

Trade association welcomes Prime Minister's focus on skills and immigration

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Reports that the new Prime Minister plans to reform the education system and make the UK more attractive to highly skilled non-UK nationals have been welcomed by the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo).

Latest reports from The Times have suggested that Rishi Sunak plans to prioritise early careers training in subjects where skills are in short supply – including engineering and digital technology – and invest in skills and education.

While definitive proposals around immigration targets are yet to be unveiled, the Prime Minister has previously been vocal on the need to attract highly-skilled immigrants into the UK and is reportedly keen to explore a new visa to support this.

Tania Bowers, Global Public Policy Director at APSCo commented:

“The UK’s education system has been outdated for some time and we welcome the news that Rishi Sunak plans to focus on revamping education and training. While longer-term skills development through access to T-Levels and apprenticeships will be beneficial to some degree, much more can be done. The world of work is flexible and our skills development needs to be agile to suit the new way of working. With contract professionals and the self-employed continuing to play a key role in keeping the UK running, there is a need to adapt training programmes to be accessible to this demographic.

“We look forward to hearing the plans from Sunak and the new education secretary, Gillian Keegan, but we urge them to ensure any reforms incorporate the input from business leaders, recruitment experts and education institutions as well. We need an education system that is fit for purpose for both economic growth and business needs. Achieving this requires collaboration across all stakeholders impacted by, and responsible for, skills development.

“While there’s yet to be any formal confirmation on the new Prime Minister’s immigration and skills plans, his comments during his time as Chancellor suggest he recognises the need to make the UK more

attractive to highly skilled professionals and entrepreneurs. If the country is to become the economic powerhouse we know it can be, Britain needs to become globally attractive to top talent. We need visa pathways for skilled independent contractors, with expertise in skills shortage occupations, as well as short-term flexible business visas for service providers. We will continue to work with authorities to ensure the voice of the recruitment sector – which has a crucial role to play in informing truly strategic skills plans – is heard across the Government as policies are defined.”

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