

Prime Minister to revolutionise skills and training opportunities

The government's new legislative programme will be unveiled in the Queen's Speech today.

Landmark reforms will support the nation's recovery from the pandemic, building on the progress made so far to level up the country and ensure equal opportunities for all.

The Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee will be a central part of the Queen's Speech. New laws will create a post-16 and adult education and training system that is fit for the future, providing the skills that people need for well-paid jobs and opportunities to train throughout their lifetime.

The legislative measures include:

- enabling a new student finance system to transform the current student loans system, which will give every adult access to a flexible loan for higher-level education and training at university or college, useable at any point in their lives
- employers will have a statutory role in planning publicly-funded training programmes with education providers, through a "Skills Accelerator" programme
- the Secretary of State for Education will be given more powers to intervene in colleges that fail to meet local needs, and to direct structural change where needed to ensure the provider improves.

These build on the extensive action already underway to revolutionise the skills and training offer across the country, including the introduction of new T Level courses and access to free, job-relevant "bootcamp" courses.

The Prime Minister outlined his vision for a radical change in skills provision in a speech last year. He made clear that the 50 per cent of young people who do not go to university have been historically deprived of the chance to find their vocation and develop a fulfilling, well-paid career.

Prime Minister, Boris Johnson said:

These new laws are the rocket fuel that we need to level up this country and ensure equal opportunities for all. We know that having the right skills and training is the route to better, well-paid jobs.

I'm revolutionising the system so we can move past the outdated notion that there is only one route up the career ladder, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to retrain or upskill at any point in their lives.

The government will introduce the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill on 18 May to deliver the Prime Minister's vision. The Bill forms the legislative underpinning for the bold reforms set out in the Skills White Paper.

The challenges of the last year highlight the need to rethink and rebuild, bringing our skills and education system closer to the employer market and widening the opportunities that are available for all as we build back better from the pandemic. A third of working-age undergraduates are not in highly skilled employment, and in 2019 employers were unable to fill a quarter of their vacancies due to a lack of employees with the right skills.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

As we rebuild from the pandemic, we've put reforming post-16 education and skills at the heart of our plans to build back better, and as Education Secretary I have championed the often forgotten 50 per cent of young people who don't go to university.

Through legislation, our vision is to transform the sector and expand opportunity right across the country, so that more people can get the skills they need to get good jobs.

Our universities and colleges must be far more accessible to adults and part-timers, allowing people to change careers, upskill regularly, and stay up to date with changing knowledge and technologies. These reforms will enable people to learn, train or retrain and access new or updated skills at any time in their lives from age 16.

The Lifelong Loan Entitlement will comprehensively reform the way student finance is structured. As set out by the Prime Minister last year, the loan will give all individuals access to the equivalent of 4 years of student loans for higher-level study. The loans can be used flexibly across their lifetime, full-time or part-time, for modules or full qualifications, for high-quality technical qualifications and academic education.

The restructured skills system will put local employers at the centre of skills provision, through a 'Skills Accelerator programme.' The programme will build stronger partnerships between employers and their local Further Education colleges, or other local training providers, ensuring that provision meets local needs in sectors including construction, digital, clean energy and manufacturing.

The Skills and Post-16 Education Bill will provide these reforms with the statutory footing that they need, to introduce new opportunities for everyone aged over 16, up and down the country.

New policies and funding programmes are already in place to ensure adults have greater access to local, free, job-relevant courses. Intensive 'bootcamps' offer training in areas such as coding and 'green' retrofitting in construction, as well as longer, qualification-based courses in areas including engineering, accountancy and construction. Bootcamps have already

trained 3,000 people, with 14,000 more signed up to attend courses this year.

T Levels were introduced last year. Equivalent to three A-levels, they have been co-created with over 250 employers so students can get the right skills and experience, and businesses have the workforce that they need for the future.

Almost 400 free courses are also now available to adults without a full qualification at Level 3, ranging from engineering to healthcare to conservation and backed by £95 million in government funding.

Work is also ongoing with businesses of all sizes to support them to offer more, high-quality apprenticeship opportunities. To help with this, the government is offering cash incentives for employers of £3,000 for each new apprentice they take on until the end of September.