

# APSCo welcomes Levelling Up White Paper but warns of limitations

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Responding to the details outlined in the Levelling Up White Paper published by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo) comments:

“With the UK facing significant skills shortages we’re pleased that the Levelling Up White Paper has a clear focus on upskilling and improving employment prospects across the country. There are a number of laudable intentions outlined in the White Paper and as a trade body representing over a 1000 recruitment companies and outsourcers across the UK, we look forward to working with the Government to “increase pay, employment and productivity in every area of the UK.” This follows our recent call to develop a national strategy, recognising urban hubs and regions with existing strengths in particular skills and industries, such as digital and technical skills. We look forward to receiving more details on elements such as the Unit for Future Skills and how it will drive collaboration across government departments. However, while the plan is ambitious, without sufficient funding or innovative actions to support the vision of “global competitive cities” in the regions within eight years, then the plan will remain just a laudable intention.

“One such example of the limitations to the White Paper is its reference to the Apprenticeship scheme where the Government refuses to deviate from the fundamental structure which was devised years ago for a different labour market. If real change is to be driven, more is needed. The Apprenticeship Levy, for example, should be broadened to cover administrative costs and ‘bench’ salaries to facilitate a commercial, realistic and flexible scheme in which recruitment firms can fund ‘flexi-job’ apprenticeships. This would enable the professional development of agency workers across placements.

“The intention to devolve skills locally is also welcome, but it will require well-funded local implementation plans. Regional hubs need localised government funding to support tech start-ups, T-Levels and SME access to tech-based apprentices to help create centres of excellence across specific sectors and regions to combat digital and tech skills shortages.

“APSCo will continue to work closely with the relevant government bodies to ensure the voice of the professional recruitment sector is heard in consultations on the Levelling Up White Paper.”

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