



## Apprentice Voices Heard in Parliamentary Roundtable

As part of National Apprenticeship Week 2026, the Association of Apprentices hosted a Parliamentary Roundtable in partnership with The Right Honourable Laura Trott MP (Shadow Education Secretary), Lord Tony Young, and the Chief Executives of Skills England. Crucially, apprentices from a wide range of sectors and regions across England were invited to share their stories and lived experiences.

Will Birley, QA Level 3 Multi-Channel Marketer apprentice, attended this event.

'My apprenticeship has given me a real opportunity to develop my skills while making a difference in my community. It has shown me just how many career paths are available in the NHS and how apprenticeships can open doors for people from all backgrounds. My experience in parliament gave me the chance to meet other apprentices from across the country, share my experience as an apprentice with MPs, and help shape apprenticeships for the future.'

**Will Birley, QA Apprentice**

Will is an apprentice within the communications and engagement team at NHS Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board.

'Apprentices bring energy, fresh thinking and practical skills that strengthen our organisation and directly support better care for local people. Will is an excellent example of this, and his professionalism, commitment and impact in our communications team have made a real difference. We are proud to see him invited to Westminster to represent apprentices at a national level'

**Tom Abell, Chief Executive Officer, NHS Mid and South Essex**

'The best advocates for apprenticeships are apprentices themselves. We're so proud to see QA learner Will Birley showcasing exactly why apprenticeships are no longer a 'nice to have' in the NHS. They are a powerful lever for building a skilled, diverse and dedicated workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

QA work closely with the NHS and together we believe that combining real work experience with high-quality training is one of the most powerful ways to grow talent and improve patient care. Embracing apprenticeships helps us not only develop careers but also transform services for the long term.'

**Jo Bishenden, Chief Learning Officer, QA**

The session provided a valuable platform for apprentices to make their voices heard, highlighting the challenges they face in accessing opportunities, the impact of social mobility barriers, funding constraints, upcoming assessment reforms, employer support, and the realities of their apprenticeship journeys.

QA is proud to partner with the Association of Apprentices and to continue offering free membership to every QA apprentice. Through this partnership, apprentices gain access to a rich range of AoA learning resources, opportunities to connect with peers, insights from experts and industry leaders, support for life skills and mental wellbeing, softskills development, and a calendar of free online and inperson events.

You can access your free membership [here](#).

Photo credit: Association of Apprentices

