



# WMC Training News Bulletin

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## New Apprentices Aged Over 25 Increase by 277%

Government figures have revealed that 46,800 over-25s joined apprenticeship schemes this year, compared to only 12,400 in 2007-08.

This increase comes as the number of 16- to 18-year-olds signing up for apprenticeships fell by 8.3%, and the number of 19- to 24-year-olds joining schemes dropped by 2%.

Richard Marsh, business development manager for the National Apprenticeship Service, told *Personnel Today* that over-25s being made redundant during the recession and turning to apprenticeships was not the main cause of the sudden increase in uptake.

The majority of apprenticeships in this age group came from people joining schemes within their existing organisation, he said, indicating employers were taking advantage of government support to develop and motivate staff during the downturn.

Marsh said: "During the recession, employers are not taking on new staff but they are still keen to train existing staff, and apprenticeships is a great way of doing that. Most over-25 apprentices are not new to organisations, most have been there for 12 months or more.

"It's absolutely a sign that employers are trying to invest in their staff. We hope that it will keep going up and that the recession will encourage employers to value their employees more highly in the long-term."

Gill Lewis, director of retail HR at B&Q, which launched a new apprenticeship scheme this month for 161 existing employees, said the scheme was great for boosting staff engagement and loyalty. Of the 161 apprentices, more than 60% are aged over 25, while 12% are aged over 45.

Lewis said: "Investing in the workforce like this is something that drives stability and commitment. Over-25s bring more diversity to the programmes that we would have otherwise missed out on. They are people with experience of other roles and they can bring this breadth of experience to the programme."

Earlier in the week, *Personnel Today* revealed 36% of apprentices due to complete their courses last year dropped out, and this figure is predicted to rise during the recession.

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