

Skills  
Development  
Scotland

# Scottish Apprenticeships Working for Scotland



# Introduction



## **The scale of investment in Scotland over the next decade has the potential to transform the country's economy.**

Up to £230bn of planned investment, driven by the generation, transmission and distribution of renewable energy and other growth sectors.

However, lasting benefit for local communities and businesses is dependent on a major growth in workers.

An estimated 1.3 million workers<sup>1</sup> are needed over the next ten years.

For generations Scottish apprenticeships have provided real returns for employers, individuals and the economy.

People from all backgrounds get meaningful career opportunities through apprenticeships, creating diverse workforces that benefit business and society.

With major investments underway and skills shortages, apprenticeships are more vital now than ever.

Given the scale of investment in the economy and persistent skills shortages, the role

of apprenticeships has never been more important.

There are currently around 12,000 apprentice employers in Scotland, investing in over 40,000 Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprentices.

Apprenticeships are working for people from a diverse range of backgrounds.

Apprenticeships are working for Scotland's employers, providing a pipeline of talent that is being supported and trained to meet their needs.

And apprentices are working for Scotland by adding value to the country's businesses and developing in industries that support workforce demand.

Since 2008 Skills Development Scotland has worked alongside learning providers, employers and all those with a shared interest in Scotland's economic success with the ambition of creating a world-class apprenticeship system.

From Shetland to the Borders, from family firms to global businesses, the relentless focus

on partnerships and outcomes has ensured that apprenticeships are working for Scotland.

The opportunity for us all is to make sure apprenticeships work for Scotland for generations to come.

**Chair of Skills Development Scotland  
Frank Mitchell**



# Apprenticeship development

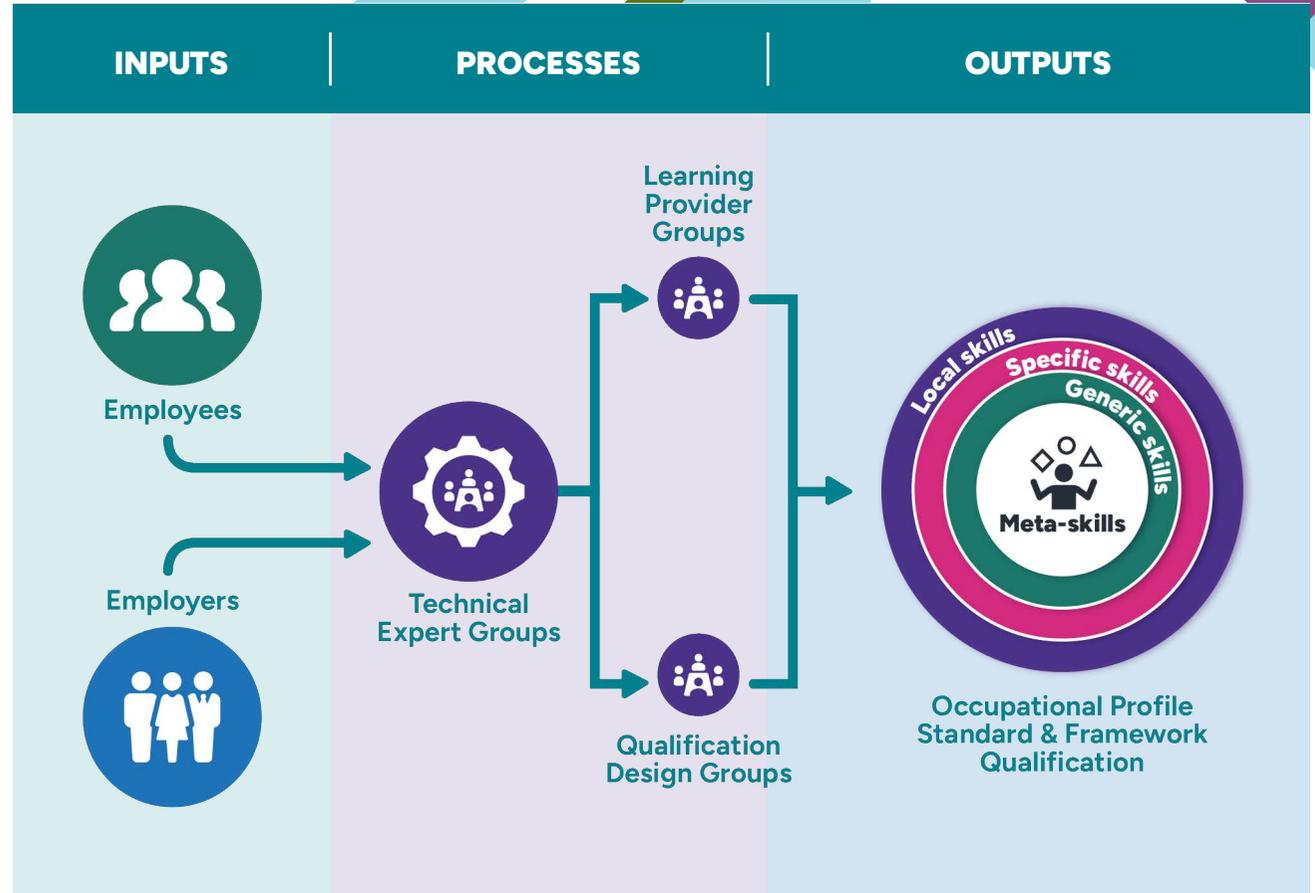
## Employers are at the heart of apprenticeship development in Scotland.

