

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**



## Foreword

The St Martin's Group commissioned this research to investigate the outcomes and destinations of apprentices – for those who complete and those who do not.

The issue of high non-completions has plagued both policymakers and the wider FE sector, making it an important factor to explore and remedy. The completion rate for apprentices on apprenticeship standards in 2020/21 was 51.8 per cent. While this is an improvement on the previous year, it remains a risk in damaging the brand and public trust in apprenticeships, which are the cornerstone of funded work-based learning.

We embarked on this research with a series of fundamental questions. These explored who the apprentices are who are not completing their courses; what their reasons for leaving are; whether there are any shared characteristics which link this group of people; what happens to them after their apprenticeship; and what could have been done differently to encourage them to complete their apprenticeship.

Until now these questions have not been properly answered but understanding the underlying factors that contribute to non-completions of apprenticeships is essential for policymakers, employers and training providers to build a more successful apprenticeship system.

This report provides those within the sector with these crucial insights for the first time, along with detailed recommendations for how legislators, training providers and employers can reduce non-completions, and update the measures of success to properly encompass the benefits of the apprenticeship scheme.

At the beginning of this project, we also suspected that non-completion data does not tell the whole story. The research uncovered evidence to support this. For example, many apprentice withdrawals actually arrived at a positive destination, such as a job with increased pay or a promotion. However, as this is not captured in the official data, it could not contribute to the story of the programme's success.

This research comes at a crucial time for the Government, when skills and vocational training are key to achieving economic growth, meeting skills gaps in the workforce and accelerating the levelling up agenda.

The fresh new insights in this report are needed to form the beginning of wider conversation and more effective collaboration. Only then can we effectively achieve our shared goal of supporting and training more apprentices, kickstarting their careers and creating a sustainable skills pipeline for continued economic growth.

**David Marsh**  
Co-Chair of SMG



# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. Executive summary .....   | 4  |
| Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations .....                           | 5  |
| Factors contributing to apprenticeship completion or withdrawal .....    | 7  |
| Support to prevent apprenticeship withdrawals .....                      | 8  |
| Recommendations .....  | 9  |
| 2. Introduction .....  | 10 |
| Research method .....  | 11 |
| Report structure .....   | 12 |
| 3. Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations .....                        | 13 |
| Apprenticeship outcomes .....  | 13 |
| Immediate destinations .....   | 15 |
| Employment outcomes .....  | 18 |
| Earnings outcomes .....  | 19 |
| Progression outcomes .....   | 21 |
| Industry retention .....   | 22 |
| Application of apprenticeship to current activities .....                | 23 |
| Other benefits from apprenticeships .....                                | 24 |
| 4. Factors contributing to apprenticeship completion or withdrawal ..... | 26 |
| Motivations for starting an apprenticeship .....                         | 27 |
| Information provided before starting apprenticeship .....                | 29 |
| Reasons for withdrawal .....   | 29 |
| Expectations vs experience .....   | 35 |
| Quality of apprenticeship experience .....                               | 37 |
| 5. Support to prevent apprenticeship withdrawals .....                   | 40 |
| Support received during apprenticeship .....                             | 40 |
| Support not to withdraw .....  | 42 |
| 6. Conclusions and recommendations .....                                 | 47 |
| Recommendations .....  | 48 |
| 7. Appendix/Supplementary information .....                              | 50 |
| Appendix 1: Survey respondent profile .....                              | 50 |
| Appendix 2: Interview respondent profile .....                           | 53 |
| 8. About .....   | 55 |



# 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 (L&W) 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.

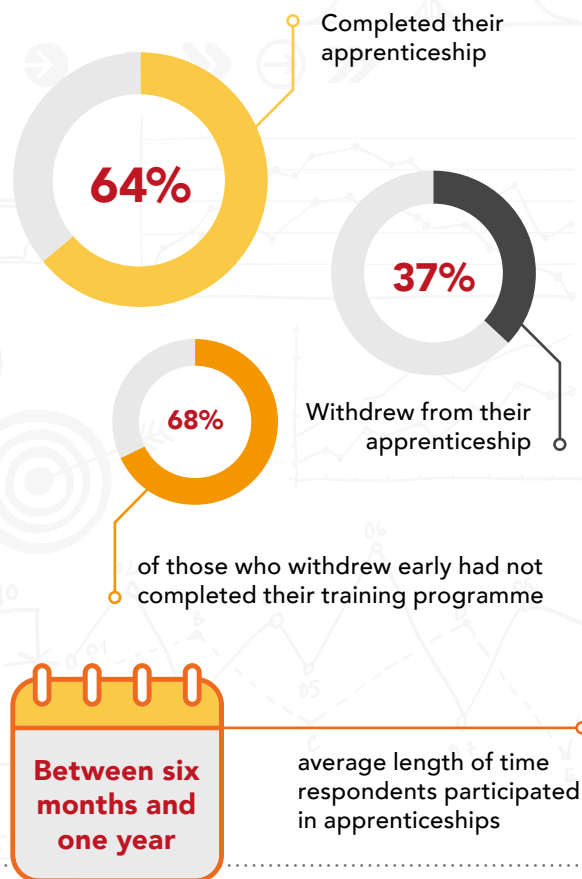
# Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations

## 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.

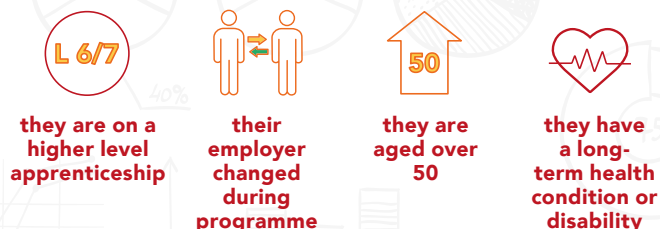
The average length of time that these respondents had participated in their apprenticeship was between six months and one year.

Of survey respondents:



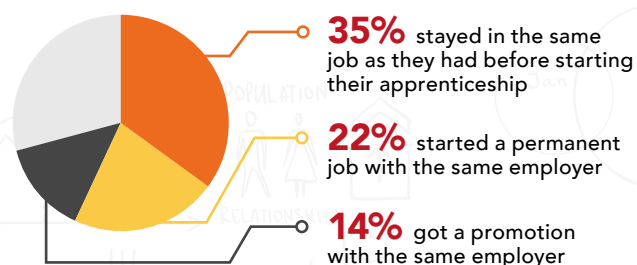
The survey indicates that some groups are more likely to withdraw from their apprenticeships than others. These include those: on higher level apprenticeships (Level 6 or 7); who undertook their apprenticeship with a micro-sized employer; whose employer changed during their programme; aged over 50; and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

Apprentices are more likely to withdraw if:

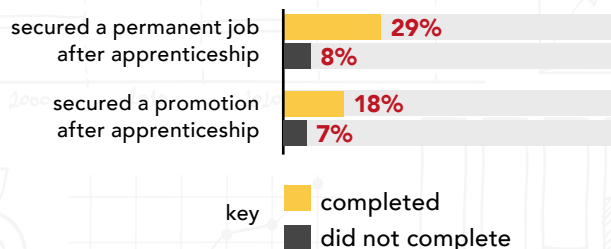


The most common immediate outcomes across all survey respondents relate to being employed by the same employer that respondents started their apprenticeship with. This includes staying in the same job as they had before they started their apprenticeship (35 per cent), starting a permanent job with the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



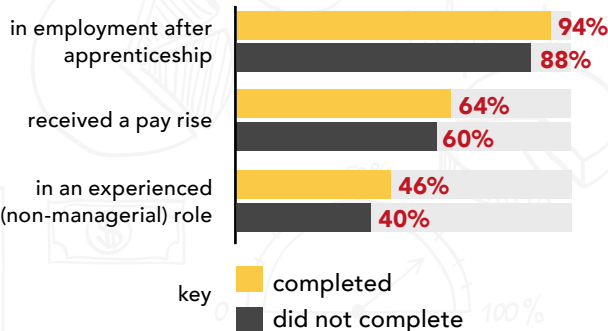
The survey indicates that outcomes vary across groups. For example, apprentices who undertook a Level 4 or 5 apprenticeship, already worked for their employer, worked for a large employer, worked in certain subjects and industries, and those who were older or from less deprived areas were more likely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

### Longer term outcomes

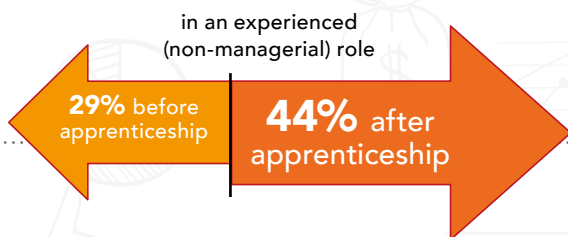
**92%** of survey respondents were in employment



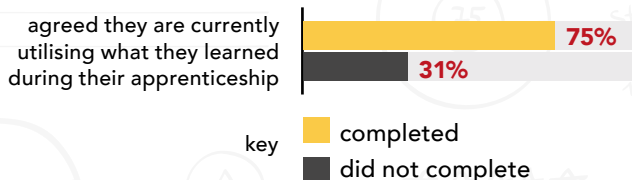
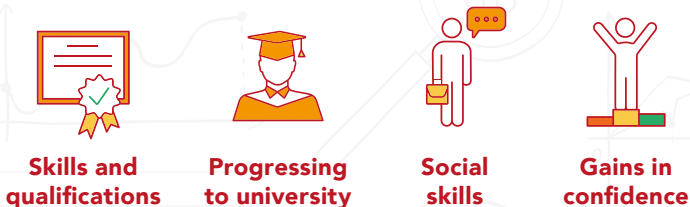
compared to **78%** prior to participating in an apprenticeship



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



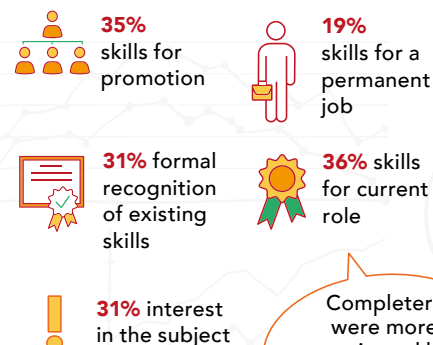
Interview participants identified a range of wider benefits of participating in their apprenticeships, including gaining skills and experience for employment, social skills, and the opportunity to progress onto university. Participants who completed their apprenticeship were particularly positive about 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

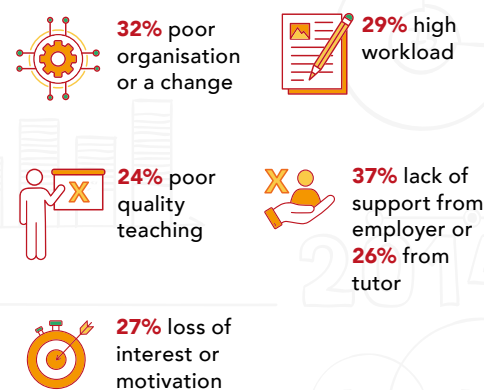


The interview findings suggest that apprentices do not feel well informed about their programmes or their End Point Assessment (EPA) prior to starting. This is the case regardless of whether they go on to complete or withdraw. The information that was provided tended to involve details such as the quantity 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.



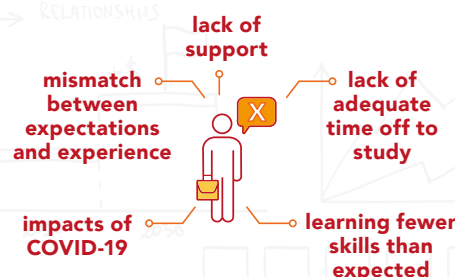
The most common reasons cited by respondents for withdrawing from their apprenticeships related to a negative experience on the apprenticeship programme, including: a lack of support from their employer (37 per cent); poor course organisation/change to logistics (32 per cent); high workload (29 per cent); 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.

## 2. Introduction

Apprenticeship achievement ensures that individuals gain formal recognition for their skills and experience and provides assurance to employers that apprentices' knowledge and skills meet industry expectations. The Government has an agenda to grow the number and quality of apprenticeships<sup>1</sup>. As part of a commitment to raising quality and employer engagement, the Government introduced a set of reforms to the system. These included the introduction of the apprenticeship levy<sup>2</sup> in 2017, and the transition from apprenticeship frameworks to employer-designed standards<sup>3</sup>.

However, a considerable proportion of apprentices withdraw early from their programme. The proportion of early withdrawals is higher for apprenticeship standards than for the previous frameworks system – in 2020/21, the completion rate for standards was just 52 per cent. As end point assessment (EPA) pass rates are high, this indicates that there is an issue with keeping apprentices engaged with the programme for the planned duration.

Existing research into early apprenticeship withdrawals has found that apprentices commonly withdraw for negative reasons, including a lack of support, lack of time for learning or training, poor course organisation, and a mismatch between their expectations and experience<sup>4</sup>. Those who withdraw tend to be less satisfied than completers with their apprenticeship experience and the quality of training provided<sup>5</sup>, and are also less likely to say that an apprenticeship was their preferred career choice<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, analysis of IRL data for the academic years 2017/18–2019/20 has found that the rate of withdrawal from apprenticeships tends to increase with programme level<sup>7</sup>.

However, the current measure of achievement rates does not capture the full experience for apprentices who withdraw from their programmes, including whether they still go on to reach occupational competence or secure promotions or pay rises after withdrawing. The St Martin's Group commissioned L&W 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. Although the most recent Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey (AEvS) included individuals who withdrew from their apprenticeship,<sup>8</sup> this research provides a uniquely detailed exploration of the characteristics and destinations of apprentices who did not complete their programme. It also aims to provide insights into the characteristics of apprentices who did and did not complete, and the factors that contribute to completion/non-completion, to help identify additional measures of quality and success for apprentices and explore support which would help to encourage programme completion. With a new government target of 67 per cent apprenticeship completions by 2025, this research will be a timely report for the sector to explore how this can be effectively achieved.

<sup>1</sup> HM Government (2015) *English Apprenticeships: Our 2020 Vision*

<sup>2</sup> The apprenticeship levy is paid by employers with a pay bill of over £3 million per year. Levy paying employers have a digital account, from which they can draw down funding to pay for apprenticeship training and assessment.

<sup>3</sup> Apprenticeship frameworks are qualification focused and involve ongoing units-based assessment. In contrast, standards are occupation-focused, with an end point assessment. Apprenticeship standards are developed by employers and contain the skills, knowledge and behaviours an apprentice will need to have learned by the end of their apprenticeship. Apprenticeship standards fully replaced frameworks by 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*; Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>5</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*

<sup>6</sup> IBID.

<sup>7</sup> Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>8</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*

## Research method

The research took a mixed methods approach, involving an online survey of apprentices and qualitative follow-up interviews with survey respondents.

### Online survey

The survey aimed to gather insights into apprentices' motivations, on-programme experiences and destinations, and how these compare according to whether apprentices completed their programme. For apprentices who withdrew from their programme, the survey also explored their reasons for withdrawing, and any support that would have encouraged them not to withdraw.

The survey was conducted online using Snap surveys, between 7 July and 3 August 2022. Apprentice data for the academic years 2017/18–2019/20 was obtained from the ILR database, provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which contains records of all apprentices on standards in England. Apprentice data for 2020/21 was not included as it was unavailable at the time of the data request, and there would be insufficient time after completion to identify sustained outcomes. These records were deduplicated so that each individual learner only appeared once<sup>9</sup>, and learners without a course end date were removed. This left a sample frame of approximately 50,000 individuals.

Invitations to complete the survey were initially sent to a sample of approximately 20,000 individuals. These were selected to be representative of the apprentice population by gender, age, ethnicity, region and additional learning needs or disabilities, and to include a representative spread of apprentices across the three academic years. To boost response rates, all remaining contacts were later invited to complete the survey.

In total, 2,427 respondents completed the survey. A profile of these respondents can be found in Appendix 1. Of these, 2,221 had either completed or withdrawn early from their apprenticeship, while the remainder indicated either that they were still on their course, that they did not know, or that they had sustained a different outcome. For the purposes of this report, only respondents who indicated that they had either completed or withdrawn early from their apprenticeship are included in the analysis – these are referred to in Appendix 1 as 'valid responses'.

