

Westminster Employment Forum policy conference:

Next steps for apprenticeships in England

Timing: Morning, Tuesday, 2nd June 2026

Taking Place Online



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
Sam Moorwood, Head, Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning, Sheffield Hallam University
Senior representative, employer
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