



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
Minister for Skills**

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The Lord Freyberg
House of Lords
London
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By email.

10 November 2025

Dear Lord Freyberg,

Thank you for your contribution during the oral statement repeat on 22 October on the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper on the importance of recognising skills to support creative industries and crafts, particularly in the context of bespoke, freelance and project-based employment.

I promised to respond in writing to the points you raised and to outline how the reforms set out in our White Paper will support these vital sectors alongside other industrial and technical pathways. As I mentioned in my response during the debate, I would also like to reassure you that, in the sorts of crafts you referenced, we continue to maintain a considerable number of apprenticeship standards. These provide a structured route for employers to take on apprentices and sustain the transmission of important craft skills across generations.

The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper sets out a comprehensive reform programme designed to ensure our education and training system is responsive to the evolving labour market, including the increasing prevalence of non-standard employment and income models. We recognise that flexibility is essential to support individuals who may be self-employed, work freelance or engage in portfolio careers, particularly in the craft and creative sectors.

To address these needs, the government is expanding access to modular and short courses, enabling individuals to upskill and reskill in ways that fit around their working lives. These courses are being delivered through initiatives such as Skills Bootcamps, Sector-Based Work Academy Programmes and the forthcoming apprenticeship units to be introduced as part of the Growth and Skills Levy from April 2026. These flexible training options are designed to be responsive to employer needs and accessible to those in non-traditional employment arrangements.

Central to this flexibility is the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) which will provide individuals with loan funding for four years' worth of higher-level education or training.

The LLE will support modular study at levels 4 to 6, allowing learners to build qualifications over time and tailor their learning to their career needs. This entitlement will be available to apply for from September 2026, with the first courses taught from January 2027, and is a cornerstone of our commitment to lifelong learning and inclusive access to higher-level skills.

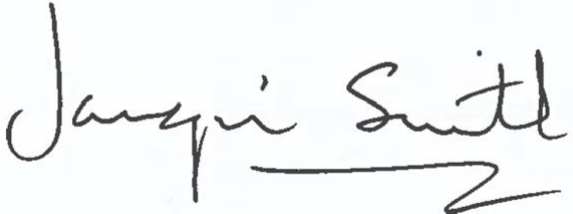
In terms of measuring success, the government is investing in improved outcomes data across further education. Through Skills England, we are developing a robust, data-driven national view of skills needs and training outcomes. This includes tracking employment and earnings outcomes after training via the Longitudinal Education Outcomes dataset. These insights will help us to assess the effectiveness of training routes in all sectors, including creative and craft industries.

We are also committed to ensuring that creative and craft routes are included in the broader strategy for growth. Local Skills Improvement Plans will play a role in identifying and supporting high-quality provision in these areas, ensuring that learners have clear pathways into sustainable employment.

Together, these reforms represent a significant step forward in creating a post-16 education and skills system that is inclusive, flexible and aligned with the diverse realities of modern work.

Thank you again for taking the time to engage on these matters. I hope these further details have been useful and I will place a copy in the House libraries.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Jacqui Smith', with a stylized flourish underneath.

**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith
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