Throughout the report, survey findings are broken down according to whether or not respondents completed their apprenticeship, with statistically significant differences noted in the text. Subgroup analysis is also included to explore the relationship between respondent characteristics and their survey responses. All subgroup differences reported in the findings are statistically significant at the five per cent level, unless otherwise specified. All figures in the report are reported to zero decimal places. As such, figures in some tables and charts will not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

It should be noted that the survey data is self-reported, and therefore is based on respondents' understanding and interpretation of the questions. Moreover, the survey only includes respondents who have participated in an apprenticeship, and there is no counterfactual with non-apprentices. As such, we cannot directly attribute any outcomes reported by respondents to participating in an apprenticeship, although we can compare outcomes and experiences by apprenticeship completion status.

### Follow-up interviews

Follow-up interviews were conducted with 38 survey respondents to gather more in-depth insights on their experiences, including motivations for starting their apprenticeship, expectations of their apprenticeship and whether these were met, overall experiences on their programme, support received from their employer and provider and what they did after their apprenticeship. This included 20 who had completed their apprenticeship and 18 who had withdrawn early. Interviews were conducted between the 18 August and 9 September 2022 via telephone or Microsoft Teams/Zoom.

<sup>9</sup> Where learners appeared in datasets for more than one year, only their most recent record was retained.



Interview participants were purposively sampled to ensure a broad representation across a range of characteristics, including year of apprenticeship completion/withdrawal, apprenticeship level, apprenticeship subject area and industry, employer size, type of training provider and demographic factors. All participants were offered a £20 shopping voucher as a thank you for participating. A profile of these participants can be found in Appendix 2.

All interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. The qualitative data has been analysed thematically to draw out commonalities and differences in responses according to whether participants completed or withdrew from their apprenticeship, as well as any other relevant characteristics. It is important to note that the qualitative findings are not intended to be, and cannot be taken as, representative of wider populations. Instead, the interview findings are intended to build on and add detail to the survey responses. The use of 'most', 'some' and 'a minority' in this report illustrate the prevalence of views amongst participants.

## Report structure

This report presents the findings from the survey and interview data, including:

- Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations
- Factors contributing to apprenticeship completion and withdrawal
- Support to prevent apprenticeship withdrawals
- Conclusions and recommendations.



### 3. Apprenticeship outcomes and destinations

This chapter explores apprenticeship outcomes for survey respondents, destinations immediately after programme completion/withdrawal and any longer-term outcomes and benefits for apprentices.

#### Key chapter findings:

- 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.
- Most apprentices secured employment outcomes immediately following their apprenticeship, indicating that apprenticeship participation could have a positive impact on employment outcomes. However, the survey shows that, compared to apprentices who withdrew from their programme early, apprentices who completed their programme are statistically more likely than those who withdrew to:
  - Have secured a permanent job with the same employer they completed their apprenticeship with (29 per cent compared to eight per cent)
  - Have secured a promotion with the same employer (18 per cent compared to seven per cent)
  - Have had an increase in pay since starting their apprenticeship (64 per cent compared to 60 per cent)
  - Work in the same industry as their apprenticeship (76 per cent compared to 57 per cent)
  - Agree they are currently utilising what they learned in their apprenticeship (75 per cent compared to 31 per cent).
- 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.

#### Apprenticeship 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.** These figures are broadly consistent with overall completion rates between 2017/18–2019/20<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships* Analysis of ILR data showed that, between the academic years of 2017/18–2019/20, 61 per cent of apprentices completed their programmes and 39 per cent withdrew early.

Almost all survey respondents (97 per cent) who completed their apprenticeship indicated that they had completed their training and passed their End Point Assessment (EPA), indicating a very high success rate amongst apprentices who undertook their EPA. Just one per cent of those who completed their training did not pass their EPA, while a further one per cent were classified as 'other complete', for example, because they had completed but were awaiting their EPA results or completed but without the EPA due to the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>.

Just over two thirds (68 per cent) of survey respondents who had withdrawn from their programme early said they withdrew from their apprenticeship and did not complete the training programme. The average length of time that these respondents had participated in their apprenticeship was between six months and one year<sup>12</sup>. A further nine per cent of those who withdrew early had completed their training, but withdrew before taking the EPA, while five per cent had completed their professional qualification, but withdrew before their EPA. Nearly one fifth (18 per cent) did not complete for another reason – for example, through non-voluntary withdrawal by their training provider or employer or being made redundant.

### Subgroup differences

Further analysis identifies several factors which are associated with completing or withdrawing from an apprenticeship, including:

■ **Apprenticeship level.** Respondents who undertook a Level 3 apprenticeship are more likely to have completed their programme (70 per cent compared to 65 per cent other levels), while those who undertook a Level 6 or 7 apprenticeship are more likely to have withdrawn early (42 per cent, compared to 32 per cent other levels). This is consistent with L&W's previous research into early apprenticeship withdrawals, which found that withdrawal tends to increase with level<sup>13</sup>.

■ **Apprenticeship employer.** Respondents whose employer changed at some point during their programme are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship (45 per cent, compared to 36 per cent of those whose employer did not change). This is consistent with findings from L&W's previous research, which found that apprentices with no breaks or transfers in their programme were more likely to complete<sup>14</sup>.

In addition, respondents who undertook their apprenticeship with micro-sized employers (< 10 employees) are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship when compared to those who undertook their apprenticeship with other sized employers (46 per cent compared to 35 per cent).

Whether or not apprentices already worked for their employer does not have a statistically significant impact on completion rates.

■ **Apprenticeship sector subject area (SSA) and industry.** Respondents who undertook an apprenticeship in the health, public services and care SSA are more likely to have completed their apprenticeship (71 per cent, compared to 62 per cent in other SSAs).

Similarly, those who undertook their apprenticeships in the health and social care industry had higher completion rates than other industries (69 per cent compared to 62 per cent). In contrast, apprentices in the digital industry are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship, with over half having done so (53 per cent, compared to 36 per cent in other industries). This may relate to employer size – over a quarter (27 per cent) of apprentices in the digital industry were with a micro-sized employer, compared to just nine per cent of the total sample.

<sup>11</sup> An 'other' option was available for this question, which was initially coded by 14 per cent of respondents. Their responses were coded into 3 new categories: 'other complete', 'other did not complete', and 'not yet completed/still on course', as well as keeping the 'other category for responses that did not fall into any of these new categories.

<sup>12</sup> Mean average of responses to Q16 'How long did you participate in your apprenticeship for?'

<sup>13</sup> Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>14</sup> Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*



This analysis demonstrates variation in completion rates across sector subject areas and industries, suggesting completion targets should take account of differences across programme areas.

- **Demographic factors.** Respondents over the age of 50 are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship than those aged 50 or under (43 per cent compared to 35 per cent). In addition, those with a disability or long-term health condition are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship than those without one (45 per cent compared to 35 per cent).

In summary, the findings suggest that **those who undertook a Level 6 or 7 apprenticeship, who changed employer at some point in their programme, who worked for micro-sized employers, who are older and who have a disability or long-term health condition are all more likely to withdraw from their apprenticeship.** This highlights a number of groups who may require further support to complete.

## Immediate destinations

**The most common outcomes for survey respondents immediately after their apprenticeship relate to being employed by the same employer as respondents undertook their apprenticeship with (see Table 1).** 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).

**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 immediately after their apprenticeship.** Those who withdrew from their programme early were more likely to have secured outcomes with a different employer or become unemployed/take a break from work. Around a fifth of those who withdrew and became unemployed had been made redundant from their apprenticeship<sup>15</sup>. Although it cannot be definitively concluded as a positive destination, note should be taken that 50 per cent of those who did not complete their apprenticeship, still secure an outcome with the same employer.

**Table 1:** Immediate destinations

| Outcome   | Total % | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
|---|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I stayed in the same job I had before I started my apprenticeship   | 35%     | 36%                        | 32%                               |
| I started a permanent job with the same employer                    | 22%     | 29%                        | 8%                                |
| I got a promotion with the same employer                            | 14%     | 18%                        | 7%                                |
| I moved to a job with a different employer, in a different industry | 8%      | 3%                         | 16%                               |
| I moved to a job with a different employer, in the same industry    | 7%      | 5%                         | 9%                                |
| I became unemployed and was looking for work                        | 4%      | 1%                         | 8%                                |
| I went back into education  | 3%      | 3%                         | 1%                                |

<sup>15</sup> This is based on just 42 survey respondents who withdrew because they were made redundant or their training provider ended the programme.

| Outcome  | Total %    | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
|--|------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I started a different apprenticeship with a different employer | 3%         | 1%                         | 5%                                |
| I took a break from work                                       | 3%         | <1%                        | 6%                                |
| I started a different apprenticeship with the same employer    | 1%         | 1%                         | 2%                                |
| Other  | 3%         | 2%                         | 6%                                |
| <b>Outcome with same employer</b>                              | <b>71%</b> | <b>83%</b>                 | 50%                               |
| <b>Outcome with different employer</b>                         | <b>17%</b> | 10%                        | <b>29%</b>                        |
| <b>Left employment</b>   | <b>9%</b>  | 5%                         | <b>15%</b>                        |

Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship (810)

Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red

## Subgroup differences

In order to allow for ease of comparison between subgroups, responses to this question have been grouped into outcomes with the same employer<sup>16</sup>, a different employer<sup>17</sup> or left employment<sup>18</sup>. Key findings from this analysis include:

- **Apprenticeship level.** Those who undertook a Level 4 or 5 apprenticeship were more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer immediately after their apprenticeship (79 per cent, compared to 70 per cent of other levels). By contrast, those who undertook a Level 2 apprenticeship were more likely to have left employment (12 per cent, compared to seven per cent other levels). As explored later in this report, respondents who took part in a Level 2 apprenticeship are more likely to have withdrawn due to negative workplace experiences, which may partly explain this.
- **Apprenticeship employer.** Respondents who already worked for their apprenticeship employer before starting their programme are more likely to have secured an outcome with the same employer (83 per cent, compared to 55 per cent who did not). This is also true of those who undertook their apprenticeship with a large employer (78 per cent, compared to 56 per cent who did not), although this may be explained by apprentices at larger employers being more likely to be existing employees (65 per cent, compared to 46 per cent with other sized employers). In contrast, those who undertook their apprenticeship with a micro or small employer were more likely to have left employment (18 and 13 per cent respectively compared to eight per cent for each).
- **Apprenticeship SSA and industry.** In line with the findings on apprenticeship completion, those who undertook an apprenticeship in the health, public services and care SSA were more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer when compared to those in other SSAs (78 per cent compared to 69 per cent). This was also the case for business, administration and law (77 per cent, compared to 68 per cent in other subject SSAs), while those in the ICT SSA were less likely to have done so (52 per cent, compared to 72 per cent in other SSAs).

Those undertaking an apprenticeship in the health and social care industry (80 per cent, compared to 68 per cent other industries) and the public services industry (77 per cent, compared to 70 per cent other industries) were also

<sup>16</sup> This category includes respondents who achieved the following outcomes: 'I started a permanent job with the same employer'; 'I stayed in the same job I had before I started my apprenticeship'; 'I got a promotion with the same employer'; 'I started a different apprenticeship with the same employer'.

<sup>17</sup> This category includes respondents who achieved the following outcomes: 'I moved to a job with a different employer, in the same industry'; 'I moved to a job with a different employer, in a different industry'; 'I started a different apprenticeship with a different employer'.

<sup>18</sup> This category includes respondents who achieved the following outcomes: 'I took a break from work'; 'I became unemployed and was looking for work'; 'I went back into education'.

more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer. Those in the digital industry, meanwhile, were less likely to secure an outcome with the same employer, with just two in five (40 per cent) having done this.

- **Demographic factors.** The likelihood of moving into an outcome with the same employer increases with age<sup>19</sup>, although this may be partly explained by the increased likelihood of working for the same employer with age<sup>20</sup>.

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition are less likely to have moved into an outcome with the same employer (64 per cent, compared to 73 per cent with no disability or long-term health condition), and are more likely to have left employment (13 per cent, compared to eight per cent with no disability or long-term health condition). This corresponds with these respondents being more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship.

Respondents in less deprived areas<sup>21</sup> are more likely to secure an outcome with the same employer (73 per cent, compared to 69 per cent in the most deprived areas). Those in more deprived areas<sup>22</sup>, meanwhile, are more likely to have left employment (10 per cent, compared to seven per cent in the least deprived areas).

In summary, **respondents who undertook a Level 2 apprenticeship, did not already work for their employer, and who worked for an SME are less likely to secure an outcome with the same employer, as were those in certain SSAs and industries, notably IT (SSA) and digital (industry). Younger respondents, those with a disability or health condition, and those in more deprived areas are also less likely to secure an outcome with the same employer.** These findings highlight specific groups where employers may need to work support apprentice retention.

### Qualitative insights

Reflecting the survey findings, most interviewees who completed their apprenticeship remained with the same employer immediately after completing. Around half stayed in the same job role; these participants typically worked for a medium or large employer.

Some of those who stayed with the same employer received a pay rise or promotion immediately following completion. For example, one Level 4 management apprentice in the IT industry said that they had applied for and achieved a promotion immediately following completion, describing this as a *“pretty seamless internal process once you completed the apprenticeship.”* Another participant, who had completed a degree apprenticeship in market research, explained how they were promoted twice during their apprenticeship, and then remained in this role following completion. They commented that:

**“If I hadn’t done my degree apprenticeship, I wouldn’t obviously be able to be in the role that I’m in now in terms of kind of the experience and the level that I’m at now, I feel that the apprenticeship, you know, really helped me with that.” (L6/7 business, administration and law apprentice, completed)**

A minority of participants who completed their apprenticeship moved company for career progression or for personal reasons. Only one was not kept on by the same employer following successful apprenticeship completion, since they were working for a very small business systems company who was unable to offer them a permanent position.

<sup>19</sup> A Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the median age of respondents who went into each grouped outcome.

<sup>20</sup> This is consistent with the most recent Apprenticeship Evaluation Learner Survey, which also found that older apprentices were more likely to have already been working for their employer.

<sup>21</sup> Defined as those in Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) deciles 6-10. This is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. Deprivation deciles are calculated by ranking all neighbourhoods in England from the most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups.

<sup>22</sup> Defined as those in Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1-5



Around half of interview participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship also stayed with the same employer. However, echoing the survey data, only one person gained a promotion or pay rise from their employer immediately after withdrawing from a Level 3 retail apprenticeship. This participant explained that they had gained managerial skills from their apprenticeship, which contributed to their progression into a new management role that had opened up from a restructure in the organisation. Some of those who withdrew from their apprenticeship also moved company as they were not kept on with their initial employer or moved into entry-level positions or part-time work elsewhere before deciding how to progress in their careers.

Participants who had moved into entry-level roles or part-time employment tended to describe this as a backwards step. Nonetheless, a minority of participants who withdrew did secure positive job outcomes or higher-level roles with a different employer, with some withdrawing to pursue these opportunities. Interviewees 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. For example, one participant explained how the skills they had learned on their apprenticeship helped them to achieve a promotion from assistant store manager to department manager once they moved employer:

**“They offered me this opportunity I thought I was years away from... the apprenticeship actually helped me get that job role... because I’d never done spot analyses and stuff like that, and we’d just covered those bits in the apprenticeship, then they asked me to do one... So with the skills that I learned in the small period that I had done the apprenticeship for, it did get me another job.”** (L3 retail and commercial enterprise apprentice, withdrew)

A minority of interview participants used the apprenticeship as a stepping-stone to university, regardless of whether they completed or withdrew. A minority of apprentices moved directly to university after their apprenticeship (with some taking on part-time work while waiting for courses to start) and explained how their apprenticeships had helped them to make this step by allowing them to obtain UCAS points and giving them the confidence to apply. One interviewee’s apprenticeship provided the opportunity to start a second apprenticeship; following successful completion of a Level 2 business administration apprenticeship, their employer offered them a Level 3 apprenticeship in the same subject.

## Employment outcomes

**The survey data indicates that more respondents are currently in employment when compared to before undertaking their apprenticeship (see Table 2).<sup>23</sup>** Prior to undertaking their apprenticeship, almost four in five respondents (78 per cent) were in some form of employment, with most of these (60 per cent of the sample) employed full-time. Currently, more than nine in 10 respondents (92 per cent) are in some form of employment, with more than three-quarters of the sample (76 per cent) being employed full-time.

