Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education

Delivering opportunity through technical education and apprenticeships: **an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion strategy**

Contents

Foreword from Sir Robin Millar –
IfATE Board member and chair of the EDI Committee

Increasing the diversity of the skilled workforce and enabling more people to progress in technical careers is the path to a more competitive economy and fairer society.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) works with thousands of employers to ensure that the skills system meets their needs and supports apprentices and students. We want employers to recruit more apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, offer T Level work placements (particularly in the most deprived areas of the country), and value investment in skills at every level of their organisation.

This strategy sets out IfATE's role in widening opportunity through technical education. It makes specific commitments regarding equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) to change the way apprenticeships and technical qualifications are developed. This will benefit both individual apprentices and students, through better pay and career prospects, and employers, through improved talent attraction, staff retention, corporate reputation and improved products or services.

Our vision at IfATE, is for a world-leading apprenticeships and technical education system, that equips people from all backgrounds for skilled occupations contributing to increased economic productivity. Apprenticeships are now available across all sectors and at all levels – offering entry points and clear progression routes.

Degree apprenticeships are providing routes into previously academic-only professions like architecture, law and medicine, opening them up to a far wider talent pool. We also believe that there should be clearer paths for people to gain the necessary confidence and skills to access and succeed within apprenticeships and technical qualifications at all levels.

It is vital that technical education has the furthest possible reach and offers a ladder of opportunity for everyone, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, such as care leavers and disabled people.

We want to listen and learn from people's experiences and put that insight at the heart of our work. We will act as a facilitator and bring together policy makers, employers, apprentices, students, providers of technical education, and research groups to develop long-term solutions that deliver positive and lasting change.

Executive Summary

IfATE oversees apprenticeships and technical qualifications in England. We work with employers to develop, approve, and review occupational standards, apprenticeships, and technical qualifications.

The purpose of this strategy is to show how we can build a skills system that supports everyone, no matter their background, to access high quality technical education and skills opportunities which lead to good jobs and technical careers. The commitments within the strategy span IfATE's roles as a decision maker, an authority within the wider sector, and as an employer.

As a decision maker, we are committed to the pursuit of equity, diversity, and inclusion in technical education through:

- Our EDI framework and toolkit that will put EDI consideration at the forefront of how we develop, approve, and review occupational standards, apprenticeships, and technical qualifications.
- Using diversity data to inform our 15 employer route panels who provide expert advice and recommendations on the qualifications we approve.
- Informing our processes through a diverse range of views and challenging barriers to access.

As an authority within the sector, we will improve access to technical education through:

- Building a simpler skills system that works for everyone.
- Providing more support for employers of all sizes to know how they can take on an apprentice or T Level student and achieve a more diverse workforce as a result.
- Bringing together an Expert Advisory Panel to inform our work and provide their insights and experiences.

As an employer of over 300 people, we want to lead by example through:

- Continuing to create conditions where all our staff are treated fairly and are able to reach their full potential.
- Improving the ways in which we attract, select and promote our staff to address diversity imbalances.
- Achieving a 90% self-declaration rate for protected characteristics and socia-economic background on our internal HR system.

We are grateful to the expert organisations, sector stakeholders and other government organisations engaged throughout the development of this document. We have also drawn on internal conversations and collaborative dialogue with our partner communities.

Why EDI matters

The economic case for a diverse workforce is strong. The "Women and the UK economy" research briefing output (Irvine and others, 2022) showed that female-led SMEs are estimated to contribute £85 billion per year to the UK's economic output. It is also estimated that the potential benefit to the UK labour market from full representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals could be worth £24 billion a year. This represented 1.3% of GDP at the time it was set out in 2017 in the McGregor-Smith Review 'Race in the Workplace'.

McKinsey & Company's (2015) 'Why diversity matters' article set out that organisations that are diverse ethnically and in gender, are more likely to outperform competitors by 15% and 35% respectively. Diverse teams can be more innovative and better at creative problem-solving (Financial Conduct Authority, 2021).

Apprenticeships and technical qualifications offer a structured, high-quality means for employers to develop talent and for apprentices and students to begin and enhance their technical skills. They can be a powerful tool to increase a company's diversity and offer gateways into professions that were previously only accessible through academic routes, such as law or medicine.

Accessing technical education

Employers, apprentices and students can all experience the benefits of technical education. The Social Mobility Commission (2021) toolkit outlines how people who start their careers on an apprenticeship are likely to stay longer, gaining invaluable knowledge of their organisation as they progress.

However, accessing technical education is not always straightforward or without challenge. The Social Mobility Commission (2021) toolkit also outlines the disadvantage gaps that exist across the apprenticeship journey. Access issues are often more acute for disadvantaged apprentices and students, such as disabled people. Care leavers may have additional costs to consider, such as moving out to live independently. The most recent employment statistics ONS (2023) show that 53% of disabled people were in employment compared with 83% non-disabled people.

Data from the Department of Education (2022a) shows that care leavers are three times more likely to be not in education, employment, or training (NEET) than other young people. Overall, the government estimates that over one in ten young people aged 16-24 are NEET (ONS, 2022). PwC's (2022) report and collaboration with Youth Futures Foundation has indicated that UK GDP could benefit by £38 billion by closing the NEET gap for 20–24 year olds. The fantastic opportunities offered by technical education could be a route to achieving this.

The imbalances in the wider labour market tend to be reflected both in apprenticeships and T Level cohorts (Annex 2). For example, engineering and manufacturing sees 91.2% male starts on apprenticeships compared to 8.8%

female starts, whereas hair and beauty sees 91.4% female starts to 8.6% male starts. The route panel and trailblazer group members we work with (dedicated and expert employers who help us to design occupational standards) are investigating what the barriers are to participation.

Different types and levels of apprenticeship are offered by different employers and a range of levels of qualifications are available, enabling entry at different points. DfE (2022b) outlines that [adults studying at level 2 and below are more likely to have learning difficulties or disabilities than those at level 3](link) (17% of adult enrolments at level 2, 25% at level 1, and 19% at entry level, compared to 15% at level 3 and 18% across the whole adult cohort at level 3 and below). In 2019, a report from [Federation of Small Businesses (2019)](link) highlighted that 92% of all apprenticeships offered by smaller businesses in England were held by 16–24-year-olds. It also reported that these jobs are more likely to be at entry level.

[Recruitment by small and medium enterprise (SMEs) was impacted by the coronavirus pandemic, but there are signs of recovery.](link) DfE's (2022c) data shows that in 2020/21, the number of apprenticeship starts in small employers increased for the first time in five years, with starts 12% (9,770) higher than in 2019/20. The same data set showed that SMEs accounted for 41% of starts, up from 38% in 2019/20.

