

**Westminster Employment Forum policy conference:  
Next steps for apprenticeship quality and funding in England**

*Timing: Morning, Thursday, 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025*

**\*\*\*Taking place online\*\*\***



**WESTMINSTER  
EMPLOYMENT  
FORUM**

*Draft agenda subject to change*

- 8.30 Registration
- 9.00 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 9.05 **Next steps for apprenticeship funding, quality and participation in England**  
Senior academic  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 9.30 **Adapting to the new Growth and Skills Levy, assessing changes in funding and improving employer engagement**  
*assessing reform to the Levy | implications for employer flexibility | strategies to maintain employer engagement and incentivising employers | assessing the impact on training providers and apprentices | financial support for SMEs and options for incentivising their participation in apprenticeships | options for improving employer confidence in apprenticeship frameworks and training outcomes | safeguards against misuse of levy funds | priorities for channelling resources to essential skills | balance between apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship training | expanding apprenticeship opportunities for young people | considering the impact of funding distribution on different age groups*  
**Claire Costello**, Chief Procurement Officer, Co-operative Group  
**Claire Barker**, Senior Policy Manager, Skills and Industry, Association of Colleges  
**Chris Rawlinson**, Head, Learning and Development, DJH  
Senior representative, consultancy  
Young person  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 10.20 **Chair's closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.25 Break
- 10.35 **Chair's opening remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian
- 10.40 **Apprenticeship quality and standards**  
*managing the transition to Skills England and key priorities for maintaining standards | examining changes to English and maths requirements | assessing risks and benefits of shorter apprenticeships | improving completion rates and qualifications alignment*  
**Robert Nitsch**, CEO, Federation of Awarding Bodies  
**Simon Ashworth**, Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Policy, Association of Employment and Learning Providers  
**Tom Richmond**, Education Policy Analyst  
Senior representative, FE  
Senior representative, subject association  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 11.30 **Student participation, completion rates and improving outcomes**  
*latest thinking on underlying factors affecting completion rates | assessing strategies and best practice for improving retention | options for improving apprenticeship structures and requirements to meet employer needs while ensuring a positive experience for those in training | ensuring equitable access to apprenticeships | addressing the decline in participation among disadvantaged young people and engaging NEETs and the role of apprenticeships in the Government's Youth Guarantee | examining options for targeted strategies to support underrepresented groups in apprenticeship schemes | assessing outcomes and improving access to higher level apprenticeships*  
**Mandy Crawford-Lee**, Chief Executive, University Vocational Awards Council  
**Nicola Drury**, Early Careers, Skills, and Apprenticeships Advocate  
Senior representative, employer  
Senior representative, FE  
Senior representative, HE  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.30 **The future of apprenticeships in England - key priorities for policy**  
Senior representative, policy  
Questions and comments from the floor
- 12.55 **Chair's and Westminster Employment Forum closing remarks**  
Senior Parliamentarian  
**Sean Cudmore**, Westminster Employment Forum