

BMF HEADS TO PARLIAMENT IN NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

THE BMF visited Parliament in February to (a) discuss progress to date on encouraging more people to take an apprenticeship and (b) what more can be done to boost further uptake and their prestige. The event was at the invitation of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Apprenticeships that enjoys wide support from all the main political parties.

In this article, Ben Scobie, the BMF's own Policy & Public Affairs' Apprentice, describes how we combine with representatives of other trades & industries to lobby as employers for policy and funding improvements.



Baggy Shanker MP & Ben Scobie

To tie in with National Apprenticeship Week (10 to 16 February), the APPG held its annual Apprentices Fair in Parliament to celebrate NAW 2025 and hear direct from apprentices about choices they made on leaving school. A dozen well-known British manufacturers used their exhibits to showcase what they are doing - and to lobby MPs and Peers for improvements in policy & funding arrangements.

Co-chair of the APPG, Andrew Pakes MP and Shane Chowen, the Editor of "FE Week" magazine both spoke. Mr Pakes acknowledged that unused Levy payments go straight back into HM Treasury coffers. In today's tight labour market this is unhelpful, which is why he is excited for the new Growth & Skills Levy that will turn the Levy into a more flexible, broad-based training fund.

He was keen to correct an often-cited misconception that apprenticeships are solely for school-leavers - only around 25% of apprentices are under 19. Mr Chowen highlighted that we are one of only four nations that can boast an all-age apprenticeship system - highlighting its ability to catalyse productivity and create structured pathways for career switchers, not just school leavers.



Ben Scobie & Pam Cox MP



Lord Aberdare & Ben Scobie



FE Week editor, Shane Chowen

During this Fair, we spoke to Baggy Shanker MP (Lab, Derby South), Amanda Martin MP (Lab, Portsmouth North), Pam

Cox MP (Lab, Colchester), Gerald Jones MP (Lab, Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare), Lord Aberdare and Lord Goddard.

In those conversations, several key points emerged:

- more collective effort is required to attract and hire 16-18 year olds for whom staying longer in the state education system may not be worthwhile.
- more must be done to overcome parental prejudice. Employers want to see parity of esteem between academic and vocational education - namely to persuade parents that university is not always the correct choice for their child.
- more awareness of how apprenticeships cater for people of all ages and abilities - with level 1 courses through to level 7, the equivalent of a Masters' degree.

Two apprentices we met exemplified these points, noting that their degree apprenticeships combined rigorous academic learning with invaluable workplace experience - an advantage largely unavailable to their university-only counterparts.

We highlighted the BMF's own Apprenticeship Pledge to take on 15,000 more apprentices among our members by 2030 - a target that has now been surpassed. BMF members are urged to sign up to the Pledge and recruit apprentices to their business. Further information can be found here:

<https://www.bmf.org.uk/BMF/BMF/Training/BMF-Apprenticeships.aspx>

Anyone interested in finding out more about apprenticeship opportunities in the building materials sector can contact the BMF's Apprenticeship Manager marianna.peet@bmf.org.uk or visit www.bmcareers.com for more information

Apprenticeships:

- Enable you to learn whilst you earn
- Give you an accredited qualification
- Provide businesses with a fresh perspective
- Range from entry-level to masters degree
- Provide a structured training plan
- Improve company staff retention

SIGN UP

