

Briefing for Peers - Tuesday 2 June 2009 Second Reading of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children & Learning Bill

Apprenticeships

AoC welcomes the Government's commitment to apprenticeships and the intention to place them on a statutory footing. However, we feel there are a number of issues which need to be addressed:

Employer demand

The Government's current campaign to encourage companies to take on apprentices is to be applauded and we note the ambitious target that, by 2013, every young person will be able to choose two sectors in which to take up an apprenticeship. However, even when the economy was buoyant there were insufficient employer places to meet the demand of potential apprentices. Now, **in a recession, Colleges are already hearing of apprentices losing their places as companies go out of business. Group Training Associations may help (see below) but there may also be scope for looking at additional incentives.**

Group Training Associations

One way in which SMEs can be encouraged to take on apprentices is through Group Training Associations. A College becomes the official 'employer' of the apprentice and then he or she spends time in a small business for their workplace experience but the SME avoids taking on the responsibility. **We understand that the Bill is flexible enough for this scheme to flourish.**

The role of the public sector

Local authorities, educational institutions, the NHS and other parts of the public sector have a significant role to play in ensuring as many young people can become apprentices. Ed Balls has already set out his desire for schools to take on apprentices and AoC is encouraging all Colleges to employ apprentices. **We hope that other areas of the public sector are prepared to play their part too.**

Information, Advice and Guidance

A House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee report into apprenticeships in July 2007 found that schools were "reluctant to let staff from the training provider talk to students about apprenticeships as an option for when they leave" [Paragraph 61, HL 138-I]. This means many young people make poor post-16 choices and often drop out of education at 17. The Bill places a duty on schools to consider, when giving pupils careers advice, whether it is in the best interests of the pupil to tell them about apprenticeships. **AoC believes that all young people should have a right to be informed about all their options post-16, not only those which their teachers view as being in the child's interests.** DCSF has recently published a consultation on information, advice and guidance to which AoC will be responding. It is available on the DCSF website.

Adult Apprenticeships

The Bill but does not contain similar duties in regard to those aged 19 and over as it does for 16-19 year olds. **There may be a need to reconsider this as people look to re-train after losing their jobs during the recession.**