

A smiling man with short dark hair and a beard, wearing a plaid shirt and a dark apron, is working in a workshop. He is holding a piece of wood that is clamped in a vise. The background shows shelves filled with various items, suggesting a creative or manufacturing environment.

# APPRENTICESHIP OUTCOMES AND DESTINATIONS

**October 2022**

# 1. Executive summary

## **The Government has an agenda to grow the number and quality of apprenticeships.**

As part of its commitment to raising quality and employer engagement, the Government introduced a set of reforms to the system, including the 2017 apprenticeship levy and the transition from apprenticeship frameworks to employer-designed standards.

However, a considerable proportion of apprentices withdraw early from their programme and the current measure of achievement rates does not capture the full experience of these apprentices.

The St Martin's Group commissioned Learning and Work Institute to conduct research to investigate the outcomes for apprentices who complete their programme and those who do not. The research aims to explore the experiences, outcomes and destinations of apprentices who both completed and withdrew from their programme, to better understand the benefits of participating in an apprenticeship for both groups. It also aims to provide insights into the characteristics of apprentices who did and did not complete their programme and the factors that contribute to completion.

# 2,427

apprentices sampled

Follow-up interviews conducted with

# 20 apprentices

who completed their programmes and

# 18 apprentices

who withdrew



This report builds on previous research including The St Martin's Group report into the 'Real Costs and Benefits of Apprenticeships' published last year, and the 2021 Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey. Compared to previous research, this report contains the largest sample of apprentices who did not complete their programme, providing a uniquely detailed exploration of their characteristics and destinations. For the first time, it also provides comparisons between apprentices who completed and withdrew from their programme across a wide range of apprenticeship experiences. This enables a richer and more detailed picture to be drawn on apprenticeship expectations and experience, reasons for withdrawal and support needs.

The research took a mixed methods approach, involving an online survey of 2,427 apprentices sampled through Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data, and qualitative follow-up interviews with 20 apprentices who completed their programme and 18 who withdrew.



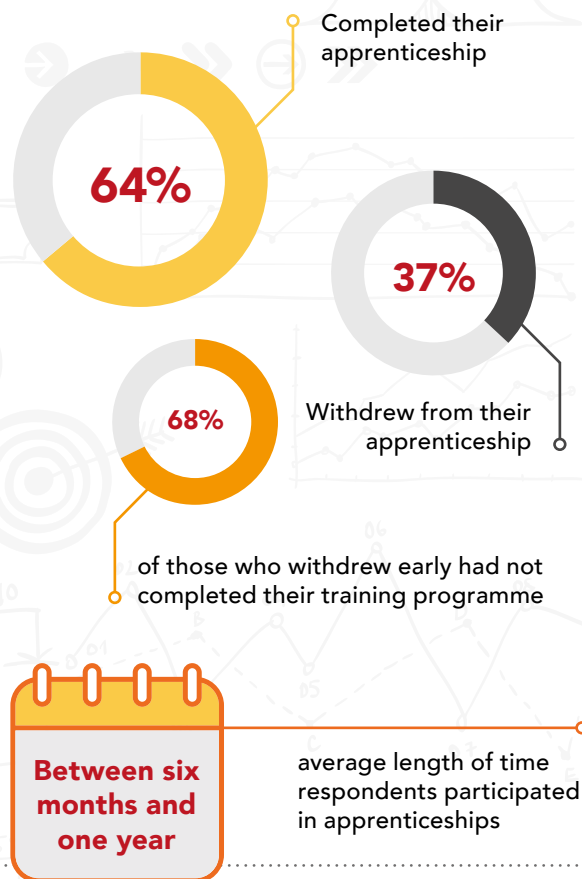
# Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations

## Immediate Outcomes

Nearly two thirds (64 per cent) of survey respondents reported that they had completed their apprenticeship, and 37 per cent stated that they had withdrawn from their programme early. More than two thirds (68 per cent) of those who withdrew from their programme early had not completed their training programme.

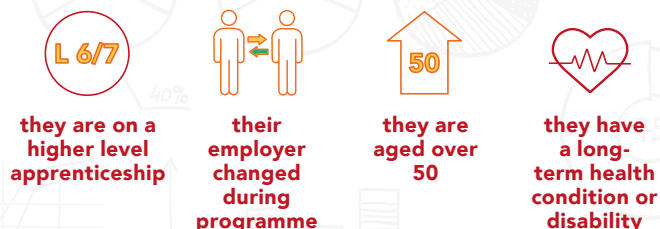
The average length of time that these respondents had participated in their apprenticeship was between six months and one year.

