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# APPRENTICESHIP **DIVERSITY** CHAMPIONS — NETWORK —

**2022-23 Annual Report**  
February 2023



# Foreword

## The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP: Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education



I am passionate about apprenticeships and the benefits they bring to individuals and to businesses. Apprenticeships develop people with the skills employers need and benefit the economy. They provide a route into a good job and a successful and fulfilling career. And they are open to all. In this way apprenticeships serve social justice; they provide a first rung on the ladder of opportunity for those who want to demonstrate their potential directly in a job – different to other routes. Employers who embrace diversity are rewarded. Disabled employees stay in their jobs 3.5 times longer than non-disabled co-workers<sup>1</sup> and more diverse companies see 38% more of their revenue come from innovative products and services<sup>2</sup>.

That is why I am pleased to introduce the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN) annual report during National Apprenticeships Week 2023. This year's theme is [Skills for Life](#), which is all about unlocking what people need for their future career through the right training, support and advice – whatever their background. As we celebrate the great things apprenticeships do, I want to recognise the dedication and hard work of the ADCN's members and extend my thanks to them. Employers on the ADCN are proving why diversity in apprenticeships matters – and why this Government is so committed to it.

This report shares members' wealth of knowledge and their lived experience in championing apprenticeships to a broader range of people. It contains tried and tested good practice and case studies to tap into new talent and fresh perspectives and shows how other employers can benefit in the same way. It shows how you can set apprentices up for success.

Whether you have one apprentice or one thousand, diversifying your apprenticeship programme will not only strengthen your workforce, but provide potentially life-changing opportunities for the apprentices you employ. I believe the good practice and recommendations highlighted in this report provide some great pointers to taking the next step. From setting up an apprentice buddy system to settle in new recruits, to changing the way you use data to monitor diversity, there is something for employers of every size and sector.

This government will also help you to get the most out of apprenticeships. We are continuing to improve the quality of apprenticeships. We are providing [flexible models](#) that reflect modern forms of employment and are supporting SMEs through all aspects of their apprenticeship journey, from recruiting the best candidates to finding the right training provider.

I am delighted to celebrate the ADCN's work to champion diversity and apprenticeships. But I want to finish with a simple call to action: what steps will you take this year to increase diversity in your apprentice workforce? If you're not sure where to begin, I hope the success stories in this report inspire and guide you.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.smarttar.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/top\\_tips\\_for\\_small\\_employers\\_-\\_a\\_guide\\_to\\_employing\\_disabled\\_people.pdf](http://www.smarttar.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/top_tips_for_small_employers_-_a_guide_to_employing_disabled_people.pdf), Disability Rights Commission (2015)

<sup>2</sup> [The mix that matters](#), Boston Consulting Group

# ADCN Member Organisations

The following organisations are part of the ADCN. Organisations in bold chaired this year's working groups.

RNLI

Coca Cola

European Partnership

South West City Farm

University of Leicester

## **Labcorp**

Anchor Hanover

London Fire Brigade

Royal Shakespeare Company

Lancashire Constabulary

Brother UK Limited

CGI

HM Prison & Probation Service

G4S

Frimley Health NHS

Foundation Trust

The Royal Navy

Sussex Partnership NHS

Foundation Trust

Canal and Rivers Trust

Clarion Housing Group

Cheshire Constabulary

HIT Training

Avon and

Somerset Constabulary

Bauer Media

Equal Engineers

National Trust

Superdrug

Persimmon Homes

## **Resource Productions**

Thames Valley Police

## **Transport for London**

Leadership Through Sport

Lancashire and South Cumbria

NHS Foundation Trust

ITV

Channel 4

Buckinghamshire Fire  
& Rescue Service

XPO Logistics

Washwood Heath Academy

Pets at Home

Christeyns

Colas Rail

Bombardier

Shropshire Council

Nottingham City Homes

University of Birmingham

## **Connectr**

Walsall Council

Siemens

Asda

BAE Systems

Barclays

## **BBC**

Brighton & Hove City Council

Bristol City Council

DiVA films

Rolls Royce

Compass Group

UK & Ireland Ltd

Kier Group

Hampshire Hospitals NHS  
Foundation Trusts

## **Health Education England**

KPMG

## **Lloyds Banking Group**

NG Bailey

Worldskills

Northumberland Tyne & Wear

NHS Foundation Trust

Staffordshire University

The Atomic

Weapons Establishment

Uniper

Corndel

The Co-op Group

Lookers

DFDS

Cell and Gene

Therapy Catapult

Birmingham Women's

& Children's NHS

Foundation Trust

Coventry City Council

Great Ormond Street Hospital

## **Crimson**

Doosan Babcock

United Utilities

Brunelcare

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# Executive Summary

This year's report highlights the good progress made towards increased diversity in apprenticeships as well as identifying some remaining areas of challenge. It looks in greater depth at five key areas to understand both this progress and remaining barriers to creating apprenticeship opportunities and attracting diverse candidates to them.

Members draw on their experiences and those of their networks to propose solutions all employers can implement. This is brought to life through links to resources, inspirational apprentice stories and case studies of employer best practice. The ADCN remains committed to championing apprenticeships and increasing diversity and encourages you too to take the next step.

## Key themes

	<p><b>Grow your knowledge; improve your programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Several groups found that employers struggle to know where to start with apprenticeships and diversity. There is however a wealth of guidance and support out there for employers.</li><li>• Resources are highlighted in the chapters of this report to enable you to grow your knowledge and move forward with apprenticeships.</li></ul>
	<p><b>Equip yourself with data to spot challenges and monitor impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Data can be key to exposing challenges and monitoring the impact of your interventions, but some groups found that it can be hard to know the right data to collect and scrutinize.</li><li>• The report offers practical suggestions about the data to collect, and suggestions on how it can inform your apprenticeships strategy.</li></ul>
	<p><b>Collaborate and communicate</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Some groups found that different people perceive apprenticeships in different ways. By reaching out to the right groups and influencers you can attract new talent.</li><li>• Others highlighted the benefits of working in partnership with your training provider or other employers to get the best out of the apprenticeships programme.</li><li>• The report also underlines the importance of good communication within your organisation to set clear expectations for apprentices, make sure they are well supported, and that everyone in the business knows the value of an apprenticeship.</li></ul>

# About the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network

## Who We Are

The ADCN is an employer-led network of over 90 members drawn from a range of sectors and different sizes of organisation. Members recognise the benefits of growing a more diverse workforce, both for their organisation and their employees – including their apprentices.

## Our Mission

Members of the ADCN are committed to taking action to widen participation in apprenticeships, champion diversity and support greater social mobility. Employers are integral to delivering a national apprenticeship programme that is for people of all backgrounds. Members strive to deliver this themselves, and to shine a light on effective practice so that others can follow where they lead. This includes demonstrating how employers can encourage more people from a range of backgrounds to consider an apprenticeship and how they can best support individuals to thrive once their apprenticeship has started.

## About this Report

This year, ADCN members have pursued five priority areas, which are covered in the chapters that follow. In each of these areas, members have sought to identify the challenges facing apprentices and employers and offer practical suggestions for how these can be addressed. Their suggestions are designed so that other apprentice employers can replicate these on their own journey to realising increased workforce diversity.

Members chose these priorities because they felt these were areas where there were still considerable challenges or where providing additional information and support could make a real difference on the ground.

The five areas are:

- Social mobility
- Participation by individuals with a learning difficulty or disability
- Progression into and through apprenticeships
- Participation by individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Women in STEM sector roles

Four of these priorities continue the ADCN's work from 2021-22. Social mobility is a new focus this year. The ADCN recognises that this is not an exhaustive list and that employers will be supporting many other kinds of diversity.

