

September 2025
Issue #9



SAF Newsletter

The latest news, views and announcements

Letter from the Forum

Dear Readers,

As the leaves turn and the days grow crisper, we're delighted to welcome you to the September edition of the Science Apprenticeship Forum Newsletter.

We're especially proud to share the success of this year's Science Apprentice Conference, which was our largest gathering yet, welcoming around 120 delegates from across the country. The event was filled with energy and enthusiasm – from inspiring keynote talks and hands-on workshops to the invaluable networking that took place among apprentices, mentors, and industry leaders.

A particular highlight was our award ceremony, celebrating the creativity and dedication of our apprentices. We were thrilled to present prizes for the Poster Competition, recognise the outstanding achievements of our Apprentice of the Month award-winners, and honour the recipients of the prestigious Royal Society of Chemistry Apprentice Prizes. These awards showcase the talent and innovation flourishing within our community.

In this issue, you'll find conference highlights, inspiring stories from our award-winners, and updates on upcoming opportunities and events.

The Science Apprenticeship Forum Team



Science Apprenticeship Conference – Thank You!

On 12th September, we were proud to host this year's **Science Apprenticeship Conference**, bringing together apprentices, employers, training providers, and sector leaders from across the UK.

When we first set up this conference, the goal was simple: to create something **I wish I had during the early stages of my apprenticeship journey**, a space where apprentices could learn, connect, and feel part of a wider community. Over the years, it has grown into an event that not only supports **upskilling and EPA preparation**, but also **networking, idea sharing, and building connections with like-minded apprentices**.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who joined us, from those who presented fantastic posters, to the inspiring voices on the **apprentice panel** and in the **workshops**. Your contributions made the day truly special.

We are also hugely grateful to our sponsors; **Innovate UK, the Science Council**, and **the Royal Society of Chemistry**, whose support helped make this event possible.

This year we were particularly excited to host a **policy roundtable**, where apprentices sat alongside representatives from **Gatsby, Innovate UK, UKRI, the Office for Life Sciences, and more**. Thank you to all the apprentices who brought their ideas and energy to the table, it was a fantastic opportunity to inspire change directly with policymakers.

The conference continues to grow in both impact and ambition, and your **feedback is really important to us**. If you haven't already filled out the feedback form, please click on the below links; we'd love to hear your thoughts.

[Apprentice Feedback](#)

[Sponsor & Exhibitor Feedback](#)

You can also get in touch with us via info@scienceapprenticeshipforum.org.

Finally, a huge thank you to our amazing **organising committee** and to every apprentice who joined us.

Watch this space for 2026 . We can't wait to see you there!

Tyler Harvey-Cowlishaw
Chair & Founder



Science Apprentice Conference



Thank you to our co-organisers!



Calls-To-Action

The Biochemical Society - Opportunities, including for Tech Professionals

If you are interested in playing an active role in the future of the Society and supporting the wider molecular bioscience community, available opportunities can be found on the website [here!](#)

If you apply, or are accepted to any, please let the SAF know at:
info@scienceapprenticeshipforum.org

Apprenticeship & Training Awards 2026

Nominations are open for the 2026 Apprenticeship & Training Awards, celebrating outstanding employers and providers with national recognition, a parliamentary reception, and the legendary Gala Dinner.

These prestigious awards highlight the very best in the country - organisations who go above and beyond to deliver outstanding training, create pathways into successful careers, and champion apprenticeships and workforce development.

Share this information with your employer or training provider to submit their nomination. More details can be found [here!](#)

Lab Innovations

Lab Innovations is the UK's leading gathering for laboratory and scientific experts, bringing professionals from every field together in one place – from life sciences and pharmaceuticals to food and materials research. It's the ultimate opportunity to expand your network and discover fresh insights.

The conference is free to attend. For more details and to register to attend, visit the website [here!](#)



Lab Innovations Conference

Lab Innovations is the only event in the UK where lab and scientific professionals from every sector come together under one roof - from life sciences to food, pharma to material science. There's no limit to who you can meet, or what you can learn.

We are thrilled to have been chosen as a finalist to be part of this year's
Lab Awards 2025!

Find us in the '**Commitment to Skills & Training**' category amongst **Elemental Lab Solutions, AstraZeneca and Shimadzu!**

It is amazing to be recognised for the work we put in to support apprentices and improve apprenticeship standards in the UK. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in the journey with us!

