

I remember very early after I was elected to Parliament a constituent contacted me with his views on how to get youngsters into employment. His comments were heavily based on not only his own experience as a teenager starting out in industry but as a gentleman who himself progressed into training future generations of workers and leaders into employment.

It was, in essence, a conversation based largely around the need to bring back apprenticeships. Much of the older generation, particularly although not exclusively the male population, started their successful lifelong careers as an apprentice. It involved a mix of classroom and work place based learning and gave many an introduction into a trade.

Shortly after coming to power the Government poured its energy into re-launching apprenticeships and the results are very impressive. Last year alone 280 apprentices started schemes across Chatham & Aylesford. This follows on from 260 and 210 apprentices recruited in the two respective years before.

I've had the pleasure of meeting some of the apprentices. They are young and enthusiastic. They know the direction in life they wish to travel and have utilised the schemes open to them. What is equally impressive is that they have had to go through a competitive process in order to be rewarded the placement. An apprenticeship is no easy opt-out. In fact it is quite the opposite. It is a sharp introduction into work and given the number of applicants for each place it is important those successful knuckle down and prove their value to the business.

The other great aspect of the new apprenticeship scheme is how many different businesses are involved now. From Councils through to the Army, apprenticeships are no longer just a route into trade.

Thankfully my wise and experienced constituent is around to see his comments become policy and a successful one it is too.