# Social Mobility

## Progress this Year

ADCN members felt it was important to have social mobility as a new priority this year. They recognised the benefits apprenticeships can provide to those from disadvantaged backgrounds by offering a paid and non-degree route to high skills, and a bigger earnings boost than apprentices from higher socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>3</sup>

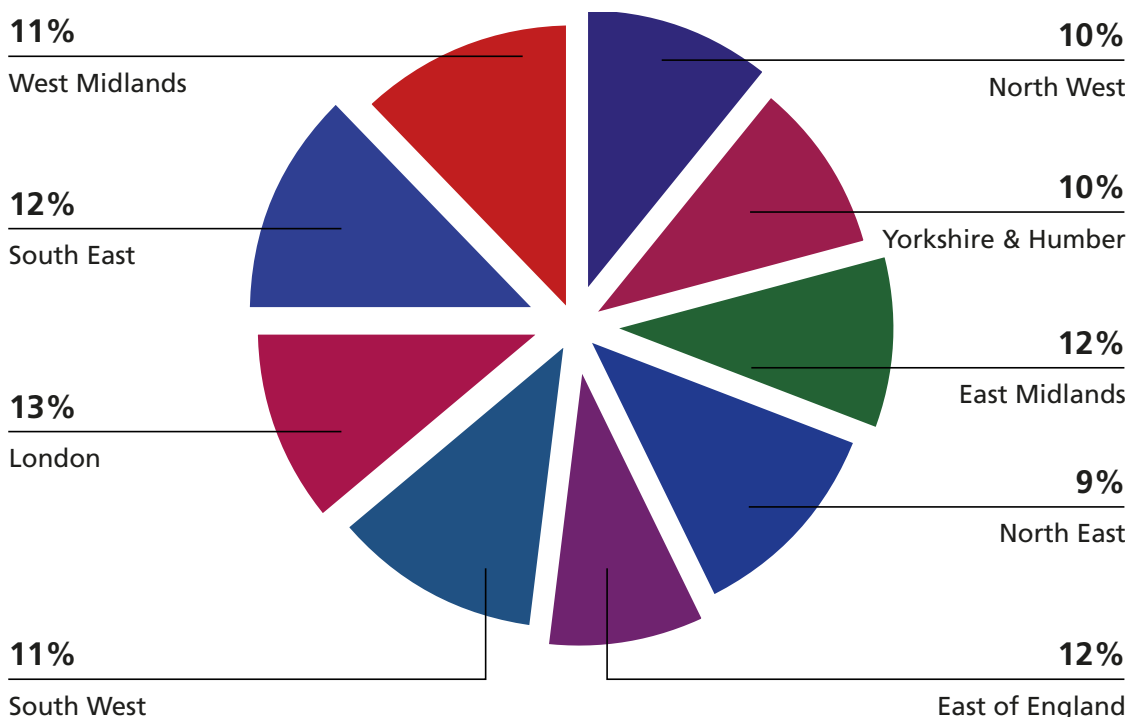
## ADCN Working Group Findings

Social mobility is a broad topic, so the working group, led by Labcorp's Robert Watts, decided to focus on three key areas to review if and how companies currently link their apprenticeship programmes and social mobility:

1. How and why companies record social mobility data;
2. How companies use social mobility aims and data to structure their recruitment strategies; and
3. Whether social mobility is factored into decision making around accessibility and pay for apprentices.

The group formulated a survey to gain insight into these areas. The survey was well received, and the group were able to gain insights from a range of organisations of different sizes and across a variety of industries and locations. Similar proportions of responses were received from private and public sector organisations.

### Regions respondees' businesses operate\*



\*Businesses who operate in multiple regions could select multiple answers.

<sup>3</sup> [Toolkit: Apprenticeships that work for all - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/toolkits/apprenticeships-that-work-for-all)

# Transport for London (TfL): Data Collection

## The Challenge

To be representative of the city we serve and support those most economically impacted by the pandemic, we wanted to understand our performance in hiring apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Metrics were key to understanding the current position and where to make improvements. We had no data available to analyse socio-economically disadvantaged candidates or to review how different groups performed through assessment and selection.



## The Solution

We reviewed local labour market data to understand which groups were most impacted by the pandemic, as well as those who already faced barriers into employment and within education. We then reviewed various possible metrics and considered what would be most relevant for our organisation using the Social Mobility Commission's Apprenticeship Toolkit.

We chose not to use the common measure of parents' occupation and instead introduced new metrics at the application stage of the recruitment process including:

1. Those receiving free school meals as a statutory benefit.
2. Those that had been unemployed for 12 months or more.
3. Those that were not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

## The Impact

Having introduced these metrics in the 2022/3 recruitment campaign, we could identify that 22% of hired apprentices were candidates who had been eligible for free school meals. This compared to nationally 22.5% of pupils eligible for secondary school free school meals based on statutory benefit in 2022, up from 13.6% in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

We established that 17% of apprentices hired were not in education, employment or training which compared to 12.1% in London for 16 – 24-year-olds (2021 published data) and 10.6% nationally (July 2022 published data).<sup>5</sup>

Finally, just short of 8% of those hired into TfL Apprenticeships had been unemployed for 12 months or more compared to 1% nationally as of July 2022.<sup>6</sup>

We are now doing further analysis to understand the impact of attraction through selection to help shape ongoing recruitment campaigns. This will continually inform TfL's approach to engagement with schools. This targets those with a high percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals, ensuring effective links to employability programmes for those with barriers to work, and informing any further improvements to our selection process.

<sup>4</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/statistics-neeet>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/employmentintheuk/july2022>



## 1. Recording of Social Mobility Data

Recording social mobility data is an essential foundation for any organisation's social mobility strategy. Knowledge of your workforce's socioeconomic backgrounds allows you to evaluate the effectiveness of any pro-social mobility initiatives.

Concerningly, only 29% of survey respondents reported that they record any type of social mobility data for their apprentices, and this fell to 17% when it came to recording social mobility data for existing staff undertaking an apprenticeship. In some cases, this could suggest that even where social mobility data is being collected for apprentices, it is not being collected in the wider workforce. This could make it difficult to assess the impact an apprenticeship programme is having on an organisation's workforce diversity.

The group identified that a lack of understanding about what data to collect and how to collect it was a barrier preventing organisations from recording social mobility data. The survey found the majority of participants were not familiar with existing resources that support approaches to data collection.

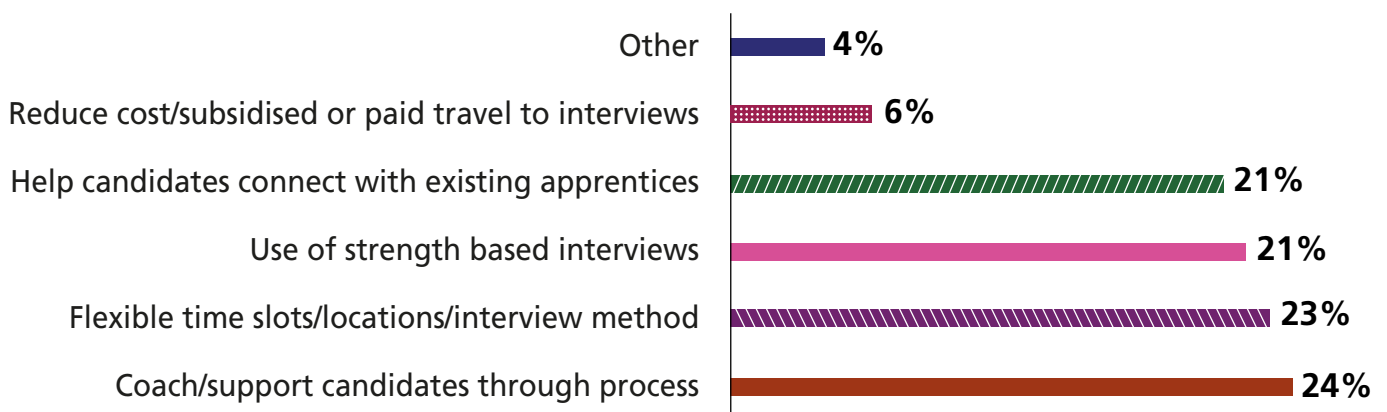
**Recommendation 1:** employers should utilise existing resources such as the Social Mobility Commission's Apprenticeships Toolkit to better understand how, when and why to collect social mobility data on their apprentices and wider workforce.

## 2. Recruitment Strategies for Social Mobility

The survey showed positive findings on recruitment with 56% of respondents who said they had made adaptations to selection processes to make them more accessible to a wider range of candidates. Another positive finding was that 65% of respondents had actively adapted their recruitment processes to reach a wider and more diverse pool of candidates. Respondents did this either by having a variety of career events or by working directly with schools and colleges.

However, many respondents reported that they still rely predominantly on job boards and social media to advertise roles. This can exclude certain sectors of society with less access to digital forums.

