

The Journal helps recruit 500 new apprentices

Mar 28 2011 by Chris Knox, [The Journal](#)



Journal editor Brian Aitken helped to kick off the campaign when he spent a day as an apprentice

THE Journal has helped boost the job prospects of the region's youngsters with our campaign to encourage the recruitment of apprenticeships smashing its target of creating 500 new apprentices in 100 days – with five weeks of the campaign to go.

The '500 in 100' campaign, which launched in association with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and supported by the North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC), has managed to find places for 589 apprentices, after breaking its previous target of 100 apprentices in under three weeks.

The success of the campaign illustrates how much importance the region's employers are placing on apprenticeships to boost the economic recovery and bridge the skills gap.

John Wayman, regional director of the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), said: "We have been genuinely overwhelmed by the positive response to the campaign from North East employers.

"To have surpassed our aspirational 500 apprenticeships target is truly exceptional and well beyond our expectations.

"I would like to sincerely thank all of the North East's businesses who have helped to make the campaign such a huge success to date.

"There are still five weeks of the campaign to go and I would like to urge North East employers who currently do not employ apprentices to take the opportunity to get in touch with us to find out how apprenticeships could benefit their business."

Patricia Wilkinson, director of training and skills development at NECC, said: "This is an absolutely fantastic achievement. The revised target of 500 has been smashed and at this rate it looks as though the region could be doubling this before the campaign finishes."

The milestone comes as the Government continues its drive to step up apprenticeships. While it has significantly reduced its spending in many areas, its determination to invest in workplace training was underlined in last week's Budget.

Chancellor George Osborne announcing a £180m package to fund an extra 40,000 young apprentices and 10,000 advanced level and higher apprentices.

The plans stem from rising concerns over a "lost generation" of young people unable to find their feet in the labour market as a result of the economic situation.

Bev Robinson, principal of Newcastle College, which runs its own apprenticeship programmes, said: "Newcastle College has been delighted to have been involved in the 500 in 100 apprenticeship campaign and to see the North East business community respond so positively.

“An apprentice provides a valuable opportunity for businesses to recruit enthusiastic individuals who can train whilst gaining experience in employment.”

As well as helping youngsters get a foot in the door, the campaign has also benefited employers close the skills gap, particularly in areas such as construction and engineering.

One company that has recently brought on apprentices through the campaign is Wallsend-based equipment repair and measuring specialist AMECaL. It has recruited Stephen Simpson, 21, from Denton Burn, Thomas McFayden, 20, from Hebburn and Josh Howie, 21, from Chapel Park, as advanced engineering apprentices. Newcastle College provided the training programme.

Stephen Simpson said: “I’ve been at AMECaL for two weeks now and am already enjoying the programme. I was attracted to apprenticeships as they give you the chance to earn a wage while you learn.”

Bill Mole, inspector team leader at Express Engineering, which has brought on four apprentices during the campaign, said: “Apprenticeships are a win win for everybody. Not only are they providing jobs at a time when there a few of them around, they also allow employers to train staff from the ground up.”

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