

BESA urges employers to take apprenticeship pledge

3 years ago



The Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) has called on employers to pledge they will take on at least one apprentice this year in a bid to plug the industry's alarming skills gap and ensure it has the right talent to address future challenges.

With the building services sector struggling to cope with the loss of many experienced workers since the start of the pandemic and a rapidly ageing workforce, the need to recruit new people who can quickly start contributing to business growth is acute.

The Association has, therefore, launched its 'Future Skills' pledge to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week and is urging all building services employers to show their commitment to bringing new talent into the sector as well as growing the skills of existing workers through apprenticeships.

The Construction Products Association (CPA) recently reported that more than 200,000 experienced workers had left the construction industry since the start of the pandemic and almost half of them were aged between 45 and 55. They joined the industry during the boom years of the 1980s and had accumulated a huge amount of experience, which has now been lost.

At the same time, the workforce continues to age with the number of employees above 60 growing faster than any other age group and the sharpest fall being seen among workers under 30.

"We urgently need to replace lost skills and start to rebuild the thinning ranks of the youngest and brightest in our industry – and the best and most business-friendly way to do that is by taking on apprentices," said BESA's director of training Helen Yeulet.

Growth

"An apprenticeship benefits the employer because the apprentice is learning about their business and specific requirements while gaining valuable on the job experience," she added. "By the end of their apprenticeship, they will have the right skills for their chosen career and will already be contributing to

their employer's business growth."

BESA believes apprenticeships are the best way to equip the building engineering workforce with the modern skills needed to be successful in the fastest growing areas of the market, such as indoor air quality, decarbonisation of heating, and renewables.

"With the breadth of qualifications on offer, this is a really good way to upskill existing employees. It is important to point out that apprenticeships should not be thought of as solely reserved for new entrants," said Yeulet.

Recent government research found that 86% of employers who took on at least one apprentice believe it helped them develop the skills most relevant to their organisation. 78% said their apprentices helped them improve productivity, and 74% stated they had improved the quality of their product or service.

The Association is, therefore, inviting employers to take their '[apprenticeship pledge](#)' as a way of indicating their commitment to addressing the sector's skills gap and helping training providers gear up to meet demand for relevant courses.

Apprenticeships last between one and six years depending on the type, level, and previous experience of the candidate. BESA will help employers access the funding available from the government for apprenticeships at all levels from school leavers and university graduates to more experienced workers who want to further their careers or change career direction completely.

"Apprenticeships are the key to our industry's future," said BESA President Neil Brackenridge. "They are crucial for helping us develop new skills and attracting the much more diverse workforce we must access if we are to remain profitable.

"Today's apprenticeships are extremely flexible and are a good way for a young person to learn a trade without running up big student debts. By being involved at all stages of the training, employers can also make sure the apprentice is learning the right skills and being made ready for the world of work.

"It also allows someone to get a flavour of the industry so they can decide whether it is right for them before committing to long-term employment," said Brackenridge.

The BESA 'Future Skills' pledge does not require the pledger to commit to taking on an apprentice immediately but will help the Association and its college partners identify and prepare the training resources needed to meet demand.

Once the pledge has been made, BESA will contact the employer to get a better understanding of their requirements and provide advice about possible training providers, funding, and access to suitable candidates.

For more information visit: www.theBESA.com/future-skills

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