

APSCo responds to Spring Statement

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Following Chancellor Philip Hammond's Spring Statement, which celebrated the UK's 'thriving employment market' amid a cloud of Brexit uncertainty, Samantha Hurley, Director of Operations at the Association of Professional Staffing Companies (APSCo (<https://www.apsco.org/>)), comments:

"While yesterday's statement offered no unexpected revelations, the Chancellor's admission that 'investment in people' is central to boosting UK productivity is a sentiment that we at APSCo whole-heartedly support.

"The announcement that changes to the Apprenticeship Levy - which will allow employers to transfer 25% funds to others in their supply chains – will be brought forward to April 2019 is welcome. As we have repeatedly stressed to HMRC, the fact that a company's 'size' is directly related to its payroll means that many staffing firms have Levy pots so large that they cannot realistically use all the funds upskill their own people. While not perfect, this new system at least means that more of this money can be directed towards skills development, as the initiative was originally designed to do.

"We also welcome the government's commitment to build on the UK's 'fundamental strengths and competitive advantages' through embracing the technologies of the future and, crucially, equipping British workers to use them.

"While our members will take heart in assurances that economy remains robust - with a further five years of growth predicted and 600,000 further jobs expected to be created by 2023 - there is no escaping the precarious position we find ourselves in as March the 29th nears ever closer.

"Hammond's stark warning that a no deal Brexit is likely to result in higher unemployment and lower wages should not be taken lightly. However, the professional sectors that our members recruit into are unlikely to be impacted to the same extent as some others in this scenario. The Chancellor's resolve that the government remains focussed on attracting those with the skills we need in the UK economy after the UK leaves the EU – no matter where they come from – is promising. As is his commitment to consulting with business to ensure that any new immigration system is fit for purpose. APSCo is, of course, always keen to engage with government to ensure that the interests of our members are represented in parliament."

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Carly Smith
BlueSky PR
Carly@bluesky-pr.com
T: +44 (0)1582 790 708