



Our plan for apprenticeships

Broader, higher quality,
better prepared



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Foreword

Apprenticeships are seen as the jewel in the crown of technical education in the UK. While they are generally perceived positively by the businesses and apprentices involved, and some significant progress has been made in recent years, there is no doubt that **this particular jewel risks becoming significantly tarnished.**

Our evidence shows that, with the rapid changes of government policy and numerical targets for apprenticeships, **quantity has been set as the driving force for the programme, at the expense of quality.** Even so, the recent reforms have caused a significant reduction in starts leaving the government way off track for its own three million target.

At the same time the demographics of apprenticeships have changed markedly, with a huge growth in those aged over 25. Two-thirds of new apprentices are conversions from existing employees. Completion rates have also plateaued at around two-thirds, meaning that even **if the government's three million apprenticeship starts were achieved, this would lead to just two million completions.**

English apprenticeships are **narrower, shorter and involve less off-the-job training and less general education than other leading systems.** Meanwhile, smaller businesses are finding it harder than ever to engage with the development of standards and the delivery of apprenticeships.

These issues are reinforced by messages from leading researchers, which show that more needs to be done to address misconceptions and stereotypes associated with apprenticeships and prepare young people to compete for these opportunities.



They suggest that the **new apprenticeship standards may be more restrictive than expansive,** preparing individuals for narrow occupations and that large employers have dominated the development process. They question the amount of off-the-job training in English apprenticeships when compared to international benchmarks and show that the economic value of apprenticeships is significantly greater when undertaken by younger people and those new to job roles – **the opposite of where the recent growth has taken place.**

Apprenticeships are a vital part of the technical education landscape, but they have the potential to be even more than they currently are. We must **refocus apprenticeships as intensive training for those aged 16-24** or who are entirely new to a job role. We must drive the system on **quality not quantity**, with an end to arbitrary numerical targets. We must **broaden the base of apprenticeship training**, ensuring that every apprenticeship provides the transferable skills required in our ever changing labour market. In the next five years, I want to see many more Higher Education providers in the UK offering young people degree apprenticeships as a fast track into their chosen career.

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1. Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

In this Chapter, we examine the recent history of apprenticeships policy in England and bring together all of the relevant recent data to paint a picture of the successes and challenges of the current apprenticeship system in terms of age, level, sector, geography and quality.

APPRENTICESHIPS HAVE A LONG HISTORY, WITH A RECENT ACCELERATION IN POLICY CHANGE

Apprenticeships in England can be **traced back to the medieval craft guilds of the Middle Ages**. The term has commonly been used to refer to a formal, standardised form of learning, where structured on-the-job training is combined with study. Just as in modern times, the craft guilds deployed arguments around standardisation and quality assurance to defend the value of apprenticeships, and this was protected in legislation. The Statute of Artificers in 1563 made it illegal for anyone to *exercise any art, mystery or occupation now used or occupied within the realm of England and Wales except he shall have been brought up therein seven years at the least as an apprentice*.

The system was highly devolved by sector, with the specific requirements and structure in different crafts managed by the relevant guild or association. Much like professional bodies today, guilds typically charged fees from those who wished to practice, issued licences and maintained professional standards. Apprentices typically started young – in their early teens – and often lived with the mastercraftsmen, **providing free labour in exchange for board, lodging and training in the craft**, until they were ready to practice it on their own.

The 1563 Act stood until 1814 – **a consistency of legislation that modern technical and vocational education practitioners might find hard to believe!**

Apprenticeships remained a major feature of English education, with about one third of 15-17 year olds entering them in the 1960s, before declining steadily through to the late 1980s when there were barely 100,000 apprentices left in England.

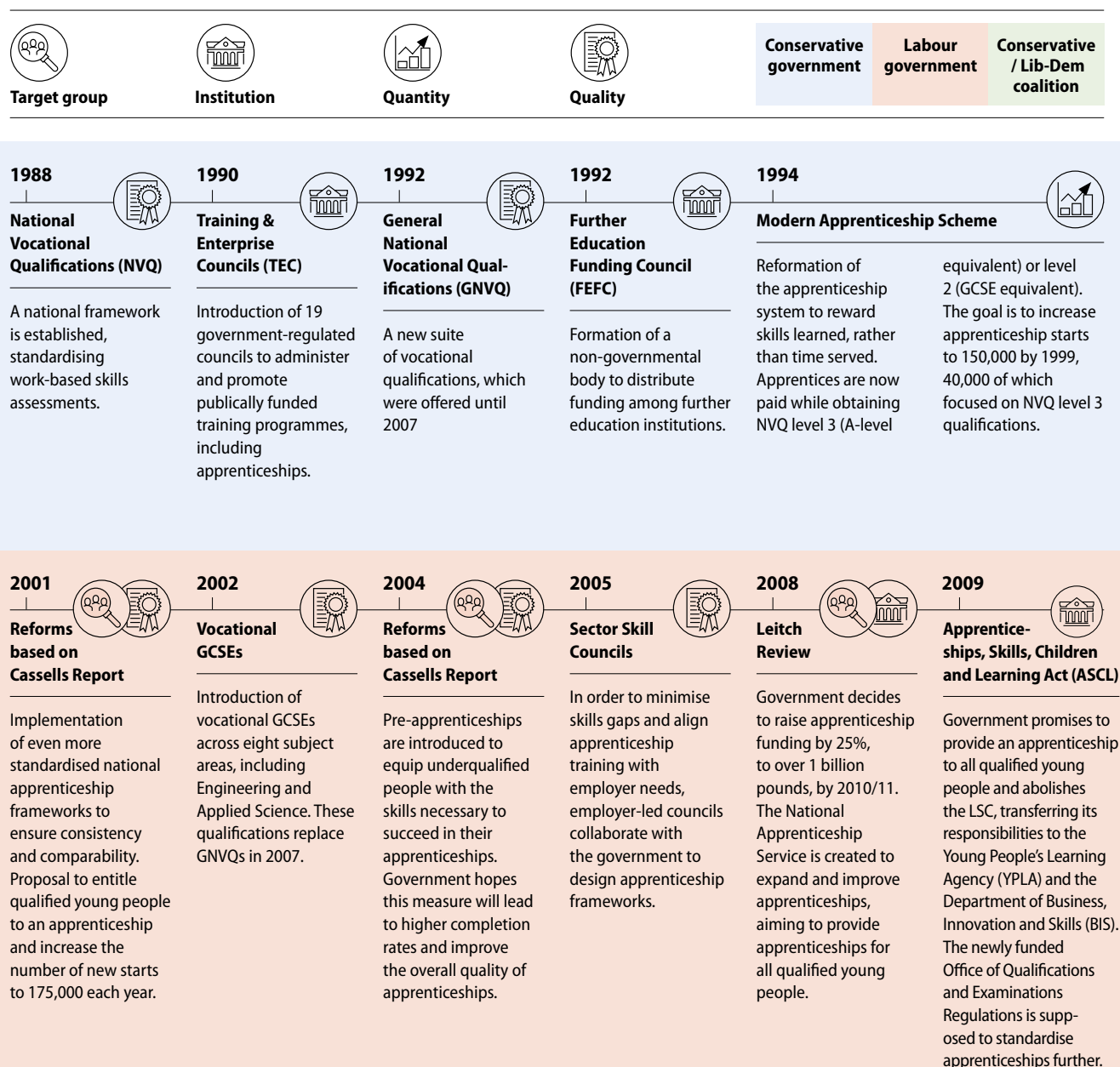
The **late 1980s ushered in a period of frequent changes to apprenticeship policy** in England, as set out in the timeline opposite. Common themes have been efforts to raise the quality of the qualifications and to increase the number of apprenticeship starts. The Government's current vision is "to reach three million [apprenticeship] starts in 2020" in England.¹ This is funded by a new levy on employers introduced in 2017, whereby those with an annual pay bill over £3m contribute 0.5% towards apprenticeship training provision. This can be used for their own staff training or for redistribution by government.

New and stricter definitions of apprenticeships have accompanied these ambitions, **specifying more tightly what the state is willing to recognise and subsidise**. From 2013, new Trailblazer apprenticeship standards began development, with employers playing a stronger role in designing the requirements for their sectors and occupations. These new apprenticeships must be a minimum of 12 months in length, with at least 20% of the total apprenticeship as off-the-job learning.

Government approach to apprenticeships timeline: 1988-2017²

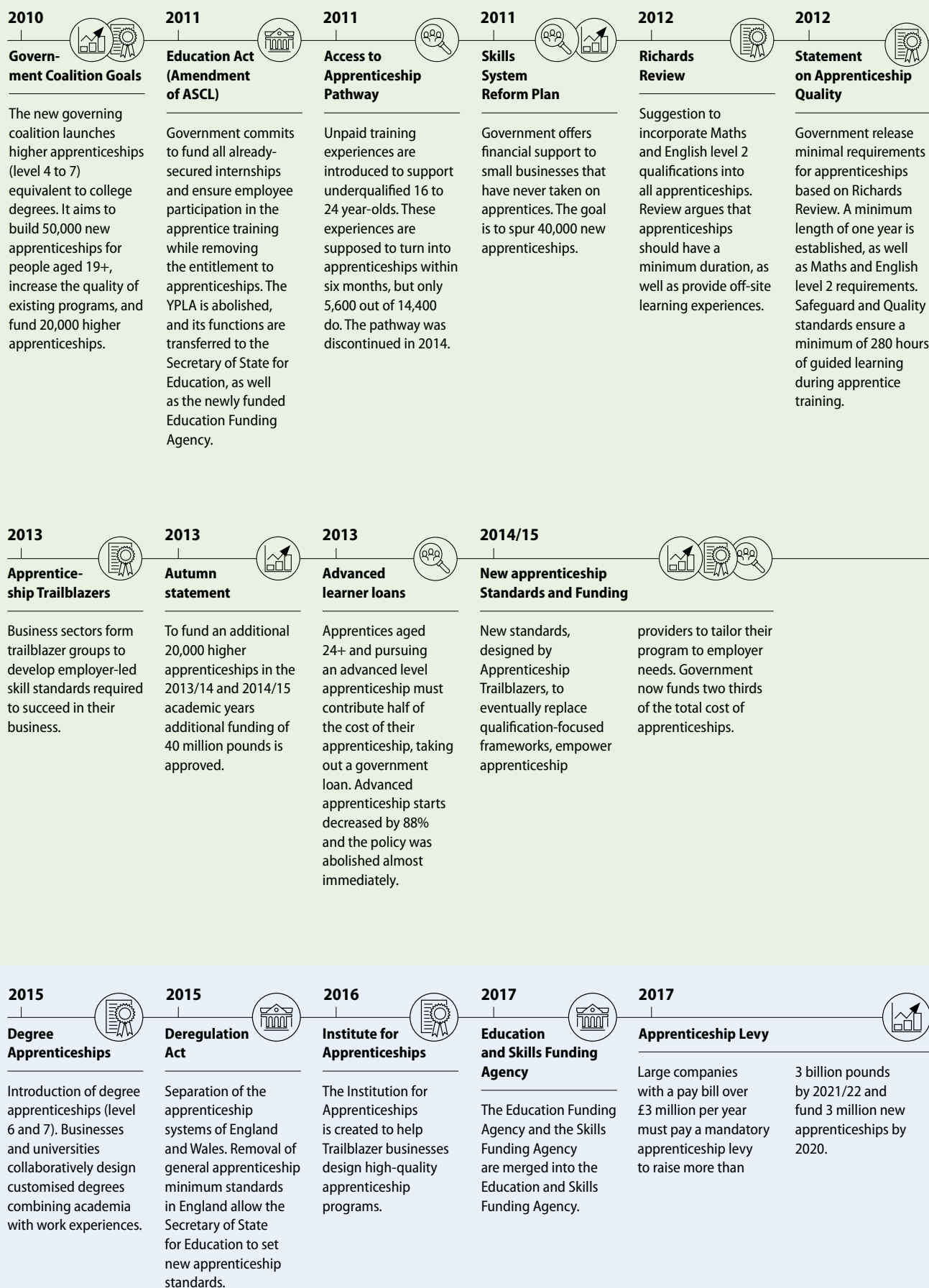
The policy timeline tracks the development of government policies from the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (1988) to 2017 and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. Policies in this period have aimed to change one or more of the following aspects of apprenticeships: Quality, Quantity, impacting a certain target group in regards to apprenticeships or changing the institutions

that are involved in organising and administering apprenticeships. The background colour refers to the government that introduced each change. There has been a wide range of developments, but overall these focused on quality until 2005, when the focus began to shift to quantity. Institutions have seen a lot of changes in structure and responsibility but only minor changes in scope and goals.



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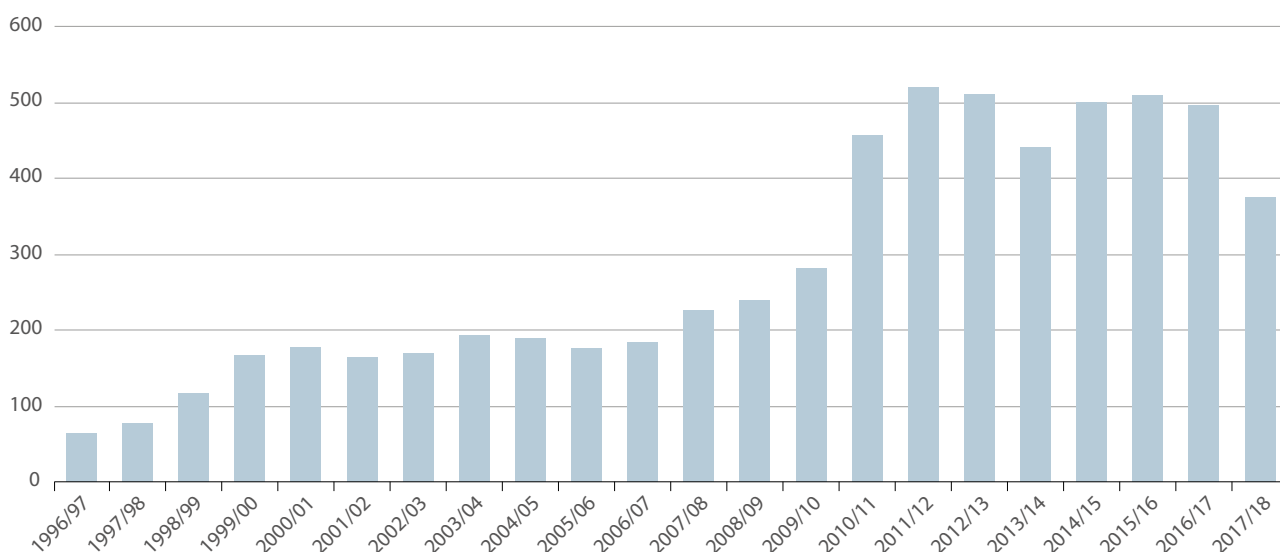
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Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

Apprenticeship starts, thousands



Source: BIS FE data library: apprenticeships and HC Deb 14 Feb 2011 c560-1W (PQ38062)

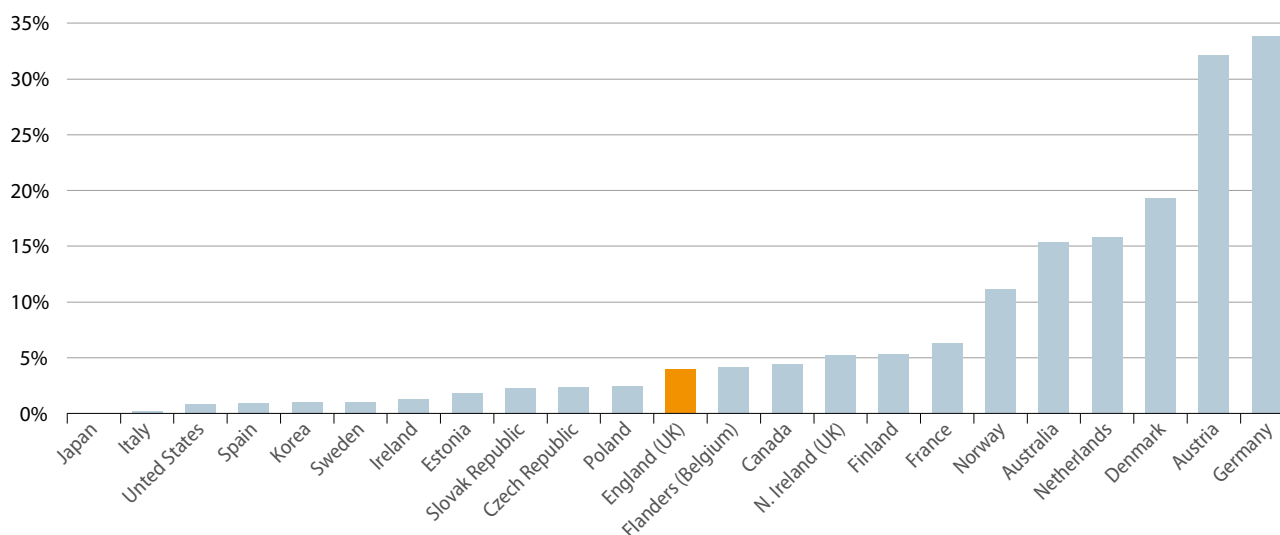
APPRENTICESHIP STARTS HAVE INCREASED SINCE THE 1990S, BUT FALLEN DRAMATICALLY IN RECENT YEARS

The number of people starting apprenticeships has certainly increased since the lows of the 1990s, from under 100,000 a year to nearer 500,000 in the mid 2010s. However, the peak of around 521,000 starts in the 2011/12 academic year has proved elusive since, **with the number of starts in 2017/18 dropping to around 376,000**. This has been strongly affected by the

introduction of recent apprenticeship reforms and the government is now well off trajectory for their own target of 3 million starts by 2020.