One in 10 respondents (10 per cent) were unemployed and seeking work prior to undertaking their apprenticeship. Currently, just three per cent are unemployed and seeking work. Just over four in five (81 per cent) of the respondents who indicated they were unemployed and looking for work prior to their apprenticeship are now in some form of employment, suggesting that apprenticeships could be an effective entry route into employment.

A breakdown of these findings by apprenticeship completion status demonstrates that there are few significant differences in respondents’ employment status prior to undertaking their apprenticeship. **However, 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).** This reflects previous research conducted by The St Martin’s Group, which found that apprenticeship completers outperform the wider labour market in terms of employment rates<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that analysis of current status (in terms of employment, progression and pay) includes apprentices from multiple cohorts.

<sup>24</sup> St Martin’s Group (2021) [The real costs and benefits of apprenticeships](#)

Almost four in five respondents (79 per cent) who completed their apprenticeship are in full-time employment, compared to 71 per cent who did not. Instead, respondents who didn't complete their apprenticeship are more likely to now be self-employed, unemployed and looking for work or to have selected 'other' as their employment status. These 'other' responses include being a stay-at-home parent or carer, being pregnant/on maternity leave, being on a career break, doing temporary/agency work and being unable to work due to physical/mental health issues.

**Table 2:** Employment status before apprenticeship and currently

| Employment status                                 | Before apprenticeship |                            |                                   | Current    |                            |                                   |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|   | Total %               | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % | Total %    | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
| Employed, full-time (35 hours or more per week)   | <b>60%</b>            | 59%                        | 61%                               | <b>76%</b> | <b>79%</b>                 | 71%                               |
| Employed, part-time (Less than 35 hours per week) | <b>18%</b>            | <b>19%</b>                 | 15%                               | <b>14%</b> | 14%                        | 13%                               |
| Self-employed                                     | <b>1%</b>             | 1%                         | 1%                                | <b>2%</b>  | 1%                         | <b>4%</b>                         |
| On another apprenticeship                         | <b>2%</b>             | 1%                         | 2%                                | <b>2%</b>  | 2%                         | 1%                                |
| Unemployed and looking for work                   | <b>10%</b>            | 9%                         | 11%                               | <b>3%</b>  | 2%                         | <b>4%</b>                         |
| In full-time education                            | <b>13%</b>            | 13%                        | 12%                               | <b>2%</b>  | 2%                         | 4%                                |
| Other   | <b>1%</b>             | 1%                         | 1%                                | <b>3%</b>  | 2%                         | <b>6%</b>                         |
| Don't know  | <b>&lt;1%</b>         | <1%                        | <1%                               | -          | -                          | -                                 |
| <b>Total employed</b>                             | <b>78%</b>            | <b>79%</b>                 | <b>76%</b>                        | <b>92%</b> | <b>94%</b>                 | <b>88%</b>                        |

Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship (810)

Respondents could select as many options as applied ('unemployed and looking for work', and 'don't know' exclusive). Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red

## Earnings outcomes

**More than three in five survey respondents (63 per cent) have experienced an increase in their salary since starting their apprenticeship<sup>25</sup> (see Table 3).** Just four per cent have experienced a decrease, while 34 per cent are in the same salary band as before starting their apprenticeship. However, these pay rises cannot be attributed to apprenticeships, since the analysis did not include a non-apprentice counterfactual<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Salary bands for respondents employed both before their apprenticeship and currently were directly compared to measure distance travelled. Don't know' and 'prefer not to say' responses are excluded for this comparison.

<sup>26</sup> It is also possible that apprentices received a pay rise after completing/leaving their programme because they were no longer being paid the national apprentice minimum wage.

**Respondents who completed their apprenticeship are significantly more likely to have experienced a salary increase when compared to those who did not (64 per cent compared to 60 per cent).** This figure is consistent with the most recent (AEvS)<sup>27</sup>, which found that 65 per cent of completers had since achieved a pay rise. These findings suggest an association between apprenticeship completion and higher earnings, although it should be noted that statistical significance testing does not establish causation.

The mean salary band<sup>28</sup> for respondents prior to undertaking their apprenticeship was £18,000–£20,999, compared to £24,000–£26,999 for respondents currently. One quarter (25 per cent) of the sample was earning less than £15,000 prior to undertaking their apprenticeship, compared to just one in 10 (10 per cent) who are currently earning at this level.

**Table 3: Salary before apprenticeship and currently**

| Salary band       | Before apprenticeship |                            |                                   | Current |                            |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                   | Total %               | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % | Total % | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
| Less than £15,000 | 25%                   | 26%                        | 25%                               | 10%     | 10%                        | 11%                               |
| £15,000 - £17,999 | 15%                   | 15%                        | 14%                               | 7%      | 6%                         | 7%                                |
| £18,000 - £20,999 | 17%                   | 18%                        | 16%                               | 13%     | 14%                        | 13%                               |
| £21,000 - £23,999 | 11%                   | 11%                        | 12%                               | 16%     | 17%                        | 16%                               |
| £24,000 - £26,999 | 7%                    | 7%                         | 7%                                | 12%     | 13%                        | 12%                               |
| £27,000 - £29,999 | 4%                    | 6%                         | 2%                                | 8%      | 8%                         | 6%                                |
| £30,000 - £32,999 | 3%                    | 3%                         | 4%                                | 6%      | 6%                         | 5%                                |
| £33,000 - £35,999 | 2%                    | 2%                         | 2%                                | 5%      | 5%                         | 4%                                |
| £36,000 - £38,999 | 3%                    | 2%                         | 3%                                | 3%      | 3%                         | 4%                                |
| £39,000 - £41,999 | 1%                    | 1%                         | 1%                                | 3%      | 4%                         | 3%                                |
| £42,000 - £44,999 | 1%                    | 1%                         | 1%                                | 2%      | 2%                         | 3%                                |
| £45,000 - £47,999 | 1%                    | 1%                         | 1%                                | 2%      | 2%                         | 2%                                |
| £48,000 - £50,999 | 1%                    | <1%                        | 2%                                | 1%      | 1%                         | 1%                                |
| £51,000 and above | 3%                    | 2%                         | 3%                                | 5%      | 5%                         | 6%                                |
| Don't know        | 1%                    | 2%                         | 1%                                | 1%      | 1%                         | 1%                                |
| Prefer not to say | 4%                    | 4%                         | 5%                                | 6%      | 5%                         | 8%                                |

Base: all respondents employed/on another apprenticeship before apprenticeship (1750); where completed apprenticeship (1121); where did not complete apprenticeship (629). All respondents currently employed/in an apprenticeship (2048); where completed apprenticeship (1338); where did not complete apprenticeship (710)

<sup>27</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*

<sup>28</sup> Survey respondents who are currently in employment or another apprenticeship, or were so prior to starting their apprenticeship, were asked to state their current and/or previous salary.



## Progression outcomes

**One third (33 per cent) of survey respondents are currently in a more senior position compared to before their apprenticeship<sup>29</sup> (see Table 4).** Around one in 10 (nine per cent) are in a less senior role, while around three in five (59 per cent) indicated that their level of seniority has not changed. These findings suggest that apprenticeships may support some individuals to progress at work. There are no statistically significant differences in these findings according to whether respondents completed their apprenticeship.

More than one third (36 per cent) of respondents were in entry/graduate level positions prior to their apprenticeship, compared to around a quarter (24 per cent) who are currently in these positions. 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).**

Interestingly, those who did not complete their apprenticeships were more likely to be in management positions prior to undertaking their apprenticeships (27 per cent, compared to 20 per cent who completed). It may be that these respondents therefore felt less need to complete their apprenticeship, since they were already in relatively senior positions prior to starting. This finding could also relate to the responsibilities of their role – when compared to respondents in other roles, those in management positions were significantly more likely to cite high workload as their reason for withdrawing (45 per cent compared to 27 per cent). Reasons for withdrawal will be discussed in more detail later in this report.

**Table 4:** Seniority before apprenticeship and currently

| Seniority                    | Before apprenticeship |                            |                                   | Current |                            |                                   |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                              | Total %               | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % | Total % | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
| Entry level or graduate      | 36%                   | 37%                        | 34%                               | 24%     | 24%                        | 25%                               |
| Experienced (non-managerial) | 29%                   | 29%                        | 28%                               | 44%     | 46%                        | 40%                               |
| Management                   | 23%                   | 20%                        | 27%                               | 24%     | 23%                        | 25%                               |
| Senior or executive level    | 2%                    | 2%                         | 2%                                | 5%      | 5%                         | 6%                                |
| Other, please specify        | 3%                    | 3%                         | 2%                                | 2%      | 2%                         | 2%                                |
| Don't know                   | 8%                    | 9%                         | 7%                                | 1%      | 1%                         | 1%                                |

Base: all respondents employed/on another apprenticeship before apprenticeship (1750); where completed apprenticeship (1121); where did not complete apprenticeship (629). All respondents currently employed/in an apprenticeship (2048); where completed apprenticeship (1338); where did not complete apprenticeship (710)

Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red

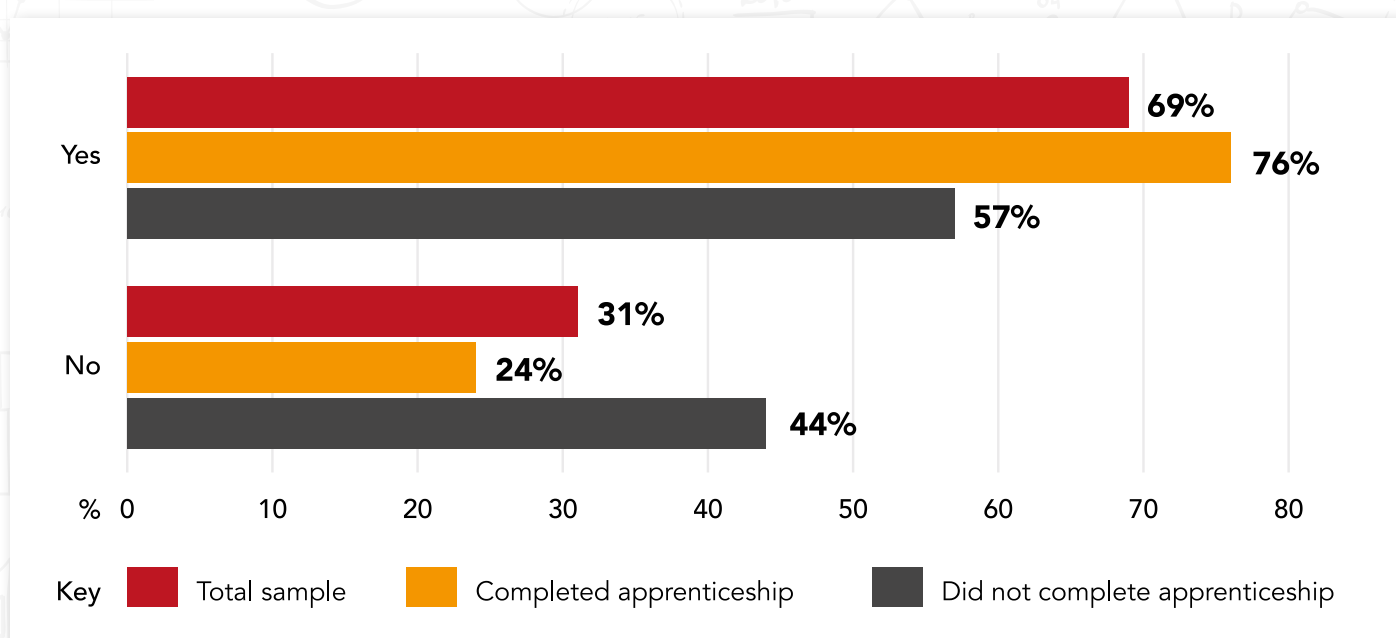
<sup>29</sup> Seniority levels for respondents employed both before their apprenticeship and currently were directly compared to measure distance travelled. Don't know' and 'prefer not to say' responses are excluded for this comparison.

## Industry retention

The majority of survey respondents (69 per cent) who are currently employed are now working in the same industry that they completed their apprenticeship in (see Figure 1). Respondents who completed their apprenticeship are significantly more likely to be working in the same industry as their apprenticeship (76 per cent, compared to 57 per cent of those who did not complete). This finding indicates that there may be an association between apprenticeship completion and whether respondents go on to work in the same industry. However, the proportion of apprentices going on to work in the same industry despite not completing their programme is not insubstantial, suggesting that there may still be value in undertaking their programme even for those who did not complete.

Corresponding with the findings on apprenticeship completion, respondents who undertook their apprenticeship in the health and social care industry are more likely to still be working in the same industry as their apprenticeship (88 per cent, compared to 64 per cent in other industries). Conversely, those in the business management (44 per cent, compared to 72 per cent in other industries) and hospitality and catering industry (64 per cent compared to 71 per cent in other industries) are also less likely to be working in the same industry now.

**Figure 1:** Employed in the same industry as apprenticeship



Base: valid responses<sup>30</sup> where employed/on another apprenticeship currently (1984), where completed apprenticeship (1304); where did not complete apprenticeship (680)

The qualitative interviews show that participants who left their sector generally did so for better job security, to find temporary work, or for personal reasons. For example, after completing an apprenticeship in the catering and hospitality industry, one participant moved sector due to a perceived lack of progression opportunities post-COVID-19:

**"There wasn't really promotion opportunity there for the role. Obviously when I first started it was a bit different, because COVID hadn't happened, but hospitality took such a nosedive there's simply no money really at the moment and especially for promotions and things are just way on hold."** (L3 catering and hospitality apprentice, completed)

<sup>30</sup> Don't know' responses and 'other' responses which could not be directly compared between questions are excluded.

Another participant, who withdrew from a Level 4 project management apprenticeship, struggled to find employment in team leader roles during the pandemic and so worked in several temporary roles, including food courier services and retail. Whilst working in temporary roles, the participant continued applying for jobs that required skills they had gained from their apprenticeship and has since been invited to an interview for a porter role which can progress to a team leader role.

## Application of apprenticeship to current activities

**Around seven in 10 survey respondents (71 per cent) agree that their current activity fits in with their future plans, with almost half (46 per cent) indicating that they strongly agree (see Table 5).** Relatively few respondents disagree with this statement (11 per cent). **Respondents who completed their apprenticeship were more likely to agree than those who withdrew (76 per cent compared to 64 per cent).**

**Around three in five respondents (59 per cent) agree that they are currently utilising what they learned during their apprenticeship, with just more than one third (35 per cent) strongly agreeing. Respondents who completed their apprenticeship were more than twice as likely to agree than those who did not complete (75 per cent compared to 31 per cent).** Almost two in five respondents (38 per cent) who did not complete their apprenticeship strongly disagree. However, despite these differences a substantial minority of apprentices who withdrew from their programme did feel that they are currently utilising what they learned during the apprenticeship.

Respondents currently working in the same industry as their apprenticeship are also significantly more likely to agree with both statements. Around three quarters (76 per cent) agree that their current activity fits in with their future plans, compared to 68 per cent working in a different industry to their apprenticeship. Sixty-eight per cent agree that they are utilising what they learned during their apprenticeship in their current activity, compared to 47 per cent working in a different industry.