Having employers and employees central to the development process ensures alignment between jobs, the apprenticeships and the realities of the world of work.

It means apprenticeship Standards & Frameworks are more agile and responsive to reflect what work looks like today and in the future.

Technical expert groups include industry bodies; Trade Unions; standard setting organisations and regulators. Learning provider groups are the providers aligned to the apprenticeships and qualification design groups include the relevant qualification bodies.

Significant developments have already taken place in sectors including engineering, construction, retail, hospitality, digital and health care.



### Apprenticeship Skills Layers explained

<b>Meta Skills</b>	Supports apprentice impact within role and workplace
<b>Generic Skills</b>	Shared by all occupational group
<b>Specific Skills</b>	Common within a branch of occupational group
<b>Local Skills</b>	Required by the employing organisation

# Evidence-led apprenticeship delivery

Skills Development Scotland draws from a range of external and operational evidence, data and insight to deliver apprenticeships.

This work includes a demand assessment to support the Modern Apprenticeship contracting and re-contracting process, which is used throughout the year to inform any in-year changes to allocations of funded places, using real-time demand data, sectoral skills studies and insights, plus a range of intelligence gathered throughout the year.



# Creating careers



## There are over 40,000 Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprentices in Scotland.

Skills Development Scotland works with employers, learning providers and partners to support the Scottish Government's commitment to maximising high quality apprenticeships.



MA completers earn up to 52% more compared with non-completers<sup>2</sup>



Earnings for MA completers higher in STEM-related frameworks five years after completion<sup>3</sup>



Most MAs taking qualifications at higher SCQF levels<sup>4</sup>



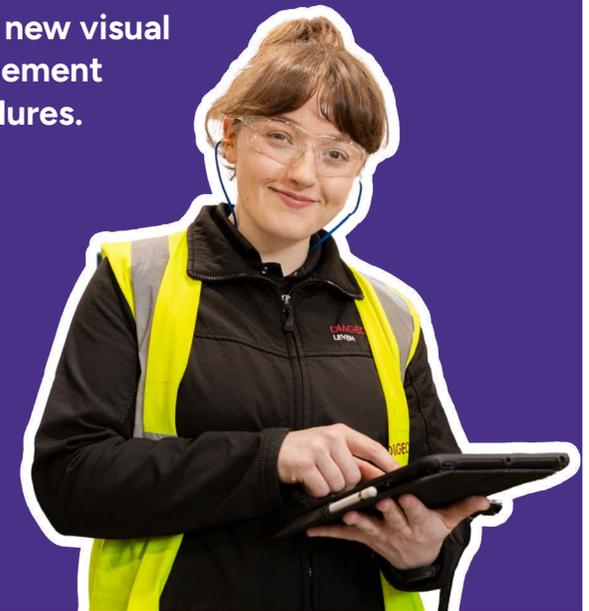
8 in 10 MAs still working for the same employer 15 months after completion<sup>5</sup>



94% of MAs very satisfied or satisfied with the service they received<sup>5</sup>

**D**uring her Modern Apprenticeship in Food and Drink Operations with Diageo, Katy Wright used her initiative to cut equipment breakdowns and operational stops on complex machinery by almost half on one of the firm's busiest production lines.

Katy chose to take an online administrator course in digital tools to gain the skills she needed to develop standards in key production processes, adapt troubleshooting guides into digital formats and create new visual management procedures.



Katy Wright, Digital Co-ordinator, Diageo

## Building businesses



**In Scotland, around 12,000 employers invest in apprenticeships, using them as a strategic response to a range of workforce challenges.**

Employers say apprenticeships help them to upskill and retrain existing employees, find and develop new talent to meet business needs and support sustainability and skills gaps by helping them tackle an ageing workforce.