Even at its height, the size of the apprenticeship programme in England, as a proportion of upper-secondary education, was **dramatically lower than in many of our economic competitors** – around a third of the scale of Australia and the Netherlands and just a sixth of the proportion in Austria and Germany.

Current apprentices in programmes leading to upper secondary or shorter post-secondary qualifications as a share of all students enrolled in upper secondary and shorter post-secondary education

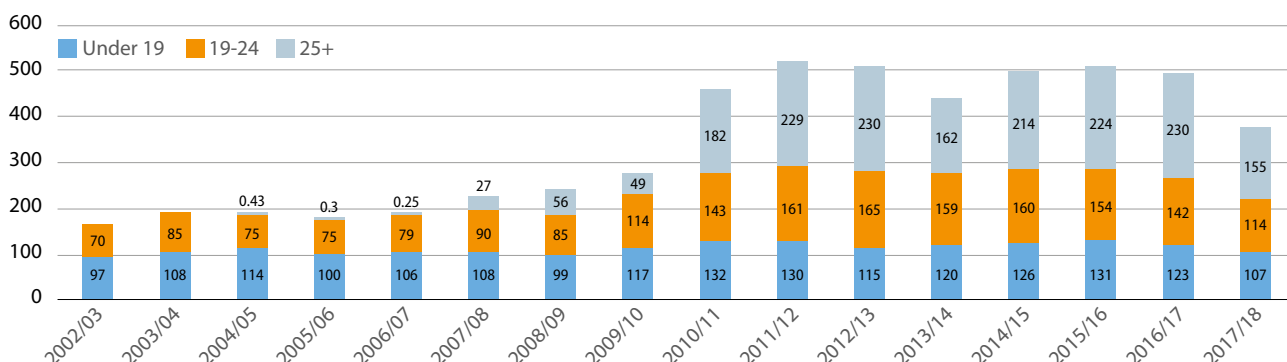


Source: OECD (2016), *Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC)* (Database 2012, 2015), www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/publicdataandanalysis

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Apprenticeship starts in England by age since 2002/03, thousands



Source: House of Commons Library, BRIEFING PAPER Number 06113, 25 July 2018 Apprenticeship Statistics: England (2018) (by Andrew Powell)

Apprenticeship starts in England by age as a percentage of all starts since 2009/10⁴

	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Under 19	42%	29%	25%	22%	27%	25%	26%	25%
19-24	41%	31%	31%	32%	36%	32%	30%	29%
25+	18%	40%	44%	45%	37%	43%	44%	46%

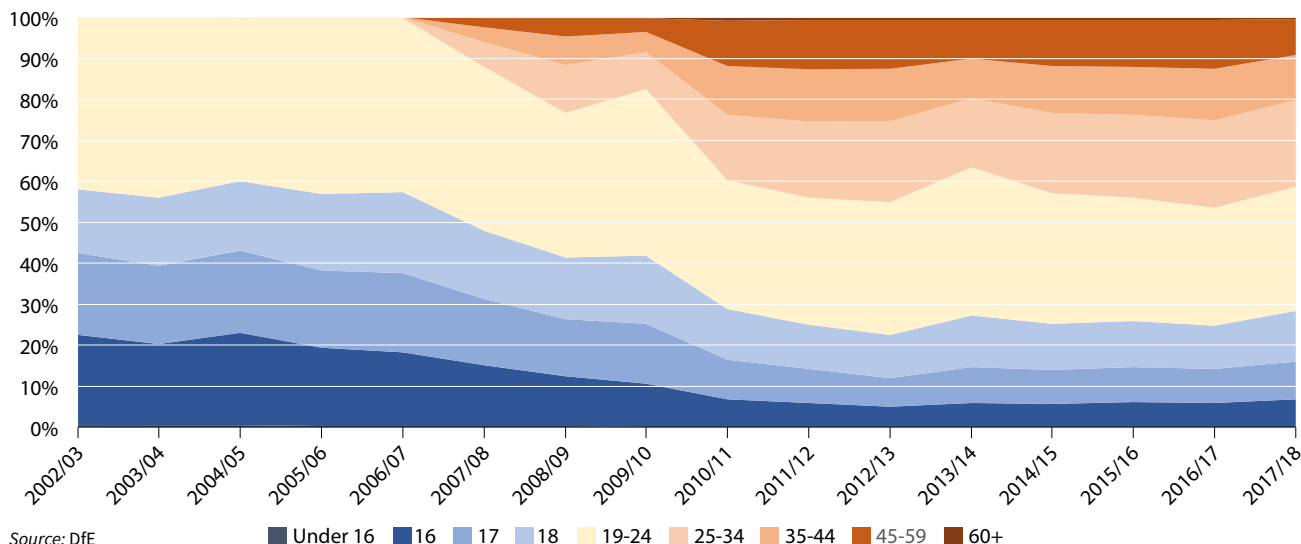
THE AGE PROFILE OF APPRENTICESHIPS HAS UNDERGONE A STEP CHANGE OVER THE LAST DECADE

In 2005, the government made a change to apprenticeships policy that took the English system out of step with most high-quality apprenticeship programmes in other countries, by extending the programme to those aged 25 and above. Since 2010/11, there have consistently been **more apprenticeships starts among those aged over 25 each year** than among the 19-24 age group or

those aged 16-18, reversing the trend of prior years. By 2016/17, **46% of apprenticeship starts in England were among those aged over 25**.

The Government has also released more detailed age breakdown data for 2002/03 to 2017/18.⁵ This data reveals that **those aged 35 or more have come to represent a comparable share of starts to those aged 16-18**, at around 20%-25% compared to 25%-30%. Those aged 45 to 59 now represent around 10% of apprenticeship starts.

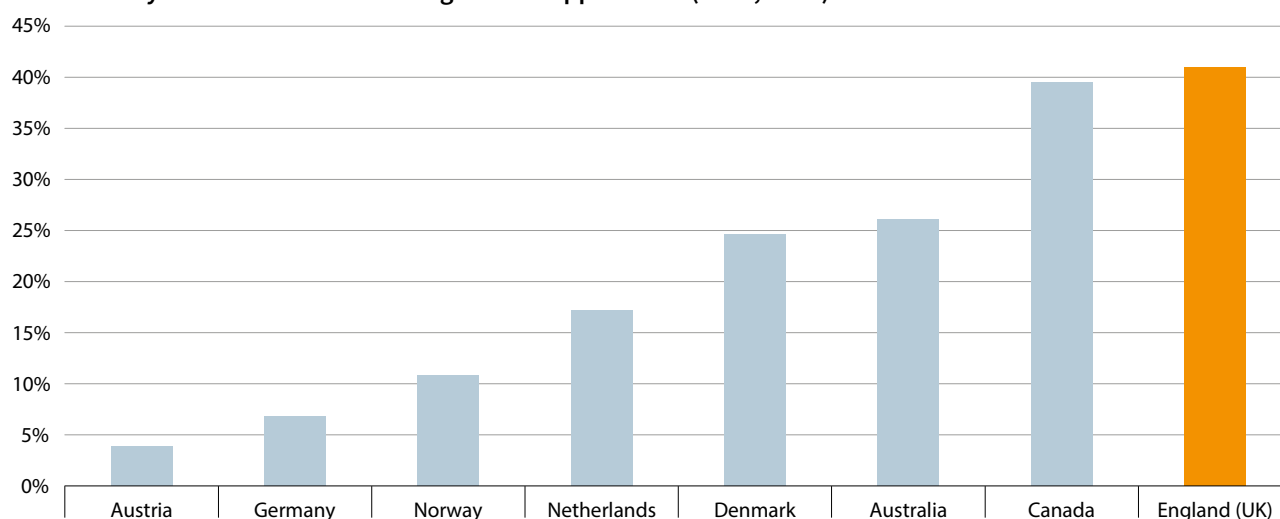
Apprenticeship starts by age, since 2002/03 to 2017/18



Source: DfE

Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

Share of 25-year-olds and older among current apprentices (2012, 2014)⁶



Source: Kuczera, M. (2017), "Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 153, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/995fff01-en>

Looking internationally, **English apprentices are much more likely to be over 25 than in other OECD countries**, particularly European countries with dual systems. Comparative data compiled by the OECD in 2017, referring to the years 2012 and 2014, showed England with a higher proportion of apprentices aged 25 or more (43%) than all other surveyed countries, which were typically in the range of 5% to 25%. Canada was the only other country surveyed with a similar proportion of older apprentices.

The uptake of apprenticeships varies widely by region within England. For instance, within the North East about 3.2% of all employment in 2017/8 was in

the form of apprenticeships, compared to only 1.3% in London. Since 2011/12, there has been some rebalancing of apprenticeships with low uptake regions, such as London and the South of England, growing the number of apprenticeships more than the high uptake regions, such as the Midlands and the North of England. The most popular sector subject areas are broadly the same in all regions: Business, administration and law; Engineering and manufacturing technologies (less in London); and Health, public services and care. Since 2011/12, the main shift in sector subject areas is a relative decline in Retail and commercial enterprise, with a relative increase in Health, public services and care.

Apprenticeship participation by region (2017/18)⁷

Region	2017/18 full year apprenticeship participation	As a percentage of all employed population aged 16-64	Increase in apprenticeship participation from 2011/12 to 2017/18
North East	52,940	3.2%	-5,780
North West	129,540	2.9%	-7,200
Yorkshire and The Humber	96,960	2.9%	-2,200
East Midlands	75,140	2.6%	1,820
West Midlands	94,760	2.7%	100
East of England	77,110	2.1%	5,400
London	77,800	1.3%	5,590
South East	111,370	2.0%	5,940
South West	90,560	2.7%	3,820
England Total	806,200	2.3%	7,500

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A LARGE MAJORITY OF APPRENTICES ARE RECRUITED FROM EXISTING EMPLOYEES

A government survey of apprenticeship pay reported that **two thirds of apprentices were ‘conversions’ of existing employees**.⁸ This is not a new feature of apprenticeships⁹ and significant concern has been raised about it over a number of years. In 2008, the Innovation, University, Science and Skills select committee recommended that official statistics should differentiate conversion apprenticeships from new recruits, a recommendation agreed to by government for introduction from August 2010 that was never implemented.¹⁰

In one particularly challenging example, Ofsted investigated 45 training providers in 2015 and found some apprentices had been **doing the job for more than a year and were not even aware they were on an apprenticeship**.¹¹ These findings highlight concerns about the quality and sophistication of training where existing employees are moved into apprenticeship schemes.

RECENT REFORMS ARE ALTERING THE BALANCE BY LEVEL, ALTHOUGH THE PROGRAMME REMAINS DOMINATED BY LEVEL 2 AND 3

The former apprenticeship framework qualifications, which are currently being phased out, were heavily

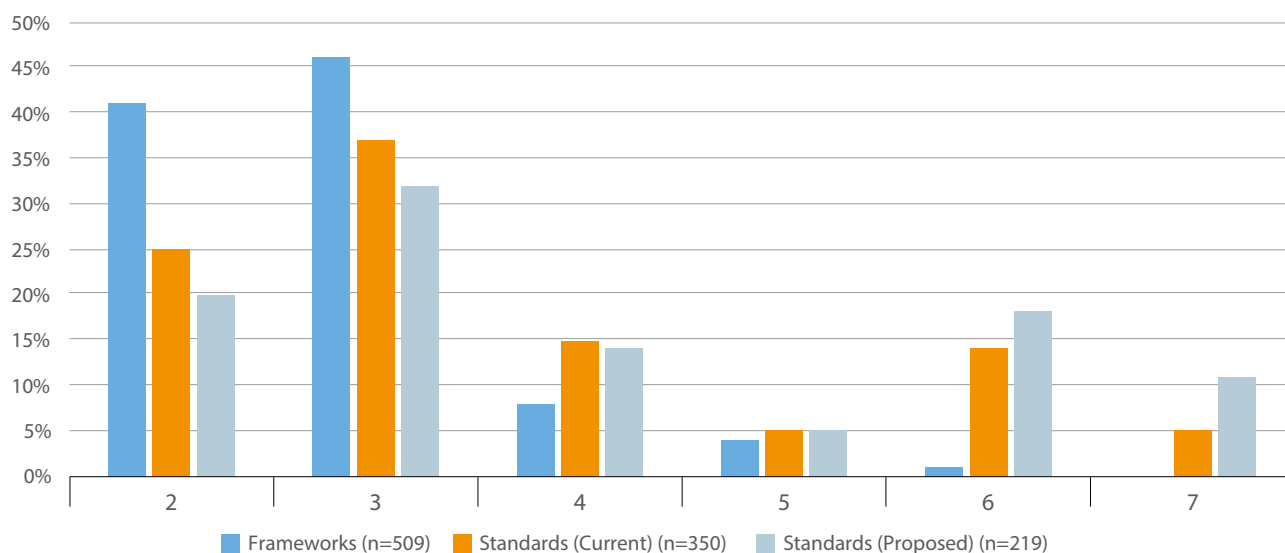
focused towards level 2 and level 3 – the equivalent of high GCSE pass grades and A-levels. Some **88% of those qualifications led ultimately to a Level 2 or Level 3 qualification, a much higher proportion than in the new apprenticeship standards**. The new Standards also bring in the first level 7 qualifications (equivalent to Masters Degrees), with 40 either already approved for delivery or under development as of October 2018.

The growing availability of higher level apprenticeships has increased the number of starts working towards higher level qualifications. **In 2016/17, 7% of starts were on higher apprenticeships** (levels 4 – 7, where level 6 is the equivalent of a typical undergraduate degree), as compared to less than 1% from 2009/10 to 2011/12. However, Intermediate level 2 apprenticeship qualifications (e.g. equivalent to GCSE grades 4-9 or A*-C) still dominate, albeit having declined from 68% of qualifications in 2009/10 to 52% in 2016/17. **Level 6 degree apprenticeships remain very rare**, accounting for some 0.4% of 2016/17 starts.

APPRENTICESHIP ACHIEVEMENTS HAVE PLATEAUED, BUT VARY SIGNIFICANTLY BETWEEN SECTORS

The way in which achievements are calculated has changed over time, but the broad trend is clear. Overall achievement rates for all ages and levels rose significantly from a third in 2004/05 to a high of just over three

Distribution of apprenticeship qualifications by level¹²



Source: Frameworks data from the 24 May 2018 DfE Funding Band data

Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

Apprenticeship starts in England by level since 2009/10, thousands¹³

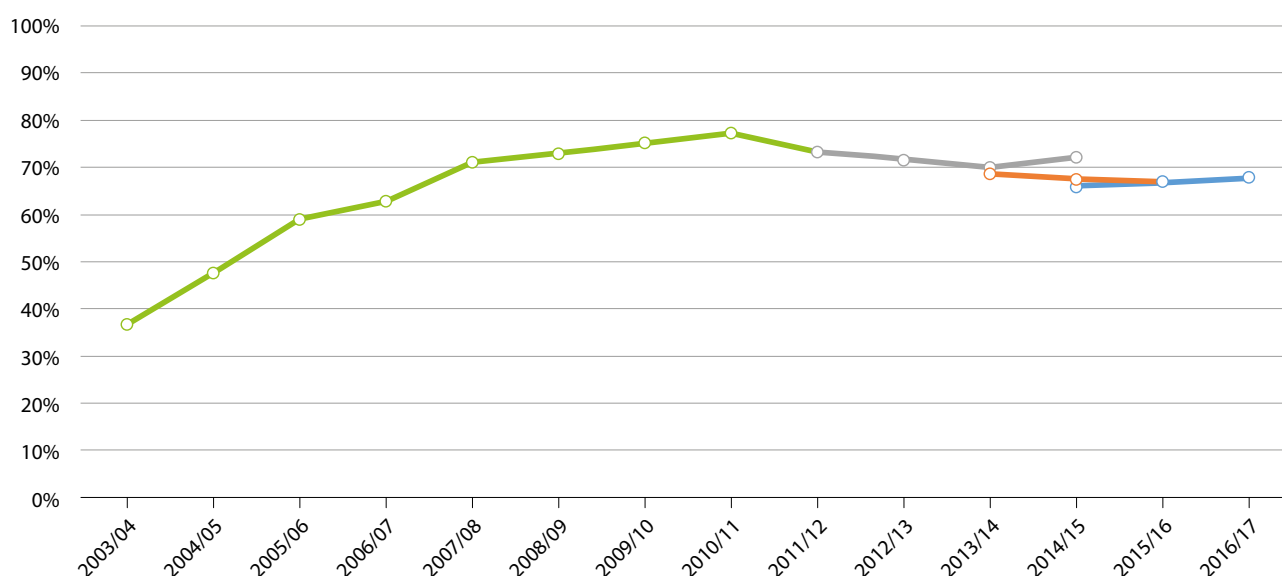
	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Level								
Intermediate (Level 2)	191	301	329	293	286	298	291	259
Advanced (Level 3)	88	154	188	208	145	182	191	196
Higher (Levels 4-7)	2	2	4	10	9	20	27	36
Level 4	1	2	3	4	4	7	10	12
Level 5	–	–	1	6	5	13	17	23
Level 6	–	–	–	–	–	0	1	2
Level 7	–	–	–	–	–	–	0	0
Proportion								
Intermediate (Level 2)	68%	66%	63%	57%	65%	60%	57%	52%
Advanced (Level 3)	31%	34%	36%	41%	33%	36%	37%	40%
Higher (Levels 4-7)	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	4%	5%	7%

quarters in 2011/12. Since then, **completion rates have declined to around two thirds in 2016/17**. This means that, even if the government's ambition of three million apprenticeship starts was met, **these would likely lead to just two million apprenticeship completions**.