Delivering change

Finding solutions to these issues is complex. Delivering opportunity for everyone through the skills system will require intervention and change from national and local government, from public bodies, from employers and from educators and training providers. Our view is that IfATE has an important role to play within this system to ensure the design of apprenticeships and technical education takes EDI into account. We want to play a visible role in supporting wider change in access and take-up of the opportunities which come through technical careers. The benefits to apprentices and students, and the overall economy are compelling.

We are ambitious about what we can help to achieve, and the following sections set our objectives, aims and actions to show how we can contribute to this, together with a summary of where progress has been made.

Our objectives are structured around the three roles we fulfil as an organisation – as a decision maker, as an authority in the sector, and as an employer. The actions underpinning each objective are important steps in achieving our vision. We will continue to work closely with our partners to build on the progress already made and push for equity, diversity, and inclusion to be front and centre within technical education.

The current set of actions takes us through to the end of 2025. At that point we will review and report progress and set out our next steps.

IfATE as a decision maker

Objective: Embed EDI in our decision making on occupational standards, apprenticeships, and technical qualifications by using EDI data and guidance to advance accessibility and remove barriers.

Background

Our approvals processes ensures that apprenticeships and technical qualifications are high-quality and meet the needs of employers, apprentices and students. We work with 15 [route panels](#) of employers who are leading figures within their industries. They provide expert advice and recommendations on the approval of occupational standards and the apprenticeships and technical qualifications which relate to those standards. Panel members come from a wide range of large and small employers and represent the views of their sectors.

In turn, each route panel is supported and informed by [trailblazer groups](#) – engaged employers who work on the detailed development and revision of specific standards to ensure that the content is high-quality.

We are working with our expert employers to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion are considered as a core part of the development and approval processes. We have developed an [EDI operational framework and toolkit](#) to achieve this. It will equip our teams within IfATE, route panels and trailblazer members with the latest guidance and data for critically considering EDI.

A key aspect of the framework and toolkit is a set of validation questions. When developing occupational standards and apprenticeships, proposals will be challenged with EDI validation questions before they proceed. This includes the question: *How has EDI been considered during the development of your submission? e.g., consideration of accessibility issues or under representation of certain groups in your sector.*

> *"Extending diversity, in its many domains, is a key and critical element of IfATE's mission. I welcome our EDI Framework and look forward to the contribution it will make; it is beholden on us all to help to realise this ambition.'*
>
> **Robert Nitsch, Delivery Director**

Case study: BAE Systems (British multinational arms, security and aerospace company)

In 2016, BAE Systems opened a new Academy for Skills and Knowledge (ASK) facility in Samlesbury, Lancashire.

This has enabled them to target schools in deprived areas with students upwards of 7 years of age to promote social mobility through aspirational engineering careers and opportunities for worldwide travel.

They facilitate this by arranging schools' visits, organising STEM clubs hosted by apprentices as ambassadors, skills workshops with knowledge-based themes and maintain sustained interaction throughout their schooling.

They also work with schools' staff in a 25-mile radius to upskill them on the changes in the industry and bring them along to ASK to demonstrate the routes young people can take in the aerospace industry.

Overall, BAE Systems have recruited 30% female apprentices in various offerings at level 3 craft apprenticeships up to level 6 degree apprenticeships across a range of aerospace and maritime industries. This a big step forward to parity as currently only 8.8% of overall apprentice starts in engineering and manufacturing are female.

Richard Hamer, Education and Skills Director at BAE Systems, said:

"Our work experience and Women in Craft Engineering pilot project was highly successful. Of over 100 new females recruited in 2022, 38 came from the Women in Craft Engineering pilot project.

Our approach is about consistency and continuity – this is not a one-off activity. We are committed to encouraging more women and girls to join our business and the sector, and we believe collaboration with schools and local communities is critical to achieving this. This journey starts with our school's roadshow for 9-12 year-olds, work experience for 14-16 year-olds, and T Level placements soon too. We also support disadvantaged young people to fulfil their potential through our involvement in the Movement to Work programme and in partnership with the Prince's Trust."

Awarding bodies will also benefit from using the toolkit whilst developing technical qualifications, which could support compliance with existing regulatory or legal requirements such as the [Equality Act 2010](#) or [Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition](#). We will provide further advice on how EDI issues should be considered in the development of technical qualifications in the relevant guidance issued for each category of technical qualification (T Levels for example). Our expectation will be for awarding bodies to explain how they have actively considered EDI in the development of their qualification materials.

We want our partner groups to represent the diverse communities that we serve. This includes our members across the 15 routes, our [trailblazer group members](#); employer directory members; [peer and occupational advisors](#); and our [apprentice panel](#) and a [technical qualification (TQ) student forum](#).

More diversity within these groups will ensure questions are asked from more points of view and our decision-making considers access for all upfront. This will help to remove unnecessary barriers to people taking on and completing apprenticeships and technical qualifications.

Achieved by the end of 2022:

- ✓ Launched automated reports for IfATE employees to show the diversity of the apprenticeship and T Level systems.

- ✓ Made extensive guidance available to staff to demonstrate how to fulfil our legal duties against the [Equality Act 2010](#) and [the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)](#)

- ✓ Added demographic and inclusivity questions to the [2022 Apprentice Panel survey of apprentices,](#) receiving over 2000 responses, 92% of whom felt the employer-defined knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are required in their apprenticeship would equip them for future success.

- ✓ Conducted an EDI toolkit pilot and evaluated feedback, making changes to the toolkit before full implementation.

Apprentice Panel

Our [apprentice panel](#) was created to provide first-hand accounts of apprentice experience to inform the decisions made at the heart of IfATE. The panel not only provide feedback but also look to create projects with meaningful outcomes that can be used by teams throughout our organisation.

The panel has recently shared their perspective on [the importance of EDI within the workplace](#) and some [EDI workplace case studies](#). The [Technical Qualifications (TQ) Forum](#) has been set up to fulfil the same purpose for students on technical qualifications.

Case Study: Rhiannon Rees-Jones, IfATE apprentice panel alumni

I am currently a Business Support Officer for the learning disability team at West Northamptonshire Council. This is a role I attained after completing my Level 3 Business Administration Apprenticeship.

I initially thought I was too old to do an apprenticeship due to an age limit requirement. However, I found out the upper age limit had been removed at an information day with West Northamptonshire Council.

At first, it was challenging as I had to complete some functional skills in English and Maths which was a bit scary as a mature student. I thought it was going to be like school and I'd be studying things like algebra, but it wasn't like that at all. The way it was presented and taught was better for me.

I also found the Employment Disability Service (EDS) a helpful resource, and my employer was very supportive. I started working at West Northampton Council 12 years ago on 2 days a week, and have built up to working full time following my apprenticeship.