Of survey respondents:



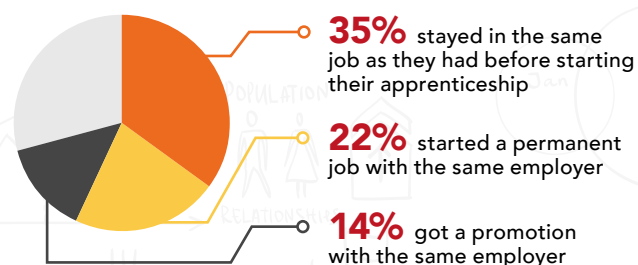
The survey indicates that some groups are more likely to withdraw from their apprenticeships than others. These include those: on higher level apprenticeships (Level 6 or 7); who undertook their apprenticeship with a micro-sized employer; whose employer changed during their programme; aged over 50; and who have a disability or long-term health condition.

Apprentices are more likely to withdraw if:

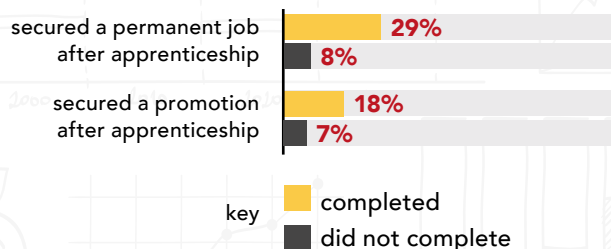


The most common immediate outcomes across all survey respondents relate to being employed by the same employer that respondents started their apprenticeship with. This includes staying in the same job as they had before they started their apprenticeship (35 per cent), starting a permanent job with the same employer (22 per cent), and getting a promotion with the same employer (14 per cent).

Of apprentices employed by the same employer after the apprenticeship:



However, respondents who did not complete their apprenticeship were statistically less likely to secure either a permanent job (eight per cent, compared to 29 per cent who completed) or a promotion (seven per cent, compared to 18 per cent who completed) with the same employer.



Apprentices are more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer if they:



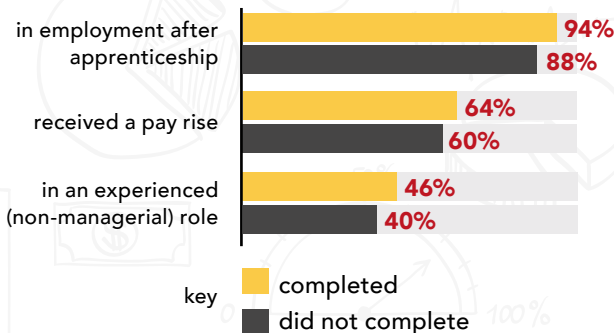
The survey indicates that outcomes vary across groups. For example, apprentices who undertook a Level 4 or 5 apprenticeship, already worked for their employer, worked for a large employer, worked in certain subjects and industries, and those who were older or from less deprived areas were more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer.

### Longer term outcomes

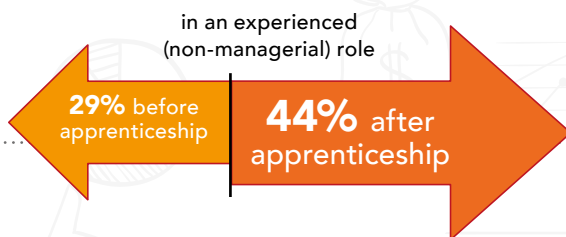
**92%** of survey respondents were in employment



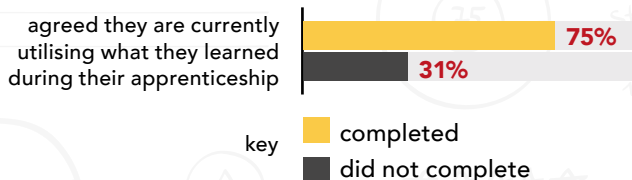
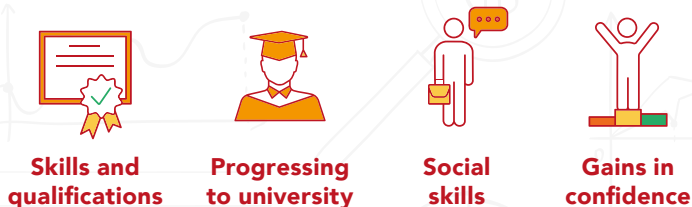
compared to **78%** prior to participating in an apprenticeship



With regards to longer term outcomes, more than nine in 10 respondents (92 per cent) were in some form of employment at the time of the survey, compared to 78 per cent prior to participating in an apprenticeship. Respondents who completed their apprenticeship are now significantly more likely to be in employment when compared to those who did not (94 per cent compared to 88 per cent), and to have received a pay rise (64 per cent and 60 per cent). The proportion of respondents in experienced (non-managerial) positions has increased from 29 per cent of respondents before undertaking their apprenticeship to 44 per cent after. Those who completed their apprenticeship are now significantly more likely to be in experienced (non-managerial) roles when compared to those who did not (46 per cent compared to 40 per cent).