Across the eleven sector subject areas (SSAs), overall achievement rates **vary from 65% (Arts, Media and**

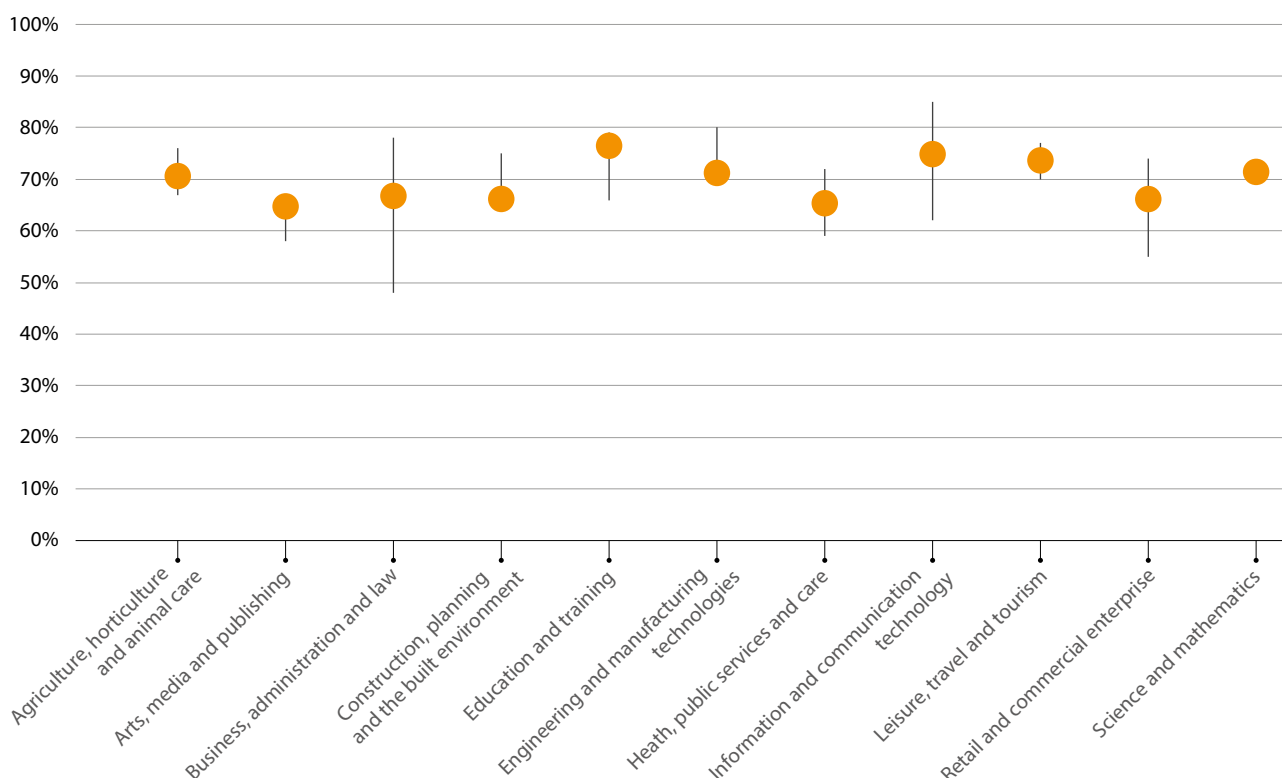
Publishing) to 77% (Education and Training) for 2016/17. However, within sector subject areas larger differences can be observed. The chart and table below show the range from the lowest to the highest achievement rate by level and Tier 2 SSA. The largest range can be seen in Business, Administration and Law where a level 2 Marketing and Sales apprenticeship saw a 48% achievement rate, as compared to 78% for level 2 Accounting and Finance.

Overall apprenticeship achievement rates by year¹⁴



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Overall achievement rates by and within sector subject area [%, 2016/17]¹⁵



Sector Subject Area Tier 1	Cohort size	Achievement rates (% , 2016/17)			Subset apprenticeships (only one example given where multiple are tied)	
		Average	Lowest in subset	Highest in subset	Lowest in subset	Highest in subset
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	6,630	71	67	76	Horticulture and Forestry – L2	Agriculture – L3
Arts, Media and Publishing	1,110	65	58	65	Crafts, Creative Arts and Design – L3	Media and Communication – L3
Business, Administration and Law	113,700	67	48	78	Marketing and Sales – L2	Accounting and Finance – L2
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	17,360	67	64	75	Building and Construction – L2	Building and Construction – L3
Education and Training	6,880	77	66	79	Teaching and Lecturing – L3	Direct Learning Support – L2
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	64,340	71	69	80	Manufacturing Technologies – L2	Transportation Operations and Maintenance – L3
Health, Public Services and Care	103,070	65	59	72	Public Services – L3	Child Development and Well Being – L2
Information and Communication Technology	12,650	75	62	85	ICT Practitioners – L4+	ICT Practitioners – L2
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	12,390	74	70	77	Sport, Leisure and Recreation – L2	Sport, Leisure and Recreation – L3
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	70,600	66	55	74	Retailing and Wholesaling – L2	Warehousing and Distribution – L2

*The subset for each SSA Tier 1 is all Tier 2 apprenticeships by level, provided there are at least 250 learners in the cohort.

The overall cohort is the number of learners for that SSA, all ages and levels.



The duration of apprenticeship programmes and how apprentices spend their time¹⁶

	Duration of the programme including off-the-job period and work placement with the company	Time allocation in apprenticeship programmes	Work place time spent in productive and non-productive tasks
Austria	3-4 years	66% – workplace 20% – off-the-job education and training 14% – leave and sick days	83% of the time with the company is spent on productive work
Denmark	3.5-4 years (typically)	—	—
England (UK)	Minimum 12 months, 15 months on average	At least 20% in off-the-job education and training (sometimes in the workplace but outside productive work)	—
Germany	2-3.5 years	56% – workplace 29% – off-the-job education and training 14% – leave and sick days	77% of the time with the company is spent on productive work
Netherlands	2-4 years		
Norway	Mostly 4 years (shorter programmes are available for disadvantaged students)	Apprentices spend as much time in school as in a workplace with the company	1 year of training 1 year of productive work
Sweden	3 years	Apprentices spend as much time in school as in a workplace with the company	—
Switzerland	3-4 years (2-year programmes are available for disadvantaged students)	59% – workplace 27% – off-the-job education and training 14% – leave and sick days	83% of the time with the company is spent on productive work

ENGLISH APPRENTICESHIPS ARE SHORTER AND NARROWER THAN IN MOST OTHER COUNTRIES

A large-scale OECD review in 2017 found that **apprenticeships in England average around 18 months, whereas the other countries surveyed ranged from 2 to 4 years**. This included countries such as Austria, Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland which are often held up as examples of high quality technical education provision.

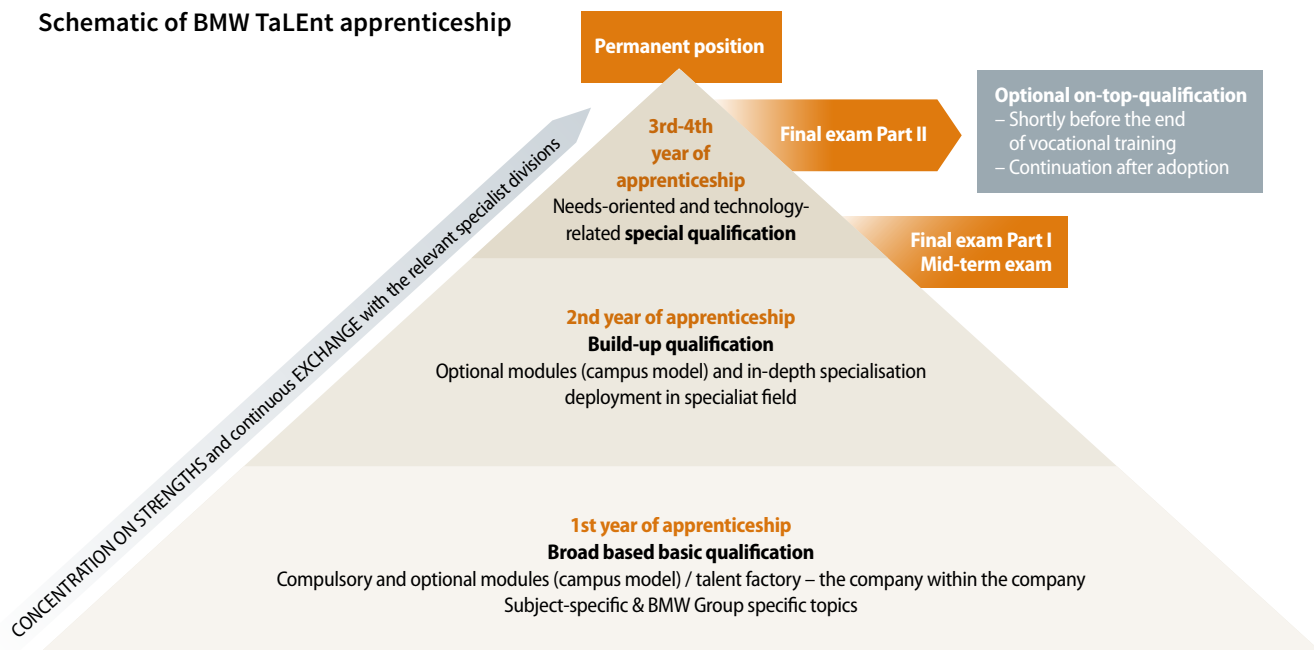
The OECD has also highlighted that the longer duration apprenticeships in dual systems involve a substantial amount of general, off-the-job education.¹⁷ This can represent **around 400 hours, compared with the**

approximately 50 hours of study that occur in typical English apprenticeships, focused primarily on remedial English and Maths. The OECD notes that *youth apprentices in England therefore receive much less academic preparation than those in the other countries mentioned*.

One common principle in longer apprenticeships is the idea that the first year of an apprenticeship should include a **broad introduction to the content of the occupation, prior to specialising** in future years. This principle lay behind reforms in Denmark as far back as the 1960s and 1970s¹⁸ and is a key component of BMW's sought-after TaLEnt apprenticeships.¹⁹

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Schematic of BMW TaLEnt apprenticeship

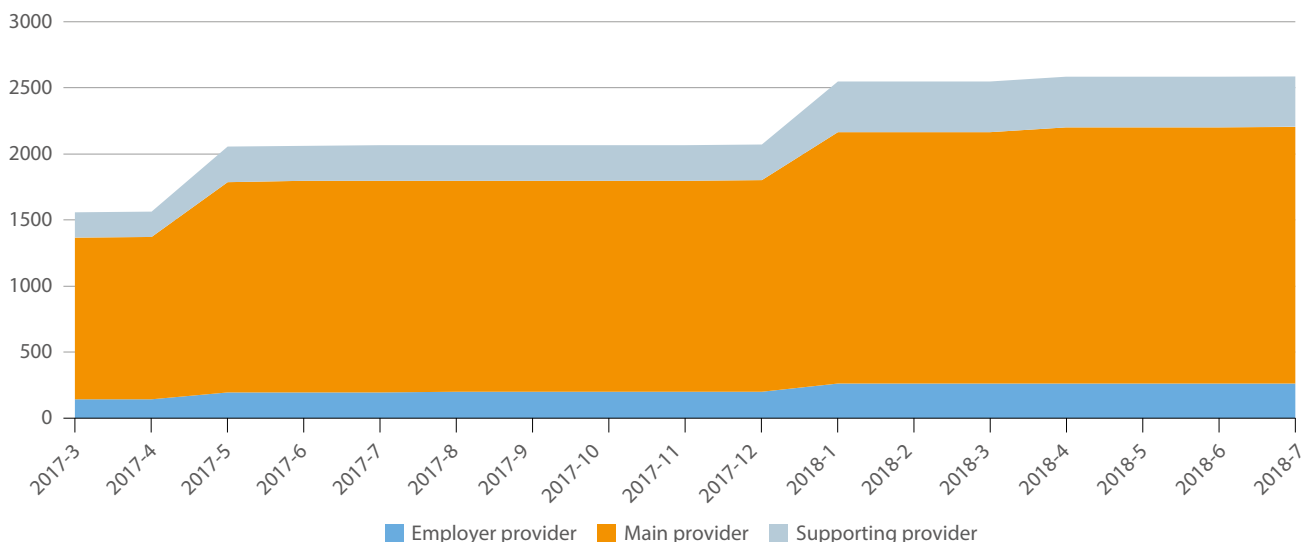


THERE IS A DIVERSE RANGE OF TRAINING PROVIDERS, WITH SOME CONCERNS OVER QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY

As of October 2018, there were **2,586 registered providers of apprenticeship training**, including 262 employer providers and 1,942 main providers, comprising a mixture of Further Education Colleges and private training providers. By comparison, the Schools Census identified 3,408 maintained government secondary schools in England in 2017.

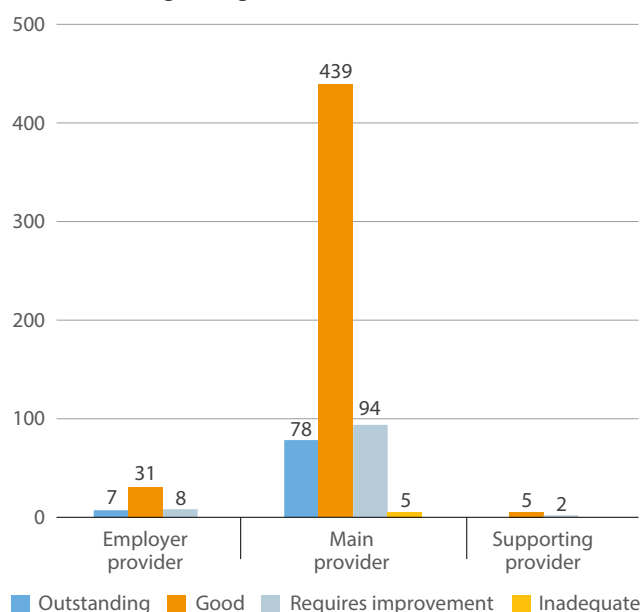
As of February 2018, Ofsted inspections could be identified for 669 of the providers, approximately 45% independent learning providers, 25% colleges, 13% local authority providers, 8% not-for-profit providers, 6% employer providers, and 3% higher education providers.²¹ Overall, **13% of these providers are rated Outstanding, 71% as Good, 16% as Requires Improvement** and 1% as Inadequate. Employer providers perform similarly to main providers. By comparison to secondary schools, Ofsted's 2016/17 annual report explains that 23% are Outstanding, 56% are Good, 15% Require Improvement and 6% are Inadequate.²²

Number of registered apprenticeship training providers (2018/10/01 ROATP data)²⁰



Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

Distribution of apprenticeship training providers by latest Ofsted grading (Oct 2018)



Ofsted has been paying close attention to apprenticeship training providers. In one investigation, **one third of the 45 providers visited did not provide sufficient high-quality training.**²³ The motor vehicle, construction and engineering sectors were identified as examples of good practice, and contrasted with the food and retail sectors. Apprentices

over 19 were described as particularly at risk of a lack of off-the-job training. Ofsted's thematic review in 2015 was clear about the impact of low quality provision: *employers and providers involved in poor quality, low-level apprenticeships are wasting public funds and abusing the trust placed in them by government and the apprentices.*

These concerns have been echoed by the Education Select Committee,²⁴ whose Chair, Robert Halfon MP, has explained that there is insufficient high quality apprenticeship training and that the *explosion in the number of training providers* has **undercut confidence in the quality of provision.**

The Government has responded to these concerns by establishing the Institute for Apprenticeships, which has responsibility for the quality of apprenticeship standards, although they share responsibility for overall quality with a wide range of other organisations including the Department for Education, Ofsted, Ofqual and the QAA, making for a potentially confusing picture. In September 2018, the Department for Education also agreed to provide Ofsted with **additional funding to inspect all new apprenticeship training providers.**



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SMALLER BUSINESSES FIND IT HARDER TO ENGAGE WITH APPRENTICESHIPS, EXACERBATED BY RECENT REFORMS

Data from the 2016 Employer Perspectives Survey can be used to understand the types of firms that employ apprentices. The data suggest that **larger firms are more likely to employ apprentices** – 41% of firms with 100 or more employees employ at least one apprentice, compared to 16% of those with 10-24 employees. When broken down by sector, the education, construction and public administration sectors are more likely to employ apprentices than the primary sector, utilities, transport, storage and communications sectors.