I would definitely recommend other people do an apprenticeship. I was diagnosed with Asperger's in my late twenties and doing this has really expanded my skill set and boosted my confidence. I was the winner of both the 'Behind the Scenes' Award for Adult Social Care and 'Apprentice of the Year' at the 2020 Northamptonshire Health and Care Partnerships (NHCP) Awards. I was a member of the IfATE apprentice panel, have started to do public speaking and received training to be a mentor as I want to use my experience to help autistic people in apprenticeships to show others what is possible.

What are we doing next?

EDI operational framework and toolkit

Our EDI operational framework and toolkit will provide evidence-based guidance so that employers and awarding bodies will be better able to build EDI into content and assessment design. It includes diversity data and EDI related knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs).

> **Two-year aim:** embed our new EDI operational framework and toolkit to support best practice approaches throughout the design and approval process of all apprenticeships, T Levels and other technical qualifications.

Action 1: publish our EDI toolkit that will help employers and awarding bodies consider EDI in the development, review and delivery of their technical qualification or an apprenticeship, supplemented by on-hand support by IfATE. This will include EDI related knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) for employers and awarding bodies.

Action 2: ask those developing and reviewing technical education products 'validation questions' to check whether they have considered EDI. We will analyse responses to the validation questions, which will inform route panel meetings' discussions. If necessary, we will provide guidance points to the product developer (trailblazer group or awarding body as appropriate).

Action 3: supply each of our 15 occupational route panels with diversity data on the cohorts of apprentices and students, to allow them to critically evaluate their routes. This will help to highlight any EDI issues that should be taken into consideration when trailblazer groups are developing or revising occupational standards.

Action 4: we will regularly review diversity data to evaluate and understand the impact of the EDI considerations in our approved products. We will discuss the findings with our partner groups. This will include our route panels, trailblazer groups and awarding bodies as appropriate, and any other key partners.

Accessibility

We are making positive changes to ensure that accessibility is considered across our products and our digital content – so that everyone can access, navigate, and interact with our content. We will seek advice from a range of experts on how we best do this, including to meet the needs of those who are neurodivergent.

> **Two-year aim:** ensure that we have reviewed all digital content to implement best practice accessibility guidance by 2025. This will remove barriers where they exist and improve access for all to our content.

Action 5: ensure that our digital content and external communications are accessible for visitors to our website and require use of our wider content. We are committed to using plain English with a target reading age of 9 as best practice to ensure as many people as possible can understand and engage with our work. [Government Digital Service](#) provides further information on this.

Action 6: ensure that a broad range of accessibility needs are considered in technical education product content and assessment design. Promoting and utilising our [language software tool](#) to product developers to improve readability and gender-neutrality, will contribute to reducing the volume of reasonable adjustments upfront by removing unnecessary barriers.

Improved data collection and evaluation

We understand the importance of effectively collecting, monitoring, and evaluating data to inform our EDI decision-making and measure change over time and to know if our actions are effective.

> **Two-year aim:** to identify and seek to close representation gaps where they exist in our advisory groups and in the cohorts of apprentices and students undertaking apprenticeships and technical education.

Action 7: to ensure diversity of thought and representation of those we serve, capture, and review the diversity data of our employer advisory groups (including [route panels](#) and [trailblazer groups](#)), informing improvements to recruitment and selection to secure diverse representation.

Action 8: gather, benchmark, and evaluate apprenticeship and technical qualification cohort data on a regular basis, sharing insights with the respective route panels. This will enable them to develop route specific problem statements and solutions to improve diversity (both in terms of access, completion and comparable performance outcomes).

Action 9: include respondent diversity questions in our surveys and consultations. This will inform our understanding of who is aware of IfATE's work, and where we may need to target interventions to increase awareness and participation in our approvals processes.

IfATE as an authority in the sector

Objective: to proactively engage with employers, students, and the wider sector to find opportunities for collaboration which support social justice and continually improve access to apprenticeships and technical qualifications.

Background

IfATE has been at the forefront of reforms in technical education since it was established in 2017. Our role was further expanded in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, to take on approval of a greater range of technical qualifications. We work with partners and colleagues in government and sector groups to consider long term skills needs and priorities. One of our key priorities as an organisation is to increase access to a simpler, more effective skills system for all.

One of the key tools for delivering the benefits of equity, diversity and inclusion is increased access and successful outcomes for those who choose to take up technical education opportunities. IfATE has an important part to play within that system, but we know that we do not work in isolation and that collective change is required. We see creating the space and focus for discussions across all of those parties involved in developing and delivering technical education and apprenticeships as an important part of our role. We will work with national and local government, public bodies, employers, educators, training providers, and apprentices and students.

We will bring employer views and the experiences of those involved in developing, delivering, and taking up technical qualifications and apprenticeships to government discussion to inform policy development. We are particularly focusing on vulnerable and disadvantaged apprentices and students, such as those who have experienced the care system and disabled people, and how they can best access technical education opportunities.

> *"Challenging ourselves to consider social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion at each stage of our work will help us to shape the skills system so that people from all backgrounds can access and succeed in high-quality apprenticeships and technical qualifications."*
>
> **Beth Chaudhary and Rachel Cooper, Strategy Director (Jobshare)**

Case Study: Lynette Leith, Vice Principal Curriculum and Skills, Hull College

Hull College serves a signification proportion of the city's most deprived residents. 75% of our students and apprentices live in one of the 10% most deprived areas nationally. Many students resit their level 2 English and mathematics qualifications and their average GCSE scores are significantly lower than across the Hull region as a whole and the rest of the country.

The college has risen to this challenge by offering a wide-ranging mix of programmes for young people aged 14-19 and adults. These include apprenticeships, employability programmes, offers for English speakers of other languages, special education needs and disability specialist provision. The college also provides higher education and higher apprenticeships, and we plan to offer T Levels and Transition courses from September 2023.

Alongside these programmes, Hull College has chosen to put core and workplace skills development at the heart of our support offer to students. These are designed to address non-technical skills gaps and help to prepare students for career and educational progression.

Our apprenticeship 'pre' programmes cover leadership skills, information and communications technology, digital skills and social value. The tutorial programme offers wider personal development. Students can work on projects which are designed and delivered by employers outside of the traditional learning environment and cover broader themes such as sustainability and industry 4.0, enabling students to practice core skills in the context of their chosen subject area and gain valuable experience.

These examples of curriculum design demonstrate how Hull is supporting and enhancing the offer for its diverse student cohort, better enabling them to access the wealth of opportunities available in today's changing world.