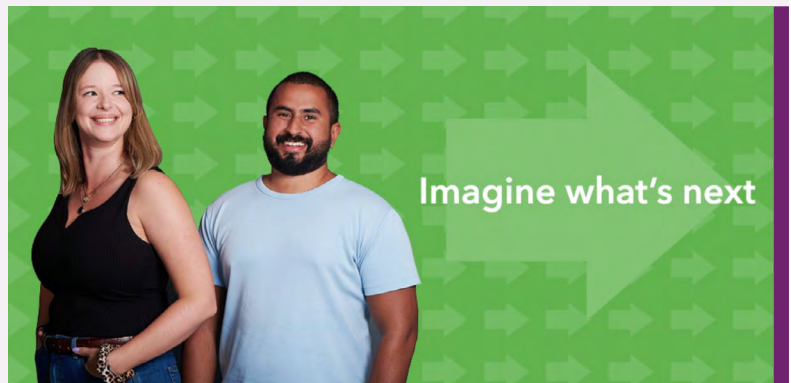
### Adaptations to selection process to support social mobility



# Lloyds Banking Group: Recruitment and Talent Pipeline

## The Challenge

Lloyds Banking Group like many other organisations, especially with a high number of digital roles, are facing the challenge of needing to recruit to jobs that five years ago hadn't existed. Sadly, the organisation recognises that whereas talent is born equally, opportunity is not and young people from middle class backgrounds are 80% more likely to progress into advanced education and professions than working class children.<sup>7</sup>



## The Solution

Lloyds Banking Group decided to develop and implement a range of new developments to support their recruitment process and talent pipeline:

- For the majority of higher and degree apprenticeships they trialed removing academic qualifications as a requirement to acknowledge the impact of the pandemic, particularly on the most disadvantaged.
- In 2021 they introduced virtual work experience – a two day immersive experience involving skills-building, business simulations and interaction with apprentices and graduates. All schools participating have above national average levels of students on Free School Meals and Pupil Premium.
- Lloyds Banking Group switched to virtual assessments to avoid travel costs as well as enabling interview in local offices for those without the space or tech to do this from home. They also offer support and guidance to candidates on how to 'be your best' in the recruitment process to level the playing field for all candidates.

## The Impact

Lloyds Banking Group hire on strength and skill and the organisation has found that the number of applications that progress for apprenticeship roles from those without academic qualifications has increased. Their wider application 'net' has avoided excluding these potential colleagues. Positive feedback from the 2022 New Starter Survey included: 'I was able to show my genuine passion and interest' – 'Each stage of the recruitment process was easily accessible.'

<sup>7</sup> [Class privilege remains entrenched as social mobility stagnates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/class-privilege-remains-entrenched-as-social-mobility-stagnates)

The group identified pockets of good practice in recruitment strategies which support social mobility. They noted however that recruitment interventions can be disjointed and are not always linked to a wider social mobility strategy, nor informed by social mobility data – with 65% of respondents saying social mobility data played no role in informing their recruitment and selection strategy.

**Recommendation 2:** employers should embed social mobility into recruitment and selection strategies, ensuring there is a clear link between their recruitment and selection practices and the intended impact on social mobility within their workforce.

The group recommended again that employers utilise the [Social Mobility Commission's Apprenticeships Toolkit](#) to support development of recruitment and selection strategies.

### 3. Impact of Wages on Social Mobility

When discussing social mobility, wages and economic stability are often considered as an *output*, rather than an *input* – in that an individual who has achieved positive social mobility will achieve higher wages and economic stability as a result. When considering social mobility in the context of apprenticeships, though, the group emphasised the importance of viewing wages as a vehicle for social mobility.

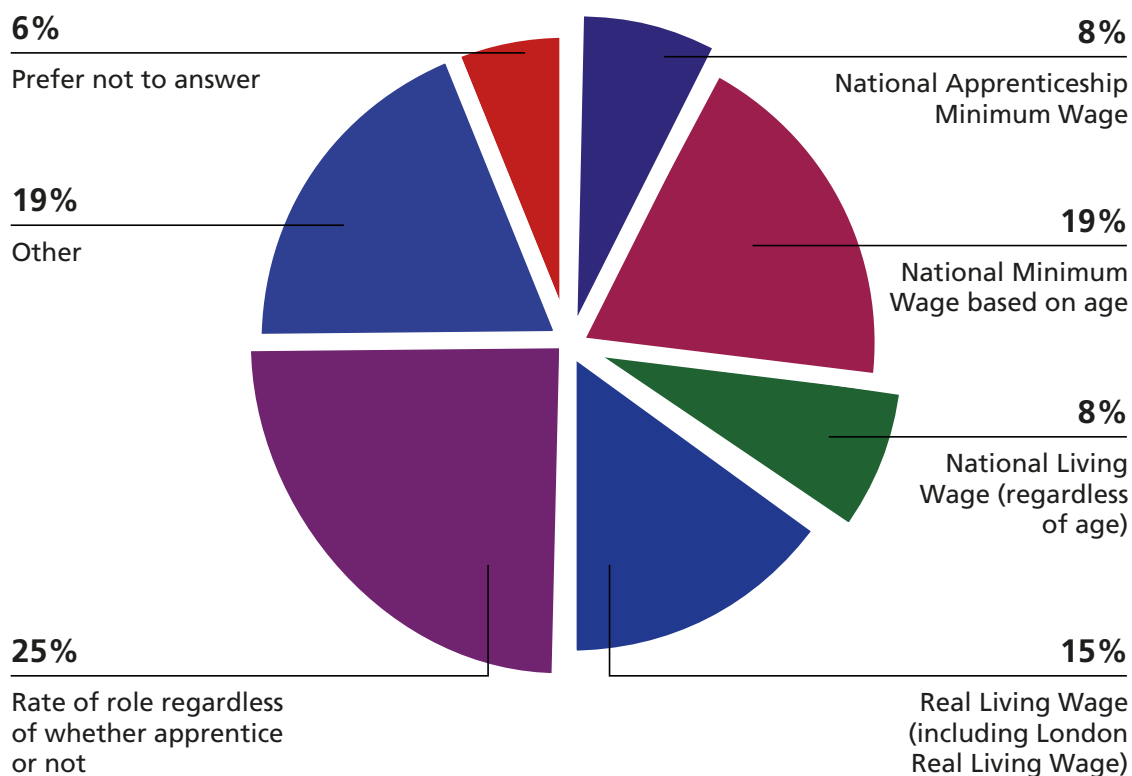
There is a wide evidence base to suggest that completing an apprenticeship boosts an individual's earnings potential across their lifetime.<sup>8</sup>

For individuals to reap the benefits of an apprenticeship, it needs to be a viable employment option for that individual. The group recognised individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds will be considering wages and economic factors when deciding on training and employment options.

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<sup>8</sup> [Apprenticeships and social mobility: fulfilling potential - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

## How do you set pay rate for newly hired apprentices?



71% of survey respondents said they **did not** consider social mobility when setting wages for their apprentices. However, the majority of respondents reported paying their apprentices the usual rate for the role they were hired into, with just 8% paying the Apprentice Minimum Wage.

Separate to wages, some employers reported other types of financial support offered to their apprentices, such as subsidised travel costs to support them to get to work.

The group felt that wages and financial support are too often overlooked by employers wanting to improve social mobility within their workforce. As well as low wages and economic uncertainty acting as a barrier for some individuals to access apprenticeships, they may also hinder retention of apprentices, leading to higher turnover and increased costs for employers.

**Recommendation 3:** employers should include apprentice wages and benefits in their wider social mobility strategy to ensure decisions around pay support - rather than hinder - wider efforts to drive social mobility in their workforce.