90% of employers said apprenticeships significantly improved job performance<sup>6</sup>



Modern Apprentices have 80% achievement rate<sup>4</sup>



Up to £63,000 net benefit to employers over lifetime of apprenticeship completer at SCQF level 6/7<sup>7</sup>



96% of employers would recommend apprenticeships<sup>6</sup>



Employers with higher proportion of MAs in training are more productive<sup>8</sup>

**A**pprenticeships have created in-house skills, retained local talent and boosted capacity for renewable projects for Forres firm aes renewables.

The 70-strong firm has invested in Modern and Graduate Apprentices to support many aspects of the business, all of whom are still with the company.

Hannah Jakobsen from aes renewables said: "Apprenticeships have allowed aes renewables to mould our own skilled teams of electricians, plumbers, roofers, installers and heat pump technicians who have increased installation capacity across the country."



Kiera Wright, Graduate Apprentice, aes renewables

# Growing the workforce



**Apprenticeships are playing a significant role in helping Scotland's growth industries to realise their potential and transform regional economies.**

Around 29% of people starting a Modern Apprenticeship and 38% of people starting a Graduate Apprenticeship were working in the five industry sectors that are important in the transition to net zero<sup>9</sup> and will create the most new jobs.



Over 90% of apprentice employers are Small to Medium sized Enterprises<sup>10</sup>



76% of MA starts were in key growth sectors including Health and Social Care, Construction, IT and Engineering<sup>4</sup>



29% of Modern Apprentices support the drive to Net Zero



64% of MAs employed in STEM-related roles<sup>4</sup>



9 in 10 MAs highly rate the training they get from learning providers<sup>5</sup>



“Scottish Engineering’s skills gap survey found that the existing industry in Scotland needs an additional 58% of new engineers across 31 key roles by the end of 2027, over three quarters of which are delivered by apprenticeships.

“Apprenticeships are working for Scotland’s engineering community and will play an even greater role as the sector seeks to address these skills gaps and benefit from the economic opportunities both now and in the future.”



Paul Sheerin Chief Executive,  
Scottish Engineering

# Returns for the economy



The Scottish Government recognises that apprenticeships are central to the education and skills system, playing a key role in economic growth and public service sustainability.

Apprentice employers are investing in their apprentices whilst those apprentices are giving back, through the value they bring to their businesses and their tax contributions.



For every £1 of public investment, there is a £4-5 return on investment<sup>11</sup>



Employers invest £10 into apprenticeships for every £1 of public investment<sup>12</sup>



Apprenticeships raised £450 million in tax<sup>13</sup>



Helps fuel £1 billion of employer investment in skills<sup>14</sup>



Circ. 12,000 apprentice employers



“We have been clear in our Business Manifesto that Scotland needs demand led expansion of apprenticeships.

Skills shortages in digital, engineering, manufacturing and the green economy are already holding back investment. Apprenticeships are how we build the talent pipeline that unlocks growth.”



Michelle Ferguson OBE, Director,  
CBI Scotland

# Sources



- 1 [SDS Scotland's Labour Market Drivers Oct 2025](#)
- 2 Figure achieved three years after completion
- 3 [Education and Skills Impact Framework Modern Apprenticeships report](#)
- 4 SDS Modern Apprenticeship starts 2024-25
- 5 [SDS Apprentice Voice 2025](#)
- 6 [SDS Apprentice employer survey 2020](#)
- 7 Education and Skills Impact Framework 2022
- 8 [SDS Modern Apprenticeship Employers Profile](#)
- 9 [SDS An Evidence based approach to supporting the transition to Net Zero](#)
- 10 [SDS Profile of Modern Apprenticeship employers 2024](#)
- 11 Education and Skills Impact Framework 2022 – Figures based on SCQF level 6/7 MAs
- 12 SDS accounts, BEIS Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2018/19 – Scotland. Includes leverage on wages and recruitment and training costs. Note that not all leveraged employer spend is fully additional – some employers may still recruit apprentices even if there was no support from government
- 13 Public investment of £100m in apprenticeships would result in an estimated £450million return from enhanced lifetime earnings and employment
- 14 Based on £100m+ public investment in apprenticeships and £10 of employer investment for every £1 public investment (£80m within Skills Development Scotland and approx. £30m for Foundation & Graduate Apprenticeships via Scottish Funding Council)

For help and support, visit:  
**[apprenticeships.scot](https://www.apprenticeships.scot)**

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