

Shared Apprenticeships- the ultimate collaborative

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Depending on which sources you read, the Scottish Government has pledged to achieve a target of between 25,000 and 30,000 apprentices per year by 2020. According to recent Skills Development Scotland reports (June 2016) Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire currently support in the region of 1,280 apprentices in a wide range of disciplines, this equates to about 5% of the total number in Scotland.

In a region where there is so much enterprise and development in the business sector, I would hope the uptake for apprentices would be higher. However according to information from Aberdeen Guarantees; 70% of local business have no contact with education and only 29% employ young people direct from school. *

From conversation, we've been having with our network around the RedWave Academy's Apprentice Support Scheme, many smaller organisations would like to support an apprentice but feel there are too many barriers or obstacles in the way. Predominantly the ability to commit longer term to the training of an apprentice.

The premise of an apprentice model where several organisations support one apprentice seems to fit the bill for many, unfortunately some feel it is a step too far into the unknown. However, this concept is far from new. CITB currently run pilot schemes in the Highlands & Western Isles and Angus, where they have been working successfully with a shared apprentice approach in the construction industry. Apprentices are employed by a "host" or central employing company and are placed on a variety of projects where they have the opportunity to develop their skills in mixed environments.

I think the shared apprentice route is the way of the future. Not only do we provide opportunities for young individuals to secure employment and training, we open the doors to the possibility that small & medium sized companies can work with apprentices to support their own organisations growth and development. It also offers an opportunity to cross train and share learnings from different sectors. In my opinion a win for the apprentice, a win for the organisation and a win for the region as we grow and develop skills in the North East.

So I urge all the companies in Aberdeen City and Shire to think about what you can do to support the young people in the area. Do you have space for an apprentice for 10 hours a week for example? The Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce enjoys a membership of more than 1,350 companies, how many of these would be willing to offer a home to young talent in 2017?

*Education Working for All, Wood Commission 2014