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## Pocket Watch – What have we learned from this year's National Apprenticeship Week?

### Introduction

It began with a speech from the Prime Minister, it led to over 800 different events around the country, it took in a debate in Parliament and a major National Conference and it prompted a number of announcements including an important Statement on Government policy issued in response to the latest Review. So what have we learned from this year's National Apprenticeship Week?

### 10 headline messages

1. Apprenticeships are worth it, they help boost national let alone individual prospects. This emerged in a **Report** published at the start of the week by the Centre for Economics and Business Research which concluded that "*the average person completing an Apprenticeship increases business productivity by £214 a week* " and that such productivity gains are passed on to workers in the form of higher wages
2. Employers will be given greater opportunities to design and develop their own Apprenticeship standards and qualifications as part of a **consultation** being carried out this spring following the Response to last year's Richard Review of Apprenticeships in England
3. An Apprenticeship route should become the new standard route for school leavers not intending to progress into higher education. This proposal for a new 'norm' for school leavers was announced in the Prime Minister's **speech** kicking off Apprenticeship Week
4. Following the Skills Minister's announcement at the end of last year, the first graduate level **Higher Apprenticeships** are rolling off the line including those in advanced manufacturing, commercial airline piloting and professional development for work based learning practitioners
5. The **Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England** (SASE) and associated guidance have been updated to accommodate the new higher level standards and come into effect from 6 April 2013
6. Two new Government **Apprenticeship Ambassadors** have been appointed, one, Gordon Birtwistle MP as Apprenticeship Ambassador to Business and the other, Andrew Jones MP as an Apprenticeship Ambassador to Parliament
7. Incorporating apprenticeship opportunities in public procurement contracts, careers advice in schools, bridging to work, traineeships and links to youth unemployment, employer engagement, quality standards and apprenticeship growth were the main talking points in the **Adjournment Debate** on Apprenticeships led by the Opposition on the second day of Apprenticeship Week
8. Barclays, which has been running an Apprenticeship programme since last April and has already employed over 500 apprentices, has set out plans to recruit a further 1,000 apprentices and launched a new '**Bridges into Work**' support programme
9. **The Federation of Small Businesses** followed up its autumn Report on '*The Apprenticeship Journey*' by supporting the argument that numeracy and literacy should be improved in schools rather than developed in Apprenticeship frameworks
10. The **Government** appears to favour the Employer Ownership Pilot approach to funding rather than tax credits but we wait to see if next week's Budget offers further clues



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