### Benefits of participating in apprenticeships

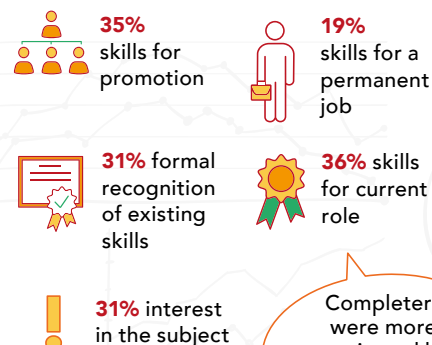


Interview participants identified a range of wider benefits of participating in their apprenticeships, including gaining skills and experience for employment, social skills, and the opportunity to progress onto university. Participants who completed their apprenticeship were particularly positive about the wider benefits they had experienced. Interviewees who withdrew described gains in confidence, skills and the completion of qualifications during their programme as ways in which participating in an apprenticeship had supported their career progression, despite withdrawing. Although apprentices who completed were more likely to agree that they are currently utilising what they learned during their apprenticeship (75 per cent), a substantial minority of those who withdrew also agreed (31 per cent).

## Factors contributing to apprenticeship completion or withdrawal

The most common reasons apprentices gave for starting their programme related to gaining new skills relevant to their career, including skills for their current role (36 per cent) and the skills needed to achieve a promotion (35 per cent). Nearly one fifth of respondents (19 per cent) also wanted the skills to enable them to get a permanent job. Other common reasons for undertaking an apprenticeship were to gain formal recognition of existing skills (31 per cent) or because they were interested in the subject area (31 per cent). Motivations were broadly similar regardless of whether respondents completed or withdrew, although the survey indicates that those who completed their apprenticeship were more motivated to gain skills for their current employment (38 per cent compared to 32 per cent).

### Reasons for starting their programme

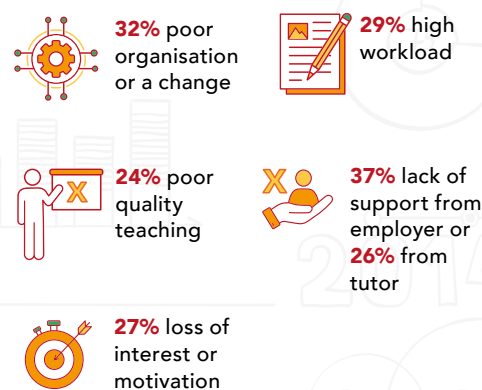


The interview findings suggest that apprentices do not feel well informed about their programmes or their End Point Assessment (EPA) prior to starting. This is the case regardless of whether they go on to complete or withdraw. The information that was provided tended to involve details such as the quantity and frequency of assessments or the number of days spent with the employer and training provider. However, there was a lack of detail about the training content, and one participant who eventually withdrew was unaware of the college element of their apprenticeship. Some participants who completed their apprenticeship searched online to gain a better understanding of the apprenticeship.



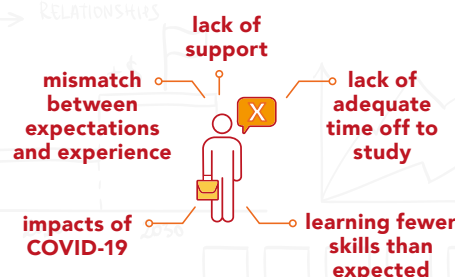
The most common reasons cited by respondents for withdrawing from their apprenticeships related to a negative experience on the apprenticeship programme, including: a lack of support from their employer (37 per cent); poor course organisation/change to logistics (32 per cent); high workload (29 per cent); a lack of support from their tutor (26 per cent); and poor-quality teaching (24 per cent). Thirteen per cent of respondents cited a lack of support from both their tutor and employer as a reason for withdrawal. Just over one quarter of respondents (27 per cent) said that they withdrew due to a loss of interest or motivation. Reasons for withdrawal also vary significantly according to apprenticeship and demographic factors. Insights from the qualitative interviews indicate that a combination of a lack of support from both the training provider and employer is the driving factor for withdrawal.

