

SME APPRENTICESHIP ESSENTIALS.

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SME Apprenticeship Pilot Case Study: Far'n'Beyond and Sheffield Hallam University

“The apprenticeship route expedited our growth in the packaging industry”

Far'n'Beyond

Why this case study matters for the SME Apprenticeship Pilot

The Apprenticeship Workforce Development (AWD) Programme newly released SME Apprenticeship Pilot aims to support SMEs and SME key managers to use apprenticeships more confidently and strategically — not just as a training route, but to grow capability, open new opportunities and strengthen business performance.

Far'n'Beyond, an independent creative design, print and digital marketing agency, provides a clear example of how a **well-supported higher degree apprenticeship** programme can contribute directly to business growth, innovation and turnover — when aligned to business strategy and actively supported by management.

Business context

Far'n'Beyond is an award-winning creative agency specialising in design, print and digital marketing. With a strong commitment to quality, service and expertise, the business works closely with clients to communicate brand and product messages effectively.

As a growing SME, the company is keen to continuously develop its skills base and explore new markets — while remaining agile and commercially focused.

Using apprenticeships to support growth

(Linked to Pilot Theme 1: Getting Apprenticeships Right from the Start)

Far'n'Beyond chose the apprenticeship route to **upskill an existing team member** through structured learning, while bringing new insight and external perspective back into the business.

Dr Mandy Crawford-Lee, Chief Executive, UVAC
February 2026

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As Managing Director Adam Moody explains, apprenticeships offered:

- A structured way to develop specialist skills
- Exposure to industry knowledge beyond day-to-day SME experience
- A mechanism to align individual development with business ambition

The decision to enrol Sam, a designer specialising in packaging design and print, was closely linked to the **growth of the company's packaging portfolio** — ensuring the apprenticeship aligned directly with emerging business needs.

Pilot link: The SME Pilot supports managers to identify where apprenticeships can best align with workforce development and growth opportunities, helping them make informed, strategic decisions rather than viewing apprenticeships in isolation.

Day-to-day impact in the workplace

(Linked to Pilot Theme 2: Managing and Supporting Apprentices)

Sam's apprenticeship has had a tangible impact on the business. Throughout the apprenticeship, both Sam and Far'n'Beyond gained:

- Access to packaging industry networks, events and opportunities
- Exposure to new ideas, techniques and best practice
- Opportunities to challenge and develop packaging design solutions for clients

Sam worked collaboratively within the team to apply learning directly to live projects — helping the business refine and expand its packaging offer.

This demonstrates how **active engagement from managers and teams** enables apprentices to translate learning into immediate commercial value.

Pilot link: A core focus of the SME Pilot is helping managers feel confident supporting apprentices day to day — ensuring learning is applied, valued and shared across the business.

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Accelerating capability and commercial outcomes

(Linked to Pilot Theme 4: Completion, Retention and Beyond)

The apprenticeship played a key role in accelerating Far'n'Beyond's growth in the packaging sector. According to MD Adam Moody:

"The course has expedited our growth in the packaging industry, which has contributed to our increase in turnover."

Sam's focus in their apprenticeship helped the business:

- **Stay strategically aligned** to the development of packaging products and services
- **Build momentum in a growing area** of the business
- **Strengthen the company's market position** more quickly than would otherwise have been possible

This illustrates how apprenticeships, when well supported, can deliver **measurable business benefits**, not just individual development.

Pilot link: The SME Pilot supports employers to think beyond enrolment — helping them plan for progression, retention and return on investment.

Working effectively with the training provider

(Linked to Pilot Theme 2: Collaboration and Communication)

Far'n'Beyond highlights the importance of clear, accessible communication with the training provider. Sheffield Hallam University supported the business through:

- Early video calls to explain the process
- Clear guidance to help the employer understand expectations
- An accessible, employer-friendly approach

This **collaborative relationship reduced complexity** and made the apprenticeship feel manageable within the realities of SME working life.

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Pilot link: The SME Pilot helps managers navigate provider relationships with confidence — understanding roles, responsibilities and how to get the most from the partnership.

Key learning for the SME Apprenticeship Pilot

The Far’n’Beyond experience reinforces several key messages at the heart of the SME Apprenticeship Pilot:

- Apprenticeships can directly support **business growth**, not just skills development
- **Aligning apprenticeships** to emerging business priorities **maximises impact**
- Confident **line management and engagement** turn learning into commercial value
- **Strong provider relationships** make apprenticeships **more accessible for SMEs**

As Adam Moody reflects:

“An apprenticeship is a great way to support your team’s growth and bring new opportunities to your organisation. Finding the right people is hard, so courses that help them develop and commit to the company are rewarding for everyone involved.”