The group recommends that employers access advice and information around apprenticeship wages and social mobility through [The Apprentice Decent Wage Pledge](#) and the [Social Mobility Commission's Apprenticeships Toolkit](#)

The approach some of the employers took included:

**“** *We're committed to paying our apprentices fairly for the contribution they make to the firm and have ensured a decent wage by creating an apprenticeship salary framework so all of our apprentices are paid above the minimum rate set by the Government from day one.*

*This framework is structured around the apprenticeship qualification levels. The decent wage pledge has already allowed us to increase our apprenticeship opportunities and will continue to do so as we strive to meet our target of 6% of our employees on apprenticeships by 2025.* **”**

**Hattie Fletcher,**  
HR Business Partner



**“** *At Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, we pledge that all of our Early Career apprentices joining the organisation regardless of age or programme would receive above the National Living Wage and that they receive an annual salary increase in line with the wider organisation. They receive the same additional benefits as all employees, which means that they are treated equally.*

*The difference that this has made to our apprentices, is that they feel valued and motivated to not only join our programmes but to stay within the organisation once their apprenticeships have concluded.* **”**

**Sharon Blyfield OBE,**  
Head of Early Careers & Apprenticeships GB



**“** *CSR Scientific Training enthusiastically back the decent wage pledge and are proud to have worked with Rob Watts to facilitate the launch of the wage pledge campaign.*

*As an apprenticeship training provider, we have seen a huge increase in employer engagement with apprenticeship programmes since the global pandemic. This has led to large numbers of apprenticeship vacancies across the country. Sadly, some of these vacancies have not been filled due to a lack of suitable candidates. Many of the organisations that have joined the decent wage pledge have reported that they seldom find it difficult to fill their vacancies and the quality of the individuals applying has been high. Ensuring that low wages do not act as a bar to individuals looking to engage with work based learning will allow apprenticeships to reach their full potential. This will support skills development and workforce growth, which is essential to support the full recovery of the UK economy.* **”**

**CSR Scientific training**



# Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Apprenticeship Participation

## Progress this Year

Since last year's report, there have been further increases in the proportion of apprenticeship starts made by apprentices who declare a learning difficulty or disability (LDD). Starts rose a further 1.6 percentage points to reach 14% in the 2021/22 academic year.<sup>9</sup>

There is however still plenty of opportunity to help more people into a fulfilling career through an apprenticeship. Only 5.1% of adults with a learning disability known to their local authority in England are in paid work.<sup>10</sup> The group notes that there is some confusion around who can be supported on an apprenticeship. Apprenticeships are for people of all ages and the group highlighted how important initial assessment is in catching previously unidentified LDDs so the right adjustments can be made.

There are some great examples and case studies of the life changing opportunities that offering apprenticeships that are both accessible and inclusive can bring. The group has worked this year to identify and share best practice so others can follow suit.

They noted that some employers and apprenticeship providers can struggle when supporting individuals with an LDD and might feel confused about the support available or what they should be providing. They also noted the importance of declarations so employers know when support is needed and can work with the individual to put in place appropriate adjustments so they're not disadvantaged by their disability.

## Working Group Findings and Recommendations

The group was chaired by Lucy Hunte (Health Education England) and co-chaired by Sarah Langford (BBC) with support from Lloyds Banking Group and HIT Training. The group also thank external consultants Essex County Council and Dynamic Training for their invaluable support.

Similarly to last year, the LDD working group wanted to understand more about best practice, and employer and training provider perceptions of barriers. They believe that it is important for employers and providers to work in partnership with a good mutual understanding of each other's role. This means they can provide constructive feedback and best support their individual apprentices.

Through regular conversations around challenges and sharing best practice in their sectors and across their wider networks the group found that:

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<sup>9</sup> [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

<sup>10</sup> [Measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, England - 2020-21 - NDRS \(digital.nhs.uk\)](https://digital.nhs.uk)

## 1. Some employers aren't aware of the support that can be accessed for apprentices with a learning difficulty and/or disability. This can create barriers to apprentice starts and completions.

The group found that some employers across the country lack understanding of how best to support apprentices with learning difficulties or disabilities. This includes confidence in making reasonable adjustments and awareness of available additional funding. They found that employers rely on their training provider to share the right information with them and that on occasion this does not happen, or they might not receive the right information.

The group also found that a wide range of resources already exist which can help employers to understand apprenticeships and how they can attract and support apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities. Making use of these resources as well as learning from best practice can increase employers' confidence in recruiting and upskilling their future workforce.

This is particularly valuable for employers new to apprenticeships, but more seasoned employers can consider how to take their practices further with the [Disability Confident scheme](#) and [associated training](#). Employers can also consider accessibility when identifying a training provider, for example by asking potential providers about their application process or their experience supporting individuals with additional needs with adjustments like part-time apprenticeships.

The group recommends [Essex County Council's employer toolkit](#). This guide has been developed to support conversations on the accessibility and inclusivity of apprenticeships across organisations. They also recommend resources produced by the Education and Training Foundation such as this [video](#) with ideas to make apprenticeships accessible to individuals with an LDD.

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**Recommendation 4:** employers should use existing resources to guide and shape their approaches to recruiting and managing apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities.

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## 2. Signposting existing information, resources and best practice can empower employers to create more apprenticeship opportunities and work effectively with their apprenticeship provider to best support apprentices.

The group found that a wealth of information is already in place for employers and providers. Rather than producing extra content the group wanted to highlight what's available.

- **Additional payments:** employers and training providers could be eligible for a [£1,000 payment](#) if they hire an eligible apprentice. The payment can be used to cover any costs associated with supporting the apprentice in the workplace.
- **Reasonable adjustments:** employers must make [reasonable adjustments](#) so workers with disabilities and health conditions, including apprentices, are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. Employers can apply for [Access to Work](#) for extra help if needed. Learning support [funding](#) is also available to training providers to make reasonable adjustments and employers can ask their provider to explore this to help their apprentice to learn.
- **Flexibilities to standard English and maths requirements:** English and/or maths must be provided for all apprentices who don't have prior attainment up to level 2 (GCSE grade 4/C equivalent). Eligible apprentices with an LDD may be able to complete their apprenticeship with a reduced level of English and maths. Employers can discuss this with their provider if they think it might be relevant for their apprentice.

## Emma's Story

Emma is currently undertaking a L3 Business Administration Apprenticeship with Walsall Council. Having always worked in retail this is a career change for Emma and marks a return to employment after losing all sight in one eye and partial sight in another.

After developing a visual impairment Emma wanted to return to work but her self-esteem had taken a knock and she was worried about finding the right role or being offered a job. She was put in touch with Walsall Council's employment officer who suggested an apprenticeship and assured her that she wasn't too old to give it a go. Emma eventually applied and decided to disclose her disability during the application process. She was nervous to have her first interview since her diagnosis but pleasantly surprised to find her employer didn't perceive her eyesight as an issue.

She was offered the job and says her employer has supported her all the way. She was given a fixed desk with a special keyboard and large screens for both the office and at home, and arrangements were reviewed after six months. She also describes her tutor as "incredible". He has set high expectations and pushes Emma to do more.

When she finishes her apprenticeship this year Emma wants to continue working for the Council, developing herself and progressing her career with them – maybe through another apprenticeship.

Reflecting on her experience what would Emma say to employers taking on a disabled apprentice?

**“ Take the time to understand someone as an individual. This makes them feel recognised, accepted and just as much a part of the team as anyone else. You can't fully appreciate what someone's disability is like, but you can talk about the barriers they face and how to overcome these. ”**

Helena Baxter, Walsall Council's Apprenticeship Programme Lead said: "We are so proud of Emma, especially winning the Black Country Apprentice of the Year Award. It just shows how truly diverse apprenticeships can be. There are absolutely no barriers, and they are open to all!"





The group also welcomed the [announcement](#) of a comprehensive package of professional development for training providers, employers and their workforces. Members thought this would be a valuable addition to the resources already available and the group encouraged the inclusion of content on special educational needs and disabilities.

In addition the group would like to suggest that government consider ways of recognising provider and employer excellence in supporting apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities, possibly through the development of a 'kitemark' or similar.

**Recommendation 5:** employers should familiarise themselves with the latest guidance and information and work in partnership with their provider to access and deliver relevant support to apprentices with an LDD.

## The BBC: Disability Confident Scheme

The BBC is a proud Level 2 [Disability Confident Employer](#). They believe that the more diverse their workforce, the better they can respond to and reflect audiences in all their diversity. The Talent Acquisition Team oversee the organisation's resourcing and have measures in place so that applicants are not disadvantaged by their disability.



Prospective apprentices are actively encouraged to contact the team when first applying. The team advise them in confidence on how the recruitment process can be adapted to meet their needs. This could be anything from allowing more time for assessments to providing a British Sign Language interpreter for interviews. The team also make sure all candidates know what to expect by providing clear information on the application process.

