
4.8 Expanding and improving apprenticeships and further education

More people have started an apprenticeship in this Parliament than ever before. As we grow our economy, we must protect and enhance adult skills training and our further education colleges. We need to grow our skill base, especially in the technologies and industries that are most important to our economic future. We want it to become the norm for businesses to take on and train up young people as apprentices in every sector of our economy, and for higher level apprenticeships to be understood as a respected alternative to university education.

We will:

- ◆ Increase the number of apprenticeships and improve their quality, extending the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers for the remainder of the next Parliament, delivering 200,000 grants to employers and expanding the number of degree-equivalent Higher Apprenticeships.
- ◆ Aim to double the number of businesses which hire apprentices, including by extending them to new sectors of our economy, like creative and digital industries.
- ◆ Develop National Colleges as national centres of expertise for key sectors, like renewable energy, to deliver the high-level vocational skills that businesses need.
- ◆ Establish a cross-party commission to secure a long-term settlement for the public funding of reskilling and lifelong learning.
- ◆ Set up a review into the VAT treatment of Sixth Form Colleges and FE Colleges to ensure fair treatment in relation to the schools sector.
- ◆ Work with the Apprenticeship Advisory Group to increase the number of apprentices from BAME backgrounds, ensure gender balance across industry sectors, and encourage underrepresented groups to apply.
- ◆ Identify and seek to solve skills gaps like the lack of advanced technicians by expanding higher vocational training like foundation degrees, Higher National Diplomas, Higher National Certificates and Higher Apprenticeships.