Firms who currently have apprentices are also **more likely to be growing companies**, that believe investing

in training and development is important, that offer work experience, and that are always looking for new opportunities.

Small enterprises have often found it more difficult to engage with the apprenticeship system than larger employers. This is a feature noted across the EU by Cedefop, which points towards various factors making small and medium-sized enterprises reluctant to engage, including an unfavourable business environment, **burdensome legislation, and the need to invest time, money and organisational structure** to make apprenticeships a success within the firm, as well as the lack of information and training culture that can be present in some smaller firms.²⁵ The Federation of Small Businesses has remarked that the smallest firms often lack the formal training and recruitment processes to manage

Apprentice employment by size of firm, UK

Size of firm (number of employees)	Approximate % of those in work in the UK	% currently employing an apprenticeship	% not employing apprenticeships in last 3 years or offering apprenticeships
2 to 4	8%	7%	83%
5 to 9	9%	12%	74%
10 to 24	13%	16%	65%
25 to 49	11%	24%	57%
50 to 99	11%	28%	51%
100+	38%	41%	42%

Apprentice employment by sector of firm, UK

Sector	Percentage of eligible firms in the sector (i.e. those with 2 or more employees)	% currently employing an apprenticeship	% not employing apprenticeships in last 3 years or offering apprenticeships
Education	3%	11%	56%
Construction	9%	7%	67%
Public admin.	1%	7%	68%
Arts and Other Services	8%	6%	69%
Manufacturing	5%	8%	70%
Health and social work	7%	8%	70%
Wholesale and Retail	20%	7%	76%
Financial services	2%	5%	78%
Business services	22%	5%	78%
Hotels and restaurants	9%	10%	80%
Transport, Storage and Comms	7%	6%	82%
Primary sector and utilities	6%	2%	83%

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apprenticeships and **struggle to manage the cashflow** for funding the direct costs of apprentices.²⁶ Studies by Ofsted in London,²⁷ Jason Holt for the Government²⁸ and by the Tech Partnership for the Mayor of London²⁹ have repeatedly highlighted the burden of bureaucracy (both genuine and perceived), the lack of clear information regarding process and providers, and the time cost of managing apprenticeships, particularly given the lag before a new apprentice can become productive.

The **challenge for smaller businesses wanting to engage with the apprenticeship system has been exacerbated by recent reforms**. As part of the new funding system underpinned by the levy, small businesses who do not pay into this pot are expected to make a direct contribution to the cost of apprenticeship training. Whilst small (10% moving down to 5% following the 2018 Budget), this acts as a disincentive particularly where no contribution was required in the past. Similarly, smaller businesses have found it difficult to contribute to the development groups for new apprenticeship standards. The Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards has said that *large businesses have dominated the development of many of the new standards*.³⁰

THERE ARE CHALLENGES WITH INFORMATION ABOUT APPRENTICESHIPS AND PREPARATORY TRAINING

A large, mixed-methods study by Education and Employers³¹ found apprenticeships continue to have a significant image problem, reinforced by findings that both

young people and employers describe career education as biased towards academic routes. Teachers lack confidence and experience in promoting apprenticeships, where careers provision is particularly patchy. One striking statistic is that **36% of employers felt that schools or colleges were the main barrier** preventing school leavers from going onto an apprenticeship.

Criticisms of careers guidance become particularly pronounced in individual surveys. For instance, the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) surveyed its members in 2015 – **80% of the respondents felt that schools did not provide a balanced choice** between staying on in full-time education post 16 and seeking an apprenticeship.³² The Association of Accounting Technicians found that only 36% of the 17-18 year olds in school or college they surveyed in 2017 had heard of the National Apprenticeship Service compared to the 72% who had heard of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).³³ While the balance is beginning to shift, school leavers and parents still associated apprenticeships with blue-collar jobs and were critical of the advice they had received.

The pattern of apprenticeship applications varies very significantly between sectors. Until July 2017, the Government published data from its *Find an Apprenticeship* service showing the number of vacancies and applications, with the **ratio varying from 2.5 applications per role in leisure, travel and tourism to 13.6 in arts, media and publishing**.

Sector Subject Area – Tier 1	Total vacancies on “Find An Apprenticeship”	Applications per vacancy
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	3,320	9.8x
Arts, Media and Publishing	1,700	13.6x
Business, Administration and Law	77,260	8.4x
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	8,180	9.3x
Education and Training	2,840	10.3x
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	26,920	7.6x
Health, Public Services and Care	30,250	7.8x
Information and Communication Technology	12,640	10.4x
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	5,230	2.5x
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	41,720	6.2x
Science and Mathematics	80	8.8x

Our plan for apprenticeships

One approach for improving access to apprenticeships is to **increase the number and quality of traineeships available**.³⁴ These typically last up to six months for young people aged 16 to 24 and focus on work preparation training, English and maths support, and work experience placements.³⁵ While growing rapidly since their introduction, traineeships remain few in number. Government data released in October 2018 revealed that traineeship completions have trebled from 4,750 in 2013/14 to 17,230 in 2015/16, among those for whom a traineeship was the highest qualification at the time.³⁶ LEO data released at the same time shows that 62% of the 2015/16 completers of traineeships had a sustained positive destination – overall 30% were in sustained learning, of which 18% progressed to an apprenticeship. As the OECD has noted, such **pre-apprenticeship programmes are more common and more substantial in many other countries**.³⁷ For instance, such programmes are a minimum of six months in several European countries rather than the maximum of six months as in England and are approximately four times as prevalent in Switzerland and ten times as prevalent in Germany.

There are concerns about the overall returns and social mobility of English apprenticeships

Many commentators are concerned that some of the

challenges of the English apprenticeship system listed above **have translated into lower skilled apprentice graduates**, considering the shorter duration, limited and relatively unintegrated off-the-job study, and low qualification equivalency when compared to international competitors.

The London-based think-tank Reform has raised concerns that **low-skill roles are being rebadged as apprenticeships**, with employers exploiting the Government's flexible definition of "suitable occupations" to which apprenticeship study is intended to lead.³⁸ The author finds that the financial incentives created by the new apprenticeship levy exacerbate this situation, describing the "retailer", "customer services practitioner", "business administrator" and "hospitality team member" apprenticeships as examples where training is too brief, too unambitious and too focused on a single firm's processes, resulting in graduates that are less skilled and less transferable than their equivalents in Germany.

Meanwhile, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation has highlighted concerns that some of the **new standards are narrower (and more numerous) than in comparable countries**, which is unhelpful for young apprenticeships and damages the brand. This is



Understanding apprenticeships in England – what does the data tell us?

exacerbated by apprenticeships receiving less off-the-job training than the relatively low amount required by regulations. The Apprenticeship Learners Survey in 2017³⁹ suggested that **nearly 40% of level 2 and 3 apprentices were receiving less than the statutory minimum of five and a half guided learning hours per week** required by the rules of the apprenticeship frameworks. Half of the apprentices over 25 were receiving less than the statutory minimum amount of training.

Apprenticeships, like all forms of education, provide an opportunity for societal mediation to compensate for disadvantages of birth. However, recent analysis⁴⁰ has found that those who start level 3 apprenticeships are similar to A-level students in social background, with both groups being half as likely as the whole cohort to have been eligible to receive free school meals. Meanwhile, those with a level 3 vocational qualification other than an apprenticeship are more likely to come from a disadvantaged background and more likely to speak English as an additional language to their mother tongue, suggesting that **apprenticeships are not helping provide a route to less privileged students**.⁴¹

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission⁴² have raised further question marks about whether

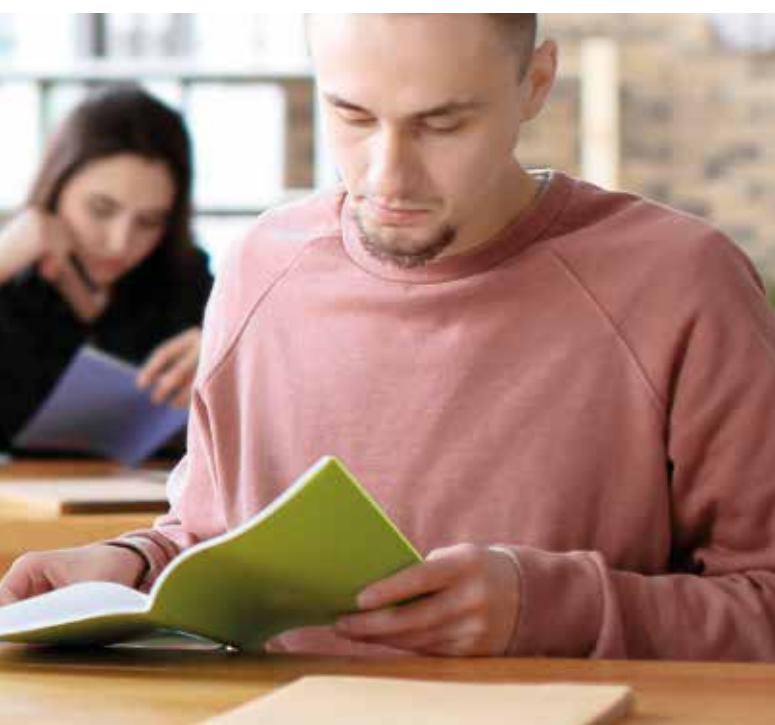
apprenticeships support social mobility goals. They have reported that **the majority of apprentices under the age of 25 start their training at a qualification level below that of their existing level of educational attainment**.⁴³ In this context, the recent shift towards level 3, 4 and higher apprenticeship qualifications is to be welcomed, although around four in ten remain on level 2 qualifications and the long-term effect of this shift remains hard to assess.

RECENT REFORMS AIM TO ADDRESS SOME OF THESE CHALLENGES, BUT EARLY EVIDENCE IS VERY MIXED

The Government's **latest reforms to apprenticeships have been very wide-ranging**, described by the Government themselves as the largest ever.⁴⁴ Three key elements of the reforms in particular have attracted much debate: the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, initially comprising a tax of 0.5% of the total pay bill of all employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3m, the shift away from apprenticeship frameworks to employer-designed standards, and the strengthening of end point assessment.

The Levy has generally been welcomed by education and training professionals in that it brings an increase in the overall amount of funding available for apprenticeships. It should however be noted that **it represents a significant saving to the Treasury** – an apprenticeship bill of some £1.6 bn from general taxation has been replaced entirely by a hypothecated tax on employers. Levy-paying employers are able to use the funds for their own training, but if unused after 24 months are reclaimed by HMRC to subsidise training elsewhere in the sector.

However, employer groups have been very critical. A survey of over 1,400 business people by the British Chambers of Commerce and Middlesex University in July 2017 found that 23% of firms due to pay the levy had no understanding of it or did not know how they would respond to it.⁴⁵ Worryingly, **more than four in ten employers either planned to write off the levy as a tax (19%) or said they don't know (22%)**. These surveys were conducted only a few months after the introduction of the levy, so some confusion and



Our plan for apprenticeships

uncertainty might be expected. However, by March 2018, a further survey by the Institute of Directors found that just 14% of those paying the levy felt it was fit for purpose.⁴⁶

The Institute for Public Policy Research has warned that the **apprenticeship levy will deepen existing regional divides**.⁴⁷ IPPR argues that the large employers paying the levy are disproportionately in London and the South-East, which is therefore where the extra training investment will be concentrated, despite the fact that the need for employment support and extra training is higher in other parts of the country. New investment in apprenticeships was also called for by a Northern Powerhouse Partnership Summit convened in December 2018 in order to help narrow the UK's regional economic divides.⁴⁸

The Government has taken note of some of these concerns. The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in October 2018 that large employers will be able to share more of their levy budget with their partners and supply chain than before, increasing from 10% to 25% of their levy pot. Despite this increase in funding, the **Institute for Apprenticeships have warned of an imminent over-spend** of £0.5 billion in 2018/19, rising to a forecast over-spend of £1.5 billion in 2020/21.⁴⁹ It has been

suggested that the shift to higher level apprenticeships and in particular the increase in costly management apprenticeships is a factor in these escalating programme costs. Management apprenticeships have grown from around one in ten apprenticeship starts in 2015/16 to around one in five in 2017/18, some of which are subsidised to the value of £27,000.⁵⁰

In principle, the move to apprenticeship standards that would give employers greater control over the content of training was largely welcomed, but implementation has proved very challenging. The transition is continuing to take place, with all new apprenticeship starts to be on the new standards by September 2020 (three years later than the original goal of 2017). Critics such as the Federation of Master Builders have related the delays to slow approval by government of industry-proposed standards and to repeated updates to the official guidance, as well as changes to roles and responsibilities for apprenticeships.⁵¹

One particular area of concern with the new standards has been around the flexibility of the Government's definition. While a deliberate part of Government's strategy – designed to enable industry to take the lead – some commentators are **concerned that the flexibility**



is being exploited by some employers to create lower quality qualifications that nonetheless attract subsidies. The Reform think tank has argued that the Government's definition amounts to "any job with training" and transferrable skills that lasts for at least 12 months, far below the requirements set by the International Labour Organisation, which specify a particular skill-level ("intermediate occupation") and the need for a "systematic" training plan focused on "young people".⁵²

With the removal of the National Occupational Standards system within England, there is also now **no system of architecture that relates apprenticeships to each other or to a standard occupation classification**, potentially making for a more confusing picture for young people, parents and careers guidance professionals.

Instead of being assessed continually throughout their course, **all apprentices now have to complete an end-point assessment (EPA)** before they can complete and gain their qualification. This concept is central to the Government's ambition of ensuring qualifications that are both high-quality and widely seen as such. The EPA must be delivered by an approved, independent organisation with no affiliation to the employer or training provider. One estimate suggests that 10%-20% of the overall cost of apprenticeship delivery will be in its assessment.⁵³

EPAs can take the form of tests, exams and discussions as well as workplace observations, work portfolio assessments and assignments. However, it is possible that budget pressures and the logistics of a single end-point assessment process may encourage a focus towards standardised tests. Apprentices themselves have been critical of this reform since many chose apprenticeships precisely because the practical, real world focus resonates with them, unlike the often arbitrary and artificial feel of the exam hall. The 2017 IAC survey reported that **nearly 90% disagree with the introduction of End Point Assessment**, although 92% still want formal qualifications to be a mandatory requirement of the new standards.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, we have shown that:

- **Apprenticeship starts increased dramatically from the lows of the early 1990s to a peak in 2011/12 but have dropped significantly following recent reforms and remain well below international comparators.**
- **The age profile of apprenticeships has changed rapidly, with a huge growth in those aged over 25. Two-thirds of new apprentices are conversions from existing employees.**
- **Whilst there has been a recent growth in higher apprenticeships and the introduction of degree apprenticeships, these remain small in number and the programme is still dominated by level 2 (GCSE equivalent) and level 3 (A-level equivalent) provision.**
- **Completion rates have plateaued at around two-thirds, meaning that even if the target of three million apprenticeship starts were achieved this would lead to just two million completions.**
- **English apprenticeships are narrower, shorter and involve less off-the-job training and less general education than our international competitors.**
- **Smaller businesses are finding it harder than before to engage with the development of standards and the delivery of apprenticeships.**
- **Early evidence on the recent reforms is very mixed with concerns from employers about the levy, from providers about the standards and from apprentices about end point assessment.**

As this shows, **there are significant challenges within the English apprenticeship system**, some of which may be partially addressed by recent reforms while others are likely to be exacerbated by them. In the next chapter, we look at perspectives from recent leading research to provide a greater insight into some of these issues.

2. Understanding apprenticeships in England – latest research perspectives

In this Chapter, we bring together contributions from some of our leading research partners focusing on different aspects of the apprenticeships system and on international comparisons to add further depth to the picture painted by the data in Chapter 1.

PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

Dr Elnaz Kashefpakdel,
Head of Research, Education & Employers



Our research⁵⁵ shows that schools and colleges need to do more to improve the knowledge of apprenticeships among young people and their parents, as well as teachers and careers staff. It is crucial to make sure support is provided to schools and colleges to further raise the confidence of school staff in providing advice to all students and to tailor their advice and guidance with the relevant and up-to-date recruitment requirements of modern workplaces.

In order to ensure that there is sufficient unbiased information about the full range of routes, schools and colleges are advised to increase and diversify the amount of apprenticeship events they do involving employers and current or former apprentices. Our results from speaking to young people underlined the impact of hearing first-hand from those outside school and from young apprentices who have done this before and whose stories resonate. It is also clear from the research that stereotyping about particular pathways and occupations starts from an early age and so more must be done earlier to prevent those misconceptions taking hold.

Despite a great deal of advertising and work by government and employers and some evidence of the start of a shift in perceptions, apprenticeships still appear to be stigmatised by parents. As the recent Youth Employment UK Youth Census⁵⁶ showed, of all the sources of advice and guidance, parents and teachers were the least likely to have highlighted apprenticeships as a possible route, with young women half as likely to be recommended an apprenticeship by their parents as young men.

Schools and colleges should do more to ensure that parents are part of their wider efforts to raise awareness of apprenticeship opportunities. For apprenticeships to be regarded as a genuine alternative to university, parents must understand their value and potential as a way of helping their children progress in the labour market. One way to promote the prospect of doing an apprenticeship can be highlighting the benefits of furthering it to advanced and higher-level apprenticeships, although supply needs to increase if these are to be a viable route for many young people.

REFLECTIONS: Elnaz's research shows that, despite some shifting views driven by the expansion of higher and degree apprenticeships, there are still **deep-seated cultural views and stereotypes attached to apprenticeships** by many teachers and parents. If apprenticeships are to continue to grow in quality, satisfy the needs of employers and fulfil their role in social mobility, we must continue to address this with improved preparation and information for young people.



UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT WITH APPRENTICESHIPS

Melanie Simms, *Professor of Work and Employment, University of Glasgow*



Vocational training in the UK has long been problematic and employer engagement patchy, especially prior to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, but even after that point. So what drives employers to engage?

Two leading academics in this field, Van Gestel and Nyberg,⁵⁷ look at large Dutch employers' engagement and identify three main influences:

- **Individual preferences** – Individual decisions to support engagement at senior level; having an apprenticeship champion within the organisation.
- **Strategic reframing** – Strategic commitment. For instance, not simply paying the apprenticeship levy but actively deciding to develop training and take on apprentices. This is then cascaded to local level.
- **Local grounding** – Gradually taking on apprentices becomes a 'new normal'. Line managers develop systems and get used to the new ways of recruiting and training. This embeds commitment and makes it less

likely that the organisation will disengage – although some organisations consider withdrawing because of the complexity of apprenticeship funding.

This leads to two distinct arguments that can influence organisational engagement:

- **Human Resources logic** – Motivations around succession planning, developing training and skills within the organisation, subsidising cost of learning and development activities and their HR strategy.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) logic** – Arguments focusing around this being the right thing to do, giving back to the community and 'doing our bit'.

Engaged employers cite both logics simultaneously. Unengaged employers have one but not the other, or neither. That creates a clear lesson for policy development - effective policies for large employer engagement must emphasise both the HR logic and the CSR logic in order to succeed.

REFLECTIONS: Melanie's analysis reminds us that **imposing the levy on large businesses is not enough to secure their engagement** and in fact can lead to perverse incentives with businesses simply seeking to reduce their liability or spend their levy pot. Rather in terms of large business engagement, policy must make a clear and simple business and social case to secure long-term and deep employer buy in.

Our plan for apprenticeships

EARLY INSIGHTS INTO THE IMPACT OF APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

Dr Eleanor Andressen and
Benjamin Redmond,
Pearson UK



Early insights into the impact of any new policy implementation are critical to ensuring that learners – in this case apprentices – are able to access education and training that supports progression and success in their chosen career. Government targets and funding mechanisms drive unexpected as well as intended behaviours. Changes to the formal recognition of achievement, especially when those changes are inconsistent across sectors, risk compromising the value and portability of achievement. Shifting responsibilities among established stakeholders, such as employers, awarding organisations and training providers, mean more potential uncertainty as relationships were recast.

The introduction of standards-based apprenticeships raised a number of questions about the content and assessment of this strand of training and education: the impact of having no qualifications in the assessment strategy, and no formal assessment until the end of the programme, which might be two or more years in the future; employer-defined standards and content, with most training delivered on the job, alongside an employer-defined assessment strategy, frequently including an end-point assessment (EPA).

Our research provided insights into the value of apprenticeships in engineering. They are seen as a high-quality, aspirational route into work. The highly-selective recruitment process relies on a wide range of practical assessments rather than a demand for specific qualifications on leaving school. Interviewees were vocal about the value of the off-the-job BTEC qualification that was included in apprenticeship frameworks. National recognition, and the transferability the certificate afforded them, was a key part of this.

Apprentices and trainers valued these qualifications from the perspective of personal achievement – having that part of their training recognised with a national award. Also for those who may be unable to complete the full apprenticeship, they know that learning to date is recognised and benchmarked, which kept a door open to later achievement. Concerns were raised that a lack of qualifications in the new apprenticeship standards could lead to issues of recognition, comparability, transferability and progression for those completing them.

REFLECTIONS: Eleanor and Benjamin's research highlights one of the major risks with the move to apprenticeship standards and end point assessment – that **apprenticeships become an all or nothing learning programme**. With no qualifications within the standards and no modularisation, everything hangs on the set of tests or examinations at the end, creating a similar level of pressure to high stakes tests in the academic route.



Understanding apprenticeships in England – latest research perspectives

BENCHMARKING THE QUALITY OF ENGLISH APPRENTICESHIPS

Dr Simon Field, *Director of Skills Policy Ltd*



Following some of the most far-reaching apprenticeship reforms of all time, where does the English apprenticeship system stand relative to those of other countries?

It is widely recognised that English apprenticeships are usually shorter, and at lower level than those of many countries. Apprentices in England are very often adults, like Australia and some other English-speaking countries, but unlike – say – Switzerland, where new apprentices are nearly all teenagers. However, comparisons in terms of averages don't tell the whole story. English apprenticeships are also unusually diverse, ranging from low-level one year programmes to the kind of three and four year engineering apprenticeships that are more similar to counterparts found in other countries. New degree apprenticeships add to this diversity.

Within this picture, three lessons stand out:

- First, new rules requiring 20% of an apprenticeship programme to be spent “off-the-job” are proving controversial. Yet looked at internationally, this is a modest requirement: in Finland 20-30% of the programme is off-the-job; in New Zealand the comparable figure is one third of the programme. In fact, the English requirement is even more modest than these figures suggest, since in the ‘dual system’ countries like Germany, employers provide a lot of training to apprentices in workshops and training centres away from the productive shop floor, in addition to the day a week or so that the apprentices spend in vocational schools.
- Second, there is a widespread challenge to ensure that the qualifications linked to apprenticeships have sufficient breadth – specific enough to appeal to particular employers, but broad enough to provide a career foundation. German employers have said that they would like about one thousand apprenticeship occupations, while trade unions about one hundred. Social partnership facilitates a compromise, and there are in fact just over three hundred and just over two hundred in Switzerland. From this perspective, the more than 500 apprenticeship standards approved or in preparation raise some concerns. Approved standards like “dual fuel smart meter installer” would not make the cut in other countries.
- Third, some experienced practitioners already have all, or nearly all, the competences needed to work in the target profession. For them, an apprenticeship programme would waste both their time and that of their employer. With this in mind, most leading apprenticeship systems allow such individuals to proceed directly to an assessment that will offer them the certification they need. For example in Norway, about one third of journeyman certificates are awarded in this way. At present, this is a gap in the English system.

You can find out more in Simon's report, *Taking Training Seriously*.⁵⁸



Our plan for apprenticeships

REFLECTIONS: Simon's analysis reinforces many of the points established by the data set out in Chapter 1. The narrowness of English apprenticeships combined with the relative lack of off-the-job learning risks **training a generation of apprentices who do not have the transferable skills to move occupations and industries** as they progress in their careers and as the labour market changes rapidly during the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

ENGLISH AND GERMAN APPRENTICESHIPS IN PRACTICE IN THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Maisie Roberts, *Postgraduate Researcher at the Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change, Leeds University Business School*



My research focuses on how the English and German apprenticeship systems are changing in response to current policy reforms and what impact this is having within the workplace. England's employer-led system has little regulation as the flexibility of the economy is given priority. As such, the apprenticeship levy has yet to meet the demands of the Government's "3-million apprenticeships by 2020" target. On the contrary, Germany adopts a coordinated approach, reflected in its 'dual' system, where firms and vocational schools provide highly-structured training. However, more young people than ever are choosing degrees over apprenticeships in Germany, leading to unfilled vacancies, fewer firms participating and growing inequality. The future direction of both systems remains unclear.

A comparison of two selected companies from the chemical industries from both countries revealed that they were reacting very differently to these changes. Through interviews with apprentices, managers, training providers and unions, I found that the English company made a concerted effort to create new standards but training was often tailored to meet narrow company-specific demands. New degree-level apprenticeships had also been



introduced, with Masters-level apprenticeships planned for the future. Apprentices told me that studying and working was demanding but advantageous, particularly given the expense of tuition fees.

In the German company, apprentices described the broad skill base they had accumulated through completing several rotations in different departments. Managers also highlighted how digital skills were being integrated, in line with Germany's digitalisation agenda. Most apprentices completed standard three-year apprenticeships but continued vocational training was firmly encouraged to ensure further progression. However, apprentices and managers alike voiced their frustrations about the poor teaching and limited resources of German vocational schools, resulting in the company offering extra in-house education.

Responses to policy reforms and changing socio-economic pressures were also telling. The German company seemed to rise to the challenge of the growth of higher education. Germany's 29% university drop-out rate prompted managers to recruit former students as apprentices. Equally, integrating migrants and the long-term unemployed was also part of their recruitment strategy. The English company did not guarantee jobs for its apprentices, leaving them feeling more uncertain about their futures. At the German company, an apprentice job guarantee was ensured through the company's strong works council presence. The sector's union also secured the highest pay tariff for apprentices in Germany. Despite this, redundancies were announced during my visit and many apprentices spoke about their concerns for their future job security.

Understanding apprenticeships in England – latest research perspectives

Overall, I found a disconnect between high-level policy and the reality on the shop floor. Instead the contrasting institutional structures of England and Germany play a more resounding role in the realities for apprentices in terms of workplace relations, conditions and skill development. Future policy-making should adopt an institutional lens to ensure policy translates into practice.

REFLECTIONS: Maisie's research brings to life through a specific example many of the trends and concerns raised in the other pieces of research set out in this Chapter – in particular the **narrowness of apprenticeship training in England compared to Germany's much broader approach.**

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – HIGHER TECHNICAL OR TECHNICAL HIGHER EDUCATION?

Dr Jim Hordern, *Bath Spa University* and **Dr Daniel Bishop**, *Leicester University*

Degree apprenticeships are a very recent addition to the system and we wanted to explore the higher and vocational characteristics of the programmes as they were introduced in the Aerospace Engineering and Construction (Construction Management and Quantity Surveying) sectors.⁵⁹

Our research, funded by the Gatsby Foundation, investigated how employers and higher education providers were involved in the design and delivery of degree apprenticeships, and their use of the apprenticeship standards. We were also interested in whether degree apprenticeships would be recruiting young people completing A Levels or other level 3 programmes, or were to be used for existing workforce development.

In both the Aerospace and Construction sectors we found that larger employers were dominant in the design of

the apprenticeship standards and plans for delivery. Large employers had the capacity to contribute, and this may have sidelined the requirements of small and medium sized employers. We also noted some employer concern about linking apprenticeship standards very specifically to an occupational role, a stipulation that emerged from the Richard Review and subsequent reforms. Some in the Construction sector stated that a considerable amount of 'core content' would be relevant across similar occupational roles, and therefore some apprentices could share a pathway before specialising later on. However, a more flexible approach to standard development had been resisted by government. Employers also stressed the importance of professional bodies as guarantors of quality and relevance, and the role of further and higher education institutions in offering curriculum design and delivery expertise.

In both sectors, degree apprenticeships were seen to offer both a partial solution to skills shortages and an opportunity to diversify the intake of apprentices and graduates. Employers stated that a substantial volume of degree apprentices would come from 18 year old school leavers with A levels. However, in the construction sector degree apprenticeships could also offer a vehicle for workforce development, as many existing employees may be able to take advantage of an initial level 4 higher apprenticeship with entry requirements of 5 GCSEs at A*-C, before progressing to the level 6 degree apprenticeship. Some recruitment could come through level 2 and level 3 trade apprenticeships in future, although this was not thought to be a major source at this time.

The project illustrated the distinctive type of higher vocational education emerging through degree apprenticeship partnerships between employers and providers of higher education. Some higher education institutions expressed concern that apprentices would be offered a different educational experience from full time or sandwich students, but employers noted the advantages that their apprentices would have in learning together with apprentices from other organisations and 'traditional' students in a higher education environment.



Our plan for apprenticeships

REFLECTIONS: Jim and Daniel's research highlights the significant opportunities afforded by the introduction of degree apprenticeships. However, it also reinforces several of the challenges raised by the data in Chapter 1 – in particular that **large employers have dominated the development of apprenticeship standards** and that **standards are relatively narrow, missing the opportunity for a common core of training across similar occupational roles**.

USING ANALYTICAL TOOLS TO IMPROVE APPRENTICESHIP BREADTH AND QUALITY

Lorna Unwin, *Professor Emerita (Vocational Education)* and **Alison Fuller**, *Professor of Vocational Education and Work, UCL Institute of Education*



Concerns about the existence and even potential growth in low quality apprenticeships (Ofsted 2018) continue despite the claims of successive governments that they value quality over quantity. This is worrying for individuals, social mobility and the economy.

Through our longstanding research on apprenticeships,⁶⁰ we have identified a range of characteristics that affect the quality of provision and consequently the nature of apprentices' experiences (Fuller and Unwin 2017; 2004). From this, we have worked with employers, training providers and trade unions to develop the 'expansive – restrictive continuum' as an analytical framework to help them evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of their provision.

At the expansive end of the continuum, we find employers (of all sizes in all sectors, public and private) who understand that apprenticeships (whatever the level) are a key way to sustain and enhance the expertise of their workforce. At the restrictive end, the focus is on filling production gaps or, at best, enabling existing employees to gain accreditation for



their existing skills. Assessment-led forms of delivery bring in the numbers, but require little by way of training. A key feature of what we have called 'expansive apprenticeships' is that they develop new skills and knowledge and so provide a solid platform for progression.

The framework is designed as a working document and an analytical tool. The aim is not to judge 'restrictive apprenticeships' as being worthless, but to trigger a set of questions so that employers and training providers can plan (and monitor) how they might move their provision further towards the expansive end of the continuum.

Training providers and employers who work together in a 'relational approach' increase their capacity to deliver

Understanding apprenticeships in England – latest research perspectives

The expansive-restrictive framework in the context of apprenticeships

EXPANSIVE	RESTRICTIVE
Apprentice develops occupational expertise to a standard recognised across an industrial or service sector.	Apprenticeship develops or has existing skills assessed within a limited job role.
Employer and training provider share commitment to apprenticeship as a platform for career progression and occupational/professional registration.	Apprenticeship doesn't build the capacity to progress beyond present job role.
Apprentice has dual status as learner and employee: explicit recognition of, and support for, individual as learner.	Status as employee dominates: limited recognition of, and support for, apprentice as learner.
Apprentice makes a gradual transition to productive worker and is stretched by employers and providers to develop expertise in their occupational field.	Fast transition to productive worker with limited knowledge of the wider occupational field.
Apprentice is a member of an occupational community with access to the community's rules, values, history, occupational knowledge and practical expertise.	Apprentice treated as extra pair of hands with access to limited knowledge and skills to perform job.
Apprentice participates in different communities of practice inside and outside the workplace.	Training restricted to narrowly defined job role and workstation.
Apprentice's work tasks and training closely mapped against recognized occupational standards and assessment requirements to ensure they become fully competent.	Weak relationship between workplace tasks, occupational standards and assessment requirements.
Apprentice gains forms of certification with labour market currency and enabling progression to next level (career and/or education).	Apprentice doesn't have the opportunity to gain valuable and portable forms of certification.
Off-the-job training includes time for reflection and stretches apprentice to reach their full potential.	Supporting apprentice to fulfil their potential is not seen as a priority.
Apprentice's existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued and used as platform for new learning.	Apprentices have limited opportunity to expand their existing skills.
Apprentice's progress closely monitored with regular constructive feedback from range of employer and provider personnel including managers, who take a holistic approach.	Apprentice's progress monitored for immediate job performance with limited developmental feedback.

expansive apprenticeships.⁶¹ The process starts with a conversation about the pressures and possibilities in the business environment, the way goods and services are produced, and the organisation's plans going forward. Some employers have the capacity and experience to co-design apprenticeships, but many need more support.