**Table 5:** Agreement with statements about impact of apprenticeship

| Level of agreement         | My current activity (e.g. my job or training/ education) fits in with my future plans |                            |                                   | I am utilising what I learnt during my apprenticeship in my current activity |                            |                                   |
|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                            | Total %   | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % | Total %  | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
| Strongly agree             | 46%   | 49%                        | 40%                               | 35%  | 47%                        | 14%                               |
| Slightly agree             | 26%   | 27%                        | 23%                               | 24%  | 27%                        | 17%                               |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16%   | 14%                        | 20%                               | 13%  | 9%                         | 19%                               |
| Slightly disagree          | 5%  | 5%                         | 5%                                | 7%   | 6%                         | 9%                                |
| Strongly disagree          | 6%  | 5%                         | 10%                               | 20%  | 10%                        | 38%                               |
| Don't know                 | 2%  | 1%                         | 2%                                | 1%   | 1%                         | 2%                                |
| <b>Total agree</b>         | <b>71%</b>  | <b>76%</b>                 | <b>64%</b>                        | <b>59%</b>   | <b>75%</b>                 | <b>31%</b>                        |

Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship (810)

Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red



## Other benefits from apprenticeships

Interview participants perceived **gaining confidence in the workplace** as one of the most beneficial aspects of an apprenticeship. Spending time in employment and gaining hands-on experience increased participants' confidence in their ability to perform their job roles, including performing new tasks and taking on different roles within their organisation:

**"...it was like someone had invested in me, and that gave me a lot of confidence to try different things." (L4/5 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice, completed)**

Additionally, spending time socialising with colleagues and asking them questions increased participants' confidence in socialising both within and outside the workplace. Participants felt that networking with colleagues from their own workplace, as well as alternative organisations, improved their communication skills. They also saw networking with other employees as an opportunity to make lasting connections that could improve their knowledge or understanding of the industry, as well as benefit their employment security in the longer-term. For example, one participant working as a receptionist in a primary school highlighted the benefit of connecting with and learning from employees from other companies:

**"Well, the safeguarding and things like that, learning how that all works in a school was very interesting and something that I'll definitely take with me into the environment, say if I was to become a child psychologist, I've already got experience there. I met a lot of child psychologists and... I spoke to a few of them as well, and told them what I was going and doing and I remember one of them giving me a card and being, like, well call me if you ever get into it. So, I think I gained a lot of valuable information on the industry, that area of how people work, psychologists and social workers and how they all work together"(L3 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)**

Most participants who reported increased opportunities in networking and improved social skills worked for large employers.

Interview participants also felt that their apprenticeships had allowed them to gain **skills and knowledge that could be applied in the workplace**. Participants explained how their work placements provided opportunities to gain new skills, particularly when employers provided opportunities to experience a variety of job roles and/or responsibilities. They also gained knowledge and information from their training providers which developed their understanding of how industries work and the different roles within them. Some interviewees believed that learning new skills and filling gaps in their knowledge had led to improved performance and potential for promotion:

**"It was, kind of, all around leadership styles and stakeholder management, business management, it was all streamlined really well to be easily learned and like I said, I still use it quite frequently in the day-to-day job. I'd say daily actually. I definitely grew from it." (L3 retail and commercial enterprise apprentice, withdrew)**

Some participants also said that their apprenticeship could be added to their CV and would be a useful discussion point during interviews. For example, one participant noted that they joined a multi-national company during their ICT apprenticeship as it would be appealing for future employers on their CV. Despite eventually withdrawing, this participant noted that they had gained specific technical skills from their apprenticeship that were required for their new job role and therefore contributed to their success in gaining this new position.

**Participants who completed their apprenticeship were generally more positive and reported these benefits more frequently than those who withdrew**, although some participants who withdrew did mention them. They also highlighted several additional benefits of their experience not cited by those who withdrew, including: developed maturity, increased motivation, gaining formal recognition of skills, a sense of achievement, promotion opportunities, increased enjoyment of learning, and a sense of commitment to their employer. For example, one participant explained that they enjoyed the process of learning something new and in general took pleasure from the experience:

**“Also just the learning side of it I quite liked. I hadn’t studied anything in it before and learning a bit more about business models and case studies of certain pubs and things like that, yes. I think I took a lot away from it to be honest.” (L3 catering and hospitality apprentice, completed)**

These findings build on the most recent (AEvS)<sup>31</sup>, which cited a range of benefits experienced by apprenticeship completers, including skills related to their current or desired area of work, skills that can be used across a range of jobs, communication skills, and collaboration.

The interview findings also build on this by exploring benefits for non-completers, who still found some value in participating. While participants who withdrew from their programme mentioned fewer benefits than those who completed, some noted that their apprenticeship helped to broaden their horizons or realise the career path that they wanted to pursue. For example, one participant left a Level 2 accountancy apprenticeship after four months as they realised it wasn’t for them and moved on to a Level 2 business administration apprenticeship with the same employer, supported by their training provider. They are now looking to do another apprenticeship in leadership, to lead project teams and progress within their role.



<sup>31</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey

## 4. Factors contributing to apprenticeship completion or withdrawal

This chapter explores factors contributing to apprenticeship completion and withdrawal, including those related to motivations for starting an apprenticeship, the level of information provided before starting, reasons for withdrawal, and quality of apprenticeship experience.

### Key chapter findings:

- Apprentices were motivated to start their programmes mainly to gain skills to support their career, and also by the opportunity to gain formal recognition of these skills and to earn while studying. 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.
- The interview findings suggest that apprentices do not feel well informed about their programmes or their EPA prior to starting. This is the case regardless of whether they go on to complete or withdraw.
- The most common reasons apprentices give for withdrawing relate to negative experiences on their programme, including a lack of support from their employer (37 per cent) or tutor (26 per cent); poor programme organisation (32 per cent) or teaching quality (24 per cent); high workload (29 per cent); and a loss of interest or motivation (27 per cent). Reasons for withdrawal 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.
- 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 offered by training providers and employers are highly polarised according to whether interview participants completed or withdrew from their apprenticeship, with those who completed offering more positive feedback about both.



## Motivations for starting an apprenticeship

The most common reasons cited by survey respondents for starting an apprenticeship 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) (see Table 6). Nearly a fifth of respondents (19 per cent) also wanted the skills to enable them to get a permanent job. These findings are consistent with wider research, which also indicates that apprentices take up their programmes predominantly for career-related reasons<sup>32</sup>.

Another common reason for undertaking an apprenticeship was to gain formal recognition of existing skills, with three in 10 respondents (31 per cent) stating this. Three in 10 respondents (31 per cent) also indicated that they undertook an apprenticeship because they were interested in the subject area. An additional 17 per cent of respondents said that they wanted to change industry or occupation, while seven per cent said they did not have a choice.

When these findings are broken down by completion status, **there are few statistically significant differences in motivations to take up an apprenticeship**. However, respondents who completed their apprenticeship were more likely to be motivated to gain skills to perform more effectively in their current role than those who withdrew (38 per cent and 32 per cent respectively). Respondents who withdrew from their apprenticeship, meanwhile, were more likely to say that they had no choice in taking up their apprenticeship (eight per cent compared to six per cent). This is similar to one of the findings from the most recent AEVS<sup>33</sup>, which was that non-completers were less likely than completers to say doing an apprenticeship was their preferred choice when they first considered it.

**Table 6:** Motivations for starting apprenticeship

| Support   | Total % | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
|---|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| I wanted the skills to help me perform more effectively in my current role              | 36%     | 38%                        | 32%                               |
| I wanted the skills to help me achieve a promotion (at my current or a future employer) | 35%     | 36%                        | 33%                               |
| I wanted to gain formal recognition of my skills  | 31%     | 31%                        | 30%                               |
| I was interested in the subject area  | 31%     | 32%                        | 29%                               |
| I wanted to start my career / it was my first job                                       | 23%     | 24%                        | 21%                               |
| I wanted the skills to help me get a permanent job                                      | 19%     | 20%                        | 18%                               |
| I wanted to change career/industry/occupation   | 17%     | 18%                        | 16%                               |
| I did not have a choice   | 7%      | 6%                         | 8%                                |
| Other   | 3%      | 3%                         | 4%                                |
| Don't know  | 1%      | 1%                         | 1%                                |

Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship (810)

Respondents could select as many answers as applied (don't know exclusive). Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red

<sup>32</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*; Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>33</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*

Interview participants outlined numerous motivations for starting their apprenticeship. **The most common motivations included gaining formal recognition of their skills, the opportunity to gain a qualification during the apprenticeship and being paid whilst studying.**

Most participants felt that a formal recognition of skills would give them a sense of achievement. Some participants, particularly those on accounting or construction apprenticeships, also required formal recognition of their skills or additional qualifications to progress within their career. For example, one degree level accounting and finance apprentice explained how their apprenticeship would allow them to qualify as a chartered accountant: *"one of the key things being an accountant is being a Chartered Accountant. So I knew I needed that qualification."*

Most participants also found the apprenticeship an attractive opportunity to earn an income at the same time as gaining recognition of their skills and improving their career prospects. Some participants explicitly referenced avoiding tuition fees, such as for university:

*"The biggest factor was the money, the financing side of things. If I wanted to go back to do a degree the conventional way, that would be £9,000+ a year and there would be some extra loans that had to be taken out because you've got to pay for accommodation, etc. When I stumbled across the apprenticeship, when I saw that it was a government scheme, that your employers will help you pay for some of that as well, I thought it was a great opportunity for me to actually make some money whilst studying at the same time."*  
(L6/7 ICT apprentice, completed)

Some participants also viewed apprenticeships as an attractive alternative to university because it would allow them to gain more hands-on work experience. In particular, all apprentices at Level 6/7 saw gaining hands-on experience within the workplace as a motivation, suggesting a clear reason for choosing an apprenticeship at degree level over a traditional degree:

*"You've got the best of both worlds in a way, because you've got the degree side, so you've got the uni, but then you're also working and getting that hands-on experience."*  
(L6/7 economics apprentice, withdrew)

Less commonly cited motivations included the location being convenient, for example, because they could live at home while studying, and an apprenticeship being the only route into specific careers, for example, as an electrician. A minority of interview participants fell into the apprenticeship by chance: for example, one applied for a job which developed into an apprenticeship.

**Reflecting the survey findings, motivations for undertaking an apprenticeship were generally similar regardless of whether participants completed or withdrew,** though there were some small differences. Those who completed their apprenticeship more commonly emphasised the motivation to avoid 'text-book' or 'classroom-based' learning. Participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship more often mentioned the lack of cost to the individual as a benefit of apprenticeships. For example, when asked why they chose the apprenticeship over other education or training options, one Level 3 HGV mechanics apprentice explained *"I couldn't afford to do anything else"*.

Amongst those who withdrew, there was also a desire to gain higher level qualifications than the ones they currently held, as well as getting a 'foot in the door' in the workplace or industry. For example, one Level 3 business management apprentice explained that they were disappointed with their current qualifications and wanted to improve their job opportunities:

*"I actually did my GCSE's, I didn't have very many decent grades over let's say, E. So I've always had that play in the back of my mind, like, you know, if the opportunity comes along I wouldn't mind, like, working on that because it's not until you, sort of, leave school you realise how important school and your grades are at the time."* (L3 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)

## Information provided before starting apprenticeship

**Broadly, interview participants found out about their apprenticeships by word of mouth, actively searching for apprenticeship/job roles online, or advertisements (typically in work or college).** Those on Level 6/7 apprenticeships tended to find their positions online, either on a jobs page or on an employer website.

For those who were already employed by the organisation before they started their apprenticeship, job advertisements at work were predominantly shared amongst several employees, though some participants were asked to apply directly by their line managers. While the majority of employers advertised the apprenticeship as an optional opportunity that would benefit career progression, in two instances this was compulsory, since the apprenticeship came with the job role. One Level 3 arts, media and publishing apprentice explained that they had to enrol on the apprenticeship to be able to continue in the job role that they applied for. One Level 3 leadership and management apprentice applied for a team leadership role within their company and didn't expect the apprenticeship to be attached. Both of these participants eventually withdrew from their apprenticeship.

**Almost all interview participants had minimal understanding of what the apprenticeship would entail,** with even less understanding amongst those who were informed about the opportunity by their employer. The information that was provided tended to involve information 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.

Only a minority of participants reported having sufficient information about their apprenticeship at the start of their programme. All of these individuals had either been enrolled on another apprenticeship before or had previously worked with apprentices. One interviewee, who went on to complete their apprenticeship, described how they were provided with plenty of information about their Level 6 network engineering course up front. However, this apprentice actively sought out information by contacting the apprentice provider who provided ample information, as well as doing their own research:

**"Yes, loads of information. They were really helpful. They assign you an account manager and a skills coach, and those people were the people that actually helped me on board that apprenticeship scheme. All the information you can ask for, they had it to hand. I was really grateful for that."** (L6/7 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice, completed)

Interviewees explained that they received substantial information once the apprenticeship had started, often from their training provider. These findings suggest that **employers could play a greater role in informing apprentices about what their work placements will involve prior to starting their programme.**

## Reasons for withdrawal

**The most common reasons cited by survey respondents for withdrawing relate to negative experiences on their programme, including a lack of support from their employer (37 per cent) or tutor (26 per cent); poor programme organisation (32 per cent) or teaching quality (24 per cent); high workload (29 per cent); and a loss of interest or motivation (27 per cent) (see Table 7)<sup>34</sup>.**

<sup>34</sup> Respondents who said that they had withdrawn from their apprenticeship were asked to select, from a list of options, their reasons for withdrawing. Respondents who selected more than one answer were then asked to state which of these was their main reason for withdrawing.



Thirteen per cent of respondents cited a lack of support from both their tutor and employer as a reason for withdrawal. Just more than one quarter of respondents (27 per cent) said they withdrew due to a loss of interest or motivation. These findings are broadly consistent with existing research, which identifies lack of support as a driving factor of withdrawal<sup>35</sup>, alongside factors such as workload and poor course organisation<sup>36</sup>.

Around one fifth (19 per cent) of respondents indicated they withdrew from their programme early for another reason<sup>37</sup>. These reasons included personal issues (e.g. family commitments, pregnancy, bereavement); other work-related issues (e.g. stress, conflict with employer); having to take maths/English/functional skills qualifications despite already holding these; too many/excessive assessments; and being told they would have to restart the course after changing training provider.

**The most common single reason for withdrawing was a lack of support from their employer (12 per cent).** This was followed by high workload (10 per cent); being offered another job (eight per cent); poor course organisation/change to logistics (seven per cent); and loss of interest/motivation (also seven per cent). This differs from the findings for the most recent AEVS<sup>38</sup>, where being fired or made redundant was the most common single reason for not completing. However, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons with previous research due to different wording of answer options. In addition, the AEVS sample is likely to include a higher proportion of individuals who withdrew during the COVID-19 pandemic; their timeframe was limited to those who withdrew from their programme between September 2019 and December 2020, compared to our 2017/18 to 2019/20 timeframe. Their sample may therefore have experienced a greater impact of pandemic-related redundancies.

**Table 7:** Reasons for withdrawing from apprenticeship programme

| Reason   | Total % | Main reason % |
|--|---------|---------------|
| A lack of support from my employer             | 37%     | 12%           |
| Poor course organisation / change to logistics | 32%     | 7%            |
| High workload                                  | 29%     | 10%           |
| I lost interest / motivation                   | 27%     | 7%            |
| A lack of support from my tutor                | 26%     | 5%            |
| Poor quality teaching                          | 24%     | 4%            |
| I was offered another job                      | 13%     | 8%            |
| Impact of COVID-19                             | 13%     | 4%            |
| A mental health condition                      | 12%     | 4%            |
| Personal finances / low pay                    | 12%     | 2%            |
| Course content / level not relevant            | 11%     | 3%            |
| Prejudice / workplace bullying                 | 11%     | 5%            |

<sup>35</sup> Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>36</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*; Learning and Work Institute (2021, unpublished) *Reducing early withdrawals from apprenticeships*

<sup>37</sup> A small number of 'other' responses were back coded into other answer categories. However, this was not possible in most instances as 'other' was also selected as the main reason for withdrawing at Q19, and most open-ended responses contained more than one reason for withdrawing. As such, it would not be possible to determine which of the back coded responses was the main reason for withdrawing.

<sup>38</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) *Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey*

| Reason   | Total % | Main reason % |
|--|---------|---------------|
| A lack of support for my mental health condition(s)                | 10%     | 2%            |
| Change to my role  | 10%     | 3%            |
| College and employer not joined up                                 | 9%      | 1%            |
| The Maths and/or English requirement was too challenging           | 5%      | 2%            |
| The End Point Assessment was delayed                               | 5%      | 1%            |
| Change to my line manager  | 5%      | <1%           |
| A lack of support for my physical health condition(s)              | 4%      | <1%           |
| I was made redundant, or the training provider ended the programme | 4%      | 3%            |
| A physical health condition  | 3%      | 1%            |
| The End Point Assessment was too challenging                       | 3%      | 1%            |
| Relationship / family break-up                                     | 3%      | 1%            |
| Issues with getting childcare                                      | 1%      | <1%           |
| Other  | 19%     | 14%           |
| Don't know   | 1%      | 1%            |

Base: all respondents who stated that they withdrew from their apprenticeship at Q17 (663)

Respondents could select as many answers as applied ('don't know' exclusive)

## Subgroup differences

Further subgroup analysis suggests that reasons for withdrawing from apprenticeships are impacted by a range of factors, as outlined below:

■ **Apprenticeship level.** Respondents who undertook a Level 2 apprenticeship were more likely than those at other levels to cite: a lack of support from their employer (46 per cent, compared to 33 per cent); prejudice and workplace bullying<sup>39</sup> (19 per cent, compared to six per cent) and personal finances/low pay (17 per cent, compared to 10 per cent) as reasons for withdrawing from their apprenticeship. These negative experiences with their employer may go some way towards explaining why Level 2 apprentices were less likely to secure an outcome with the same employer, as previously discussed. These respondents are also more likely to have experienced a change in their training provider, to have undertaken their apprenticeship with a micro or small employer and to have undertaken their apprenticeship with a college.