Achieved by the end of 2022:

- ✓ Developed an extensive network of EDI partners across government and the wider technical education community, and with organisations that have expertise in particular protected characteristics or interests related to EDI and social mobility.

- ✓ Sought critical challenge on our EDI proposals from our [apprentice panel](#), other government departments, awarding bodies, employers and wider stakeholders.

- ✓ Had external speakers from colleges in disadvantaged areas and those who are care experienced/care leavers present their experiences and ideas, to inform the making of system-wide improvements, to our senior leadership team and EDI sub-committee.

- ✓ Identified issues with how those who are care experienced/ care leavers experience financial support and overarching guidance in their education journeys. We shared our insights with other relevant government departments, and we are working together to make improvements wherever possible.

- ✓ Conducted our first thematic research deep dive into geography and deprivation.

Research and collaboration

We want to bring together different technical education users, researchers, think tanks and policy makers to enact effective and fair policy across technical education. We believe this will improve quality in apprenticeships and technical qualifications and contribute to economic growth and social mobility.

Knowledge and a sound evidence base will help to highlight barriers and their likely root causes within technical education. We also want to use and share our knowledge to inform and implement solutions to improve the wider system. This will ensure EDI is a key feature of policy development and system improvements – bringing the voice of employers, training providers and apprentices and students to government conversations.

Two-year aim: position IfATE as a champion of equity, diversity, and inclusion that credibly reviews and improves access to technical education and encourages others to make improvements within the wider skills system. We will collate, interpret, and share qualitative and quantitative evidence to positively influence change.

Action 10: conduct and share thematic research 'deep dives' in key areas, aiming to publish our research findings, recommendations, and actions. For example, on 'geography and disadvantage'; 'age and participation'; and 'outcomes and experiences of students'.

Action 11: test new processes and policy changes against 'personas' designed to represent real people with different characteristics. This will allow us to consider the needs of different groups or individuals impacted by our work.

Action 12: work collaboratively to support the development of guidance for those seeking to access technical education (as an employer, apprentice, or student). We want to ensure that clear, simple information is available, which meets the needs of all potential skills system users. For example, making the financial support available for care leavers easy to understand for apprentices, employers and training providers.

Action 13: we will establish an Expert Advisory Panel to bring different insights and experience to our work. This panel will include a range of people that have diverse expertise and represent different interest groups.

IfATE as an employer

Objective: to put equity, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of what we do at IfATE and create the conditions where all our people can do their best work.

Background

We know that the changes required to achieve our vision start here within IfATE. We have already made positive steps towards ensuring this is a great place to work. These have been recognised by staff in our twice-yearly surveys.

However, there is more we can do to keep improving. We want to continue to develop and enhance our focus on EDI by working to create the conditions in which all our people can reach their fullest potential.

Achieved by the end of 2022:

- ✓ Achieved [Level 3 Disability Confident Leader](#) accreditation.

- ✓ Introduced Health Adjustment Passports to better support those with disabilities in their roles and make it easier when transitioning between job roles and line managers.

- ✓ Received the highest rating of 'good' from the Civil Service Commission in 2021/2022. This followed revisions to our recruitment processes by enhancing our interview panel training and ensuring gender diversity on all panels. We also use the Civil Service's [Disability Confident Scheme, offering an interview](#) to a fair and proportionate number of disabled applicants that meet the minimum selection criteria for the job (and want to be considered under this scheme).

- ✓ Ensured that all our Senior Civil Servants (SCS) objectives include 'leading inclusive teams' and 'meeting organisational EDI objectives'.

- ✓ Monitored staff bonuses to ensure equitable recognition and rewards.

- ✓ Provided 'leading inclusive teams' training for all line managers.

- ✓ Supported staff in their applications and participation of Civil Service development programmes aimed at under-represented groups.

- ✓ Enabled hybrid and flexible working to ensure positive work-life balances.

- ✓ Included inclusivity questions in staff surveys, to gauge how valued and included every employee feels.

✓ Led EDI staff events and published internal blogs. Senior managers, Board members and wider colleagues with minority diversity characteristics have shared their experiences and career journeys.

"Our commitment to embedding EDI must start with IfATE as an employer. We need to ensure that the expectations we place on partners and the wider sector are embedded in our own working culture, attitudes, and practices."

Avril Cooper, HR Director

"We launched our staff Diversity and Inclusion Network (DIN) in 2020. It provides a voice for all staff to share, discuss, learn, and inform our ways of working and organisational culture. The DIN is sponsored by three of our board members; as chair, I am a standing member of IfATE's Performance and Resources Group and I meet with our chief executive every month. We have also initiated an internal mentoring programme."

Soryah Wright, DIN Chair

Recruitment and workforce representation

We have evaluated and benchmarked our staff data and are doing well in some areas, but want to make further improvements to encourage more people with disabilities to apply for roles with IfATE, and to address disproportionately negative outcomes of selection processes for people from minority ethnic groups, particularly those from black groups.

Two-year aim: increase the percentage of applications from people who self-declare as having a disability (including hidden disabilities)[1].

Action 14: continue to review and refresh our approach to attracting new staff. This will include how and where we advertise our vacancies, and how we make our employer brand appealing to groups who are under-represented within our workforce.

Two-year aim: increase the rate of successful applications from people from minority ethnic groups[2].

Action 15: continue to improve the way we select staff through internal and external recruitment campaigns and put in place detailed monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of changes, particularly regarding ethnic disproportionality.

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[1] Currently 10% of applicants declare having a disability, compared to 1 in 5 of the working-age population are classed as disabled (20%) according to DWP (2022).
[2] Our current success rates are 5.4% for applicants from White groups and 2% for applicants from all minority ethnic groups (excluding White minorities).

Workforce data

We routinely collect confidential information about the protected characteristics of our employees. The number of staff choosing to declare their information has increased over time, but we would like to increase this even further to better understand our employees' needs.

One-year aim: achieve a 90% self-declaration rate for protected characteristics and social mobility on our internal HR system[3].

Action 16: check that staff are aware of how to enter their diversity data on our internal HR system, that they understand how it is used to identify issues and challenges and to drive positive change. Ensure the confidentiality arrangements we have in place to secure the information are understood. Encourage staff to enter their data if they have not already done so. This will include work to help colleagues to feel safe and able to be open about hidden disabilities.

Progression

We know that staff from some groups are under-represented at particular grades within IfATE: we have observed a higher representation of females in lower grades (executive officers and assistants) that is not apparent at the higher (middle management) grades of 7 and 6, and we know that staff from minority ethnic groups are under-represented among our Senior Civil Service (SCS) staff.

Two-year aim: strengthen our talent pipeline, with a particular focus on supporting staff from groups that are under-represented at different levels in the organisation.