Without a relational approach, the danger is that employers and training providers are more likely to default to offering restrictive apprenticeships. An expansive, relational approach to underpinning apprenticeship quality is required. A national programme of peer support led by training providers and employers who run quality

apprenticeships would help build capacity and have a much bigger impact than trying to dictate quality through top-down policies or initiatives.

REFLECTIONS: Lorna and Alison's research provides an excellent framework that reinforces the importance of considering the opportunities provided by apprenticeships for individuals to build a wider set of transferable skills beyond being trained for a single narrow role in a particular occupation. There is a significant risk that **apprenticeship standards are pushing more towards the restrictive than the expansive end of this spectrum.**

Our plan for apprenticeships

ASSESSING THE LABOUR MARKET VALUE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Steve McIntosh, *Professor of
Economics, Sheffield University*



Recent work undertaken by our team at the Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER) has looked at the earnings returns associated with apprenticeships, matching people who took apprenticeships with their post-apprenticeship earnings as recorded in their tax returns.

There has been a large increase in the number of apprenticeships starts in England over the last decade, from below 200,000 per year prior to 2007, to more than 500,000 per year in some years post-2010. A large part of

this increase has been due to apprenticeship participation by people aged 25 or more, who prior to 2007 had not been involved in apprenticeships.

By using a control group of similar individuals who had chosen to undertake an apprenticeship but had not completed it, we were able to compare the relative increases in earnings for apprentices who were aged 19-24 and those in the newer 25+ age group.⁶² The results revealed significantly higher value added for apprenticeships undertaken in the younger age group – around two to three times greater.

We then went on to investigate whether the higher value of apprenticeships for younger apprentices was due to them undertaking these in sectors where the value is high for everyone, or whether they earn a higher earnings differential compared to older apprentices doing the same apprenticeship. For most groups, the latter is the dominant factor, with the difference in value between age groups being particularly large within service sector frameworks, such as Business Administration, Accountancy and IT, as well as in Manufacturing. This illustrates the need to ensure that older apprentices are undertaking apprenticeships of appropriate quality, learning new skills and not simply doing ‘top-up’ training with their existing employer.

REFLECTIONS: Steve’s research adds significant weight to the challenges thrown up by the data in Chapter 1 around the rapid growth of apprenticeships at age 25 and above, the high proportion of apprentices converting from existing job roles and the perverse incentives associated with the Levy. **It is clear that the most value is added by apprenticeships at a younger age, when apprentices are more likely to be new to a job role** rather than ‘topping up’ existing skills.



Earnings differentials of apprenticeships by age group, gender and level

	19-24 Age group	25+ Age Group
Males, Intermediate Level	15.0%	6.9%
Females, Intermediate Level	12.7%	6.0%
Males, Advanced Level	22.5%	7.7%
Females, Advanced Level	11.9%	5.3%



In this Chapter, we have shared key messages from the latest research suggesting that:

- **More needs to be done to address the deep-seated cultural stereotypes and misconceptions associated with apprenticeships.**
- **The Levy is not enough to drive employer involvement – a clear business and social case must be made to secure true engagement.**
- **Large employers have dominated the apprenticeship standard development process, creating a risk that new standards are less relevant to smaller employers.**
- **The new apprenticeship standards risk creating an all-or-nothing approach because they do not contain qualifications and rely so heavily on end point assessment.**
- **The level of off-the-job training in English apprenticeships is low against international**

benchmarks and the standards are narrow, with a lack of transferable skills. These restrictive apprenticeships risk failing to prepare young people for the rapidly changing labour market.

- **The most economic value is added where apprenticeships are undertaken by younger people and those new to job roles, while recent growth has tended to be in older apprenticeships and those converting from existing jobs.**

The latest research reinforces many of the challenges established in the analysis of data and policy in Chapter 1. While apprenticeships remain popular and the expansion of higher and degree apprenticeships is welcome, the demographics of the programme suggest that it is focusing on the wrong areas to drive maximum value. The new standards have engaged large employers but not the small businesses who are the backbone of the programme and are too narrow to give apprentices the transferable skills they will need as we progress through the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

3. Promising practice from home and abroad

There are many examples from both this country and internationally where individual projects, providers or employers have managed to address some of the challenges set out in Chapters 1 and 2. In this Chapter we provide case studies of promising practice that Edge has found to inform the future of the English apprenticeship system.

Preparation for Apprenticeships – approaches from across the UK

EMPLOYING A TEAM OF APPRENTICES

Excelsior Academy, Newcastle

Excelsior Academy in Newcastle is an all-through primary to sixth form school, but some of their former students are opting to come back to the Academy as employees through their in-house apprenticeship scheme. Each year as part of their business plan the school looks at the vacancies they can offer as apprenticeships and draws up job adverts. These apprenticeship opportunities are advertised to their current sixth form students in a range of roles including

catering, marketing and PR, IT, and primary curriculum support for aspiring teachers. Most of the apprentices complete a level 2 in their first year and progress to level 3 in their second year, with a high retention rate beyond this. As Dawn Charlton, Business Support Manager, explains *the programme has been extremely successful both for us as a business and for the young people who gain a diverse range of skills. Seeing them develop from students to professionals has been fantastic and they bring a new fresh perspective to the roles. Many go on to stay with us beyond their formal apprenticeships.*



Preparation for apprenticeships

When responding to the apprenticeship advertisement, students go through the same process they would when applying for any other job, from responding to the adverts and writing an application, to attending an interview. This is excellent practice for preparing for the competitive job market. The scheme has also helped staff understand some of the skills school-leavers lack in order to be ready for the world of work, and so have built these into students' learning.

Mahima Zafar went from a student at Excelsior onto a business administration apprenticeship and has now been employed at Excelsior: *I didn't know what I wanted to do after sixth form and so I benefitted loads from the opportunity to do an apprenticeship here. I have had the opportunity to try a range of different things and find out what I enjoy, such as marketing and event planning. I have learnt loads from my time here and now I support some of the new apprentices myself.*

PROMOTING APPRENTICESHIPS AS A ROUTE TO SUCCESS – UTC Oxfordshire

University Technical College (UTC) Oxfordshire opened in 2015 and teaches students aged 14-19. It specialises in life sciences, physical sciences and engineering, alongside a broad and balanced curriculum. High numbers of students from UTC Oxfordshire progress onto high-quality apprenticeships, with some of the UTC's most successful

students undertaking degree apprenticeships. In 2018 41% of the former Year 13 pupils went on to apprenticeships, often level 4 and above at companies including Aston Martin, Crown Technology, the UK Atomic Energy Authority and Jaguar Land Rover.

The success of this can be attributed in part to the high level of employer engagement the students get whilst studying at the UTC.⁶³ Students take part in employer-led projects throughout their studies, which include direct feedback from employers and sometimes site visits to the company, where they often find out about the apprenticeships on offer.

As William Burchette, a former Y13 student and apprentice at Airbus, explains: *Being at the UTC helps massively with trying to get into the engineering industry as a lot of companies come through here like BMW MINI and we complete employer-led projects. The workshops help you with understanding what an employer is looking for.*

The UTC now has a pool of alumni who are keen to come back to talk to current students about their experience as apprentices. This helps to further position apprenticeships as an aspirational route, as Owain Johns, Principal at UTC Oxfordshire, explains [degree] *apprenticeships are pitched as a highly credible option to students rather than 'instead of university'... It is a very compelling option for the students to gain a degree without the debt.*



Our plan for apprenticeships



STRUCTURED PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMMES

Foundation Apprenticeships (Scotland) and Junior Apprenticeships (Wales)

The Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales are leading the way in introducing structured programmes that help young people to properly prepare for entry into apprenticeships as well as other routes.

In Scotland, foundation apprenticeships (FA) are specifically designed to complement academic studies as part of a broad and balanced curriculum. Students can select to enrol in a two-year foundation apprenticeship alongside their National 5 or Higher subjects (equivalent to A-level), rendering the academic-vocational divide obsolete. Apprentices spend at least one day per week learning practical skills at a local college or employer that have partnered with their school to deliver the programme.

Currently, FA programmes have been developed in the twelve fastest growing sectors of the Scottish economy,

including software development, business skills, and scientific technologies. In addition to learning industry-specific knowledge, apprentices cultivate meta-skills such as self-management. Where young people who have studied an FA go on to the full modern apprenticeship, this can accelerate their start by up to nine months – a truly no-wrong-door approach.

Meanwhile, in Wales, Cardiff and Vale College decided to begin their first junior apprenticeships programme in 2016 to address the large number of students who came to them at 16 with poor literacy, numeracy and motivation. The programme for 14-16 year olds has grown from around 60 participants to over 130 and is aimed at young people with significant or multiple barriers to learning.

These students attend the college for 25 hours per week of tuition including eight hours of fully contextualised English and maths, tutor group time and 16 hours of vocational tuition, supplemented by enrichment activities and employer visits.

Young people receive intensive support from a learning coach and if they successfully complete the programme, they are guaranteed a place on a level 2 apprenticeship or college course, which is a huge incentive to participants. The programme has been recognised by the Welsh government and is being actively spread into other colleges across Wales.

REFLECTIONS: These examples from across the UK show what can be achieved with a structured programme of advice, support and preparation ahead of a full apprenticeship programme. Pupils should be able to access vocational training from age 14 as they can through Wales's junior apprenticeships and used to be able to through England's former young apprenticeship programme. From 16, **young people need a proper structured pre-apprenticeship route similar to foundation apprenticeships in Scotland.** Meanwhile, every school in England should be thinking about making positive use of the levy as Excelsior Academy does to offer progression pathways to their students and providing truly impartial advice about apprenticeships like Oxfordshire UTC.



A RIGOROUS PRE-APPRENTICESHIP APPROACH

Blackburn College

Blackburn College works with some of the area's largest and most successful companies, offering apprenticeships at a range of levels and in a number of different sectors. The College has taken a strong role in successfully engaging with employers, which has ensured they are appropriately addressing local skills shortages and improving employability amongst young people, as well as developing pathways into apprenticeships.

The College is also committed to preparing young people who are not quite ready for an apprenticeship, through traineeships. These provide the essential work experience, work preparation training, and English and maths support (if needed) to help prepare a young person for an apprenticeship or other employment. The traineeships offer a model of learning that integrates theory with practice, by providing technical masterclasses delivered by industry professionals. These take advantage of the strong links with industry and technical facilities the college has to offer.

Another feature of this model is the opportunity for young learners to receive a funded placement with a partner employer. These placements provide an

excellent opportunity for businesses to trial potential new apprentices. They offer an induction for the student into employment and the employer can see the impact the student could make to their business. The success of this has been clear as a number of students have gained an apprenticeship with their placement employer.

Students also get excellent exposure to industry-standard environments within the College itself, for instance through the Regional Automotive Technology Hub (RATH). The RATH is a state-of-the-art workshop developed collaboratively with leading car manufacturers, to ensure that students are developing skills that are up to date and relevant to industry. The Hub is also a commercial garage and dealership, offering MOT testing, and therefore the opportunity to work with real customers.

REFLECTIONS: The example of Blackburn College shows some of the amazing work that the Further Education sector does to engage local employers and act as an anchor for apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeship training. **The best way to get young people ready for an apprenticeship is through exposure to real employers** and giving those same employers the opportunity to meet and interact with students makes them more likely to take on more apprentices in future.

Our plan for apprenticeships

BROAD AND HOLISTIC APPRENTICESHIPS

The Eden Project

Since 2014, the Eden Project has been working closely with Cornwall College to reinvigorate apprenticeships. They offer apprenticeships in three key areas of Catering, Horticulture and Events Management, but they also offer specialised apprenticeships in, for example, HR, Finance, Marketing, Plumbing and Carpentry. Horticulture is especially important as *young people leaving school don't always realise that there is a lot of opportunity to pursue a successful career in this sector* – says Tom Lal (Business Development Manager, Cornwall College). Through apprenticeships, Eden meets two of its most important aims: bringing people together to work together towards a better future and developing a pipeline of talented people for the Cornish economy. Eden aims to equip its apprentices with the values and skills to make a positive contribution to the world throughout their careers.

In 2018, Eden employed 9 apprentices on a two-year contract and so they have between 20-30 apprentices at any one time. Eden is committed to take 4 apprentices in horticulture, 2 in catering and 2 in event management each year. Most apprentices are at level 2, but there are progression opportunities and some apprentices are

available at levels 3-5. Eden work in close partnership with Cornwall College, which has the expertise to deliver courses in horticulture. Eden also works with other employers as partners. One of their close partners is The Lost Gardens of Heligan, where apprentices learn about fields and forests in a more natural setting.

Eden offers a broad and holistic experience to their apprentices. In the first year, apprentices spend time in Eden's seven sectors of horticulture and in the second year choose to specialise in one area. Eden also places great emphasis on developing transferable skills through their Sustainable Enterprise Programme. There is a strong support infrastructure built into the apprenticeship programme; each apprentice works with a mentor who also focuses on the development of life skills for the apprentice.

In addition, apprentices are engaged in project work each year. For example, year 1 apprentices work on a project called 'From Plant to Plate'. This is a multidisciplinary project working in teams to produce a consumable product. They have to plan and consider issues such as using ethically and locally sourced ingredients and sustainability. The teams present their products to Eden's directors, their line managers and college representatives. As Jed Langdon (Learning & Development Manager, Eden Project)



remembers: *their sense of achievement afterwards and the boost in confidence they get through doing this is huge.* In year two, apprentices take part in a community-related project. During these projects they have the opportunity to reflect on their work and incorporate issues such as sustainability and good citizenship values into their thinking.

Apprentices value their experience at Eden, as one apprentice said: *[Being an apprentice at Eden] is a once in a lifetime opportunity and having Eden on my CV makes me stand out.*

To date, Eden has retained half of the apprentices who have completed their apprenticeship programmes, providing them with a vital pipeline of talent for the future.

REFLECTIONS: The work of the Eden project reinforces two key points from the data and research. First, they show how when the HR logic and the CSR logic identified by Professor Simms are combined, this creates a powerful business and social case for employers to engage in delivering apprenticeships. Second, they show **the power of offering broad and holistic apprenticeships that give young people the opportunity to engage in a number of aspects of an organisation**, building their skills before they focus in.



Using mentoring to increase completion

Using mentoring to increase completion – approaches from Jersey, Northern Ireland and Australia

TRACKERS APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME – Jersey

In 2012, Jersey overhauled its apprenticeships programme, focusing on young people's progression and introducing mentoring for all apprentices independent of both the employer and training provider. Each mentor has an average caseload of 25-30 young people to support.

Stuart Penn, Skills Jersey's Operations Manager explains their role: *apprentices are given a dedicated, qualified mentor to coach, support and guide them through their apprenticeship. Mentors meet regularly with apprentices on a one to one basis to help develop their soft skills; help arrange employer, apprentice and tutor meetings and challenge and develop apprentices to reach their full potential. To help the apprentice get the best from their apprenticeship, mentors use coaching techniques such as personal reflection, performance review, goal setting and action planning. They meet with apprentice and employer on a quarterly basis to facilitate progress reviews and joint goal setting.*

A year after the introduction of the new programme, when asked their favourite thing about the apprenticeship programme, almost 70% of employers and apprentices said it was the mentoring element. As one student put it: *It is good to know that there is someone other than the teachers to ask for help not only for the course but in other areas of learning.*

The impact on the retention rate has been dramatic, rising from 60% under the older programme to 96% in the most recent figures.

Our plan for apprenticeships

BELFAST MET COLLEGE – Northern Ireland

Belfast Met recognise the power of mentoring both within the workplace and as part of the training element of an apprenticeship.

The College provide training to each apprentice's workplace mentor, including a handbook and a face to face training session. This helps them to gain confidence in managing a new member of staff and to act as a first point of contact for any challenges they face. They emphasise this training as an additional benefit to the businesses involved.

This is supplemented by a team of ten skills support coaches within the College. They develop a Personal Training Plan with each apprentice to ensure that their programme is personalised to meet their needs. This is reviewed and updated with the employer and apprentice every six weeks to support progress in their core training and broader employability skills.



HOLMESGLEN INSTITUTE – Victoria, Australia

Australia has a well-established system of apprenticeships, including standardised training and licences to practice across the nine federal states and territories. However, completion rates are very low by international standards – around 49% nationally.

At the Holmesglen Institute, the largest further education College in the state of Victoria, completion rates were sitting at 53% when the team decided to take action to address this. They recognised that there are many different roles in the system, some of which confusingly overlap, but none of these had a particular focus on the welfare of the apprentices themselves.

The College introduced a pilot of five apprenticeship support officers with a caseload of 100 young people each. They provided pastoral support, mentoring and advice about financial support, using a triage process to prioritise their time and effort amongst the apprentices they worked with.