Once in post apprentices can use the BBC Access and Disability Service for a workplace assessment. The service uses its expertise to facilitate reasonable adjustments so all employees can fulfil their responsibilities. An assessor reviews the employee's role and any workplace and disability-related barriers they are experiencing. They make recommendations on changes and provide ongoing support to managers taking forward the agreed recommendations.

In the future the BBC would like to reach the next level of the Disability Confident Scheme to become a Disability Confident Leader. Over the coming year they plan to review their existing action plan and gather the evidence needed to take the next step.

# Progression into, and through Apprenticeships

Apprentice progression is necessarily individual to that apprentice and is primarily focused on gaining the skills, knowledge and behaviour related to their specific role, and / or continuing career development.

For employers, progression will be driven by their organisation's needs and may include:

- Bring in and develop new skills and knowledge
- Improve succession planning
- Improve staff retention
- Increase productivity and efficiency

From the apprentice perspective progression can come in different, non-linear, steps depending on the individual and their job role or profession. This may include:

- Continuing to improve and develop their career prospects
- Progressing on to another apprenticeship or qualification to further enhance their skills or deepen a specialism
- Getting promoted and/or pay rise
- Attaining permanent employment
- Identifying a new career pathway

## Progress this Year

Now in their second year, the Progression working group, led by Simon Reichwald Chief Progression Officer at Connectr chose to focus on barriers to apprenticeship completions as well as progression.

They broke this down into three key stages:

1. Using the group's experience as longstanding apprentice employers to identify the main the barriers to completion and progression.
2. Checking these barriers with apprentices themselves through a survey.
3. Using the group's experience to identify ways to address those barriers in the form of recommendations for all employers.

## Jake's Story

Back in 2007/08 Jake was struggling to get a job in admin having decided on a change of career path after leaving school at 16. He attended a number of interviews, failing to get the jobs and being told the main reason was lack of experience. He then applied for a Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship with Shropshire Council.

He wasn't expecting to be with the organisation for much more than 12 months. However, he was offered the opportunity to complete a Level 3 Business Administration apprenticeship and this eventually led on to being offered a permanent role with the Council.

Since then Jake has remained with Shropshire Council where he has continued to progress. He is now working towards a Level 4 Project Manager (APM) qualification. He has added responsibility and manages a small team of staff.

Jake is understandably proud of how he has worked his way up to where he is now, and is definitely a keen advocate for apprenticeships:



**““ My morale was nearing rock bottom back in 2008 following knockback after knockback from unsuccessful interviews. The Level 2 Business Administration apprenticeship helped get me started on my career and was the catalyst for helping me to progress to my Level 4 Project Management, and for getting me to where I am today. Once I achieve my Level 4, I will look to work towards further qualifications to boost my career and work my way further up the ladder. ””**

# ADCN Working Group Findings

## Stage 1 - Identifying the Main Barriers

The group identified the following issues as the main barriers to completion and progression.

**Training delivery:** inflexible delivery models and restricted timelines for training delivery which might be too closely tied to academic rather than business cycles.

**Length of the apprenticeship:** some apprentices see the programme as too long, and there can sometimes be long gaps before doing the End Point Assessment (EPA). There is the risk apprentices lose interest and leave before completing or get poached by another employer.

**Demands of work and job:** apprentices may be at risk of overload or changes in personal circumstances. For longer programmes, there is the risk of apprentice 'fatigue' and apprentices may want to take time out during or between apprenticeships, slowing future progression.

**No natural progression:** this could include no apprenticeship standard to progress onto or no opportunities at higher level with their employer, or simply that their role does not require more progression.

**Functional skills:** can be a barrier for some individuals where they are capable of doing the job but find the required level of English and Maths challenging.

## Stage 2 – What apprentices said about the different elements of an apprenticeship

The group surveyed just under 150 apprentices across a range of different sectors and different sized employers (mainly macro employers but medium and small employers too). The apprentices were on apprenticeship programmes ranging from Level 2 – Level 7 with the highest number working towards a Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard.

The apprentices were asked to rank the aspects of an apprenticeship in order of value to them and then to explain their ranking. Highest value (1) to lowest (4) came out as:

1

### The apprenticeship award itself (all elements)



“Because the qualification can be gained without an apprenticeship, but experience only comes with it.”

“As an older apprentice with 35+ years’ work experience and knowledge, the training I gained both on and off the job was of some importance but gaining the qualification and the overall satisfaction of completing the apprenticeship was of most importance to me.”

2

### On the job training



“Just going to college does not give you the on-the-job training needed.”

3

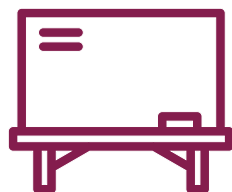
### The qualification (Degree, BTEC etc.)



“I would not be in a position to get a degree through other means. I cannot afford to get a degree through traditional academic routes”.

4

### Off the job training



“I think off the job training is very important.”

“I feel that on-the-job training is where I am acquiring technical knowledge and I have expert colleagues who are training me. I also need subject specific background knowledge to make the best of the experience (and to be a more useful member of staff), which comes from off-the-job resources of various kinds.”

The apprentices were then asked what other challenges/barriers they saw to completing their apprenticeship and/or going onto another. Similar to the findings of the employers, the challenges and barriers identified by the apprentices included:

<p><b>Balancing the time to work and complete an apprenticeship</b></p>	<p>“It sometimes gets a little overwhelming as you have the study and work and portfolio.”</p> <p>“Work life balance - three children and a full-time job!”</p>
<p><b>Not being made aware or fully understanding the End Point Assessment (EPA) or why it is part of their apprenticeship</b></p>	<p>“I’m still unclear as to the need to undertake the EPA, having successfully passed all the modules. I’m uncertain as to how the EPA contributes to my qualification (if it does).”</p> <p>“I don’t like being tested, as it feels like being at school or college.”</p> <p>“The gap in time between finishing the ‘practical learning’ and doing the EPA.”</p> <p>“The EPA may seem like an extension to what is already a long process especially if you have exams to complete within the actual apprenticeship as well.”</p>
<p><b>Needing more support from their provider and employer</b></p>	<p>“Being an adult learner the apprenticeship catered more for young people, straight from school...I have felt pressurised or not fully understood by the tutors nor my employer to complete the apprenticeship regardless of any outside factors that might have hindered this.”</p> <p>“For me it’s been the trainers. I’ve gone through three different trainers who all have different styles, and the course wasn’t structured at the start which I found difficult.”</p>

## Stage 3 – Agreeing Recommendations and Sharing Best Practice

Drawing on their combined experience the group developed seven recommendations to help address the barriers, and to support and enable more apprentices to successfully complete their apprenticeship and progress.

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**Recommendation 6:** collaborate with other employers to get apprenticeship training that best meets the needs of your business This could mean reaching out to employers in your local or sector networks where you have common apprenticeship training interests. There are tools that can help you find the right programme and training provider too, such as [Find apprenticeship training for your apprentice](#) and [share your interest with training providers](#) function.

**Recommendation 7:** think about what's necessary to include in your entry requirements. You might not need to specify prior English and maths requirements if it's possible for your apprentice to build their skills on programme. The group also recommends government consider its policy on English and maths and how it meets the needs of employers and apprentices.

**Recommendation 8:** proactively and regularly communicate the value and benefits of apprenticeships across your wider business. Celebrate your apprentices' successes and progression, so individuals are proud to be recognised as an apprentice. Build apprenticeships into your organisation's plans for developing talent so other staff know about them and consider them as a progression opportunity for themselves.

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## Jade's Story

Jade decided to apply for an apprenticeship after completing her A Levels. She had also applied for university but was unsure it was the right route for her. She was worried about financing her studies and whether the course she had chosen was something that would lead into a career.

Jade thought an apprenticeship would be a great opportunity to experience and learn in a workplace setting, and to see if she would enjoy a career related to her interest in the environment and sustainability. She started working at Birmingham University in 2017 as an Environmental Services Apprentice assisting with the administration of facilities contracts, and sustainability projects. This was a level 2 Customer Service Apprenticeship and on completion she was offered a permanent role as the Contracts, Facilities and Sustainable Engagement Officer.

A few months into the role, Jade asked her manager if she could complete a degree apprenticeship. Her manager was very supportive, and she began the Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship in Business Management. This has enabled Jade to gain a new role as Environmental Sustainability Manager. In addition to having much greater responsibility at the University, Jade is also proud to now manage another apprentice.