### Reasons to withdraw from their programme



Reflecting findings from existing research, both the survey and interview findings suggest that a mismatch between expectations and the apprenticeship experience are a contributing factor to withdrawal. A lack of employer support, not being given adequate time off to study, not learning as many skills as expected and unexpected impacts of COVID-19 were cited as key areas where apprenticeships did not match interviewees' expectations. Perceptions of the quality of training and support from training providers were highly polarised according to whether interview participants completed or withdrew from their apprenticeship.

### Contributing factors for withdrawal



## Support to prevent apprenticeship withdrawals

### Identified as important forms of support



**50%** support from training provider or tutor



**49%** employer support with time to study / complete assignments / off-the-job study



**36%** employer support with a workplace mentor or support network

Completers tended to have workplace and training provider support

The most helpful forms of support identified by survey respondents (regardless of completion status) related to direct support offered by their training provider or employer. Half of respondents (50 per cent) identified support from their training provider or tutor (such as study support or support networks) as important, with a similar proportion (49 per cent) citing support from their employer with time to study, complete assignments or for off-the-job training. Employer support with a workplace mentor or support networks was also identified by more than one third of respondents (36 per cent). Interviewees who completed their apprenticeships tended to have people available to support them both in the workplace and with their training provider.

### Identified as particularly valuable forms of support

**1-1s with line managers**



**having a mentor who completed**

**small group tutorials**

**regular meetings for support**

Support particularly valued by interviewee participants included regular 1-1s with line managers, having a mentor who had completed an apprenticeship in the workplace, regular meetings with training providers for advice and support and small group tutorials. Most interview participants who completed their apprenticeship reported that they received useful support from their training providers and employers, whereas most of those who withdrew said that they received no support whatsoever.



### Financial support

identified as an important factor

Financial support was also identified as important for some groups, in particular younger respondents and those who did not already work for their employer, although this does not appear to be a driving factor in withdrawal. It should be acknowledged that this research was conducted with apprentices on their programmes up until 2020, and that financial support may be more important to current apprentices owing to the cost-of-living crisis.

### Identified as areas for improvement



**Time off for learning / study**



**Better / more / earlier communication**



**Opportunities for networking / support / mentoring**



**Access to resources**

Areas for improvement identified by interview participants included: more protected time off for learning/study from employers, better communication between employers and training providers, more/earlier communication on programme details/requirements, more opportunities for networking/support/mentoring and support with access to study resources/materials required.



## Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations have been developed for Department for Education (DfE), training providers and employers.

1. The findings show that employer support is a key factor in enabling apprentices to remain engaged and to complete their programme. **DfE should consider how to realign accountability and responsibility to ensure employers are sufficiently incentivised to support completion.** This may require additional support and best practice guidance for smaller employers to help them to manage the demands of hiring, training and supervising apprentices.
2. **In addition to delivering high-quality training, training providers need to place greater emphasis on pastoral care and wrap around support,** particularly for certain groups who are more likely to identify support needs, including younger apprentices, those with disabilities or long-term health conditions, new starters and BAME apprentices. Investment and information on best practice to help training providers should be provided.
3. **Training providers and employers should ensure the provision of and access to information about the apprenticeship as early as possible.** Detailed information should be available prior to application; for example, in recruitment and marketing materials. The findings suggest that a mismatch between expectations and experience are a contributory factor to withdrawal.
4. The research identified high workload as the second most common single reason for non-completion, followed by being offered another job. **The Government should explore with employers and apprentices ways to ensure that apprenticeships are able to continue when an apprentice changes jobs.** This could include evaluating the impact of the recent rule change to allow a break between employments of up to 12 weeks, learning from and extending flexi-apprenticeship approaches, or a more modular approach to apprenticeships with appropriate safeguards to incentivise and support completions.
5. DfE should give consideration as to how outcomes and destinations data for apprentices can be measured effectively and on a sustainable basis. **This should include a review of fields collected in Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data to ensure robust coverage of apprentice destinations and outcomes, and more detailed recording of reasons for withdrawal.** In particular, the research suggests that more varied reasons for withdrawal are required than the current ILR fields allow for. **In addition, DfE should publish tracking of long-term employment outcomes for apprenticeship programmes through Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data.**
6. While this research shows that apprentice completers realise greater benefits than those who do not complete, the findings suggest that apprentices who withdraw from their programme still experience benefits from participating in an apprenticeship. **DfE should therefore seek to build on existing measures that include wider outcomes such as pay progression, promotion and education or training outcomes,** as quality measures for apprenticeship programmes, and expand them to also cover apprentices who withdraw from their programme.

Access the full report at [stmartinsgroup.org](https://stmartinsgroup.org)