Action 17: foster a progression and development culture as part of IfATE's management practices, to ensure individuals' talents are recognised regardless of who they are and where they sit within the organisation.

Action 18: monitor our internal progression over time to help us understand where there are disparities and where there are opportunities to address imbalances through targeted actions. We will implement formal checkpoints every six months, starting in September 2023.

Inclusion

We want the experience of working at IfATE to be equally positive for all our people, to create an environment in which all can flourish to do their best work in the service of our customers and stakeholders.

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[3] Currently, for social mobility this is 35%; for ethnicity 84%; for sexual orientation 78% and for disability 84%.

Two-year aim: tackle the disproportionate negative impact of bullying, harassment, and discrimination (BHD) on staff who have a disability and reduce the number of people who experience BHD whilst at IfATE overall.

Action 19: our human resources team (HR) will work with our internal Diversity and Inclusion Network (the DIN) to better understand the ways in which staff are experiencing BHD, identify ways to stop such experiences from happening, and provide appropriate support for staff where they do experience BHD. We will monitor our success in reducing the number of people who experience BHD via the annual Civil Service People Survey.

Two-year aim: create a working environment where staff with disabilities feel as included and fairly treated as staff who do not have a disability, and staff from minority ethnic groups feel as included and fairly treated as colleagues from white groups.

Action 20: our HR team will work with the DIN to better understand how disabled and minority ethnic staff are experiencing exclusion and unfairness. We will develop ways to ensure all groups feel fairly treated. We will monitor our success via the annual Civil Service People Survey.

Annex 1 – definitions

Equity recognises that treating everyone equally is not universally beneficial when the playing field is not level – not all apprentices and students start from the same place in their educational journeys. An equitable approach considers that different people will need different levels of support to be given fair opportunities and to be able to achieve the same successes.

Diversity is about the structure of a population, and any differences within a group. [In English law, there are nine protected characteristics](): age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. A person's protected characteristics may change over time; for example, an individual may become disabled, may change how they declare their sexual orientation and may change their religious beliefs.

Inclusion is whether someone feels accepted, supported, and valued without being disadvantaged in any way regardless of their background, identity or personal circumstances. This includes when they are at work or in an educational setting.

Social Justice in technical education is about ensuring that everyone, no matter their background, is able to access the education and skills opportunities which lead to good job outcomes. We know factors such as where someone lives, their socio-economic background and any disadvantage that they have had (or continue to have) has a profound impact on access and uptake of technical education. Addressing these factor fits with government priorities and our core mission to equip people from all backgrounds for skilled occupations.

Through a focus on the principles of social justice and opportunity for all, we aim to support the creation of an equitable, diverse, and inclusive technical education system. Equity, diversity and inclusion, as distinct terms, all serve a purpose in ensuring fairness for all.

Annex 2 – data insights

The Department for Education (DfE) publishes data on four protected characteristics for apprenticeships and traineeships. These are age, sex, ethnicity, and disability.

This annex presents these four protected characteristics for learners across our 15 occupational routes, using data for the 2021/22 academic year. It shows the variation that exists between the different routes. The underpinning data is taken from government statistics on apprenticeships and traineeships on the GOV.UK website for academic year 2021/22.

Characteristics are based upon self-declaration by the learner. Percentages are based on learners where the characteristic is known. 'Not known/not provided' categories are excluded from the calculation.

Note: the 'Education and Childcare' occupational route is now known as the 'Education and Early Years' occupational route.

Age

Table 1 shows the 15 occupational routes and the percentage of starts across three age categories – Under 19, 19–24 year-olds, 25 years and above.

Routes are ordered by the highest proportion of apprentices aged under 19.

Route	Under 19	19-24	25+
Hair and beauty	69.9%	23.4%	6.7%
Construction and the built environment	46.1%	33.7%	20.2%
Engineering and manufacturing	44.2%	36.6%	19.2%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	41.1%	31.9%	27.0%
Education and early years	29.2%	30.5%	40.3%
Catering and hospitality	25.6%	31.3%	43.1%
Creative and design[1]	23.6%	53.5%	22.9%
Sales, marketing and procurement	22.8%	37.9%	39.3%
Health and science	15.8%	27.3%	56.9%
Legal, finance and accounting	14.4%	55.7%	29.9%
Digital	13.8%	35.3%	50.9%
Transport and logistics	13.3%	25.0%	61.7%
Protective services	11.6%	43.4%	45.0%
Business and administration	9.6%	18.4%	72.0%
Care services	2.9%	17.6%	79.5%
ALL	**22.3%**	**30.4%**	**47.3%**

1. Demographic breakdowns are based on a small number of starts.

Percentage of apprenticeship starts by age group and occupational route

■ 25+   ■ 19-24   ■ Under 19

Hair and beauty
- 6.7%
- 23.4%
- 69.9%

Construction and the built environment
- 20.2%
- 33.7%
- 46.1%

Engineering and manufacturing
- 19.2%
- 36.6%
- 44.2%

Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- 27.0%
- 31.9%
- 41.1%

Education and early years
- 40.3%
- 30.5%
- 29.2%

Catering and hospitality
- 43.1%
- 31.3%
- 25.6%

Creative and design
- 22.9%
- 53.5%
- 23.6%

Sales, marketing and procurement
- 39.3%
- 37.9%
- 22.8%

Health and science
- 56.9%
- 27.3%
- 15.8%

Legal, finance and accounting
- 29.9%
- 55.7%
- 14.4%

Digital
- 50.9%
- 35.3%
- 13.8%

Transport and logistics
- 61.7%
- 25.0%
- 13.3%

Protective services
- 45.0%
- 43.4%
- 11.6%

Business and administration
- 72.0%
- 18.4%
- 9.6%

Care services
- 79.5%
- 17.6%
- 2.9%

Overall, 22.3% of apprentice starts are under 19, 30.4% are aged 19-24 and 47.3% are 25 or above.