Respondents undertaking a Level 4 or 5 apprenticeship, meanwhile, were more likely to mention poor course organisation/change to logistics as a reason for withdrawing (40 per cent, compared to 29 per cent other levels). Although relatively low base sizes mean that these findings should be treated with caution, respondents who undertook a Level 6 or 7 apprenticeship were more likely to reference high workload (44 per cent compared to 28 per cent other levels) and the EPA being too challenging (10 per cent, compared to two per cent other levels). **This finding suggests that apprenticeships at higher levels may be more challenging than participants initially expected.**

<sup>39</sup> Apprentices who experience prejudice or workplace bullying can seek support through [Workplace bullying and harassment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/workplace-bullying-and-harassment). Further advice is available in L&W's [guide to the support available to apprentices](#) and [Support for apprentices - Remploy](#).

- **Apprenticeship employer.** Respondents who did not already work for their apprenticeship employer before starting their programme were more likely to identify a range of negative reasons for withdrawal when compared to those who already worked for their employer. These include a lack of support from their employer (44 per cent compared to 33 per cent); personal finances/low pay (24 per cent compared to three per cent); prejudice and workplace bullying (19 per cent compared to six per cent); a mental health condition (16 per cent compared to 10 per cent); a lack of support for this condition (15 per cent compared to six per cent); and being made redundant/the employer ending the programme (seven per cent compared to two per cent). **These findings suggest that apprentices joining as new members of staff may require more pastoral and practical support during their apprenticeship.**

Conversely, respondents who already worked for their apprenticeship employer prior to starting their apprenticeship were more likely to identify high workload (36 per cent compared to 19 per cent); the impact of COVID-19 (17 per cent compared to six per cent); changes to their line manager (six per cent compared to three per cent); and the maths and English requirement being too challenging (seven per cent compared to two per cent) as reasons for withdrawing. **This may reflect the challenges of taking on an apprenticeship alongside an existing job role and balancing these commitments.**

**Respondents who undertook their apprenticeship with a large employer were less likely to identify a lack of support from their employer as a reason for withdrawing when compared to those who worked for SMEs** (33 per cent compared to 44 per cent), perhaps because larger employers have more resource to support apprentices. These respondents were also less likely to cite personal finances/low pay (five per cent compared to 24 per cent) and prejudice and workplace bullying as reasons for withdrawing (eight per cent compared to 17 per cent).

- **Apprenticeship training provider.** Respondents who undertook their apprenticeship with a college were more likely to cite poor quality teaching as a reason for withdrawing compared to those who undertook their apprenticeship with other provider types – a university, an independent training provider or their employer (34 per cent compared to 22 per cent). As explored further below, these findings may be related in part to age – further analysis shows that younger respondents are more likely to have completed their apprenticeship at a college, and also to rate the quality of teaching poorly.

Respondents whose training provider changed at some point during their apprenticeship were more likely to identify poor course organisation/change to logistics (47 per cent compared to 28 per cent); poor quality teaching (31 per cent compared to 22 per cent); and their EPA being delayed (16 per cent compared to two per cent) as reasons for withdrawing. These findings may indicate a negative impact of a change in apprenticeship provider on apprenticeship experience and perceptions of quality, although it could also be that respondents changed provider in response to these negative experiences. Respondents whose training provider changed were also more likely to cite changes to their role as a reason for withdrawing (16 per cent compared to eight per cent).

- **Apprenticeship subject and industry.** Respondents who undertook an apprenticeship in the retail and commercial enterprise SSA were more likely to withdraw due to a lack of support from their employer (45 per cent, compared to 35 per cent other SSAs). Respondents undertaking an apprenticeship in the business, administration and law SSA were more likely than those studying other subjects to cite high workload (39 per cent compared to 24 per cent) and the EPA being too challenging (six per cent compared to two per cent) as reasons for withdrawing. These respondents were also more likely to be studying at Level 6 or 7 (10 per cent, compared to six per cent other subject areas), which may contribute to this finding.

Respondents undertaking an apprenticeship in the hospitality and catering industry were also more likely to withdraw due to a lack of support from their employer (47 per cent, compared to 35 per cent in other industries). These findings may explain why respondents who undertook apprenticeships in this area were less likely to secure an outcome with the same employer.



■ **Demographic factors.** Although there is no significant difference in likelihood to withdraw from an apprenticeship according to gender, **men and women do give different reasons for withdrawing.** Women were more likely than men to cite reasons related to a lack of support or negative workplace environment, including prejudice and workplace bullying (13 per cent compared to seven per cent) and a lack of support for both a mental (12 per cent compared to six per cent) and physical (five per cent compared to two per cent) health condition. They were also more likely than men to cite the impact of COVID-19 (15 per cent compared to nine per cent), which is consistent with wider research into the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women's employment<sup>40</sup>. Men, meanwhile, were more likely than women to give reasons related to course content and quality, including poor quality teaching (30 per cent compared to 21 per cent) and that the course content/level was not relevant (14 per cent compared to nine per cent).

Additionally, respondents over the age of 50<sup>41</sup> (who, as reported earlier, are more likely to have withdrawn from their apprenticeship), were more likely than those aged 50 or under to cite the impact of COVID-19 (23 per cent compared to 11 per cent) and the maths and English requirement being too challenging (nine per cent compared to four per cent) as reasons for withdrawing. Despite this, further analysis indicates that there is an association between younger age and a number of negative reasons for withdrawal<sup>42</sup>, including: a lack of support from their employer, a mental health condition and a lack of support for this condition, the course content or level not being relevant, their college or employer not being joined up, poor quality teaching, prejudice and workplace bullying, personal finances and low pay, loss of interest and motivation, and being made redundant or the training provider ending the programme. These findings suggest that while respondents over the age of 50 are more likely to withdraw from their apprenticeship, there are a number of areas where young people may require more support in order to complete. **Younger apprentices may require broader support to complete their apprenticeship, while those aged over 50 may also require more intensive support in some areas.**

Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were also more likely to cite reasons related to a lack of support when compared to those with no disability or long-term health condition, including a lack of support from their tutor (36 per cent compared to 24 per cent); a lack of support for their mental health condition (22 per cent compared to seven per cent); and a lack of support for their physical health condition (nine per cent compared to two per cent). These respondents were also more likely to cite a physical (eight per cent compared to two per cent) or mental (29 per cent compared to nine per cent) health condition as a reason for withdrawing, **highlighting the need for specific and targeted support for those with physical and mental health conditions.**

There are few significant differences in these findings according to IMD. However, respondents in the most deprived areas were more likely to say they were made redundant or that their training provider ended the programme when compared to those in the least deprived areas (six per cent compared to two per cent).

## Qualitative insights

Reasons for withdrawal amongst interview participants broadly reflect those mentioned in the survey. **The qualitative findings highlight that it was often a combination of a lack of support from the training provider and employer that led people to withdraw from their programme early.**

**Lack of support from training providers.** Most participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship were disappointed by the lack of support from their tutors and training providers. Specific areas where they felt unsupported varied but include a lack of support during the COVID-19 pandemic, not being provided with the resources to complete their programme, not knowing who to contact for support and not feeling that their problems or issues were resolved.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see: [Submission to the Women and Equalities Commission - Learning and Work Institute; How has the coronavirus pandemic affected women in work? \(parliament.uk\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> Just 97 respondents over the age of 50 responded to this question. Findings based on a sample size of fewer than 100 respondents should be treated with caution.

<sup>42</sup> A Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the median age of respondents who selected each reason for withdrawing.

Some participants reported a lack of flexibility from training providers to extend their deadlines when their studies were affected by COVID-19 or personal circumstances. For example, one participant highlighted a contradiction in the information provided by their training provider, who retracted an initial allowance of their deadline extension:

**"I was told by the person who came in to sell it, 'Yes, yes, we've got loads of people that have been doing the apprenticeship for a couple of years now, and they're still not anywhere near finishing, but we just extend it.' But while I was actually doing it and realising that there was no way I was going to get this done in the 24 months that they wanted me to get it done in, and even maybe the 36 months in the end might've been a push. But there was a real, sort of, 'No, we don't extend it. This is when your End Point Assessment is and you've got to get it done by then.'"** (L6/7 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)

Some participants also said that they did not know who to contact from their training provider as they had multiple changes to their tutors or coaches and were not provided with each one's contact details. Some participants didn't feel comfortable asking for help from their training providers because they felt that the staff were disengaged or were unsure of how far their training provider could support them with placement-related issues. This perceived lack of contact with training providers meant that some participants struggled to identify what should be included in their portfolios or what would be involved in their assignments; had difficulty in accessing learning resources, tasks or assignments online; or remained unsatisfied in their work placements.

Some participants felt there was no attempt by training providers to answer their questions or provide support that had been requested. For example, some participants had requested access to resources such as reading materials or essential software, yet these weren't provided. This lack of available resources resulted in some apprentices being unable to complete their portfolios. One Level 3 retail and commercial enterprise apprentice explained that they were unable to access the IT system during the pandemic to upload their portfolio and wanted to delay their course whilst struggling with their mental health during lockdown. However, the participant said that they didn't receive help from their tutor and they weren't able to present their portfolio, so they decided to withdraw from their programme.

**Lack of support from employers.** Most participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship also identified a lack of support from their employers. This mainly related to employers not giving apprentices time off to study or complete their off-the-job training. This meant that participants often worked on their studies and assignments at home, leading to a poor work/life balance.

**"I didn't get the time that I needed at work to do my things. It was all, 'You can do that when you're at home'."** (L3 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)

Some participants also highlighted that there were inconsistencies in the amount of time off that they were allocated when their line managers changed. For example, one participant on a degree level supply chain apprenticeship stated that *"it all depended on who your line manager was whether you could get that time to learn."* Other areas where participants felt unsupported include being asked to work long hours and feeling like they had a poor work/life balance; feeling undervalued as a member of staff; and a lack of consideration for/ help with their portfolios. For example, one Level 3 HGV mechanics apprentice felt that their *"well-being was just completely disregarded"* by their employer and eventually withdrew.

**Mismatch between employer and training provider.** Some participants felt that there was a mismatch between the employer and training provider, both in terms of support being provided and the content and skills being learned. In some cases, these respondents believed that their job role did not align with their apprenticeship requirements or allow them to gather the evidence that they needed to pass their apprenticeship. Others said that what they were learning on their programme could not be applied in the workplace. For example, one Level 2 accounting and finance apprentice explained that they were learning to use software that their employer didn't use:

“...the company that I worked at had a really old home-made system made by the CEO in the 1980s. At the college I was learning a programme called Sage, and Sage is the sort of big mainstream accounting software that everyone uses. And it’s kind of really hard to get experience for the theory if you’re working on two completely different systems.” (L2 accounting and finance apprentice, withdrew)

**Participants often felt that the employer and training provider lacked an understanding of the other’s input into the apprenticeship,** and like they were the ‘middleman’ in communications between the two. The disparity between the employer and training provider often caused issues in completing portfolios, and the employer would often not cater to the evidence requested by the training provider:

“I think, in terms of my biggest thing, would be that my employer and my college didn’t communicate, like, at all, really, and I was always the middleman... I didn’t feel like that should be my responsibility.” (L3 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice, withdrew)

**Other employment issues.** Some participants also reflected on other employment related issues as their reasons for withdrawing, including poor pay, the work being too simple/not relevant, and in a minority of cases, workplace discrimination. Some interviewees who had been on Level 2 or Level 3 programmes did not believe their pay sufficiently reflected their workload, and that this contributed to their decision to leave their programme:

“But because I’m an apprentice, that’s probably their justification for only paying me minimum wage. So, that was a little bit of a kick in the gut, but there was always that in my head, the whole wage thing not quite matching the responsibilities that I was given.” (L3 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)

A minority of participants mentioned workplace discrimination as part of their reason for withdrawal. For example, a Level 3 HGV mechanic apprentice claimed that she experienced gender discrimination during their apprenticeship, including verbal sexist abuse as well as not being paid shift allowance when males were. Another Level 2 accounting and finance apprentice claimed that they were discriminated against ever since telling their employer they were thinking of leaving.

**Personal circumstances.** Some participants also mentioned personal / life circumstances as their reason for withdrawing. The most common factor was that they had doubts about their career direction and decided to make a change, including changing their apprenticeship to an alternative subject/industry, or starting university. Some participants also stated that they were offered an alternative job, as well as citing workload stress impacts from COVID-19, which in some cases led to their employers deprioritising the apprenticeship. Other, less frequent reasons include childcare, family sickness and stress in their personal life.

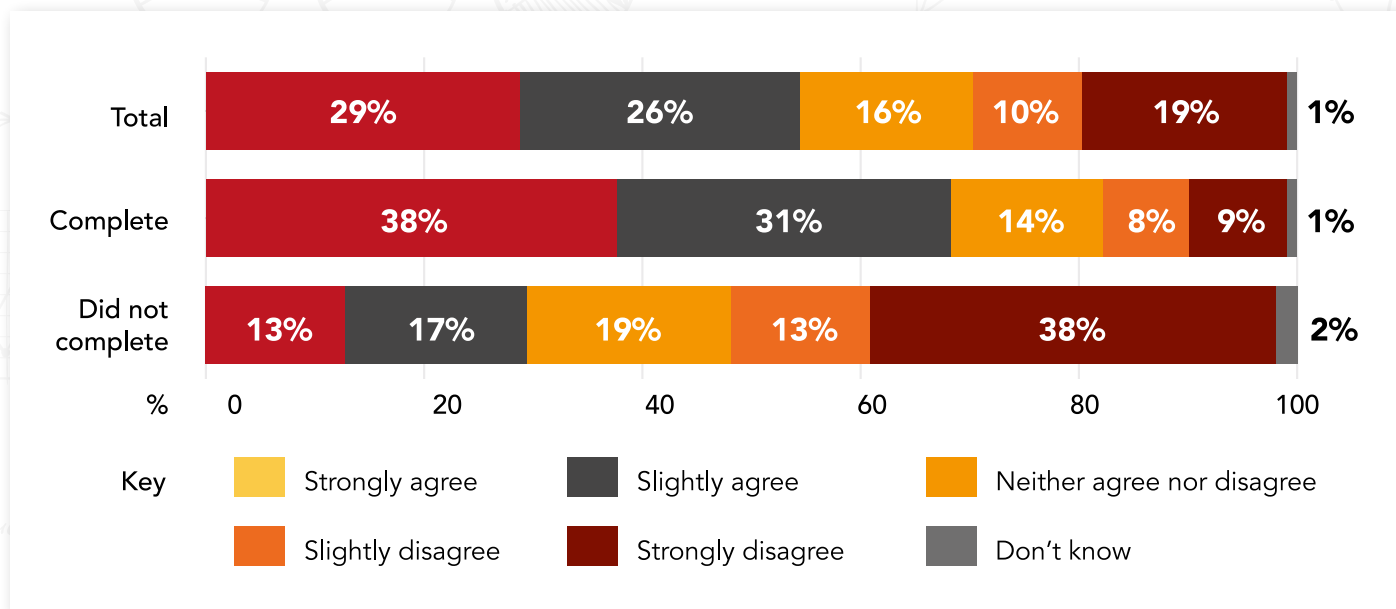
**Functional skills requirements.** Finally, issues with the Functional Skills requirements contributed to a minority of participants’ decision to withdraw. One Level 3 leadership and management apprentice described how they failed their first functional skills maths test but were only given the opportunity to resit four days later, and therefore felt too unprepared to do it and later withdrew.