Jade enjoys raising awareness of apprenticeships by speaking to other young people and is keen to promote progression:



**““ My apprenticeships have allowed me to develop personally and professionally. I was quiet and reserved when I first started working at the University, but I am now confident in my ability as a professional, managing projects, engaging with stakeholders, and making decisions. Apprenticeships have provided me with a safe space to experiment and try new things, whilst taking on more demanding responsibilities and roles. ””**



**Recommendation 9:** consistently and regularly talk to apprentices about requirements and available support. This is especially important ahead of the End Point Assessment (EPA) but the group emphasises holding review meetings with the apprentice and provider throughout the apprenticeship.

**Recommendation 10:** use peer buddies with lived experience to support new apprentices. If you have apprentices who have already completed, consider creating an apprentice advisory board for your organisation. You can also signpost apprentices to existing networks like the Association of Apprentices and the Apprenticeship Ambassadors Network.

**Recommendation 11:** build a clear apprentice journey – and make sure people know about it. Support individuals to seek new roles within the business as their apprenticeship ends. In addition to regular review meetings throughout the apprenticeship, which can include discussions around future progression, you could run workshops with apprentices towards the end of their programme. This could support completion and ensure they are clear about their future career options and opportunities.

**Recommendation 12:** act fast on the signs of disengagement. Meet the apprentice to understand the issue, offer support and explore options. If needed this could include a short break in learning. If a break is agreed continue to work with them to keep them engaged.

# Lancashire Constabulary: Supporting Apprentices Progression

## The Challenge

At Lancashire Constabulary we have a well-established Apprenticeship Programme with apprentices on a range of apprenticeships across both HQ and Divisions.

After conducting a review of our apprenticeships it became apparent that some learners felt isolated and overwhelmed, with one citing this as a reason for wanting to leave the apprenticeship in the first three months. During face-to-face meetings with the learners, we discussed why this might be happening and many expressed a lack of peer-to-peer support and how working with an ageing workforce increased their feelings of isolation and disengagement.

At the time there were limitations to what we could change in our approach to try to tackle these feelings of disconnection.

## The Solution

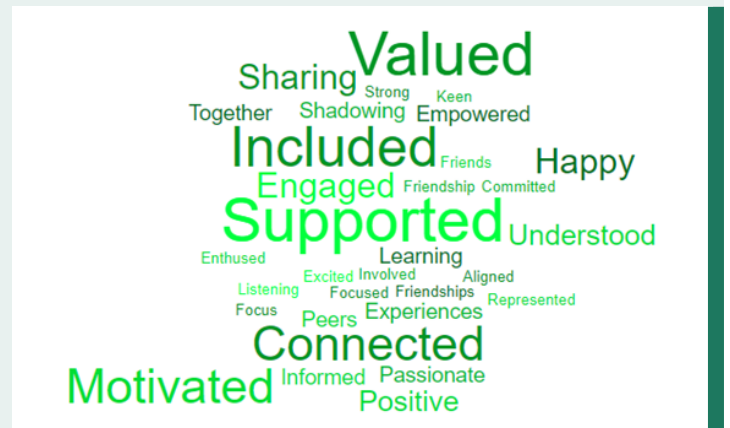
To improve the situation and reduce the risk of apprentices leaving their apprenticeship during the initial phase we considered all options and decided to introduce the Apprenticeship Network.

Bringing the apprentices together we discussed what, why, and how an apprenticeship network might help during that initial phase.

It was agreed that the Network should be hosted on Teams and should be managed by apprentices. An election was conducted, and five apprentices received the votes to manage the Network with the support of the Apprenticeship Manager. After agreeing terms of use, the Network was put straight into action connecting all the apprentices across the organisation.

## The Impact

The Network has brought all the apprentices together in one place where they can share best practice, arrange shadowing, conduct learning, feel connected, provide peer-to-peer support, and share experiences. This supportive environment has created a greater sense of belonging for the apprentices and has reduced the disengagement that can sometimes occur in the first three months. The network has encouraged apprentices to reach out for support when needed and some amazing friendships have been formed as a result.



Responses from the 2022 apprenticeship review.

# Ethnic Minority Participation

## Progress this Year

This year the working group was led again by Siobhan White from Resource Productions along with Sharon Morgan from Lloyds Banking Group who joined the group as co-chair.

Overall there has been some positive progress in the last 12 months. The data shows continued growth in the proportion of ethnic minority individuals starting an apprenticeship. In 2019/20 representation was 13.3% and had risen to 14.7% by the end of 2021/22 academic year.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, ethnic minority representation continues to increase at apprenticeship level 4 and above. This is an extremely positive indication that more people from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to go into higher-paying jobs that support more advanced career progression.

It is however still recognised that representation is not evenly distributed across all age groups and apprentices from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to be over the age of 25, with representation of younger people, particularly in the 16-19 age range still decreasing as a proportion of all apprentices.

## Working Group Findings and Insight

Based on data and research on the participation of young people from ethnic minority backgrounds the working group decided to look at how to overcome the barriers faced by young people in becoming apprentices. Having encountered the need to challenge perceptions and change views on apprenticeships in their day-to-day work they decided to explore these aspects of last year's findings in more detail. They focused on the networks and resources available to raise awareness and understanding of the opportunities apprenticeships can offer, and the impact of educational, family and friendship influences.

### Key findings from the research reviewed by the group included:

- 1. Family and friends can be unsupportive of young people's decision to undertake an apprenticeship.**<sup>12</sup> The Sutton Trust found this to be the case for 1 in 5 apprentices. They recommend highlighting the experiences and voice of apprentices themselves to other young people and ensuring such apprentices reflect different backgrounds. They also highlight the need to provide information to teachers and parents given the influence they have on young people's choices.
- 2. Young people from ethnic minorities often see their future through the lens of higher education.**<sup>13</sup> It remains important to keep promoting vocational routes including apprenticeships.
- 3. Young people from ethnic minorities may not be aware that apprenticeships are an option.** One survey found that 33% of black respondents had never had apprenticeships discussed with them, compared to 13% of white respondents.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic Year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-academic-year-2021-22)

<sup>12</sup> [Apprenticeship Outreach - Sutton Trust](https://www.suttontrust.com/research/apprenticeship-outreach/)

<sup>13</sup> [Education and training - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/education-and-training)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-YEUK-Census-Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-YEUK-Census-Report_FINAL.pdf)

## Umar's Story

Umar started his apprenticeship journey with Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust in 2020 as a Business Administration Apprentice. This was the ideal starting point for Umar as it allowed him to gain vital experience and employability skills which he needed to continue developing his career.

Having completed the Business Administration apprenticeship Umar considered moving onto a management apprenticeship, but instead decided to follow his heart and applied for a Trainee Nurse Associate apprenticeship.

Working alongside the nurses, clinical leads and managers at the Trust made Umar realise that he really wanted to be part of providing hands on care to patients. He started by volunteering at care homes and children's Islamic education centres to gain experience working with children, adults and older adults.

Umar is rightly proud of his achievements which he says are down to his hard work but also because the Trust provided support and opportunities for which he's grateful.

The clinicians at my workplace went out of their way to provide me with the advice that assisted me in taking the steps to get my Trainee Nurse Associate apprenticeship. They helped me turn weaknesses into strengths. Apprenticeships aren't just designed to get people in jobs but to help them bring true ambition like it did for me. I openly promote apprenticeships to my friends and family.



**“ The apprenticeship is the best decision I have ever made. It has provided me with a structure and a routine for working life. This will allow me to progress into mental health nursing. I am extremely happy with my apprenticeship; it is much better than I anticipated. I have finally found my true passion as I am now taking part in improving patients' health and well-being. ”**

# Great Ormond Street Hospital: Diversifying the Apprenticeships Programme

## The Challenge

Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) wanted to create a workforce more representative of its diverse local population in London and had identified apprenticeships as its route to delivery. They recognised the need to reach out to the community to raise awareness of apprenticeships and tackle outdated perceptions.



## The Solution

GOSH devised a strategy to expand and promote apprenticeships to encourage new talent from the local population and provide development and career progression for existing staff.

GOSH worked in partnership with Camden and Islington boroughs to advertise vacancies locally first and promote apprenticeship opportunities to underrepresented groups. Additionally, apprenticeship opportunities are promoted internally first, to encourage applications from existing staff.