Percentage of all apprenticeship starts by age

Under 19	19-24	25+
22.3%	30.4%	47.3%
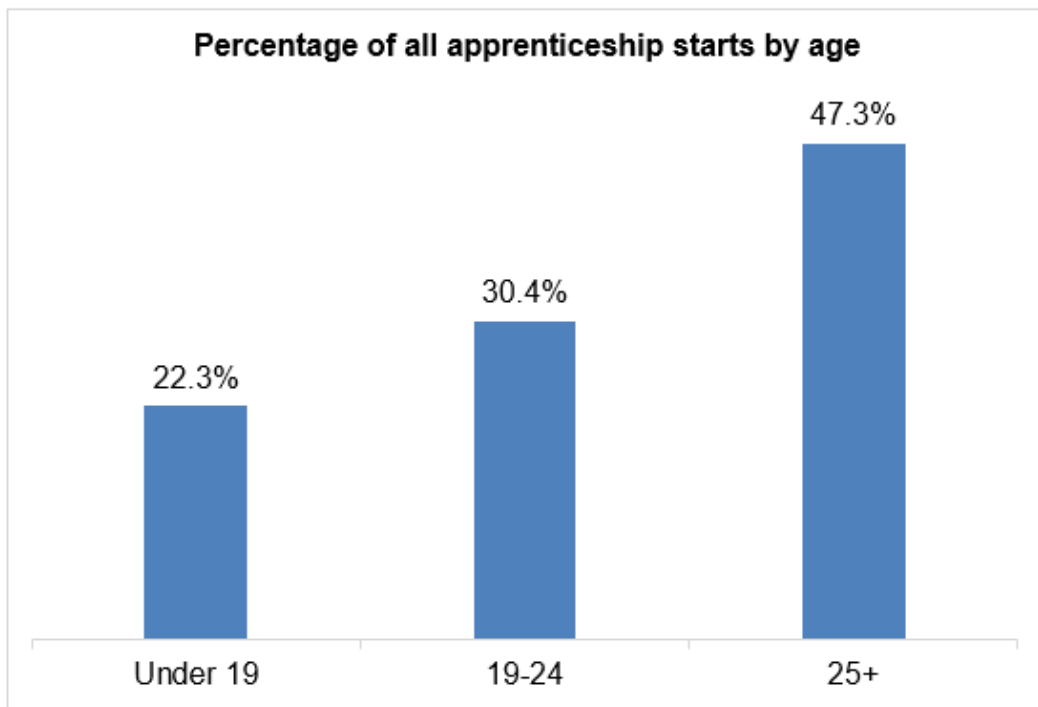
We can see the age for starting an apprenticeship varies between occupational routes. For example, 72% of apprentices are aged 25 years old or above in business and administration, for care services it is 79.5%, for health and science it is 56.9%, and for transport and logistics it is 61.7%.

In other occupational routes, more apprentices start at under 19 years of age. In hair and beauty this is 69.9% of starts, in construction and the built environment it is 46.1%, in engineering and manufacturing it is 44.2%, and in agriculture, environmental and animal care it is 41.1%.

Sex

Table 2 shows the 15 occupational routes and the percentage of apprenticeship starts by sex. Routes are ordered by the highest proportion of female apprentices.

Route	Female	Male
Education and early years	92.5%	7.5%
Hair and beauty	91.4%	8.6%
Care services	81.9%	18.1%
Health and science	74.6%	25.4%
Business and administration	60.0%	40.0%
Sales, marketing and procurement	57.2%	42.8%
Creative and design[1]	51.4%	48.6%
Catering and hospitality	50.7%	49.3%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	48.8%	51.2%
Legal, finance and accounting	48.3%	51.7%
Protective services	27.6%	72.4%
Digital	27.6%	72.4%
Transport and logistics	16.1%	83.9%
Engineering and manufacturing	8.8%	91.2%
Construction and the built environment	6.9%	93.1%
ALL	**50.8%**	**49.2%**

1. Demographic breakdowns are based on a small number of starts.

Percentage of apprenticeship starts by sex and occupational route

■ Male ■ Female

Occupational route	Male	Female
Education and early years	7.5%	92.5%
Hair and beauty	8.6%	91.4%
Care services	18.1%	81.9%
Health and science	25.4%	74.6%
Business and administration	40.0%	60.0%
Sales, marketing and procurement	42.8%	57.2%
Creative and design	48.6%	51.4%
Catering and hospitality	49.3%	50.7%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	51.2%	48.8%
Legal, finance and accounting	51.7%	48.3%
Protective services	72.4%	27.6%
Digital	72.4%	27.6%
Transport and logistics	83.9%	16.1%
Engineering and manufacturing	91.2%	8.8%
Construction and the built environment	93.1%	6.9%

Overall, 50.8% of apprenticeship starts are female and 49.2% are male.

Percentage of all apprenticeship starts by sex

Female	Male
50.8%	49.2%
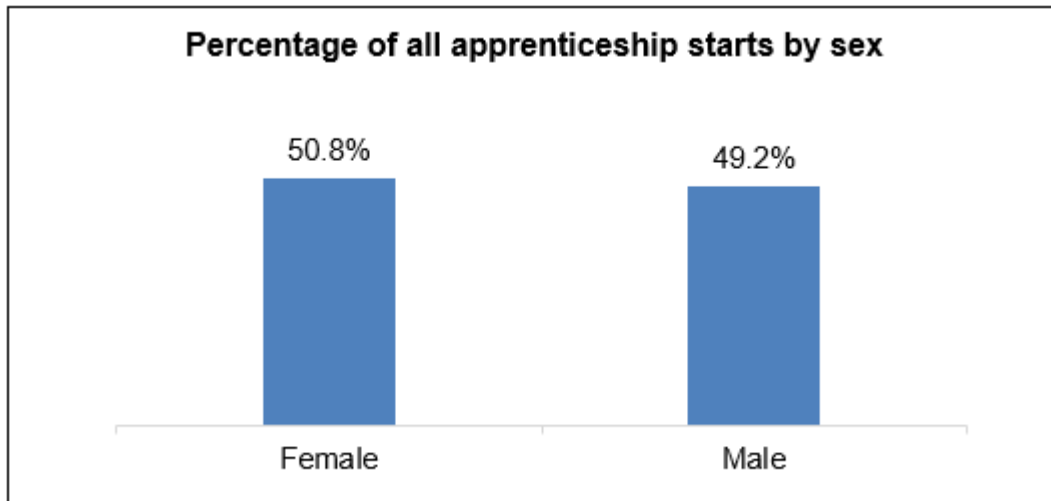
We can see that there is an equal sex distribution for all apprenticeship starts, but we find imbalances within several routes. For example, 93.1% of apprentice starts in construction and the built environment are male, for engineering and manufacturing it is 91.2% male, and in transport and logistics it is 83.9% male.

