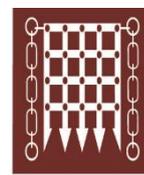


## Westminster Employment Forum policy conference:

### Next steps for apprenticeships in England

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026

\*\*\*Taking Place Online\*\*\*



WESTMINSTER  
EMPLOYMENT  
FORUM

Draft agenda subject to change

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Navigating reform to apprenticeships in England - priorities for policy, partnerships, funding and wider post-16 delivery**  
**David Hughes**, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Key developments in apprenticeship policy, reform set out in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, and considerations for implementation**  
Senior commentator
- 9.40 **Examining implications of apprenticeships reform - scheme design, assessment, regulation and standards**  
*assessing the introduction of foundation apprenticeships and modular apprenticeship units | implications of changes to minimum duration, standards and End Point Assessments | the role of Ofqual's flexible assessment framework and accelerated approval times for new programmes | considerations for the balance of support and funding between higher and lower level apprenticeships, including level 7 changes | alignment with wider post-16 reform, emerging workforce priorities and skills needs | scheme design, flexibility and long-term progression routes | governance, coordination and data-sharing across the system | priorities for capacity, staffing and resource planning*  
Senior representative, employer  
Senior representative, further education  
Senior representative, local authority  
Senior representative, legal  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.25 **Approaches to improving employer engagement - industry priorities, SMEs, talent retention and workforce organisation**  
**Sharon Blyfield**, Head, Early Careers and Apprenticeships, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.45 **Chair's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.50 Break
- 11.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 11.05 **Aligning employment and skills delivery with regional growth priorities, devolution and local planning**  
**David Gaughan**, Director, Employment and Skills, West Midlands Combined Authority
- 11.15 **Assessing employer needs, workforce priorities, funding reform and strategy for meeting skills gaps**  
*skills and sector priorities outlined in the Industrial Strategy | approaches to meeting employer needs through apprenticeship reform | quality of work and long-term progression routes | priorities for guidance and support for small and medium-sized enterprises, including on full funding for eligible under-25s | implications of removing level 2 English and maths requirements | wider impact of the Growth and Skills Levy | funding priorities across lower and higher-level schemes, including level 7 changes | priorities for the expanded Technical Excellence Colleges programme | alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plans and investment in domestic talent development*  
Senior representative, employer  
Senior representative, SME  
Senior representative, trade union  
Senior representative, labour market
- 11.35 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.00 **Improving access to apprenticeship pathways - transitions, support and progression**  
Senior representative, admissions
- 12.10 **Strategies for connecting young people with high quality apprenticeship opportunities**  
*approaches to meeting new higher-level learning targets | provision of tailored careers support | effective transition from school into post-16 training | access to opportunities and long-term career progression | signposting skills pathways parity of esteem with other academic and skills pathways | inclusive practice for learners with additional needs | coordination between providers, employers and local partners | tackling youth inactivity | alignment with the Youth Guarantee, Youth Futures Hubs expansion and the Lifelong Learning Entitlement | impact of increased digitalisation of scheme information on applicants who miss their apprenticeship scheme choice*  
Senior representative, employer  
Senior representative, higher education  
Senior representative, local authority
- 12.25 Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.45 **Apprenticeship reform implementation in local economies - practical considerations for employer engagement, supporting those who are NEET, and integrating the Youth Guarantee within skills and employment provision**  
Senior representative, local government  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 13.10 **Chair's and Westminster Employment Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian  
**Harry Nelson**, Westminster Employment Forum