We'd love for you to join us at the ceremony to celebrate! You can get your free pass [here!](#)

For more details about the event, awards and exhibitor list, visit the website [here!](#)



SIAS Leading the Way on New Engineering Maintenance Technician Standards

SIAS



SIAS is continuing its mission to drive bold, meaningful change in STEM skills and innovation. As the leading assessment organisation for the Level 3 Science Industry Maintenance Technician (SIMT), SIAS is uniquely placed to support training providers and employers as they prepare for the new Level 3 Engineering Maintenance Technician (EMT) standards, which cover both Single and Dual Disciplines.

To help ensure a smooth transition, the SIAS team is offering a comprehensive package of support, including curriculum mapping, webinars and tailored one-to-one guidance. This approach is designed to give providers and employers the confidence to deliver against the new requirements and ensure learners are equipped with the skills industry needs.

Organisations interested in finding out more about how SIAS can help are encouraged to contact partnerships@siasuk.com.

Together, we can unlock potential, shape the future of skills and keep #AlwaysMovingForward.

www.siasuk.com

[+44 \(0\) 1925 515 211](tel:+441925515211)

**ASSESSMENT
AWARDING
ACCREDITED**

Apprentice of the Month: Emily Butterworth



Congratulations to Emily Butterworth, our Apprentice of the Month!

Emily has been an outstanding and inspirational role model for fellow degree apprentices. She actively supports other cohorts during lectures, particularly by sharing her insights on developing leadership skills. Emily has also contributed to the university's success by supporting key industry events and has played an integral role in research projects that have been published in academic journals.

Her commitment to continually stretching and growing her skills, combined with her positivity and motivation, makes her one of the most exceptional apprentices her nominator has had the privilege to work with.

Apprentice Spotlight: Emily Butterworth

Q: Can you tell us a little about yourself and your background?

A: I've always been interested in science – I loved biology, chemistry, physics, and maths at school. Early on I thought I'd go into medicine, so when I was 16 I picked the relevant A-levels (biology, chemistry, and maths). I particularly enjoyed biology.

My A-level biology teacher, who was a microbiologist, ran enrichment lessons on topics like genotyping and anti-microbial resistance, which sparked my interest in microbiology. That made me realise I didn't want to study medicine after all – I wanted to stay closer to the science while still having an impact on patients.

I initially applied to university for microbiology as a back-up option, but I was already thinking five years ahead. I researched graduate jobs and came across AstraZeneca. While exploring their website, I discovered the apprenticeship programme a year in advance and spent that year preparing. I was successful in the interview and started working in Microbiology at AstraZeneca in September 2022.



Apprentice Spotlight: Emily Butterworth

Q: What does a typical day look like in your role?

A: I work in pharmaceutical microbiology. I started out in Environmental Assurance, which gave me the chance to learn a range of techniques and systems, and to understand how microbiology fits into a large pharmaceutical business.

I've rotated through different teams – from environmental assurance to product testing, then to one of our sterile manufacturing plants in a QA role where I applied microbiology knowledge to real life scenarios. I've also worked in pharmaceutical development for the past year as the responsible microbiologist for several drug projects, which has been exciting. Working in development has challenged my communication skills in a positive way and broadened my understanding of the business. I've had the opportunity to contribute to various technology projects and sustainability initiatives. For the next six months, I'm focusing a lot on university work – I've kicked off my final year project and aim to graduate in summer 2026 with my BioScience degree.

Q: What challenges have you faced, and how have you overcome them?

A: One of the hardest parts of being an apprentice is balancing work and university, which many of us struggle with.

A specific challenge has been working with Contract Manufacturing Organisations (CMOs) around the world. As a microbiologist, it's often easier to resolve issues in person in the cleanroom, but when production is in different countries, you have to rely on strong communication and coordination – often across time zones. Learning how to manage these relationships and communicate effectively has been key.

Q: Has anyone been a big influence or mentor during your apprenticeship?

A: My current manager has been amazing. I knew I wanted to work on tech-focused projects, and she's empowered me in such a supportive way and encouraged me to learn and grow. Thanks to her support, I've been able to take on opportunities I never imagined I'd have as an apprentice, and I've continued to develop my skills and knowledge.



Apprentice Spotlight: Emily Butterworth

Q: How has your apprenticeship changed your perspective on learning and working?

