

Government Skills for Jobs whitepaper fails to support flexible training

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The Skills for Jobs whitepaper revealed by the Government at the end of last week doesn't support the flexible training of today's workforces and fails to utilise crucial recruitment networks, according to the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

The reforms outlined by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson revealed a number of steps to improve the uptake of apprenticeships and training for post-16 skills development. However, the recruitment trade body has urged officials to not only ensure future changes encompass contingent workers, but also better utilise those firms that have direct access to both employers and potential apprenticeship candidates.

Tania Bowers, Legal Counsel and Head of Public Policy at APSCo, commented:

"The on-going reforms to how training and reskilling opportunities are delivered across the UK are encouraging, but there is still room for improvement and further clarity. APSCo is once again urging the government to extend apprenticeships to contingent workers - including contract professionals – to support this crucially valuable flexible segment of the workforce to develop skills in line with the changing business environment."

"There are a number of measures that have been designed to facilitate some flexibility in apprenticeships, but if the UK is to build the flexible skills it needs, how training is delivered must reflect this fluidity. That includes allowing the use of the apprenticeship levy for more adaptable training, allowing for portable apprenticeships, access for agency workers and a more flexible use of lifelong learning schemes to deliver more immediate positive impacts for both the economy and individuals."

"We also urge the Government to consider how it engages with recruitment businesses to deliver apprenticeship support. We will be interested to see how the Local Skills Improvement Plans evolve and whether our members' knowledge of their local markets can be utilised. Our members are likely to have useful data to feed into the newly formed Skills and Productivity Board and could certainly prove to be a valuable partner in this aspect. The white paper has some positives but as the Government itself admits, it has failed to address systemic issues over a long period, meaning there is still a long way to go and changes to the existing Apprenticeship system could reap immediate rewards."

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