

The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern, Minister of State (Minister for Skills) and Minister of State (Minister for Women and Equalities)

Sent by email

9 October 2025

Dear Baroness Smith,

Re. Government Proposals on Age Restrictions for Level 7 Apprenticeships

We welcome the Government's continued commitment to strengthening the UK's life sciences sector and expanding opportunities through apprenticeships. The UK's ambition to be Europe's leading life sciences hub by 2030 will only be achieved with a strong, diverse skills pipeline. Medical statisticians, who play a central role in clinical trials and health data analysis, are an important part of that picture.

Since its launch in 2021, the Level 7 Medical Statistician Apprenticeship has become a valuable and inclusive route into the profession. Employers across the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, clinical research and academic sectors have embraced the model, which combines paid, practical training with a fully funded MSc. For many, it has provided the only realistic way to enter a field where postgraduate qualifications are essential.

We are concerned, however, that the proposed age cap of 21 for Level 7 apprenticeships could unintentionally undermine these achievements. Most medical statisticians begin training after completing a first degree, meaning that the majority of current apprentices would not have been eligible under the new rules. The change would also reduce opportunities for mature students and career changers, both of whom are vital in widening participation.

The issue extends beyond medical statistics. Other high-demand professions such as nursing, psychology, engineering and law also stand to be affected. Restricting entry routes risks limiting the very workforce the government has recognised as critical to the UK's competitiveness and public services.

With the skills portfolio now sitting under your department, we see this as a timely opportunity to reconsider the detail of the proposals. We would be very pleased to share evidence from across the life sciences sector, and would welcome a meeting to discuss how apprenticeships can continue to support both new school leavers and those entering through postgraduate routes.

We look forward to working with you to ensure the UK continues to attract and train the statisticians it needs to deliver on its life sciences ambitions.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Sir John Aston, President, **Royal Statistical Society**

Naomi Givens, Chair of **Statisticians in the Pharmaceutical Industry**

David Wright, Co-Chair of **Statisticians in the Pharmaceutical Industry**

Valerie Millar, Chair of the **Medical Statistician Apprenticeship Trailblazer Group**