In contrast, females make up most apprenticeship starts in education and early years with 92.5%, in hair and beauty it is 91.4% female, and in care service it is 81.9% female.
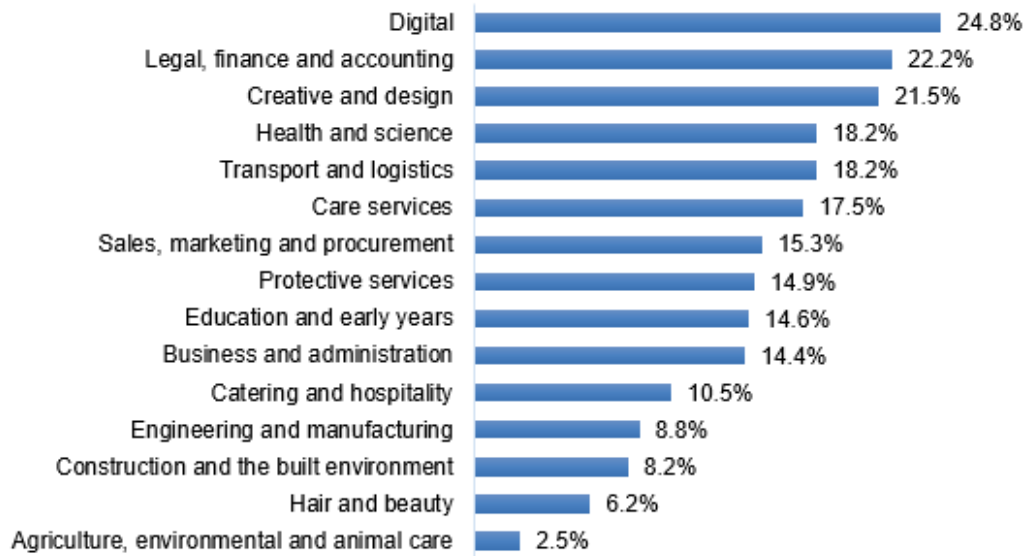
Ethnicity

Table 3 shows the 15 occupational routes and the percentage of apprenticeship starts from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) and the white ethnic group. Routes are ordered by the highest proportion of apprentices from ethnic minorities.

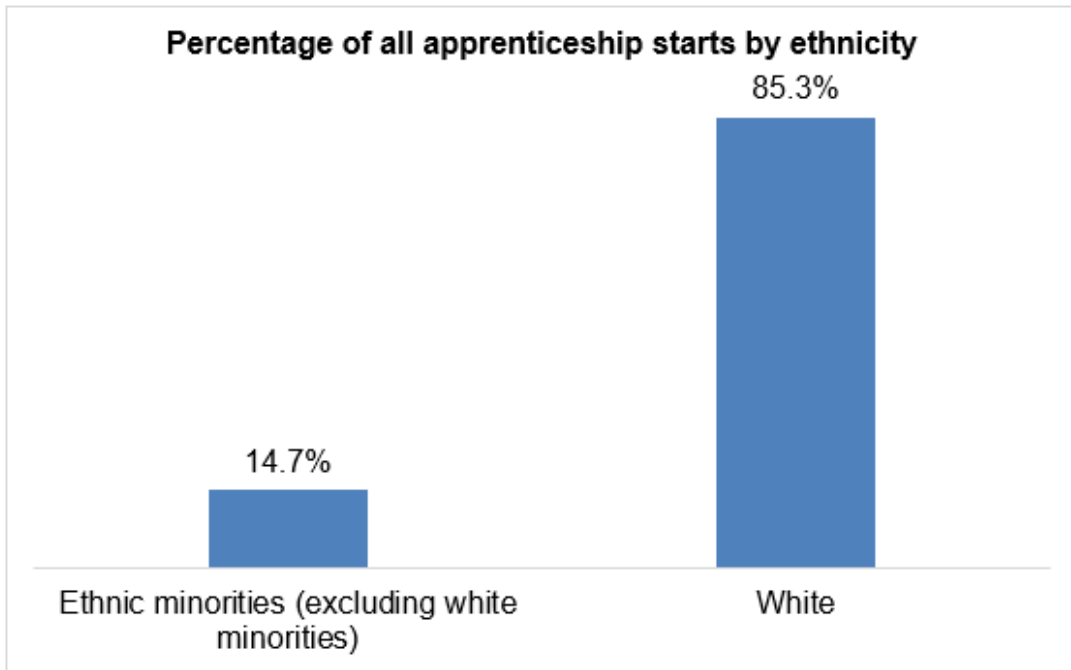| Route	Ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities)	White
Digital	24.8%	75.2%
Legal, finance and accounting	22.2%	77.8%
Creative and design[1]	21.5%	78.5%
Health and science	18.2%	81.8%
Transport and logistics	18.2%	81.8%
Care services	17.5%	82.5%
Sales, marketing and procurement	15.3%	84.7%
Protective services	14.9%	85.1%
Education and early years	14.6%	85.4%
Business and administration	14.4%	85.6%
Catering and hospitality	10.5%	89.5%
Engineering and manufacturing	8.8%	91.2%
Construction and the built environment	8.2%	91.8%
Hair and beauty	6.2%	93.8%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	2.5%	97.5%
ALL	**14.7%**	**85.3%**

1. Demographic breakdowns are based on a small number of starts.

Percentage of apprenticeship starts from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) and occupational route

Occupational route	Percentage
Digital	24.8%
Legal, finance and accounting	22.2%
Creative and design	21.5%
Health and science	18.2%
Transport and logistics	18.2%
Care services	17.5%
Sales, marketing and procurement	15.3%
Protective services	14.9%
Education and early years	14.6%
Business and administration	14.4%
Catering and hospitality	10.5%
Engineering and manufacturing	8.8%
Construction and the built environment	8.2%
Hair and beauty	6.2%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	2.5%

Overall 14.7% of apprenticeship starts are from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) and 85.3% are from the white ethnic group.