Using mentoring to increase completion

Warren Guest, Lecturer at the Holmesgen institute explains: *Over six months, this additional support helped to drive up completion rates from just over 50% to 85%. This allowed the pilot to more than pay for itself because in Australia there are financial incentives on training providers to support completion. As a result, we have decided to roll out the programme more widely in the College.*

REFLECTIONS: These three examples from very different contexts show **how powerful it can be to have a role in the system for a mentor or coach who focuses specifically on the welfare and progress of the apprentice.** This can help to address pastoral issues, act as a mediator with employers and trainers, and support the apprentice to reflect on their experiences in order to get the most out of their training. With almost one in three apprenticeships started in England not completed, there are clear lessons here for the future of the programme.

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS – University of Warwick

The University of Warwick offers degree apprenticeships (DAs) across a wide range of subjects, including engineering, health and wellbeing, and social work, with new courses currently in development. In March 2019, Warwick was the main provider for over 200 degree apprentices, in addition to supporting the teaching of over 400 at WMG. DAs are at the centre of the University's forthcoming employability strategy, and feed into Warwick's strategic priorities of innovation, inclusion and regional leadership.

Warwick DAs are collaboratively organised between the University and employers. The University's DA team supports academic departments and employers to develop new programmes and supports professional services (e.g. admissions, student finance) to accommodate the different needs of degree apprentices. Degree apprentices spend around 20% of their time working towards their degree and 80% working for their employer, where they apply the knowledge they develop on their course.

One of the key advantages of doing a DA is the opportunity to "earn while you learn". Students also develop skills that make them more employable. Through DAs, employers

can address perceived skills gaps by developing courses that address their needs. They may also benefit from improved employee loyalty.

George, a current student, says *a degree apprenticeship is hard work but extremely rewarding, allowing you to not only gain a degree but also gain industrial experience which a lot of employers value.*

Professor Stuart Croft, Vice-Chancellor, says *Universities such as Warwick have a long history of direct engagement in both their local and national economies. We are delighted once again to be at the forefront of a programme that delivers new opportunities for our young people which will also target local skills gaps, and will help drive economic growth in our region and the country as a whole.*

REFLECTIONS: Warwick University's work on degree apprenticeships shows **how powerful these opportunities can be** to enable students to earn while they learn and emerge with not only a degree but also relevant workplace experience.

A REGIONAL APPROACH TO EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT Liverpool City Region Combined Authority

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCR CA) has developed a comprehensive Apprenticeship Growth Plan that promotes local collective action, and an Apprenticeship Hub which is the localised one-stop shop support service for employers and potential apprentices in the city region. The LCR CA see apprenticeships as a key local driver for local economic growth.

To design and fund interventions that improve the apprenticeship delivery and offer in the city region, LCR CA invested in an infrastructure that allows for direct communication between the Combined Authority and local employers. According to the Policy Lead for Employment and Skills at LCR CA, *[w]e have a team of impartial Skills Brokers, who are out and about talking with employers on a regular basis. As part of that, we are listening to them as to what their concerns are, and then we develop calls and commissions as a result of their feedback.*



The Skills Brokers are also giving advice and guidance to local employers who may find the latest apprenticeship funding reforms confusing and off-putting. The evidence⁶⁴ suggests that the economic return for every £1 invested in the Skills Brokerage service (which also included a training fund for businesses that needed it as last resort) was around £8 through jobs created and jobs safeguarded.

Feedback from employers highlights the fact that there are not enough specialist curriculum areas being delivered within the city region, and that firms have to go outside of the city region to find a training provider who delivers 20% off-the-job training. Incorporating the feedback into their research, the LCR CA created the Sector-based Skills for Growth Action Plans,⁶⁵ which describe where the local jobs of the future will be. This robust information gives the CA the basis to engage with local training providers and colleges to match provision to future need.

To ensure colleges and training providers get the support they need to provide employers and learners with the curriculum areas required for future economic growth, the LCR CA commissioned local capacity building programmes aimed at extending the breadth and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships and improving the quality of teaching and learning that take place in local colleges and training providers. These interventions are funded via the European Social Fund (ESF) and will commence in 2019.

The LCR CA's strength revolves around the practice of collaboration between stakeholders to achieve

the collective goals set out in their Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018-2020.⁶⁶ An example of impactful local collaborative work around apprenticeships is the LCR CA's Maritime SuperSkills⁶⁷ project. This ESF-funded project was designed by the LCR CA to develop more apprenticeship standards in the maritime sector. The Liverpool City Region has one of the largest clusters of maritime businesses outside London in areas like shipping and ports, maritime engineering and freight distribution – and it is growing fast.

As a response to a clear need for specific skills in the local maritime industry, the LCR CA brought together local employers, universities and colleges to become Trailblazers and design the Standards, which were not only needed locally, but have a national impact as well. The Marine Technical Superintendent Standard⁶⁸ has already been approved by the IfATE, with two more in development.

Paul Corcoran, Training Manager at Carmet Tugs, who have been involved in the SuperSkills project, said: *We've managed to secure thousands of pounds of funding [for upskilling current staff] through the Combined Authority... this has put us in a better position when tendering for contracts...the LCR CA have also been really good with their Skills Working Groups, through which they have been inviting us along to find out what the apprenticeship changes are, and to keep us up-to-date with everything. We now understand the processes and how the new apprenticeship funding works for us at Carmet.*

Using mentoring to increase completion

REFLECTIONS: While there is no doubt that apprenticeship standards should be nationally accredited to ensure the quality and consistency across the country, the example of Liverpool City Region shows **how powerful a more devolved approach to organising apprenticeship training and delivery can be**. This approach could be particularly effective at helping to engage the smaller businesses who currently feel less connected to the complex national apprenticeships system.

APPRENTICESHIPS IN SWITZERLAND – BerufsBildungBaden (BBB) Vocational School

Switzerland is one of the countries which is most highly regarded for its vocational education and training (VET) and seen as a gold standard for VET world-wide. While there is a temptation to aim for a similar system, unfortunately many countries, including England, lack the traditions and the context to successfully reproduce it. Nevertheless, reflecting on and learning from this excellent practice, whilst noting the different context, can support further development.

VET in Switzerland is strongly supported by employers, appreciated by young people and embraced by parents. VET offers broad education with the opportunity to specialise at a later stage. Young people have clear progression routes, including higher education (university

of applied sciences), and there is an in-built permeability in the system between vocational and academic routes.

At the end of lower secondary school Swiss young people have to decide whether to continue on the academic or vocational route. Most vocational programmes are dual track. Young people who choose to take the vocational route have to apply for apprenticeship places in the last year of their lower secondary school. Places can be very competitive. Young people apply for apprenticeship places and at the same time they also can apply for 1-5 trial days at relevant companies. This has the advantage that employers can observe and assess potential apprentices but it also offers the opportunity for the young people to test the company. This approach can help lead to an excellent match for both the young person and employer.

BBB is a vocational school in Baden, which offers vocational courses and also professional vocational baccalaureate (Berufsmatura). As the Rector of BBB, Rolf Hänner notes *Permeability is essential and also offers young people the opportunity for progression*. BBB prepares young people for 16 out of about 200 professions in Switzerland. BBB is proud of their use of technology in addition to their vocational education. Ten years ago, they developed a Learning Management System, for which BBB received a national prize. All lesson preparations are



Our plan for apprenticeships

digitalised and all teachers have access to all lesson plans. This is an easy way to share resources, leading to a natural improvement in teaching quality. All teachers and learners have their own digital device that supports the use of their e-learning platform. *It is not rocket science, it is a new medium to educate young people. This new medium has to be also implemented in the companies.* – says Rolf Häner.

There is a strong emphasis on practical training in addition to theory. BBB works in close collaboration with LIBS (Industrial Apprenticeships Switzerland Baden). In LIBS, companies come together to offer training to apprentices. LIBS particularly supports SMEs by taking on the practical training of apprentices. In Baden, LIBS is located in a six story building where each profession has its own level, such as mechanical engineering, informatics, solar energy systems, automation and control systems. Those who study a technician level profession enrol on a four-year apprenticeship programme and apprentices spend their first two years in LIBS. Here they have the opportunity to learn about the broad sector before they have to specialise. During the first two years they learn how to use tools and machines safely. In Baden some apprentices receive bilingual teaching and their communication skills and presentation skills in English are excellent.

When speaking to apprentices at BBB, there are clear messages after only a few weeks. They felt that they had a chance to bond together in a boot camp in the first week. They had already experienced CAD, learnt some drawing techniques, used turning machines and had done bench work. They enjoy the varied work, using their hands and the challenges they had been given.

REFLECTIONS: The example of BBB illustrates how the renowned Swiss apprenticeship system effectively addresses many of the challenges which the data and research exposes in the English system. Young people have the opportunity to take part in vocational education early on, to test their options and to combine vocational and academic courses seamlessly. Meanwhile, for smaller employers, **the opportunity exists to join forces in order to minimise bureaucracy and give young apprentices a fully rounded introduction to the industry.**

In this Chapter, we have shared key examples from home and abroad which show that:

- **Schools can have a key role in promoting apprenticeships as leading options and in employing former students as apprentices in a variety of roles.**
- **There are highly effective models for pre-apprenticeship training from the age of 14 which would open up this route to a much wider range of young people.**
- **Broad and holistic apprenticeships are possible within the current system, but more can be done, as in other countries, to encourage this as the norm.**
- **Mentoring can be a highly effective approach in supporting individuals to successfully complete their apprenticeship.**
- **Regional and collaborative approaches can be very helpful in reducing bureaucracy and supporting particularly smaller businesses to engage with apprenticeships.**

These case studies provide strong examples of how some organisations and approaches both at home and abroad are already tackling the issues raised by the analysis and research. In the next Chapter, we will bring together all of these insights into our proposed way forward for English apprenticeships.



4. English apprenticeships – the way forward

The evidence from policy and analysis set out in Chapter 1, from latest research in Chapter 2 and from national and international best practice in Chapter 3 all helps to underpin a clear way forward for English apprenticeships. We want to ensure that we continue to build on the strengths of the system whilst addressing the longstanding challenges, some of which have been exacerbated by recent reforms.

DEFINING APPRENTICESHIPS

When asked about apprenticeships, most people would immediately think of younger people receiving training on the job as they take their first steps in their chosen career path. As we saw from Chapter 1 (page 6) this is increasingly atypical with almost 50% of apprenticeship starts by those over 25, including 10% in the 45 to 59 age range. Two thirds of all apprenticeships are ‘conversions’ from existing employees. **We must redress this balance if apprenticeships are to remain credible as a leading route for young people into skilled occupations.**

There is clearly an important role, particularly during the Fourth Industrial Revolution, for high quality re-skilling to ensure that individuals are prepared for the jobs of the future, but in trying to be all things to all people, the apprenticeship brand and approach risks being watered down. The English apprenticeship system should adapt an approach from Northern Ireland of prioritising apprenticeship training. **Only apprenticeships for those who are aged 16-24 or whom the organisation can prove are new to the sector and occupation should be fully funded**, with 50% funding available for older and existing workers to support retraining. As Dr McIntosh’s research makes clear (Chapter 2), rebalancing the programme towards younger and newer workers will also add more value to the economy.

The system of National Occupational Standards (NOS) that underpinned the former apprenticeship frameworks is no longer officially used as part of the apprenticeship standards in England. This may have given employers more freedom, but the **lack of an architecture for apprenticeships, and wider technical education, has led to several unintended negative consequences.**

As we have seen from the data (Chapter 1) and research (Chapter 2), apprenticeship standards risk becoming too narrow or overlapping, while young people have to make career decisions without a clear map to understand the different routes available to them. There is also no unifying system underpinning apprenticeships across the four nations of the UK, making the system much more complex for employers whose workforce is spread across more than one country.

We will work with colleagues in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to **convene a group to look at developing plans for a unified architecture for apprenticeships across the four nations.** This has the potential to create a common transferable currency between different qualifications, a more transparent method for recognising prior learning, avoiding complex duplication between standards and laying the foundations for a core set of meta-skills that will underpin all future occupations.

Our plan for apprenticeships

Jonathan Clark, Director
(Service Design and Delivery),
Skills Development Scotland



The UK shares a labour market, with many employers and employees working across more than one country. It is essential to the economy in Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland that they are able to access a pool of consistently well trained individuals. The National Occupational Standards provided a framework to support this, but as the apprenticeships systems in all four nations change, it is time for us to consider together what the future architecture for apprenticeships and technical education should look like. Getting this right will have positive benefits for employers, apprentices and training providers by making the system more coherent and supporting mobility across the UK.

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

The key performance indicator within the apprenticeships system currently is the total number of apprenticeship starts, with an ambition of three million by 2020. The fact that the Government is way off trajectory to deliver this target is beside the point – **it is the worst possible measure to drive the system.**

Firstly, by focusing on starts, it fails to acknowledge the fact that almost a third of apprenticeships that are started are not completed. In the new all-or-nothing world of apprenticeship standards those apprentices will leave without any record of progress. Second, by focusing on simply the total of all starts, it creates perverse incentives for the structure of the programme. In her evidence to the Lords Committee on Economic Affairs, **Baroness Wolf called the target ‘an abomination’** and said that it would be reached ‘by sending half the senior managers in this country on MBA courses and ticking it off’.⁶⁹

As both the Lords Committee on Economic Affairs and the Education Select Committee have recently recommended, the **system must be driven by quality rather than quantity**. By driving up the former, over time, the confidence of businesses and young people in the system will grow, increasing the latter in a sustainable and effective way rather than with policies and approaches that hit the target and miss the point. **There should be no numerical target for apprenticeship starts.** This should be replaced with a basket of indicators relating to quality, including feedback from apprentices and employers and the completion rate.

As the examples from Jersey, Northern Ireland and Australia show (Chapter 3), there is a strong case for the **inclusion of an element of mentoring within**



apprenticeships to support young people to overcome any barriers they face and to help them to reflect on and bring together the different elements of their apprenticeship, maximising their learning and the development of transferable skills. This will help to increase the completion rate, resulting in more positive outcomes for apprentices and employers alike.

The **structure for monitoring the quality of apprenticeships is simply too complex**, with roles for the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education on the quality of standards, the Department for Education on the quality of the whole system, Ofsted and QAA on the quality of provision and Ofqual on the quality of qualifications within frameworks and standards. As the CBI's recent report, *Getting Apprenticeships Right*,⁷⁰ recognises, these responsibilities need to be **vested in a single organisation with the ability to set the success criteria** for the technical education system – including progression, wage data and reducing skills shortages, with a legal responsibility to report its findings to Ministers.

Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee

As our recent report⁷¹ showed, there is not enough high-quality apprenticeship training, which is letting down both apprentices and employers. There has been an explosion in the number of training providers in recent years but neither employers nor apprentices can have genuine confidence that quality training is being provided by these new entrants. It's time for a cap on the amount of training which new providers can offer until they prove they are up to scratch. It's also time to get tough on sub-contractors, who too often seem to be delivering training which doesn't deliver for the apprentice, and lead providers who cream off large management fees. Only by boosting the quality of apprenticeships can we ensure that apprenticeships genuinely offer a ladder of opportunity for the disadvantaged and the chance for all to get the skills to get on in life.



Lord Forsyth, Chair of the Lords Committee on Economic Affairs

The quality of apprenticeships is undermined by the Government targeting three million new apprenticeship starts by 2020. The target prioritises quantity over quality and should be scrapped immediately. Framing a target in terms of starts makes no sense when about 40 per cent of those starts are not completed. There is worrying evidence that the system is being gamed by rebadging existing employees as apprentices, large proportions of whom are unaware they are doing an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship should be a method by which a young person, or new entrant to an industry, develops skills while working. MBAs and other training activities that would have happened anyway should be the employer's sole responsibility to fund.



PREPARATION FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

If we are truly to make apprenticeships the successful 'ladder of opportunity' that Robert Halfon advocates, we must directly address the questions of who knows about apprenticeships, who applies for apprenticeships and who has the qualities needed to succeed in what can be a highly competitive application process.

As Dr Kashefpakdel makes clear (Page 20), this begins in school with high quality and impartial careers guidance that genuinely **promotes apprenticeships as an equal route to success** – the example of UTC Oxfordshire (page 31) shows what can be achieved in terms of progression when this is the case. As we set out in *Towards a Twenty-First Century Education System*,⁷² this is much more powerful when delivered as part of a fully integrated curriculum approach that exposes young people to rich employer engagement as part of exciting real life projects. These not only bring learning to life but also give young people the chance to **develop the skills that they need to be competitive in the application process**, such as communication and team working.



The narrow focus on a ‘knowledge-rich’ curriculum and measures such as the English Baccalaureate are pushing technical and creative subjects out of school timetables, with a fall of more than 50% in GCSE entries to Design and Technology since 2010 and a reduction of 20% in creative subjects.⁷³ Without exposure to technical and creative subjects, young people inevitably lack the knowledge or confidence to apply for a high quality apprenticeship at age 16 or 18, or if they do will struggle to provide relevant examples that allow them to secure the opportunity. **Moving away from the EBacc towards a genuinely broad and balanced curriculum in schools** is a prerequisite to ensuring a successful and equitable intake of young people into apprenticeships.