## Expectations vs experience

Just over half of survey respondents (54 per cent) agree that their apprenticeship met their expectations prior to starting (29 per cent of whom strongly agree and 26 per cent slightly agree) (see Figure 2). This is almost twice the proportion (29 per cent) who disagree that it met their expectations (10 per cent of whom slightly disagree and 19 percent strongly disagree).

Respondents who completed their apprenticeship are significantly more likely to agree that it met their expectations than those who did not complete (68 per cent compared to 29 per cent). In addition, almost two in five respondents (37 per cent) who did not complete their apprenticeship strongly disagreed that it met their expectations. **These results suggest that this mismatch between apprentices' expectations and their course experience may be a contributing factor to withdrawal for some apprentices.** This corresponds with findings from the most recent (AEvS)<sup>43</sup>, which also identified a mismatch between apprentice expectations and experiences for those who withdrew, particularly in relation to perceived quality of training.

**Figure 2:** Agreement that apprenticeship met initial expectations



Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship

### Qualitative insights

Echoing the survey data, **interview participants who completed their apprenticeship were far more likely to feel that their apprenticeship met, or exceeded, their expectations when compared to those who withdrew.** Participants who completed referenced support from their employers, training providers and other apprentices as the main areas which exceeded their expectations, as well as the variety of work in their employment. This generally involved being placed in different roles on regular rotations, for example, one participant working as a network technician worked in several roles during their apprenticeship, which helped them to identify not only what they enjoyed, but also the roles they were less suited to:

**"I got to move around to different areas for 6 months at a time on rotations. ... So that was something that really helped me to try different areas without it having to be an interview if you go for a different job, that was really nice to be able to try that as well."** (L4/5 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice, completed)

**Interview participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship generally did not feel that their apprenticeship sufficiently met their expectations.** Some referenced less employer support than they expected, typically with regards to study-time allowance. For example, one Level 2 finance and accounting apprentice stated that they were told they'd be given time off work to study, but once in work they had to find their own time in their lunch breaks:

<sup>43</sup> Department for Education and IFF Research (2022) Apprenticeship Evaluation Survey 2021: Learner survey



“...we were told that... you would get support at work, you would get time off to be able to do studying. Even things like actually taking the exams we had to, kind of, do that in our own time and make time up, miss lunch breaks and things like that. So, that wasn't what was explained originally.” (L2 accounting and finance apprentice, withdrew)

Some participants also reported that they did not learn as many new skills as they were expecting, either because the course content or job role involved skills they already knew or because they didn't feel the skills they had learnt were relevant to their subject. A minority of participants referenced the unexpected effects of COVID-19 on their apprenticeship experience, such as increased workload in their industry as a direct effect of COVID-19 or increased remote learning.

## Quality of apprenticeship experience

### Quality of training and support from training providers

**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.** Interviewees highlighted several positive aspects of the training and support provided by training providers, with the most commonly cited positives being abundant and useful training resources, regular meetings with tutors, good communication from their training provider, and feeling well prepared for assignments. These aspects were mentioned only by apprentices who completed, who were in general much more likely than those who withdrew to identify positive aspects of the course. Other positives that were mentioned less frequently, but were also mentioned by those who withdrew, included that their tutors had good knowledge of their subject area, that they gave good guidance and explanations of course content and that the course materials were useful and engaging. For example, one participant who completed their Level 3 customer service apprenticeship described the regular meetings and high-quality support provided by their college:

“I think [the support from the college] was all lovely. My mentor was there weekly, unless she was sick or anything like that, but she's very, very hands on, very helpful. I felt as though if I ever needed to email any questions, she also left a phone number. In terms of college and getting my work done, personally, I felt as though that was great.” (L3 business, administration and law apprentice, completed)

Interviewees who withdrew from their apprenticeship were more likely to provide negative feedback around their training providers, with the most common criticisms being that their assignments lacked relevance to their job role, that they found the tutors unresponsive to their questions, and felt that there was a lack of clarity about certain assignments. A minority of those who withdrew also perceived their tutors to be unenthusiastic or disinterested. A minority of respondents who completed their apprenticeships also cited these criticisms, although they were far less likely to do so; for example, one participant who completed their apprenticeship mentioned that they felt as though their assignments were “a tick-box exercise”.

Participants who experienced a change in training provider typically perceived differences in the quality of training and support provided by each. This could be either an improvement or a worsening in quality and support. For example, one Level 3 retail apprentice found their first tutor provided helpful tutorials, communicated clearly and shared their expectations, whereas their second tutor had such poor communication that the apprentice formally complained. Both those who completed and withdrew from their apprenticeship referenced this issue, but there was no clear evidence that the change contributed to withdrawal.

## Quality of work experience and support from employer

**Perceptions of the quality of work experience and support provided by employers were similarly polarised according to whether interviewees completed or withdrew from their apprenticeship.** Most interviewees who completed their apprenticeship felt that their employer provided good quality work experience and support, whereas most who withdrew felt that these were of a poor quality. Specifically, interviewees who completed tended to report that a variety of job roles were available on rotations, that projects they completed were interesting and that they had gained useful skills from their work experience. In contrast, interviewees who withdrew typically perceived their employers as prioritising their employee role over their apprenticeship requirements, and felt that employers were inexperienced with apprentices or did not provide them with opportunities to develop their skills.

A minority of participants identified that perceived deficiencies in work experience or support was not the fault of their employer. For example, one interviewee working as a creative venue technician in a secondary school acknowledged how the employer couldn't provide the opportunity to complete the tasks or demonstrate the skills expected by their training provider, as the institutional system was very inflexible.

## Ability to manage work and off-the-job training/other priorities

Interview participants were roughly evenly split between those who found it difficult to manage work and off-the-job training or other priorities, and those who found it manageable. **The most important factor influencing this was whether the individual employer gave them allocated time off to study.** In particular, small or micro-organisations tended not to allow much, if any, time off for study. As noted in the reasons for withdrawal section, many interview participants were not allocated specific time off to study, which resulted in completing a lot of off-the-job training in their own spare time. This was especially prevalent for those who withdrew from their apprenticeship.

Several participants who completed their apprenticeship reported that allocating time off to study was one of the most beneficial aspects of support from employers. One participant who withdrew from their Level 3 retail apprenticeship also acknowledged the supportiveness of the employer in providing enough time to complete their apprenticeship studies, although they still withdrew because of issues with their training provider:

**"[My employer] always made sure I had time for my meetings, they worked my shifts around them, they gave me time when I needed time." (L3 retail and commercial enterprise apprentice, withdrew)**

Participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship reported more issues with managing their workload than those who completed. Several of these participants commented on the high workload, miscommunications between what was wanted by the training provider and employer, as well as the effects of COVID-19. For example, one individual who worked in public services during the pandemic explained how the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in excessive workload and difficulties managing their studies:

**"Trying to fit in room for learning was impossible. There was a lot going on, trying to support staff's health and wellbeing, trying to support staff morally because there were a lot of deaths in the organisation, people dying of COVID. So learning, literally went out of the window." (L3 business, administration and law apprentice, withdrew)**

## End Point Assessment

**Most interview participants reported that they had little knowledge of the EPA prior to starting their apprenticeship, and were only provided with information from their training provider once they had begun the apprenticeship.** Some participants were completely unaware that the EPA existed, and a minority remained confused as to what the EPA was for a substantial duration of their apprenticeship.

Most participants who passed their EPA felt nervous but very prepared. They referred to the training providers and EPA assessors as supportive and encouraging, and a few described the EPA as feeling more like a conversation than an exam. Some participants who passed the EPA felt as though it matched well with the work they carried out during the apprenticeship, whilst others felt as though it was different from anything else they had done. The main negative aspect mentioned by those who passed their EPA was that they felt pressed for time. For example, one participant's EPA was shorter than expected, and so they didn't feel they could demonstrate their skills to their full potential:

**"I felt also very rushed with it because I was told, as well, you had two hours but I was only given an hour which is why she was very much saying, 'Tell me this, tell me that'. I thought, 'Okay, this is not what I prepared for.' I'm happy I passed but if I hadn't passed I would've appealed and said, 'This is not what I was told and prepared for.'"** (L3 retail and commercial enterprise apprentice, completed)

Only one interviewee had completed their apprenticeship but not passed their EPA. The participant attributed this to nerves rather than a lack of preparation by their training provider. With the support of the training provider, the participant is now completing their EPA through an optional alternative method of a written statement.

As previously highlighted in the survey findings, most research participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship did so before completing their training. As such, the EPA was not generally cited by interviewees as a reason for withdrawal. Out of interviewees who withdrew before their EPA, but after completing their training or professional qualification, the EPA itself was not the main reason for withdrawal. These interviewees generally cited negative experiences with their training provider and/or employer, although other contributory factors included a promotion or gaining their desired professional qualifications, for example, in finance and accounting. However, some of these interviewees did mention feeling unprepared or confused about the EPA.



## 5. Support to prevent apprenticeship withdrawals

The final chapter of this report will consider how apprentices can be supported to complete their programmes, including the support most valued by apprentices during their programmes, other support that would have prevented apprentices from withdrawing, and apprentices' suggestions for improving their programmes.

### Key chapter findings:

- Direct support from employers and tutors/training providers was identified as important for most apprentices, and as something that would encourage apprentices not to withdraw. Interviewees who completed their apprenticeships tended to have people available to support them both in the workplace and with their training provider.
- Support particularly valued by interviewee participants included regular one-to-ones 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.
- 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.
- Areas for improvement identified by interview participants included: better communication, particularly from training providers around course requirements; more protected time off for learning/study from employers; better coordination between employers and training providers; improving the quality of teaching and training provision; and improved oversight and regulation of apprenticeships. A minority of participants felt that the apprentice minimum wage should be increased.

## Support received during apprenticeship

**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 (see Table 8).** 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). Respondents were less likely to identify financial support (seven per cent) or practical support (four per cent) as being most important or helpful.



Respondents who completed their apprenticeship were significantly more likely than those who did not complete to identify support from their training provider or tutor (59 per cent compared to 34 per cent), support from their employer with time to study, complete assignments or for off-the-job training (58 per cent compared to 33 per cent) and support from their employer with a workplace mentor or support networks (42 per cent compared to 25 per cent) as being important or helpful to them. Those who did not complete their apprenticeship, meanwhile, were significantly more likely to indicate that they did not receive any support beyond their training (38 per cent, compared to 14 per cent who completed their apprenticeship). **These findings further emphasise the importance of support from employers and training providers in encouraging students to complete their apprenticeships.**

**Table 8:** Types of support most important/helpful when completing apprenticeship

| Types of support  | Total % | Completed apprenticeship % | Did not complete apprenticeship % |
|---|---------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Support from my training provider/tutor, e.g. study support, support networks         | 50%     | 59%                        | 34%                               |
| Support from my employer with time to study/complete assignments/off-the-job training | 49%     | 58%                        | 33%                               |
| Support from my employer with a workplace mentor/support networks                     | 36%     | 42%                        | 25%                               |
| Financial support e.g. childcare costs, transport costs, cost of resources            | 7%      | 7%                         | 6%                                |
| Practical support e.g. access to transport, childcare                                 | 4%      | 5%                         | 3%                                |
| Other, please specify   | 2%      | 2%                         | 4%                                |
| Not applicable – I did not receive any support beyond my training                     | 23%     | 14%                        | 38%                               |

Base: all valid responses (2221); completed apprenticeship (1411); did not complete apprenticeship (810)

Figures significantly higher than for the contrasting group are highlighted in red

## Qualitative insights

**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. For example, one ICT apprentice who withdrew stated that “there wasn’t any support or anything” when describing their training provider, and that “there wasn’t really any support” from their employer either.

**Practical support:** Those who completed their apprenticeship frequently reported receiving practical support which boosted their confidence in their abilities, as well as having a ‘go-to’ person available in the workplace during training. For example, one participant explained that they had a point of contact in their team which they found particularly useful:

“I had a rotation lead within my team, going to her every day, it was a 1-on-1 thing, which I know you don’t normally get at [university], not to the same level, anyway.” (L4/5 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice)

**Study support:** When it comes to study support, **those who completed their programmes reported experiencing a triangulated approach, with a 'go-to' person available both in their workplace and with their provider during training.** Key areas of support perceived as useful included regular one-to-ones with their employer or line manager, having mentors available in the workplace, training videos being available at larger companies, regular meetings with training providers, and small group tutorials where apprentices could network with their peers.

Respondents who withdrew did not tend to access any study support. However, some expressed frustration at having to participate in functional skills sessions, despite already having these qualifications (a point alluded to earlier in this report). This indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach to study support does not fit, since not all apprentices feel the need to participate in certain sessions. A minority of participants who withdrew also commented that while they were eventually offered study support, this came too late, once they had already fallen behind or failed an assignment. One exception to these findings is a respondent who commented that they had received a good level of support managing their dyslexia after this was identified through functional skills tests. This led to them receiving further support for the duration of their apprenticeship, although they later withdrew due to poor pay and working hours:

**"Having the key skills test, they found out I was dyslexic and I had work requirements, so again there was a bit of support there, which was never picked up at school or anything like that." (L2 business and commercial enterprise apprentice, withdrew)**

**Pastoral support:** Participants who completed their apprenticeship **typically reported a good level of pastoral support, particularly those working for large employers.** Some respondents commented on how large employers made pastoral support a normal part of their business, for example, by operating 'open door' policies or proactively offering wellbeing support. Participants who completed their apprenticeships also offered examples of pastoral support from their training providers, for example, bereavement support and extensions due to bereavement, support through a change of employer, and support with depression or other mental health challenges, including through one-to-one sessions and regular check-ins. However, this positive experience was not universal, with a minority of respondents who completed saying that pastoral support was not available, or that you had to proactively seek this out rather than being offered it.

**Participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship were less likely to give positive examples of pastoral support, although a minority did** – for example, one said that their training provider offered regular wellbeing check-ins. While some participants did not seek pastoral support or feel that they required this, others cited negative experiences; for example, one was offered an initial three-month extension due to mental health issues, but further extension requests were denied. This participant felt that their training provider should have been more proactive in offering support throughout the programme.

