

Working to improve the delivery of apprenticeships

In all our engagements with Government and other key stakeholders we have emphasised the benefits of a flexible apprenticeship system which puts the needs of business at its centre.

Our Educational and Policy Teams worked with members of the Trailblazer group responsible for Facilities Management Apprenticeship Standards to provide written evidence to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee about post-school education and funding. We proposed measures to develop a system that meets the needs of business, provides value both for students and the Government, tackles the future demographic challenges and encourages the implementation of new technologies such as AI.

In December 2017 the Institute for Apprenticeships recommended a maximum funding band that would provide only partial funding for the Level 6 Facilities Management Apprenticeship Standard. This decision has meant this Apprenticeship Standard is not available as a route to interested learners as no provider can deliver it for that funding. This closes off the critical pipeline of FM apprenticeships and threatens to intensify the profession's skills gap at a senior level. Together with a group of leading sector employers, we urged all businesses employing workplace and facilities management staff to lobby against these recommendations which clearly failed to recognise the skills required by our profession despite it employing 10% of the UK's workforce and the £120 billion contribution that the sector makes to the UK economy.

We then submitted evidence to the House of Commons Education Select Committee inquiry on the quality of apprenticeships and skills training, expressing our wide-ranging and deep concerns about insufficient funding for FM pathways, the lack of monitoring transparency, inconsistency across sectors and the need for greater flexibility on the scope of the levy. Our submission outlined the real possibility that employers and training providers would walk away from apprenticeships without the appropriate tools to attract, upskill, train and retain staff; thereby missing this key opportunity to initiate much-needed improvements to the UK's failing technical education system.

We were pleased to see that many of the findings in the Committee's [latest report](#), published in 2018, aligned with our own recommendations. Focusing on the quality rather than the quantity of apprenticeships, the report called for stronger, clearer oversight of training and assessment; reforms to apprenticeship standards and funding to ensure the system works with employers; and funding and educational reforms to boost social inclusion.

As a result, in April 2019, the Government increased the proportion of their levy that large employers can transfer to other businesses in their supply chain from 10% to 25%. This is particularly important for the construction sector where SMEs are responsible for most of the training. Whether this measure will incentivise businesses to create more apprentices remains to be seen given that the initial 10% transfer has seen very little take up since its introduction earlier this year and businesses may not be prepared to hand over a large chunk of their own training budget.

The way that funding bands are allocated remains a barrier to higher level apprenticeship delivery and we will continue to lobby for changes so that our profession can develop the quality FMs it needs, including:

- Uplifting the funding bands allocated to the FM apprenticeship to better match the cost of delivery and align it with equivalent academic degrees
- Relaxing levy rules so that funds can be drawn on for training formats other than apprenticeships for the 20% off-the-job training requirement

- Doubling the time businesses have to spend their levy account (currently funds must be allocated within 24 months otherwise they will be claimed by the Government)

IWFM is working with several partners and platforms to raise public awareness of the opportunities that apprenticeships offer as an entry route to the workplace and facilities management sector. For example, our partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions seeks to identify and encourage a new range of audiences, including young people, to choose our profession as a career of choice and become part of the next generation of FM professionals.