



**CIPR PRIDE AWARDS 2019 GOLD WINNER**

**Category:** Best Event

**Company:** Skills Development Scotland

**Entry title:** Scotland's Apprentice Convention 2018

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**Brief and objectives:**

A key objective for Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is to promote apprenticeships – increasing the number of young people choosing the apprenticeship career path.

During Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2018, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced that SDS would deliver Scotland's first Apprentice Convention during the Year of Young People (YOYP) 2018.

SDS aimed to use the Convention to realise an ambition to create a national network of apprentices who could – through activities such as visiting schools – promote apprenticeships directly to young people.

The brief was to deliver a new event - shaped by apprentices, for apprentices - that would connect young apprentices from across Scotland, celebrate their success and equip them with the skills to inspire the next generation.

Our objectives were to:

- Deliver the first national apprenticeship event – designed in collaboration with apprentices
- Create a sense of pride and community among apprentices
- Inspire apprentices to become advocates for apprenticeships
- Support apprentices to grow their skills
- Launch Scotland's Apprenticeship Network.

**The idea, research and planning:**

**THE IDEA**

SDS works with employers, industry sectors, training providers and the skills system to meet Scottish Government targets for apprenticeships - 29,000 in 2019/20, increasing to 30,000 in 2020/21.

Led by SDS, Scotland's Apprentice Convention was driven by key themes:

- Create – pride in being an apprentice
- Inspire – apprentices to share experiences
- Grow – a network of passionate apprentices.

These principles directed the development of the event in terms of content, design and delivery.

Attendees would hear from inspiring speakers, gain valuable new skills through training workshops and meet apprentices from other areas, professions and employers.

This shared experience would support the creation of a powerful peer network equipped to inspire the next generation of apprentices.

## RESEARCH AND PLANING

Taking place during Scotland's YOYP 2018 and adhering to the ethos of by apprentices, for apprentices, the most important part of our research was to capture, and listen to, the input of young apprentices.

Working in collaboration with Young Scot's Communic18 team, SDS hosted a YouthJam workshop in Summer 2018.

This full-day session was attended by 20 young apprentices from a cross-section of employers, who provided extensive input into the event design – from branding, venue and location preferences, through to workshop and speaker themes.

This feedback was collated and used to guide all future event decision making.

Event delivery was managed internally by an SDS Project Team and governed by a Project Board.

To ensure the ongoing and responsive input of young apprentices, additional project governance was provided each month by the newly-formed Apprentice Engagement Group (AEG), which is comprised of young apprentices from Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) employers.

## **Strategy, tactics, creativity and innovation:**

### STRATEGY

Our approach relied upon effectively marketing the event to apprentices and their employers, using a multi-channel strategy with tailored messaging for each audience.

Ultimately, employers would have to endorse the event to permit and encourage their apprentices to attend.

## TACTICS

Apprentice-focussed messaging was delivered via our dedicated apprenticeship channels: the apprenticeships.scot website, Twitter and Facebook pages. All messaging emphasised the key selling points for apprentices - namely the opportunity to attend a first-of-its-kind event, designed by apprentices, and free opportunity to develop new skills and connections.

Employer-focussed communications supplemented this messaging and were delivered through our employer channels: the SDS corporate website, Twitter account, LinkedIn page and CEO blog. Employer key messages highlighted the Scottish Government's direct support of the event and emphasised the free CPD offered to all attendees.

This activity was reinforced by a robust internal engagement plan, which equipped SDS's employer and apprentice teams with customisable communications to promote across their contacts.

## CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

While the event was free to attend, we knew that travel costs would be a barrier for many employers. To support equal access, we secured a partnership with ScotRail – offering a 30% discount on rail travel to the event.

During event promotion, many employers in the Highlands & Islands stated that they could not join due to proximity. In response to this, we secured a partnership with Inverness College UHI to host a satellite event on their campus that would feature a live broadcast of the main convention, as well as interactive elements.

### **Delivery, including details of design, production and support teams employed:**

The event delivery was fully informed by the apprentice feedback captured at YouthJam and ongoing input from the AEG.

## DESIGN

- Edinburgh International Conference Centre (EICC) chosen as venue - due to nationwide accessibility and ability to accommodate target of 500 apprentice attendees
- Event offered full convention experience – with interactive marketplace area, two main plenary sessions with keynote speakers and three CPD workshops
- Apprentices featured prominently in agenda – with keynote from former Apprentice of the Year, Suzanne Birney, an Apprentice Panel and closing speech from Julia Speirs, Modern Apprentice at Microsoft
- Significant Scottish Government support - including a video message from the First Minister, keynote address from Kate Forbes MSP, Minister for Public Finance & Digital Economy, and a visit from Jamie Hepburn MSP, Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills.

## PRODUCTION

- Event managed and delivered by internal Project Team
- Event brand identity and collateral created by internal design team
- Event production and delegate management contracted to StarkEventsOn-screen media and filming contracted to Solo Films.

## SUPPORT

- Sponsorship funding secured from Lloyds Banking Group
- 30% travel discount provided by ScotRail
- Young Scot supported YouthJam consultation and provided free YOYP merchandise
- Inverness College UHI provided free venue for satellite event
- Event marketplace supported by Scotland is Now, Young Scot, SCQF and Developing the Young Workforce.

## **Measurement and evaluation:**

### MEASUREMENT

- 568 apprentices attended main convention – outperforming target of 500
- 100 apprentices attended satellite event in Inverness
- All 668 attendees completed training workshops
- Over 100 employers represented
- Scotland's Apprentice Network successfully launched via event, with 50+ expressions of interest.

### EVALUATION

- Post-event survey received 17% return rate
- 91.67% of respondents rated the event as Excellent, Very Good or Good
- 80.21% said the event made them feel proud to be an apprentice
- 84.38% said they are more likely to encourage friends or family to go for an apprenticeship after the event.

## **Budget and campaign impact:**

### BUDGET

- The event budget covered venue, supplier, speaker and production costs across both venues, as well as catering and workshop delivery for 668 delegates
- Sponsorship secured from Lloyds Banking Group.

£12,350 savings realised through use of in-house design teamIMPACT

- Provided a successful platform to launch Scotland's Apprentice Network, whose members are now actively inspiring the next generation
- Delivered the largest-ever gathering of apprentices in Scotland – bringing together Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprentices, developing their skills and expanding their networks
- Directly supported SDS's engagement with the Scottish Government through involvement of First Minister and two Ministers linked to skills policy.