**Financial support:** A **lack of financial support** was cited both by participants who completed and withdrew from their apprenticeship, although **this did not appear to be a key factor contributing to withdrawal.** In particular, this related to support from their employer to cover travel costs or signposting the support available. For example, one participant described how they weren't any subsidised costs when they had to travel as part of their apprenticeship:

**"The place we used to have to go for our maths exams and our insurance exams were maybe an hour's drive away...Petrol, parking, you know, all of that... there was no support with that." (L2 accounting and finance apprentice, withdrew)**

## Support not to withdraw

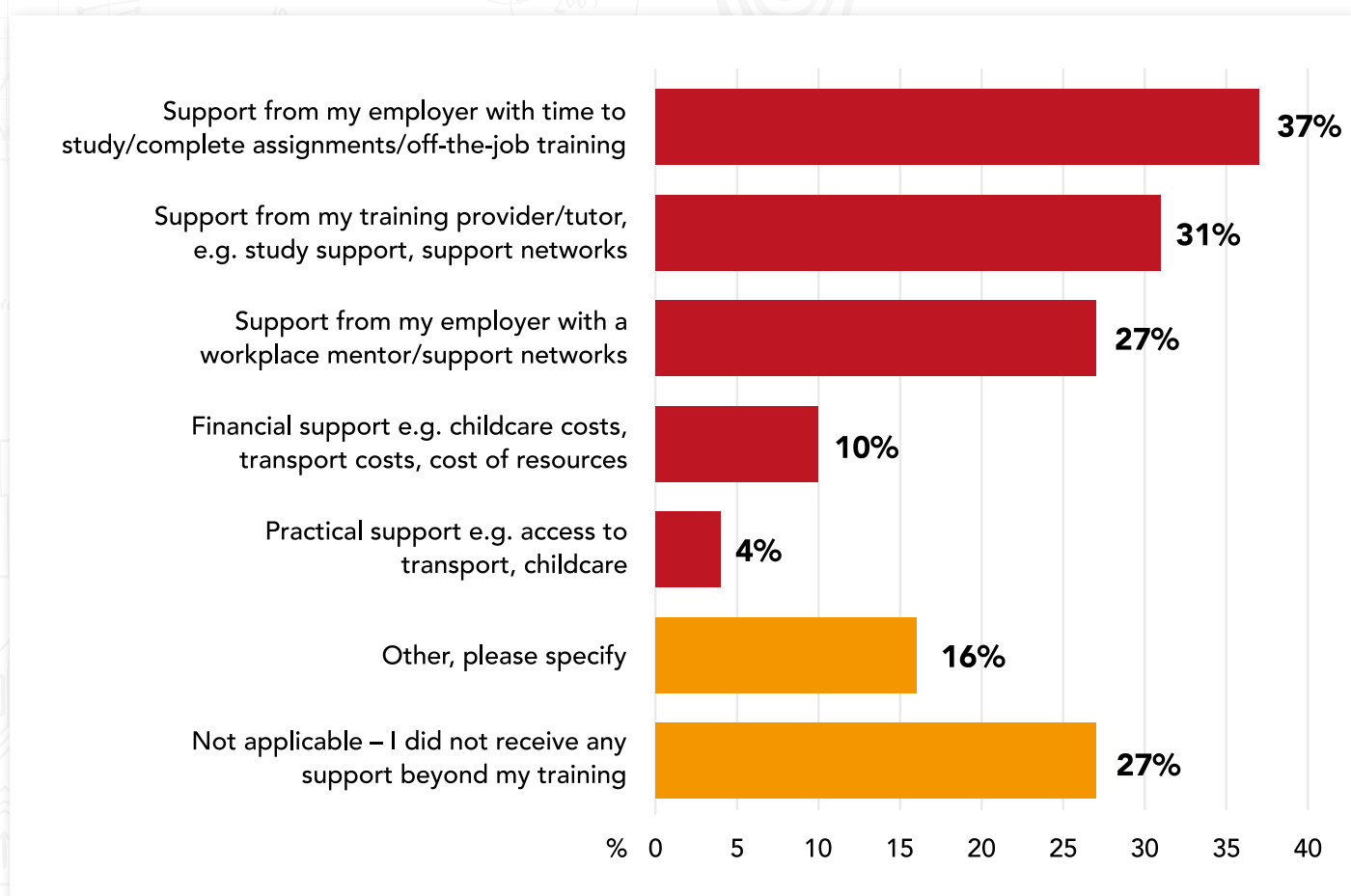
**Reflecting the findings for the previous question, the most important forms of support identified by survey respondents who withdrew from their apprenticeship related to direct support from their employer and training provider or tutor (see Figure 3).** This included support from their employer with time to study, complete assignments or for off-the job training (37 per cent); support from their training provider or tutor, e.g. study support or support networks (31 per cent); and support from their employer with a workplace mentor/support (27 per cent).

A further one in 10 respondents (10 per cent) indicated that financial support (e.g. with childcare or transport costs) would have encouraged them not to withdraw, while just four per cent of respondents cited practical support (e.g. with access to transport or childcare). It is worth considering that this research was undertaken with apprentices who were on their programmes up until 2020 – the cost-of-living crisis may mean that current apprentices view financial support as more critical.

An 'other' option was available for this question, which was selected by 16 per cent of respondents. When asked to specify, their responses included better pay, more guidance at the application stage, reducing their contractual work hours, better/more relevant course content, better/more supportive placements, better quality teaching/assessment, and that nothing/no specific support would have encouraged them not to withdraw.

An additional 27 per cent of respondents said that this was not applicable, as they did not receive any support beyond their training.

**Figure 3:** Support that would have encouraged respondents not to withdraw



Base: all respondents who stated that they withdrew from their apprenticeship at Q17 (663)  
Respondents could select as many answers as applied ('not applicable' exclusive)

### Subgroup differences

■ **Apprenticeship employer:** Respondents who did not already work for their employer before starting their apprenticeship were more likely to identify financial support as something that would have encouraged them not to withdraw than those who did (17 per cent compared to five per cent). This is consistent with the finding that this group were more likely to identify personal finances/low pay as a reason for withdrawing. They were also more likely to say that practical support, e.g. access to transport and childcare, would have encouraged them not to withdraw (seven per cent compared to three per cent).

- **Length of time on apprenticeship:** Respondents who were on their course for longer<sup>44</sup> were more likely to identify support from their training provider/tutor, for example with study support and support networks, as a factor that would have encouraged them not to withdraw.
- **Demographic factors:** Respondents with a disability or long-term health condition were more likely to say that support from their training provider would have prevented them from withdrawing (40 per cent, compared to 29 per cent with no disability or long-term health condition).

Younger respondents were more likely to identify a need for financial support<sup>45</sup>. This matches the finding that younger respondents were more likely to identify personal finances or low pay as a reason for withdrawal (discussed earlier in this report). Respondents from BAME ethnic groups were also more likely to say that financial support (20 per cent, compared to eight per cent of white respondents) and practical support (nine per cent, compared to four per cent of white respondents) would have encouraged them not to withdraw. However, due to low base sizes for BAME respondents this finding should be treated as indicative only<sup>46</sup>.

## Qualitative insights

Most interview participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship mentioned further support or guidance that they felt would have helped them to complete their programme. Some of the most common suggestions include:

### **Support from their employer with time off to study/complete assignments/complete off-the job training.**

Reflecting the survey responses, **this was one of the most frequently identified areas of support.** One participant suggested that employers should have to sign an agreement to allow apprentices adequate time off to study. Some also felt that employers would benefit from further guidance and training on how to support apprentices and apprentices' training requirements.

**Improved support from training providers.** As noted earlier in this report, participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship were less likely to be satisfied with the support that they received from their training providers. Areas of support they felt could be improved included, more support during the COVID-19 pandemic, including an allowance for extensions; support to address issues with their employers/work placements; and support to access the relevant resources to complete their portfolio. Some participants also felt training providers should have been more proactive in providing support and responding to concerns raised around the quality of their placements.

**Better alignment between employers and training providers.** As identified in the reasons for withdrawal section of this report, interview participants sometimes felt that their training provider and employer were not well aligned. Suggestions to improve this included ensuring there are opportunities to apply skills learned during their training when in role.

**Better quality training provision.** A minority of participants gave suggestions related to the quality of teaching and training provision, including tutors being more enthusiastic and the course content being more engaging or challenging. One participant also felt that they had too many tutors on their programme, some of whom seemed less experienced than others. They felt that they would have benefitted from having fewer tutors, or the provider ensuring effective handovers between tutors so that they were all aware of the requirements of the course.

**Access to pastoral support.** A minority of participants felt that more pastoral/wellbeing support would have helped to prevent them from withdrawing. In particular, one participant who experienced a bereavement during their programme noted that not being supported by their employer during this period was the biggest factor in their withdrawal. They said that check-ins with their employer and training provider would have helped them during this time:

<sup>44</sup> A Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the median length of time on an apprenticeship of respondents who selected each form of support.

<sup>45</sup> A Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare the median age of respondents who selected each form of support.

<sup>46</sup> Just 75 respondents to this question were from BAME groups. Findings based on a sample size of fewer than 100 respondents should be treated with caution.



"Just at any point during it, I think. Just someone to, sort of, check in and just be, like, 'is there anything you need? Are you worried about your training? Is there any way we can help you, or anything like that?' Just anything, but it was like, yes, I didn't have anything, really." (L3 engineering and manufacturing technologies apprentice, withdrew)

While only one example, this highlights the importance of having support and resources available for apprentices during difficult periods and ensuring that apprentices are adequately signposted to these. One apprentice also said that having a mentor in their workplace would have helped them during their programme, since they would have felt they had someone they could go to for support other than their line manager. Another felt that having opportunities to meet other apprentices so that they could support each other would have been helpful:

"So maybe getting, like, a group together, and you could have maybe got a bit of contact, you could have maybe helped each other out. You know, there was one girl who told me she was struggling with English, and I loved English and she loved maths, so maybe we could have actually helped each other study there." (L2 accounting and finance apprentice, withdrew)

### Suggestions to improve apprenticeship and support completion

Interview participants who both completed and withdrew from their programmes were asked how apprenticeships could be improved and how apprentices in general could be supported to complete their programme. Their most common suggestions included:

**Better communication:** Most interview participants suggested that **better communication overall would improve the apprenticeship experience and support completion**. Particular importance was placed on training providers providing individuals with sufficient information about their programme in advance of their apprenticeship. Specific suggestions for how this could be achieved included providing a 'road map' of the programme prior to starting, signposting to further information and support, and offering a full induction. A minority of participants also suggested providing less bureaucratic and more understandable documentation that is tailored to individual needs, such as those of more mature apprentices or those who left school aged 16:

"...making maybe some of the language used in a lot of the paperwork a little bit simpler. I found, personally, when I was reading through paperwork ... I did find quite a lot of big words that, at the time, I didn't understand." (L3 business and commercial enterprise apprentice, completed)

**Improved communication between employers and training providers:** Some participants felt that **employers and training providers should communicate and work more closely together** to gain a better understanding of each other's roles and how they interact as part of the apprenticeship. This point was commonly raised both by apprentices who completed and those who withdrew. Suggestions for how this could be achieved included introductory meetings between employers and training providers; training providers supplying employers with a schedule of modules and taught sessions up-front; and apprentices having a point of contact in their workplace who is also directly linked in with their training provider. A minority of respondents also felt that they would have benefitted from more regular informal check-ins from their training providers.

**Improved training quality and provision:** Regarding training providers, some participants suggested that apprenticeships could be improved by **better quality teaching; more tailoring to the needs of different age groups, roles and experience levels; and more differentiated delivery**, for example, by making training units more flexible and bespoke to the job role. A minority of apprentices also felt that there needed to be more face-to-face contact with their training providers and less online delivery of training. Suggestions around quality of training provision were more likely to be made by participants who withdrew from their apprenticeship, although a minority who completed also made these suggestions.

As noted earlier in this report, a change of training provider during the apprenticeship also affected participant experience, especially when there were stark differences between the support provided by each one. Interviewees suggested that more consistency in support from different training providers would increase apprentice satisfaction and reduce the chances of withdrawal.

**Improved oversight and regulation of apprenticeships:** Some apprentices felt that **improved regulation, particularly of employers, would help to improve the apprenticeship experience.** This was more commonly cited by those who withdrew, although a minority of apprentices who completed also referenced this. Specific suggestions included having an independent regulatory body/union to check in on apprentices and monitor apprenticeship quality, and independent or government enforcement to ensure that employers and training providers meet certain requirements:

**"I think government have to say training providers must do these steps and then employers must fulfil these criteria." (L3 arts, media and publishing apprentice, withdrew)**

A minority of apprentices also suggested having independent systems in place where they could raise issues, for example, around their employer not providing adequate study time.

**Higher pay for apprentices:** Although pay was not identified as a key factor in withdrawal, a minority of participants suggested that **the minimum wage for apprentices should be higher,** since they perceived the current wage as difficult to live off:

**"Don't put someone in the position I was in, where I could barely afford to make it to work." (L2 ICT apprentice, withdrew)**

Other suggestions made by a minority of participants included more opportunities to network, including support groups or online forums where they could communicate with other apprentices, and removing the maths and English functional skills requirements for those who already have the relevant qualifications because they felt unnecessary and that the time could be better used elsewhere.



## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

Much previous research exists on the benefits of completing an apprenticeship, including The St Martin's Group report into the 'Real Costs and Benefits of Apprenticeships' published last year. This research supports these earlier findings, determining that benefits are often more pronounced for those who complete their apprenticeships. In particular, the survey findings show that respondents who completed their programme were more likely to secure a permanent role or promotion with their apprenticeship employer, and are now more likely to be employed, to have received a pay rise, and to work in the same industry as their apprenticeship when compared to those who withdrew. They are also substantially more likely to agree that they are utilising what they learned during their apprenticeship in their current activity.

Even so, evidence in this research suggests that apprentices who withdraw from their programmes may still experience a range of benefits, including progression into employment and higher education opportunities and gaining technical and soft skills. For example, several interviewees who withdrew described how they had gained higher-level roles with different employers, and 31 per cent of survey respondents who withdrew agreed that they are currently utilising what they learnt in their apprenticeship. Further, although it cannot necessarily be concluded as a benefit of the programme, it should be noted that 57 per cent of those who did not complete their apprenticeship remained within the same industry that their apprenticeship was in, and 50 per cent with the same employer.

Some interview participants who had withdrawn from their apprenticeships explained the skills they had gained and the opportunities to network in their industries had benefitted them in their current roles. In a minority of cases, this had allowed them to move directly into other, higher-level opportunities immediately after withdrawing from their apprenticeship. While the findings from this report cannot be used to attribute outcomes directly to apprenticeship participation, this does suggest the picture is more complex than the current measure of apprenticeship programme quality allows for, i.e. whether an individual starts and finishes (achievement rate). This does suggest a need to include wider outcomes as success measures of apprenticeships, in addition to programme completion.

These findings highlight the importance of completions not only to the apprentice but also to the employer. The employer is more likely to retain and promote apprentice completers, helping to fill critical skills gaps and address vacancy challenges. Ensuring that apprentices are supported to complete their programmes is therefore critical, with a particular focus on groups identified as being more likely to withdraw – this includes those on higher level apprenticeships, working for micro-sized employers, whose employer changed during the programme, and older apprentices/those with a disability or long-term health condition. The average time survey respondents spent on their programme before withdrawing was between six months and one year, suggesting that this is a high-risk period for drop-outs.

The most common reasons apprentices give for withdrawing relate to negative experiences on their programme, including a lack of support from employer and training provider, high workload, a loss of interest or motivation and poor programme organisation. Also included in the top five common single reasons for withdrawing was being offered another job. Providing a high-quality experience is therefore essential in retaining apprentices on programme. It is also clear from the survey data that targeted interventions are needed as reasons for withdrawal vary significantly according to apprenticeship and demographic factors. For example, guidance for smaller employers, those taking on external apprentices, and employers in particular sectors. Furthermore, those undertaking apprenticeships at a higher level who were more likely to cite high workload as a reason for leaving, and for those being offered another job, there could be benefit from more flexibility in delivery and/or a modular approach.



The research findings also suggest that apprentices do not feel well informed about their programmes prior to starting, and that a mismatch between expectations and the apprenticeship experience are a contributing factor to withdrawal. This highlights a need for more detailed information and guidance for apprentices prior to starting their programme, including information about the EPA.

Direct support from employers and tutors/training providers was identified by research participants as particularly important, and as a factor which would encourage them not to withdraw. These findings emphasise the importance of apprentices having a key point of contact in their workplace and with their training provider to offer both pastoral and study support. The findings also highlight the importance of not taking a 'one size fits all' approach to support: while some interview participants did not feel they needed support and were frustrated at having to attend compulsory study support sessions, others, particularly those who withdrew, felt that they were offered support too late. Furthermore, the analysis indicates an association between younger age and a number of negative reasons for withdrawal suggesting further support interventions are required here.

A need for financial support came through less strongly in the findings, although this was viewed as more important by some groups, including younger respondents and those who did not already work for their employer. The current cost of living crisis is likely to make financial support more pertinent, and it will therefore be important to ensure that apprentices are adequately signposted to any financial support they can access. Further research will be required to identify how recent trends such as the cost of living crisis, the Great Resignation and changing working practices impact apprenticeship participation and completion.

