix

**Figure 5: Chef-related apprenticeship starts (England)**

	Framework/ Pathway/ Standard	Level	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 Quarter 1 (provisional)
<b>Framework*</b>	<b>Food production and cooking</b>	2	6,850	6,300	6,230	5,310	1,240	190
	<b>Patisserie and confectionary</b>	3	50	60	60	70	40	10
	<b>Professional cookery</b>	2	4,650	4,330	4,140	3,650	1,000	150
	<b>Professional cookery</b>	3	1,240	1,440	1,330	1,300	300	10
<b>Standard*</b>	<b>Commis Chef</b>	2				320	2,050	900
	<b>Chef De Partie</b>	3				10	350	100
	<b>Production Chef</b>	2						
	<b>Senior Production Chef</b>	3				10	730	190
	<b>All chef-related apprenticeships</b>		<b>12,790</b>	<b>12,130</b>	<b>11,760</b>	<b>10,670</b>	<b>5,710</b>	<b>1,550</b>
	<b>Excl. production chefs</b>		<b>5,940</b>	<b>5,830</b>	<b>5,530</b>	<b>5,350</b>	<b>3,740</b>	<b>1,170</b>

Source: Department for Education (2019)

\*Frameworks are being phased out by Government, they will be fully replaced by Standards in 2020/2021

\*Standards were first introduced in 2014/15

**Figure 6: Chef-related apprenticeship starts (London)**

	Framework/ Pathway/ Standard	Level	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 Quarter 1 (provisional)
<b>Framework*</b>	<b>Food production and cooking</b>	2	430	400	430	490	100	-
	<b>Patisserie and confectionary</b>	3	10	10	20	20	10	-
	<b>Professional cookery</b>	2	460	430	410	410	40	10
	<b>Professional cookery</b>	3	70	140	110	110	20	
<b>Standard*</b>	<b>Commis Chef</b>	2				50	340	120
	<b>Chef De Partie</b>	3				10	70	20
	<b>Production Chef</b>	2						
	<b>Senior Production Chef</b>	3				10	80	20
	<b>All chef-related apprenticeships</b>		<b>970</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>170</b>
	<b>Excl. production chefs</b>		<b>540</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>540</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>150</b>

Source: Department for Education (2019)

\*Frameworks are being phased out by Government, they will be fully replaced by Standards in 2020/2021

\*Standards were first introduced in 2014/15

**Figure 7: Proportion of chef-related apprenticeships starts in England that are in London**

Framework / Pathway / Standard	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19 Quarter 1 (provisional)
All chef-related apprenticeships	8%	8%	8%	10%	12%	11%
Excl. production chefs	9%	10%	10%	11%	13%	13%

**Figure 8: Ranking of chefs' and cooks' wellbeing among 357 professions, nationally**

	Life satisfaction	Life is worthwhile	Happiness	Anxiety	Gross Annual Pay
<b>Chefs</b>	268/357	287/357	227/357	101/357	273/322
<b>Cooks</b>	312/357	272/357	131/357	297/357	308/322

Source: Annual Population Survey (2016), period 2012-2015, UK-wide

- **How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?** (Measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0=not at all satisfied and 10=completely satisfied)
- **To what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?** (Measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0=not at all worthwhile and 10=completely worthwhile)
- **How happy did you feel yesterday?** (Measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0=not at all happy and 10=completely happy)
- **How anxious did you feel yesterday?** (Measured on a scale from 0 to 10, with 0=not at all anxious and 10=completely anxious)

**Figure 9: Interviews with practitioners**

Segment	Number of interviews	Affiliation	Number of interviews
<p><b>Fine dining</b> Full service restaurants or catering with meal courses</p>	5	Individual business	10
<p><b>Casual dining, bistro</b> Moderately-priced food in a casual atmosphere</p>	7	Self-employed	1
<p><b>"Made to order" street food</b> Small menus, food sold in a public place</p>	3	Chain	3
<p><b>Contract catering</b> Organisation hired for a dining service</p>	5	Group	4
		Social enterprise	2
		Catering course managers / apprenticeship providers	8



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London boasts a world-class food scene, but the city loses its skilled chefs and struggles to nurture local culinary talent. Drawing on new data and interviews, this report investigates the real reasons behind the huge skills gap in London's kitchens - and what can be done about it. We propose new ideas to firmly establish the UK as a centre for culinary arts and innovation, and a generator of good jobs and fulfilling careers in cooking.

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