They broadened their engagement to showcase GOSH apprenticeships as an accessible pathway to an NHS career and tried everything from engaging with educational networks like Health Education England (HEE) to visiting local colleges and schools and making use of their website and social media.

GOSH also developed over 10 entry roles with no prior experience necessary and made sure support was there for new recruits. This included a learning academy and expert education team to support apprentices. They also partnered with a local college to upskill people in maths and English to remove further barriers to entry.

## The Impact

GOSH have established themselves as an inclusive recruiter in their local area and boosted staff retention too (95% on L2 Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeships).

There are now around 220 apprentices (4% of the workforce) and over 50% are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Their work has been recognised with an impressive nine national awards to date.

Apprenticeships are built into GOSH's career pathways for a range of careers and the organisation is able to grow its own staff, from nurses to future leaders and get the most from its apprenticeship levy. More staff see an apprenticeship as a route for them with 68% of apprentices 24+. They find that the hands on learning in an apprenticeship develops their staff faster than more traditional academic routes.

## Key Insight from the Group

A common concern of prospective apprentices, particularly those from ethnic minority backgrounds, is how they will convince their parents to allow them to do an apprenticeship.

**Recommendation 13:** employers should use role models to illustrate the positive opportunities apprenticeships offer. This can help to influence people to choose apprenticeships and tackle misconceptions around this route.

Developing case studies can provide a powerful and inspirational message. The story of Haider is provided in this chapter as an example and the Network is pleased to see how Haider has been championing apprenticeships to the next generation and their parents.

A range of resources are already available to promote apprenticeships. The group identified the following as being particularly useful:

- Websites providing headline information about apprenticeships such as <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk> and <https://amazingapprenticeships.com>
- Targeted and up to date information for parents. There are written resources such as the monthly editions of the [Parent Pack](#) and podcasts too, like Amazing Apprenticeships [Parent Perspective](#) which provides parents with the opportunity to have some of their apprenticeship queries answered.

**Recommendation 14:** employers should use available resources when they are communicating with future apprentices and their schools and parents.

## Haider's Story

The first time I came across apprenticeships was at an event called What Career Live in Birmingham. It was advertised within my sixth form as career guidance ahead of applying to university and in my mind, I was going there to speak to the universities.

Apprenticeships hadn't really been covered at school and I was really surprised to see companies attending the event. Being curious, I went up to them to find out what kind of opportunities they were promoting and discovered apprenticeships. As a young person I associated the companies with the consumer angle; for example, ALDI made me think of working on the checkout, but it turned out they offered a range of business-related apprenticeships.



Accounting apprenticeships caught my interest as that was what I was considering doing at university. I couldn't believe that I could do an apprenticeship instead and become fully qualified without going to university! I did a bit more research and spoke to my family. They also were not aware of the benefits of the apprenticeship route. Apprenticeships provided a way to get into the career I wanted and progress up to Master's degree level (apprenticeship Level 7) without any student finance. They offered me the professional qualifications to become a qualified Accountant while earning a salary and getting valuable work experience.

The careers advice at school had been very geared towards university and my traditional and academic Head of 6th Form couldn't understand why I was contemplating an apprenticeship when I had offers from top universities. I believed that an apprenticeship was a good option for me but as I had little encouragement from school I decided the safest thing was to just apply for both.

What I didn't appreciate was that applying for an apprenticeship was very different than applying for university. Each application turned out to be a job application that needed tailoring to the employer – applying in bulk like for university wasn't possible.

At first, I got a quite a few rejections for my apprenticeship applications. With degree apprenticeships some employers wanted applicants to complete online/psychometric tests which I was not prepared for and really struggled with initially, and my school didn't provide any guidance. At times there was stiff competition, but I researched and prepared as much as I could and kept trying.

Eventually I was delighted to get an interview with Rolls-Royce and was later made an offer and started on their Level 7 Management Accounting Apprenticeship. My family were really pleased that I secured a role with Rolls-Royce; they could see that I was really passionate about the apprenticeship route more so than the university option.

Here are my five top tips for any young person considering an apprenticeship.

### **Top Tips**

- 1.** Be prepared! You will need to tailor each application to the specific job role and apprenticeship you are applying for.
- 2.** Do everything you can to showcase what makes you unique in all the application stages. Your individuality is your superpower.
- 3.** Challenge myths and misconceptions around apprenticeships not being for everyone. You have to be the representation that perhaps you might not currently see!
- 4.** Don't self-reject. Even if the company you're interested in is one of the biggest in the country, never talk yourself out of applying. You could be the exact talent they've been looking for.
- 5.** Rejection is redirection. Given how competitive apprenticeships can sometimes be, rejections are almost inevitable. The key thing is to learn from them and to keep going – it only takes one yes for your life to change!

# Women in STEM Sector Roles

## Progress this Year

The ADCN is passionately committed to improving the representation of women in sectors historically dominated by men. STEM sector roles (including construction) carry some of the country's most critical skills gaps and some of the highest wage returns.

## ADCN Working Group Findings

The group led by Karen Wallbridge from Transport for London and Cat Halstead from Crimson have developed work started last year to identify actions that an employer can take to engage more girls and women in their sector through apprenticeships. Here they summarise some fundamental activities for employers that can make a positive difference. Later this year the group plan to publish fuller detail and more employer best practice on these key activities.

### 1. Inspiring Future Generations

Research highlights that girls often switch off from STEM careers at primary school age unless they have access to positive role models. Employers can contribute by encouraging their women employees to volunteer to speak at local schools about the opportunities on offer and to be visible on social media platforms to inspire future generations into STEM apprenticeships and careers. Support is available via several bodies, including but not limited to the [London Transport Museums Enjoyment to Employment programme](#) and [class of your own](#), who empower and educate young people on the future of construction.

### 2. Pre-Employment

The group understand that women are more likely to be attracted to STEM sectors if they have access to meaningful insight sessions or work challenges which demystify the type of roles, work patterns, culture, and policies within STEM sectors. Employers can [use this guide produced by Fairtrain](#) to measure the quality of their work experience programmes and are encouraged to think about how work experience can create routes into apprenticeships. Additionally, organisations such as [Women in Construction](#) offers focused employability programmes to inspire and support women in the construction industry.



# BAE Systems: Inspiring Future Generations

## The Challenge:

As an employer, BAE Systems is committed to apprentices and enabling them to achieve their best in an inclusive environment where everyone can make a difference.

We've been affected by traditionally poor gender diversity in the sector and low take up of engineering roles by women.

## The Solution:

We have designed and delivered several initiatives to increase our attractiveness to a more diverse range of candidates including more women. One of those is our Schools Roadshow which has created a talent pipeline by raising the profile of apprenticeships in schools, colleges and universities across the country. The Roadshow is aimed at 9-12 year olds and showcases STEM subject choices. By partnering with the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy we've been able to reach far more pupils. Another step we have taken is our Women in Craft Engineering work experience programme to encourage young women into key apprentice occupations (welding, pipefitting and electrical fitting); we offer those who perform well a placement.

## The Impact:

October 2022 saw us celebrate reaching our millionth child through the Schools Roadshow. With our partners, we're able to reach over 100,000 children annually. Women in Craft Engineering has resulted in 45 new women recruits this year and we are doubling the initiative to 200 placements next year. In 2022, 29.6% of our new apprentice starts were women, our highest ever proportion.



# Nottingham City Homes: Pre-Employment

## The Challenge:

In 2016 we noticed low levels of applications from women for our trade apprenticeships and those who did apply weren't making it to interview. We did a poll and identified two main issues to resolve.

- Women had little to no knowledge of what trade roles were.
- Women thought that they were not allowed to apply. It was a standard belief amongst those polled that construction roles were for men only.

