



Public affairs with a difference...

Welfare, Work, Economy, poverty, jobs

National Skills Academy launches retail apprenticeship

The National Skills Academy for Retail has launched a new training programme designed to give young people across England an opportunity to kick-start a career in retail. The Retail Apprenticeship Scheme aims to find and develop the best young recruits for small to medium sized retailers.

The launch follows a survey by the scheme's manager, the Retail Apprenticeship Training Agency, which found that only 10% of retailers have offered apprenticeships under government schemes in the last five years with only 3% currently using an apprentice. The survey revealed that a key barrier was the perception that 16 – 18 year olds are low skilled.

The Retail Apprenticeship Scheme aims to address this issue by providing SME retailers who sign up to the scheme with a free recruitment service which will match them up with a suitable apprentice. In addition each apprentice will be employed by RATA to reduce the risk, cost, time and administration for retailers.

As part of the programme, each young person will be assessed and given pre-employment training, to ensure that they are job-ready. The scheme is open to all independent retailers in England.

Apprenticeship schemes are on the rise

Statistics released by The Data Service showed there was nearly a 64% increase in apprenticeship starts in the last year. Schemes launched at an advanced level saw the highest increase in take up rate, with 75% more people enrolling on these programmes, while higher level apprenticeship starts rose by just under 48%.

Data showed that 502,500 people started an apprenticeship in the last academic year, in comparison with 457,200 the previous year. The Government has pushed to increase apprenticeships in the UK, and the statistics released today suggest it has been successful. The Skills Minister, Matthew Hancock, commented: **"Hitting the half-million mark is a momentous achievement for this Government's apprenticeship programme. It shows our passion for skills, and is a ringing endorsement from employers and apprentices alike, who are reaping the benefits of a more highly-skilled workforce."** [Statistics](#)

Work Programme charities warn of imminent contract failures

7 out of 10 charity sub-contractors say that their Work Programme contracts are at risk of failure in a new report.

The report, published by the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), found that 47% of respondents felt that their contacts were at risk of failure within the next six months and 26% thought they were at risk of failure before the end of the contract.

The report also found that half of the charities (48%) were subsidising the delivery of the Work Programme from their own reserves.

These findings compound earlier warnings from the NCVO that the Government's flagship welfare-to-work initiative could leave many charities feeling squeezed out and financially vulnerable. To view the report, click [here](#).

Government must act to help struggling Work Programme charities

Struggling small charities can't wait months and months to be paid. The government must act now over funding in the Work Programme, or risk more suppliers closing, writes one former Liberal Democrat minister

As a constituency MP the government's flagship Work Programme policy was always going to be of interest to me, and the aim to get long-term unemployed people back into work is one that should be wholeheartedly supported.

Despite being a beautiful and fine place to live, North Devon still has many issues, and consistently appears around the top of lists for deprivation and unemployment as the local economy suffers during the recession. Services provided to get people back into work are particularly welcome here and are clearly needed.

Parents to share maternity leave

The Daily Telegraph

PARENTS will be able to share maternity leave and pay under family-friendly laws to be announced by David Cameron and Nick Clegg this month.

Fathers will be able to take time off work and claim state benefits throughout the majority of the first year of their baby's life if the mother returns to employment.

This will allow the main household earner, if the mother, to return to work after just a fortnight.

The introduction of the joint allowance will be delayed until October 2015, following a Cabinet disagreement over the impact of the scheme on hard pressed businesses.

The system of maternity allowance will be renamed “flexible parental leave” to make it clear that both mothers and fathers are entitled to the state support.

To address fears from women’s charities, mothers will still receive the assistance automatically unless they apply to transfer it to their partners.

yesMinister