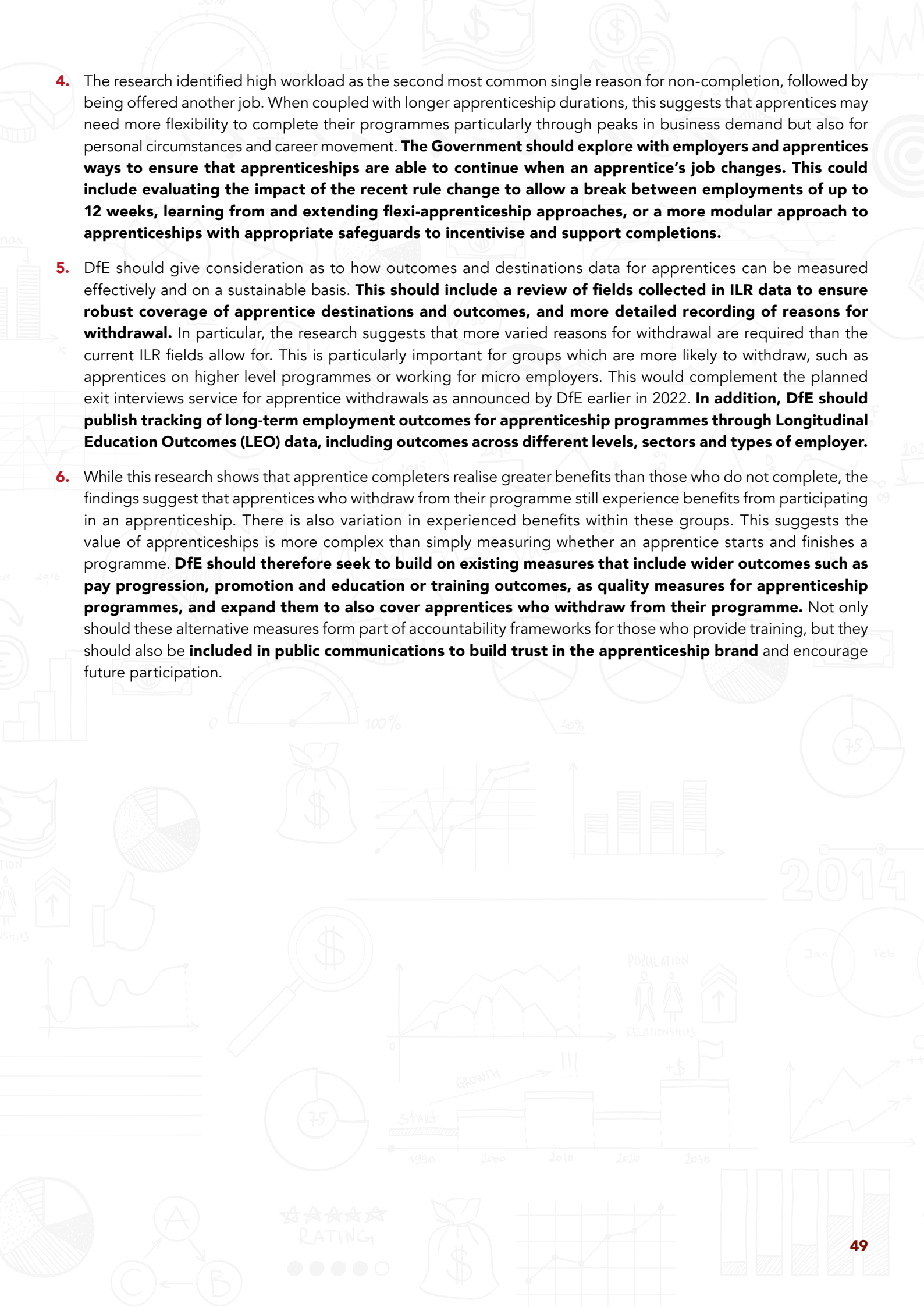
Interview participants offered several suggestions for improving apprenticeships, including more protected time for learning and training; better communication between employers and training providers; more and earlier communication on programme details and requirements; more opportunities for networking, support and mentoring; and support to access study resources and materials. These findings emphasise the importance of employers and training providers working together effectively to provide cohesive support and guidance for apprentices and ensure that they are able to meet their programme requirements. They also suggest that both employers and training providers need to be accountable for the quality of apprenticeship provision.

Overall, the findings lead us to a number of practical solutions that we can collectively work towards for improving the apprentice experience and completion rates of apprenticeships in England.

## Recommendations

1. The findings show that employer support is a key factor in enabling apprentices to remain engaged and to complete their programme. For example, it is important for employers to ensure that apprentices are given time for off-the-job training and to complete assignments, to encourage apprentices to complete their EPA and to proactively discuss progression and other goals with apprentices. **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, as well as additional support for apprentices working in smaller organisations. This could include incentive hiring payments, wage subsidies, and access to support networks.
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. Information should be practical, and cover what the training will involve (including assessments), the time that will need to be committed to the apprenticeship, and pay. Information should also be provided on the support available throughout the programme – particularly in relation to pastoral care and support networks.



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4. The research identified high workload as the second most common single reason for non-completion, followed by being offered another job. When coupled with longer apprenticeship durations, this suggests that apprentices may need more flexibility to complete their programmes particularly through peaks in business demand but also for personal circumstances and career movement. **The Government should explore with employers and apprentices ways to ensure that apprenticeships are able to continue when an apprentice's job changes. 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 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. This is particularly important for groups which are more likely to withdraw, such as apprentices on higher level programmes or working for micro employers. This would complement the planned exit interviews service for apprentice withdrawals as announced by DfE earlier in 2022. **In addition, DfE should publish tracking of long-term employment outcomes for apprenticeship programmes through Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data, including outcomes across different levels, sectors and types of employer.**
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. There is also variation in experienced benefits within these groups. This suggests the value of apprenticeships is more complex than simply measuring whether an apprentice starts and finishes a programme. **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.** Not only should these alternative measures form part of accountability frameworks for those who provide training, but they should also be **included in public communications to build trust in the apprenticeship brand** and encourage future participation.

## 7. Appendix/Supplementary information

**Appendix 1:** Survey respondent profile

| Respondent characteristics            |  | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) <sup>47</sup> |
|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Year of completion/ withdrawal</b> | 2017/18  | 32%                      | 33%                                 |
|                                       | 2018/19  | 11%                      | 11%                                 |
|                                       | 2019/20  | 58%                      | 56%                                 |
| <b>Apprenticeship outcome</b>         | I completed my training and passed the End Point Assessment                                    | 57%                      | 62%                                 |
|                                       | I withdrew from my apprenticeship and did not complete the programme                           | 23%                      | 25%                                 |
|                                       | Other did not complete   | 6%                       | 7%                                  |
|                                       | Still on course/ not yet finished  | 6%                       | -                                   |
|                                       | I completed my training but withdrew before taking the End Point Assessment                    | 3%                       | 3%                                  |
|                                       | I completed the professional qualification but withdrew before taking the End Point Assessment | 2%                       | 2%                                  |
|                                       | I completed my training, but did not pass the End Point Assessment                             | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
|                                       | Other complete   | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
|                                       | Other  | 1%                       | -                                   |
|                                       | Don't know   | 2%                       | -                                   |
|                                       | Total complete   | 58%                      | 64%                                 |
|                                       | Total withdrew   | 33%                      | 37%                                 |

<sup>47</sup> 'Valid sample' refers to respondents who either completed or withdrew early from their apprenticeship, excluding those who indicated that they were still on their course, that they did not know, or that they had sustained a different outcome.

| Respondent characteristics         |   | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) <sup>47</sup> |
|------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Apprenticeship Level</b>        | Level 2 (Intermediate)                                      | 26%                      | 27%                                 |
|                                    | Level 3 (Advanced)  | 39%                      | 39%                                 |
|                                    | Level 4 or 5 (Higher)                                       | 17%                      | 16%                                 |
|                                    | Level 6 or 7 (Non-degree)                                   | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
|                                    | Level 6 or 7 (Degree)                                       | 8%                       | 7%                                  |
|                                    | Don't know  | 10%                      | 10%                                 |
| <b>Apprenticeship subject area</b> | Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care                   | 1                        | 1%                                  |
|                                    | Arts, Media and Publishing                                  | 1                        | 1%                                  |
|                                    | Business, Administration and Law                            | 30%                      | 30%                                 |
|                                    | Construction, Planning and the Built Environment            | 2%                       | 2%                                  |
|                                    | Education and Training                                      | 4%                       | 4%                                  |
|                                    | Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies                  | 6%                       | 6%                                  |
|                                    | Health, Public Services and Care                            | 22%                      | 21%                                 |
|                                    | Information and Communication Technology                    | 6%                       | 6%                                  |
|                                    | Leisure, Travel and Tourism                                 | 3%                       | 3%                                  |
|                                    | Retail and Commercial Enterprise                            | 23%                      | 24%                                 |
|                                    | Science and Mathematics                                     | 1%                       | 2%                                  |
|                                    | Don't know  | 1%                       | -                                   |
|                                    |   |                          |                                     |
| <b>Employer size</b>               | Micro (1-9 employees)                                       | 9%                       | 9%                                  |
|                                    | Small (10-49 employees)                                     | 12%                      | 13%                                 |
|                                    | Medium (50-249 employees)                                   | 10%                      | 11%                                 |
|                                    | Large (250+ employees)                                      | 62%                      | 62%                                 |
|                                    | Don't know  | 6%                       | 5%                                  |
| <b>Existing employee?</b>          | Yes, I was an existing employee                             | 58%                      | 58%                                 |
|                                    | No, I did not work there before I started my apprenticeship | 41%                      | 42%                                 |
|                                    | Don't know  | 1%                       | -                                   |
| <b>Change to employer</b>          | Yes   | 6%                       | 6%                                  |
|                                    | No  | 93%                      | 93%                                 |
|                                    | Don't know  | 1%                       | 1%                                  |

<sup>47</sup> 'Valid sample' refers to respondents who either completed or withdrew early from their apprenticeship, excluding those who indicated that they were still on their course, that they did not know, or that they had sustained a different outcome.

| Respondent characteristics                      |                                  | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) <sup>47</sup> |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Training provider</b>                        | A university                     | 10%                      | 8%                                  |
|   | An independent training provider | 48%                      | 50%                                 |
|   | A college                        | 17%                      | 18%                                 |
|   | Your employer                    | 18%                      | 18%                                 |
|   | Other                            | 2%                       | 2%                                  |
|   | Don't know                       | 5%                       | 4%                                  |
| <b>Change to training provider</b>              | Yes                              | 19%                      | 18%                                 |
|   | No                               | 76%                      | 77%                                 |
|   | Don't know                       | 5%                       | 5%                                  |
| <b>Gender</b>                                   | Female                           | 64%                      | 64%                                 |
|   | Male                             | 34%                      | 34%                                 |
|   | In another way                   | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
|   | Prefer not to say                | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
| <b>Current age</b>                              | 16–18                            | <1%                      | <1%                                 |
|   | 19–24                            | 30%                      | 30%                                 |
|   | 25–30                            | 19%                      | 20%                                 |
|   | 31–40                            | 22%                      | 21%                                 |
|   | 41–50                            | 15%                      | 15%                                 |
|   | 51–60                            | 10%                      | 10%                                 |
|   | 61+                              | 2%                       | 2%                                  |
|   | Prefer not to say                | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                                | White/White British              | 85%                      | 86%                                 |
|   | Black/Black British              | 4%                       | 4%                                  |
|   | Asian/Asian British              | 5%                       | 5%                                  |
|   | Mixed                            | 3%                       | 3%                                  |
|   | Other                            | 1%                       | 1%                                  |
|   | Prefer not to say                | 2%                       | 2%                                  |
| <b>Disability or long-term health condition</b> | Yes                              | 14%                      | 14%                                 |
|   | No                               | 83%                      | 83%                                 |
|   | Prefer not to say                | 4%                       | 4%                                  |

<sup>47</sup> 'Valid sample' refers to respondents who either completed or withdrew early from their apprenticeship, excluding those who indicated that they were still on their course, that they did not know, or that they had sustained a different outcome.



| Respondent characteristics      |  | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) <sup>47</sup> |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Region</b>                   | North                                    | 27%                      | 27%                                 |
|                                 | South                                    | 30%                      | 30%                                 |
|                                 | Midlands/East of England                 | 30%                      | 30%                                 |
|                                 | Postcode not disclosed/no postcode match | 13%                      | 13%                                 |
| <b>IMD decile</b> <sup>48</sup> | 1–5                                      | 50%                      | 50%                                 |
|                                 | 6–10                                     | 37%                      | 37%                                 |
|                                 | Postcode not disclosed/no postcode match | 13%                      | 13%                                 |

Base: all responses (2427); valid responses (2221)

## Appendix 2: Interview respondent profile

| Respondent characteristics             |                           | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Year of completion / withdrawal</b> | 2017/2018                 | 8                        | 6                     |
|  | 2018/2019                 | 3                        | 3                     |
|  | 2019/2020                 | 9                        | 9                     |
| <b>Apprenticeship level</b>            | Level 2                   | 3                        | 3                     |
|  | Level 3                   | 7                        | 7                     |
|  | Level 4 or 5              | 6                        | 5                     |
|  | Level 6 or 7 (Non-degree) | 2                        | 0                     |
|  | Level 6 or 7 (Degree)     | 2                        | 3                     |
| <b>Employer size</b>                   | Micro/small               | 6                        | 3                     |
|  | Medium                    | 6                        | 6                     |
|  | Large                     | 8                        | 9                     |
| <b>Change to employer</b>              | Yes                       | 5                        | 4                     |
|  | No                        | 15                       | 14                    |

<sup>47</sup> 'Valid sample' refers to respondents who either completed or withdrew early from their apprenticeship, excluding those who indicated that they were still on their course, that they did not know, or that they had sustained a different outcome.

<sup>48</sup> IMD refers to 'Index of Multiple Deprivation', the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. Deprivation deciles are calculated by ranking all neighbourhoods in England from the most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally (ranked as 1) to the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally (ranked as 10). [See English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK.](#)

| Respondent characteristics                      |  | % of total sample (2427) | % valid sample (2221) |
|---|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Training provider</b>                        | A university                             | 2                        | 2                     |
|   | An independent training provider         | 12                       | 11                    |
|   | A college                                | 2                        | 4                     |
|   | Your employer                            | 4                        | 0                     |
|   | Other                                    | 0                        | 1                     |
| <b>Change to training provider</b>              | Yes                                      | 6                        | 6                     |
|   | No                                       | 14                       | 12                    |
| <b>Gender</b>                                   | Women                                    | 11                       | 9                     |
|   | Men                                      | 8                        | 8                     |
|   | Other                                    | 1                        | 1                     |
| <b>Age</b>                                      | 19–24                                    | 6                        | 6                     |
|   | 25–30                                    | 7                        | 4                     |
|   | 31–40                                    | 5                        | 6                     |
|   | 41–50                                    | 1                        | 1                     |
|   | 51–60                                    | 1                        | 1                     |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                                | White                                    | 13                       | 12                    |
|   | Black/Black British                      | 3                        | 1                     |
|   | Asian/Asian British                      | 2                        | 2                     |
|   | Mixed                                    | 2                        | 2                     |
|   | Prefer not to say                        | 0                        | 1                     |
| <b>Disability or long-term health condition</b> | Yes                                      | 5                        | 6                     |
|   | No                                       | 15                       | 12                    |
| <b>Region</b>                                   | North                                    | 7                        | 5                     |
|   | Midlands                                 | 7                        | 4                     |
|   | South                                    | 6                        | 8                     |
|   | Postcode not disclosed/no postcode match | 0                        | 1                     |
| <b>IMD<sup>48</sup> decile</b>                  | 1–5                                      | 11                       | 9                     |
|   | 6–10                                     | 9                        | 8                     |
|   | Postcode not disclosed/no postcode match | 0                        | 1                     |
| <b>Total interviews</b>                         |  | <b>20</b>                | <b>18</b>             |

<sup>48</sup> IMD refers to 'Index of Multiple Deprivation', the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. Deprivation deciles are calculated by ranking all neighbourhoods in England from the most deprived to least deprived and dividing them into 10 equal groups. These range from the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally (ranked as 1) to the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally (ranked as 10). [See English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK.](#)

## 8. About



The St Martin's Group is a unique membership organisation created to support the UK economy by fostering a sustainable, quality-focused and employer-led apprenticeship and skills system.

Launched in 2018, the Group brings together stakeholders from some of the UK's leading employers, training providers and awarding organisations from across all sectors and levels of qualification, which together are representative of these pillars of the UK's skills delivery infrastructure. Since 2021, with encouragement from key stakeholders, the Group has expanded its aims to include the wider adult funded skills market.

These efforts will ensure the Group and its members are able to promote increasing collaboration and engagement in the sector for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Collectively, The St Martin's Group encompasses the views of employers, training providers and awarding organisations. Being representative of these pillars of the UK's skills delivery infrastructure, provides it with unique insight, expertise and knowledge to address the current and long-term issues and ambitions of the sector.



Learning and Work Institute is an independent policy, research and development organisation dedicated to lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion.

We research what works, develop new ways of thinking and implement new approaches. Working with partners, we transform people's experiences of learning and employment. What we do benefits individuals, families, communities and the wider economy.