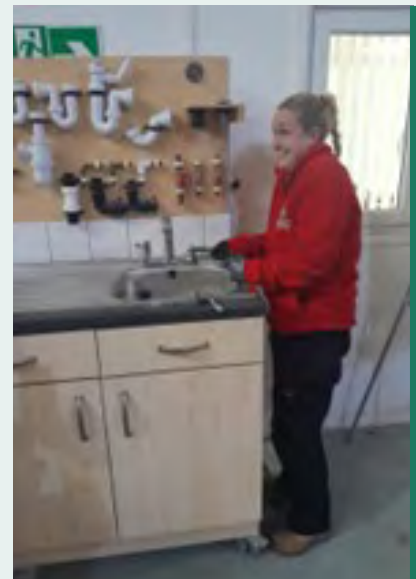
## The Solution:

Our aim was to address the stereotype of construction roles only being available to men. We noted that a lack of visible role models seemed to be interpreted as *women were not allowed to work within construction*. We created Women in Construction workshops to tackle this misconception in which women working in construction roles demonstrate their own skills. The workshops show visible role models, give an insight into what construction work entails and allow participants try out all types of construction. They also build participants' confidence and deliver application support.

## The Impact:

We have seen an increase in women applying for construction-based apprenticeships and a resultant increase in the number of women enrolled onto construction apprenticeships within the business. Just one woman applied for an apprenticeship in 2016 compared to 65 in 2022. Since 2017, 17 women have been enrolled onto construction-based apprenticeships as a direct result of them joining a workshop.

An added bonus of the workshops is increased confidence and improved presentation and communications skills for our apprentices who lead the demonstrations. The majority of these apprentices were once participants in the workshops themselves, creating a full circle approach.



### 3. Marketing & Attraction

All employers recognise the importance of clear branding, but it must also be fully inclusive. Employers should carefully consider the language used in adverts and advertising material for their apprenticeship programmes to ensure it is unbiased. Software, such as Textio, can help highlight discriminatory language. Consideration should also be given to whether images on websites and adverts are representative. Providing videos of role models is also highly effective. Crimson, a Microsoft business transformation consultancy, achieved a significant increase in diversity by adopting these simple changes to its apprenticeship recruitment campaign.

## Crimson: Attraction and Marketing

### The Challenge

In 2018 as an SME with fewer than 70 employees and a first apprenticeship cohort of 18-20 year old white men (not uncommon in the sector), we saw recruitment as an opportunity to increase diversity in the organisation. We set an ambitious target of 50/50 gender parity.

### The Solution

We started by assessing our attraction and marketing phase and shifting our focus from recruiting 'tech geeks' to recruiting raw talent with a passion to learn - individuals with the right mindset, personality, and interpersonal skills who wanted to solve business problems using technology.

We reviewed advert wording and removed overly specific requirements and qualifications to encourage women to apply. We also updated our website to show a balance of different people and events that were less stereotypically gendered – fewer photos of men and references to beer and curry nights or golf days! We introduced a 'Women in Tech' webpage showcasing our women employees. And finally we provided as much information as possible to remove candidates' uncertainty about the recruitment process alongside social media to attract more career changers and widen our age demographic.

### The Impact

We are clear that we don't want to just create technical experts in their field – we want to grow successful, rounded and happy tech professionals in a diverse team that generates innovation and creativity in the solutions they deliver for customers. The drive to make women see and feel they belong has been very successful. In 2019 the overall apprenticeship gender split for women increased from 0% to 25% (with similar rises in BAME representation) and up to 33% in 2021. This has driven an overall increase in participation by women from 34% in 2019 to 40% in 2022 against a sector average of 17%. Our women apprentices help attract more women through our 'SoMe' marketing and presence at local careers events.



## 4. Selection

Employers must provide proactive advice and guidance to support potential apprentice applicants, being as transparent as possible about the process and providing material to prepare candidates for the selection process. The Cranfield 2022 Female FTSE Board Report recommends that appointment committees for board roles should ensure they link skills and competencies to *potential* and past performance; this is particularly key for women applying for their first leadership role.<sup>15</sup>

## 5. In-Work Retention

The STEM sector still has much work to retain women including apprentices once hired into a role. Research suggest that large proportions of women may leave these roles compared to men.<sup>16</sup> Apprentices tell us how important it is to have access to diverse allies, inclusive work environments and empathic people managers. Nottingham City Homes has for example had initial success with work to support their apprentices and other staff going through menopause to remain in work. They have set up a support network and other practical assistance and developed managers' understanding.

**Recommendation 15:** employers should focus on the data available throughout their employee lifecycle in order to identify the issues affecting apprentice recruitment and retention. Perhaps the challenge is attracting women to apply, maybe the selection process is onerous, or is the culture itself the issue? Analysis of the data will help to identify where to focus efforts and energies to make the most significant difference around diversity within your organisation.

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<sup>15</sup> [Female FTSE Board Report \(cranfield.ac.uk\)](https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/female-ftse-board-report)

<sup>16</sup> [Retaining women in STEM roles | CIPD](#)

# Resources

The following resources were shared throughout this report:

## Social mobility

1. [Apprenticeships Toolkit](#)
2. [Apprenticeship Decent Wage Pledge](#)

## Disability

3. [Disability Confident scheme](#)
4. [Video on supporting disabled apprentices](#)
5. [£1,000 additional payments](#)
6. [Workplace reasonable adjustments](#)
7. [DWP's Access to Work Scheme](#)
8. [Provider reasonable adjustments](#)
9. [Apprenticeship Workforce Development](#)

## Progression

10. [Find apprenticeship training](#)
11. [End Point Assessment guidance](#)
12. [Association of Apprentices](#)
13. [Apprentice Ambassador Network](#)

## Ethnic minorities

14. [Government apprenticeships website](#)
15. [Amazing Apprenticeships website](#)
16. [Parent Pack](#)
17. [Parent Perspective podcast](#)
18. [Full GOSH case study](#)

## Women in STEM

19. [Class of your own website](#)
20. [Work experience guidance](#)
21. [Women in Construction website](#)

# Recommendations

ADCN working groups made the following recommendations throughout this report:

## Social mobility

1. Use existing resources to better understand how/when/why to collect social mobility data.
2. Embed social mobility into your recruitment and selection strategies.
3. Include apprentice wages and benefits in your social mobility strategy.

## Learning Difficulties and Disabilities

4. Use existing resources to guide and shape your approaches to recruiting and managing apprentices.
5. Familiarise yourself with the latest guidance and work in partnership with your training provider to support disabled apprentices.

## Progression

6. Collaborate with other employers to get apprenticeship training which best meets the needs of your business.
7. Think about what's necessary to include in your entry requirements.
8. Communicate the value and benefits of apprenticeships across your business.
9. Consistently and regularly talk to apprentices about requirements and available support.
10. Use peer buddies with lived experience to support new apprentices.
11. Build and communicate a clear apprentice journey.
12. Act fast on the signs of disengagement.

## Ethnic Minorities

13. Use role models to tackle misconceptions about apprenticeships.
14. Use available resources when communicating with future apprentices.

## Women in STEM

15. Use data from the whole employee lifecycle to identify the cause of any recruitment and retention issues.

# Call to Action

The ADCN hopes that this report has given you ideas and inspired you to try something new or build on your existing practices. Members call on you to put this report into practice. Discuss it with your colleagues, plan your next steps and let others know about it to stimulate change across your sector. Resources and recommendations are summarised in the sections above to help.

**What steps will you take this year to increase diversity in your apprentice workforce?**

## What Next?

This year has seen the ADCN grow in size and impact. Members have thought hard about which priorities they should pursue and volunteered their time to delve deeper and identify what works so others can replicate it. Members have worked tirelessly to grow their organisations' apprenticeship programmes in ways that attract and support individuals no matter their background. They have also promoted the Network's core messages and championed apprenticeships and diversity to wider audiences by attending conferences, publicising their successes, tapping into new networks to reach small businesses and encouraging other employers to join the ADCN to share best practice and learn from the experience of others.

The ADCN recognises that despite positive shifts in representation, their work is not done yet. Across the country there are still more individuals whose lives and careers could be transformed through an apprenticeship and more businesses who could experience the benefits of an apprenticeship. The ADCN plans to consider the role it plays in this and how best it can organise itself and its work to have the greatest impact nationally and locally.

The Network recognises that each business operates in a different way but that even the smallest organisation can make a proportionate change. They recognise the powerful influence employers play in increasing workforce diversity and opening up new opportunities in their organisations. Over the coming year the Network will continue its work to ensure it reaches employers of all sizes with practical support. It will go further to help more people find the information they need about the programme and to put it into practice effectively. In return they ask you to be open to change, to think creatively and to take your own step this year to increase diversity in your apprentice workforce. [Let them know](#) how it goes!

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