A: Coming out of A-levels, where I had to work very hard, I thought an apprenticeship would mean I could relax a bit – go to work and then come home. That couldn't have been further from the truth.

In every team I've joined, there have always been opportunities to learn and develop. I've seen the results of that approach in both my work and university studies. I've also learned to follow my curiosity – reaching out to people, doing extra work when it interests me, and discovering where in the business I most enjoy working.

Q: What are your career goals for the future?

A: I'd love to stay at AstraZeneca after I finish my apprenticeship. I want to continue working in microbiology because I enjoy the mix of theory and practical application.

Q: If you could give your past self one piece of advice for the first day of your apprenticeship, what would it be?

A: Don't get so stressed about everything – it will all be okay! You're not going to be the CEO after your first week, so take the time to learn and enjoy the experience. Prioritise yourself, figure out where you fit in both the business and university, and focus on the areas you truly enjoy.



In addition to this newsletter feature, Emily will also receive a certificate to share with her workplace. To get involved in the next 'Apprentice of the Month', see more information on page 12!



Key Updates

PM sets new target for under 25s

England Prime Minister Keir Starmer has announced a new ambition for two-thirds of young people in the UK to enter higher education or technical training by age 25, replacing Tony Blair's 1999 target of 50% going to university. Unveiled at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool, the shift emphasises "gold-standard apprenticeships" and higher-level technical courses alongside traditional degrees, aiming to better align education with jobs.

The plan includes a goal for at least 10% of young people to pursue higher technical qualifications or apprenticeships by 2040, almost double the current level, and highlights the need for renewed investment in further-education colleges. The move has been welcomed by education leaders and industry groups as a long-overdue recognition of advanced skills training as being of equal value to a university degree.

[Read more here](#)

Level 7 new starters increase

FE Week reports a sharp jump in Level 7 apprenticeship starts, with a 24 % rise between August 2024 and April 2025 compared to the previous year. The spike has accelerated in spring (up 65 % year-on-year, and in March alone more than doubling) as employers and training providers rush to lock in funding before planned cuts in January 2026. The Department for Education has already experienced its first overspend on apprenticeships, and the shift toward funding employees over 22 is seen as part of a strategy to rebalance investment toward younger learners and lower-level training. Critics warn the surge will create a "big financial headache" for ministers, stretching budgets and risking quality unless carefully managed.

[Read more here](#)



Key Updates

Landing an apprenticeship is easier said than done

While interest among under-19s in apprenticeships is increasing, actual uptake is falling. Young people are keen—over a third say they are likely to apply—but only a fraction succeed, with three times more applicants than apprenticeship places.

Major barriers include poor visibility of apprenticeship opportunities (many employers don't use or are unfamiliar with the central "Find an Apprenticeship" service), complex application processes that aren't coordinated with the school calendar, and SMEs (small-to-medium enterprises) struggling with administrative burdens after the introduction of the apprenticeship levy.

The below article argues for better signposting, a one-stop platform for all opportunities, synchronisation of applications with school years, a "clearing" system for unmatched applicants, and stronger support (e.g. brokerage services) for smaller employers.

[Read more here](#)



Key Updates

Apprentice of the Month Nominations!

We're celebrating our amazing apprentices by featuring those who go above and beyond—whether through outstanding performance, teamwork, or workplace impact. Nominate a deserving apprentice by sharing their achievements and help us highlight the incredible talent in our community!

Use the link [here](#) to nominate now!

We Want to Hear from You!

Our newsletter is all about celebrating your stories, experiences, and questions. Whether you've recently worked on an exciting project, want to share your journey so far, or are looking for advice from the community, we'd love to feature your voice.

This is your space to inspire others, ask questions, and highlight the amazing work happening across our network. No story is too big or too small—every contribution helps to build a stronger, more connected community.

If you'd like to be featured in our next newsletter, simply get in touch by emailing **o.brittain@scienceapprenticeshipforum.org**

We can't wait to hear from you!



Upcoming Events / Dates:

Black History Month

October 2025

ADHD Awareness Month

October 2025

Diwali

20 October 2025

Any Other Business (AOB):

Science Apprenticeship Forum Membership Form

As we continue to enhance the way we support and connect with our community, we kindly ask all members to complete the new SAF membership form. This will help us ensure we have the most accurate and up-to-date information about your members.

You can find the form [here!](#)