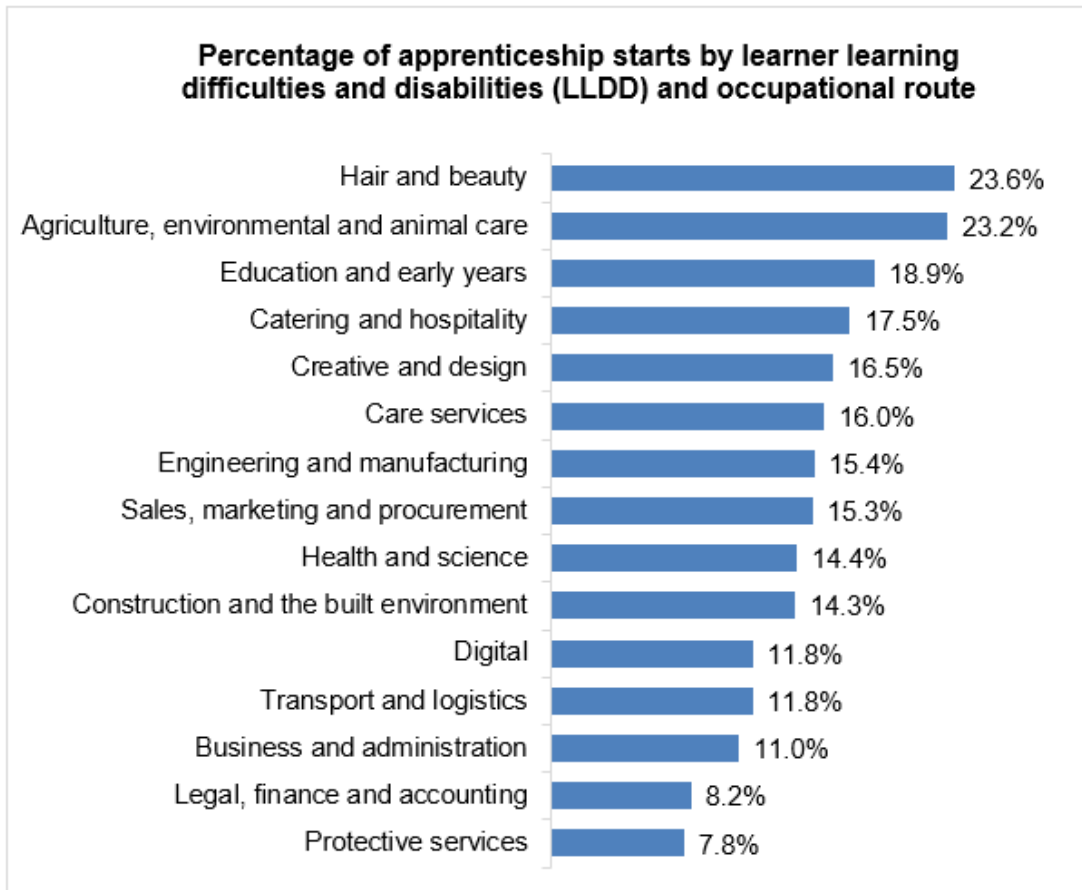**Percentage of all apprenticeship starts by ethnicity**

Compared to the overall apprentice population, there are lower proportions of apprentices from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities) in agriculture, environmental and animal care at 2.5%, hair and beauty at 6.2%, construction and the built environment at 8.2%, and engineering and manufacturing at 8.8%. Other occupational routes have a higher proportion of apprentices from ethnic minorities (excluding white minorities). This includes digital at 24.8%, legal, finance and accounting at 22.2%, and creative and design at 21.5%.
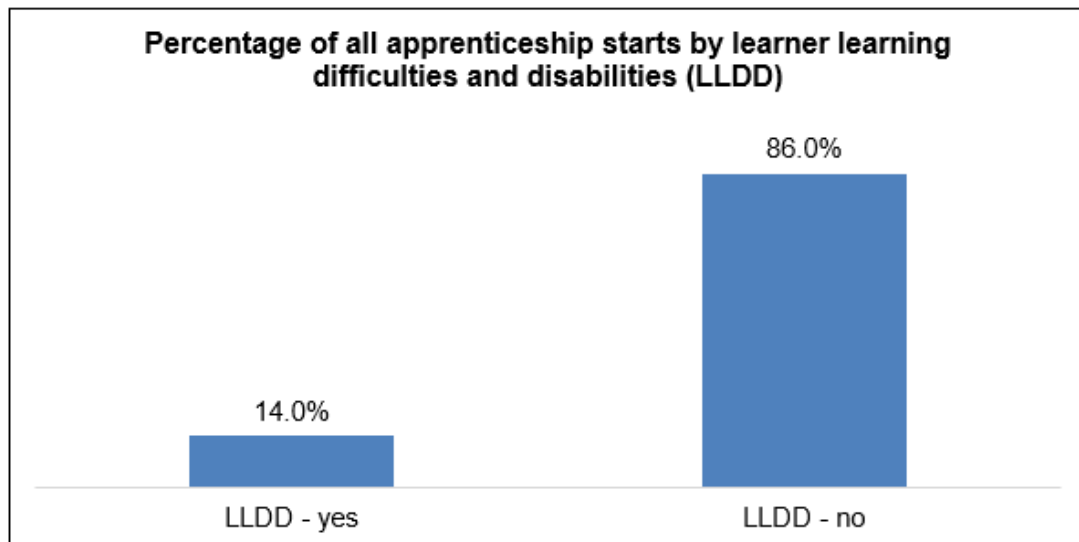
Disability

Table 4 shows the 15 occupational routes and the percentage of apprenticeship starts where a learner identifies as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD). Occupational routes are ordered by the highest proportion of LLDD.

Route	LLDD – yes	LLDD – no
Hair and beauty	23.6%	76.4%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	23.2%	76.8%
Education and early years	18.9%	81.1%
Catering and hospitality	17.5%	82.5%
Creative and design[1]	16.5%	83.5%
Care services	16.0%	84.0%
Engineering and manufacturing	15.4%	84.6%
Sales, marketing and procurement	15.3%	84.7%
Health and science	14.4%	85.6%
Construction and the built environment	14.3%	85.7%
Digital	11.8%	88.2%
Transport and logistics	11.8%	88.2%
Business and administration	11.0%	89.0%
Legal, finance and accounting	8.2%	91.8%
Protective services	7.8%	92.2%
ALL	**14.0%**	**86.0%**

1. Demographic breakdowns are based on a small number of starts.

Percentage of apprenticeship starts by learner learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD) and occupational route

Occupational route	Percentage
Hair and beauty	23.6%
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	23.2%
Education and early years	18.9%
Catering and hospitality	17.5%
Creative and design	16.5%
Care services	16.0%
Engineering and manufacturing	15.4%
Sales, marketing and procurement	15.3%
Health and science	14.4%
Construction and the built environment	14.3%
Digital	11.8%
Transport and logistics	11.8%
Business and administration	11.0%
Legal, finance and accounting	8.2%
Protective services	7.8%

Overall, 14% of all apprenticeship starts have answered yes to having an LLDD.

Percentage of all apprenticeship starts by learner learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDD)

LLDD - yes	14.0%
LLDD - no	86.0%

Compared to the total apprenticeship population, the proportion of LLDD was highest among those undertaking apprenticeships in the hair and beauty occupational route at 23.6% and agriculture, environmental and animal care at 23.2%. It was the lowest in protective services at 7.8%, and in legal, finance and accounting at 8.2%.

Currently, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of learning difficulties and disabilities as two distinct categories. Whilst a learner may record multiple LLDD categories they must indicate which of these is the primary disability, difficulty or health problem.

Information regarding the list of LLDDs and health problem(s) that can be selected is available in the Specification of the [Individualised Learner Record for 2023 to 2024](#) on the [LLDD and health problem category page.](#) The data source for the below table is the same as can be found at the top of this annex – [GOV.UK website for academic year 2021/22.](#) It is also possible to explore DfE's data and statistics and create your own tables, however this is not currently available by occupational route.

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