As the examples of foundation apprenticeships in Scotland and junior apprenticeships in Wales (page 32) clearly show, there is also a need for the proper structured pre-apprenticeship training that the OECD has identified as a particular gap in the English system (page 16). We should **bring back the successful young apprenticeships programme** to give 14-16 year olds the opportunity to gain practical experience and test out different career routes. From age 16, **the foundation apprenticeships model developed in Scotland should be available** in England. In Scotland, these are the same size as a single Scottish Higher (equivalent to an A-level), allowing true blending of subjects and a truly no-wrong-door approach, carrying university entrance points and offering an accelerated start to a full apprenticeship.

To further support high quality outreach and preparation for apprenticeships, some flexibility should be allowed within the apprenticeship levy to support this activity. Companies would have the opportunity to **spend a small proportion of their levy pot to support pre-apprenticeship activities from a quality-assured list of third party providers**. Organisations like Career Ready provide high quality programmes that include mentoring, expert seminars and a paid internship to help young people who might otherwise not have considered an apprenticeship to gain the skills, confidence and experience to support their first steps into the labour market.

Dame Martina Milburn,
*Chair of the Social Mobility
Commission*

Apprenticeships can be a powerful route to social mobility. In our Social Mobility Barometer⁷⁴ we asked whether apprenticeships, university or other post-school options provide the best progression route. The poll showed that most people think apprenticeships offer better life chances than university. However, by age group, young people under 25 are the least likely to see the value of apprenticeships. We must do more to signpost and prepare young people for these life-changing opportunities.



THE CONTENT OF APPRENTICESHIPS

In the drive for numbers, the quality of what actually goes on in an apprenticeship seems to have been largely forgotten, yet as with any form of education it is the strength of the relationships and pedagogy that drive the success of the programme. Just as the curriculum is narrowing within schools to focus purely on academic subjects, so the latest data and research warns us time and again that **English apprenticeships are narrow and getting narrower**. Some of the new standards risk training individuals for a very specific role with very few broader transferable skills, at the very time when the Fourth Industrial Revolution is beginning to create rapid change in the labour market that will require individuals to change occupations or even industries several times during their career.

We need to take action to **broaden apprenticeship training and include transferable meta-skills in every apprenticeship**, as positive examples like Eden and Switzerland highlight (pages 34 & 39). Building on the best international models, young people entering an apprenticeship in, for instance, a construction occupation, should spend their first year learning and practicing a range of roles and techniques before beginning to specialise (page 11). This will enable them to see a broader picture of the industry and be prepared to change roles as technology and the economy moves on. Similarly, **every apprenticeship at every level should have built into it explicitly the key skills that all employers**

are looking for, including team working, problem solving and communication. The ‘behaviours’ section of apprenticeship standards provides a starting point, but these need to be developed further and placed at the heart of the programme. This could truly help to make English apprenticeships ‘expansive’ rather than ‘restrictive’ in the excellent matrix set out in Drs Unwin and Fuller’s research (pages 26-27). Broadening the Trailblazer groups to include a more diverse range of employers, particularly smaller employers, could also have a positive impact here.

Toby Peyton-Jones,
Ambassador, Education and Skills: Siemens Plc

An apprenticeship is a qualification for an occupation not a specific job. It is not the mastery of a single technology, but the preparation for a career that will span successive technologies. In combining ‘learning and doing’, apprenticeships are uniquely brilliant at developing the interdisciplinary meta skills that are at the heart of occupational performance. Difficult to specify and assess they may be, but beyond technical ability, this is what employers look for and, given the rapid change in technology, it is these same meta skills that will ensure the long term development and employability of the individual.



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There is certainly a clear case for some end point assessment in apprenticeships to ensure that apprentices can bring together everything they have learned and prove themselves as a fully-fledged professional in their field. However, it is **unacceptable for the significant proportion of apprentices who do not complete to leave with nothing**, as Dr Andressen's research shows (page 22). Learning from high quality technical education systems such as Finland, the units of apprenticeship training should be distinct modules, each ending in a proportionate end point assessment that can be taken by both apprentices and established professionals looking to accredit their skills. This would enable apprentices to 'bank' individual units and would build on a stronger architecture for apprenticeships (page 41) to enable much more efficient organisation of training.

It is clear from Dr Field's excellent research (page 23) that the English system lags behind other competitors in terms of high quality off-the-job training. It is even more worrying that when talking to apprentices, we often hear that **the two parts of their apprenticeship – the job and the training – feel completely disconnected** with little effort made to relate the two. The feedback loop of learn – practice – reflect sits at the very heart of high quality apprenticeships and much greater care needs to be taken by providers to work with employers to ensure that the training keeps pace step by step with

their experience in work to reinforce, stretch and evaluate rather than simply sitting alongside.

Building on the integration of mentoring (page 42) this can be neatly brought together in a **Personal Development Plan** approach that draws on the excellent practice in Northern Ireland (page 36). Having a clear and jointly agreed plan that is discussed regularly by the apprentices, training provider and employer together, in a discussion moderated by their mentor, would truly help to join things together to ensure that every party gets the most out of the opportunity.

John Cope, Head of Education and Skills, CBI

Our economy is changing, making it essential that young people have the choice of taking high quality apprenticeships. The CBI's research⁷⁵ brings this into sharp focus, with two-thirds of businesses worried about filling vacancies with the right people. Higher skills doesn't just mean qualifications however, with over half of employers valuing broader skills such as communication, creativity, or problem solving, and three quarters making clear they value a mixture of academic and technical qualifications – exactly what an apprenticeship and vocational education can offer.



MAKING APPRENTICESHIPS WORK FOR EMPLOYERS

Our economy is becoming increasingly reliant on smaller businesses and innovative enterprises and yet the apprenticeship programme has been designed primarily with large firms in mind. As we have seen (pages 14-15) recent reforms have only served to **exacerbate concerns that smaller organisations are being shut out of the apprenticeship system.**

We need to rebalance apprenticeships so that the programme **focuses on small businesses as its prime audience.** Any system that is designed with small businesses in mind will be simple and easy for large businesses to use, whereas the reverse is not always true. A good example is the development of apprenticeship standards, where it is possible for a large firm with an HR department to spare a member of staff for a series of workshops, whereas for a small business that might mean closing their enterprise for the day. Just as when we install a software package on our home computer, what is required as a basis is a **very simple ‘plug and play’ apprenticeship where small businesses can see at a glance exactly what they are getting** with no complex decisions to make. For large firms with particular requirements, they could then work with training providers on a fully customised version as they have the time available to invest in that and the scale to make it work.

Andrew Stevens, President and CEO, CNet Training

The data centre and digital infrastructure sectors are beset with significant skills shortages, and the response must come from a collaboration between industry, apprenticeship providers, higher and vocational education, schools and industry representative groups. Time and again the small businesses that are the backbone of our industry tell me that the apprenticeship system is too complex and bureaucratic – after all they have an important day job to do. While large companies may want to develop bespoke models for their workforce, what small businesses need is an ‘apprenticeship in a box’ – the simplest possible model that can be explained in a few sentences and signed off on a couple of sheets of paper, giving a young person an amazing opportunity and that company a new dynamic member of staff.



One particular international model that could be used to provide much greater support for apprenticeships in small businesses is the **Australian Group Training Organisation model**, which in England was the inspiration for Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs). Where they work well, these organisations exist to employ apprentices on behalf of small businesses (who pay them a small fee



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for this managed service). In return, they take on all of the associated bureaucracy, remove the risk if the firm has to downsize and can provide apprentices with a carousel of different placements, helping to give them broader experience. In Australia, as many as 40% of construction apprentices in some areas are employed in this way, but the model remains very small in England. **We should significantly expand the Apprenticeship Training Agency model here** in order to provide a route for smaller and emerging businesses to engage. Take science and technology parks, for example – each of their incubator businesses is too small and new to take the risk of employing an apprentice on their own, but an ATA could employ apprentices on their behalf, giving them amazing exposure to emerging technology whilst minimising the risk and bureaucracy for the employers.

There is also a strong argument, building on the example of Liverpool (pages 37-38) for **much greater regional devolution of responsibility for apprenticeship training and business engagement**. This would give regions and localities the opportunity to focus on their particular skills shortages, which we know from our research in this area can vary significantly. It would provide a strong basis for appealing to businesses in terms of both the ‘Human Resources logic’ and ‘Corporate Social Responsibility logic’ drawn out in Professor Simms’ research (page 21) as employers would have the opportunity to build their local pipeline of future employers and give something back to their specific community.

This approach would provide much greater opportunities to engage with smaller businesses, who tend to respond better to a tailored local approach rather than the national messages that suit large businesses. It would also fit with the recommendations of the CBI who have pushed for local skills plans and local apprenticeship levy pooling.⁷⁶

Andrew Carter, Chief Executive, Centre for Cities

City-based organisations, such as employers, training providers, colleges, local authorities, Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships all have a key role in delivering effective apprenticeships. Our



research⁷⁷ shows how these partners have responded in innovative ways to the challenges and opportunities of the new apprenticeship levy system, in particular engaging smaller businesses who would not have been involved without a local approach. In the future, cities can help to make the apprenticeships system much more responsive to employer demand. By using their convening powers, cities can act as catalysts of change – by providing a better understanding of the local labour market and local skills shortages, by bringing local training providers and employers together to create scale and promote efficiency in the system, and by raising the awareness of and the demand for amongst their residents.





DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

As the example of the University of Warwick shows (Page 37), the introduction of degree apprenticeships has undoubtedly been a key part of improving the image and public perception of the programme over recent years – parents and young people can see that undertaking an apprenticeship can include getting a higher education qualification rather than being an ‘alternative’ path, with all of the negative connotations that carries.

However, two significant challenges remain. The first is that at this stage numbers remain low – with just 0.4% of English apprenticeships being made up of degree apprenticeships in 2016/17. It is therefore important that **messaging to young people remains realistic as this is not yet a widespread route.**

The second is that in creating degree apprenticeships, which are free to students because funding for the training comes from the levy, at a time when tuition fees and concerns about value for money in higher education are running high, the Government may accidentally have created too attractive a deal. The Institute for Apprenticeships has reported that the **apprenticeship budget for England is set to be overspent by £0.5 billion this year, rising to £1.5 billion in 2021/22** and the Government will need to clarify how they will fund a future expansion of degree apprenticeships.

We want to see **degree apprenticeship opportunities grow significantly in the coming years.** These should be part of the much richer offer we set out in *Our Plan for Higher Education*,⁷⁸ with some of the key lessons from degree apprenticeships being reflected in wider HE courses through project based learning and real employer engagement, creating a continuum of provision to suit the needs of a variety of young people and businesses.

Matthew Turner, National Software Academy Manager, Cardiff University
Cardiff University’s National Software Academy delivers degree qualifications in a very different way to traditional computing courses. Each semester starts with around six weeks of intensive



tuition, using problem-based learning and real world examples to bring the topic to life. This is followed by four weeks of project-based learning, working in teams to deliver prototype tech projects to real businesses in a variety of sectors. We are looking to offer apprenticeships in the future as we further diversify our offer, but the example of the National Software Academy shows that even in core Higher Education courses, it is possible to take a much more applied approach that brings the subject to life.

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CONCLUSION

It is abundantly clear that apprenticeships have a key role to play in delivering high quality technical education in England. Significant progress has been made in recent years, particularly in removing intermediaries and enshrining key parts of the system in law. However, the common perception of their focus as a programme for giving young people aged 16-24 their first step onto the career ladder is at odds with reality. Almost 50% of apprenticeship starts are by those over 25 and two thirds are ‘conversions’ from existing employees.

We must refocus the apprenticeship programme principally on those aged 16-24 or who are new to their sector and occupation. This will add the most value to their lives and careers, as well as to the economy. This should be underpinned by a **clear and transparent architecture for apprenticeships** and technical education making it easier for young people to choose their career route and for employers to operate across the four nations of the UK.

Quality must be the prime driver of the programme, which means moving away conclusively from a target based on the volume of starts when we know that a third of apprenticeships are not completed. In place of that target should be a basket of quality indicators overseen by a single organisation that has the ability to set the success criteria for the system. Within individual apprenticeships, **mentoring should be included** as a proven intervention to increase success rates.

Schools should promote apprenticeships as an equal route to success and the education system should move away from the EBacc towards a genuinely broad and balanced school curriculum that gives all young people exposure to technical and creative subjects. We should bring back young apprenticeships at age 14-16 and **adopt the Scottish foundation apprenticeships model in England for those aged 16-18** to offer genuine preparation and progression routes. Employers should be able to spend a small proportion of their levy pot on pre-apprenticeship activities such as paid internships to support this.

It is clear that English apprenticeships are narrow and getting narrower. We must **broaden apprenticeship training and include transferable meta-skills in every apprenticeship**, ensuring that they are truly ‘expansive’ not ‘restrictive’. **Units of apprenticeship training should be modular** with a proportionate end point test that enables apprentices to get that module signed off. More attention needs to be given to ensuring that the two parts of an apprenticeship – the job and the training – are directly connected, which can be supported through a personal development plan.

Even as our economy comes to rely more heavily on smaller businesses, the apprenticeship programme has been designed primarily with large firms in mind. We need to **rebalance the programme to focus on small businesses as its prime audience**, developing clear and simple ‘plug and play’ apprenticeships with minimal bureaucracy. The **Apprenticeship Training Agency model should be significantly expanded and cities and regions given more responsibility** for tailoring the programme to meet local needs.

Finally, **degree apprenticeships should be significantly expanded in the coming years**, with the future position on funding clarified. More broadly, other higher education provision should also learn from the model to integrate more project based learning and employer engagement to ensure that individuals graduate with the real skills that employers are looking for.

Looking across the English apprenticeships system over the last twenty years, it is absolutely not the case that there is a lack of effective practice. What has been lacking is the creation of a stable ecosystem and the ability to scale up what works. Some of the institutional structures and foundations are now in place to enable that to happen and our proposals here can guide that development in a way that will **truly make the English apprenticeship system world class**.

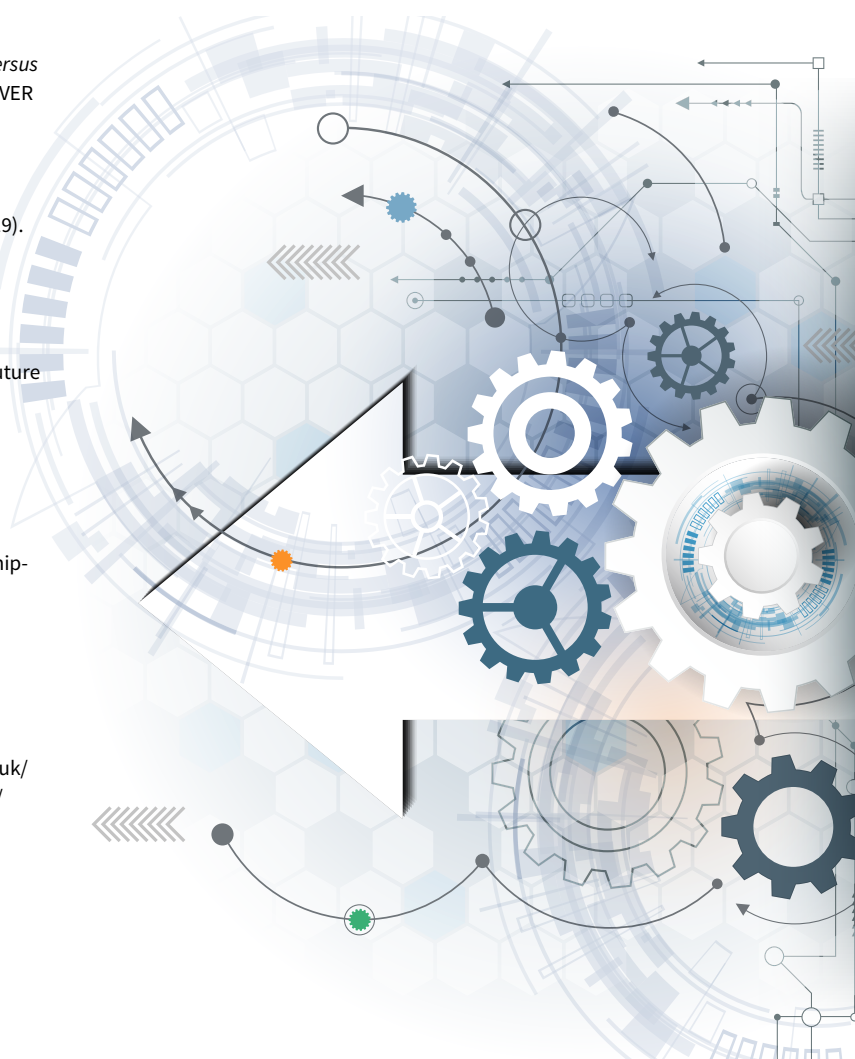
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