

EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE

Supplementary Questions for Ask the Minister on the 14th March 2018

The Committee received questions from the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights and the Scottish Chamber of Commerce on 12 March 2018.

Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

Background: The Scottish Government's Race Equality Action Plan 2017-2020 commits to work with Skills Development Scotland to annually review their Equality Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships to monitor progress towards improvements.

SDS has committed that by 2021, BME groups will undertake Modern Apprenticeships at a rate equal to the BME population (4.0% at the 2011 Census.) As of December 2016, the rate of BME groups undertaking Modern Apprenticeship had only increased 0.2% from December 2015 to 1.7%. It is likely that the BME population of Scotland is growing faster than 0.2% per year, so in effect we are likely going backward in terms of representation. Additionally, most Modern Apprenticeships are available in cities in which the BME population is much higher than 4.0%, which further adds to the challenge of equal representation.

Question: What actions are the Scottish Government planning to undertake to help Skills Development Scotland progress on this goal?

Scottish Chambers of Commerce

1. **Background:** We note the Government's intention to increase the number of Foundation Apprenticeships.

Question: When are we going to see foundation apprenticeships offered in every school across Scotland?

2. **Background:** Business investment in apprenticeships in Scotland remains buoyant and we are continuing to see growth by business which is confirming business investment in training, with record levels of opportunities being posted. However, SCC, has been promoting to its members the Graduate Apprenticeship option. We see this as a major step forward in providing more opportunities for our young people and business, coupled with the lever to support skill shortages in the future. This has become even more critical with Brexit, and the labour market supply challenges. This demand by business is not being matched with available funding from the Scottish Government.

Question: How is the minister proposing to alleviate this situation to ensure that demand is met for business, to open up even more opportunities for young people?

3. **Background:** The Scottish Government announced a £10M Flexible Training Fund for colleges. We understand this fund has been set up with proceeds from

the Scottish Apprenticeship Levy Tax, with the objective being to develop and support needs of business.

Questions: Business is asking what ownership, influence and control over how this money is being spent is being provided for the business community? It appears that business is not taking up the offer from colleges currently, can he confirm this? Could we utilise this fund perhaps through bids or other processes, to engage business and provide them with the opportunity to train in areas and disciplines that they need, as opposed to potentially being in a situation where it could be deemed as being “provision led”?

4. **Background:** DYW Local Panels has been deemed to be successful in terms of outputs/impacts in the majority of geographical areas in Scotland. Part of this success has been due to (a) locally driven; (b) business led and (c) ability to form effective partnerships/relationships.

Questions: Do we have national indicators which do not only measure quantity but focus on quality? And is one measurement the alleviation of skill shortages for Scotland?

5. **Background:** In relation to the Apprenticeship Levy Tax. We appreciate this has been introduced by Westminster. During a lengthy consultation process by the Scottish Government, ideas were put forward to engage more small and medium sized businesses who were part of the large company supply chains to be able to access the levy pot.

Questions: How has the Minister progressed this area, how many small and medium sized businesses have benefitted from its introduction? and how is it being measured?