

APPRENTICESHIP OUTREACH

Engaging with under-represented groups to
improve social mobility

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About the Sutton Trust

The Sutton Trust is a foundation which improves social mobility in the UK through evidence-based programmes, research and policy advocacy.

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Key Findings

- Access to the best apprenticeships for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds continues to be an issue. An increasing number of degree apprenticeships are going to older apprentices, and they are also more likely to be taken up by those in more affluent areas. Apprenticeship opportunities for young people overall continue to decline.
- Apprenticeships for over 25s are substantially more likely to be offered to existing employees, rather than advertised as new opportunities. 68% of apprentices aged 25-54 in our survey reported they were already working for their employer. Such apprentices were also more likely to have come from higher socio-economic backgrounds. This limits the potential for apprenticeships to drive social mobility.
- Young apprentices received information about their apprenticeship from a variety of sources, including careers workshops, meetings with careers advisors, visits from employers or apprentices, visits to a workplace and work experience placements. However, 14% of apprentices aged 16-24 reported that they did not receive any information or outreach before starting their apprenticeship. This was higher for those starting with a new employer.
- For those aged 16-24, salary information was the most popular response when asked about the information apprentices would have liked to receive before they started their apprenticeship, followed by information on career opportunities after their apprenticeship and information on the apprenticeship experience and the balance between work and study.
- 1 in 4 young apprentices found the apprenticeship application process difficult to navigate, with those from a working class background more likely to report this compared to those from middle class backgrounds. Apprentices undertaking a higher level apprenticeship were also more likely to report this.
- When asked about what could have encouraged their friends, peers and-or classmates to choose an apprenticeship, almost one in three (31%) of apprentices aged between 16 and 24 said better information and support from their school.
- Almost 1 in 5 (22%) of apprentices aged 16-24 said that their friends and family were not supportive of their decision to do an apprenticeship. Those from a working class background were less likely to have friends and family that were supportive of their decision.
- Information on outreach activity was also gathered from employers in a series of interviews. Apprenticeships outreach is much less developed than outreach conducted by universities, and is done in a variety of ways across employers, with little evidence as yet on effectiveness.
- Apprenticeships were valued by employers for their contribution to diversifying their workforce, and outreach was a key method by which employers sought access to a wider talent pool.
- Partnerships with other organisations are seen as key for reaching larger numbers of young people, as well as those from specific groups, whom an employer may not have the experience or means to access. However, such partnerships come with inevitable challenges.

- There is still a disconnect between the employer experience and the school experience of working together to enhance young people's knowledge and awareness of apprenticeships. In particular they have different needs and preferences when it comes to the timing of outreach activities.
- In the context of degree apprenticeships, relationships and views differed between employers and universities as to who should deliver outreach.
- Apprenticeship outreach spending appeared very low when compared to graduate outreach and recruitment costs.
- Flexibility of how the levy is spent was flagged as being needed, but with no clear consensus of what this would be spent on. Employers who were not using all their levy allowance thought the spending of levy money on access and outreach activities would be beneficial.
- Virtual outreach has been prominent over the last couple of years, which has had pros and cons. As long as students could get online it has proved to be a good level up for students and has allowed more conversations to take place with teachers and parents. However, virtual fatigue and low turnouts have proved to be a challenge.
- More work needs to be done in identifying and sharing best practice in apprenticeship outreach, including learning from the university sector where relevant.

Recommendations

1. **The spending of levy money on access activities should be both permitted and promoted,** including bursaries, outreach, recruitment and travel expenses for disadvantaged apprentices.
2. **Schools should be supported to provide good quality careers advice on apprenticeships,** and the information gap among schools and teachers should be addressed with better access to information and resources.
3. **Universities should step up access and outreach activities for degree apprenticeships,** working in collaboration with employers and harnessing the experience, skills and resources of both.

Tips for employers

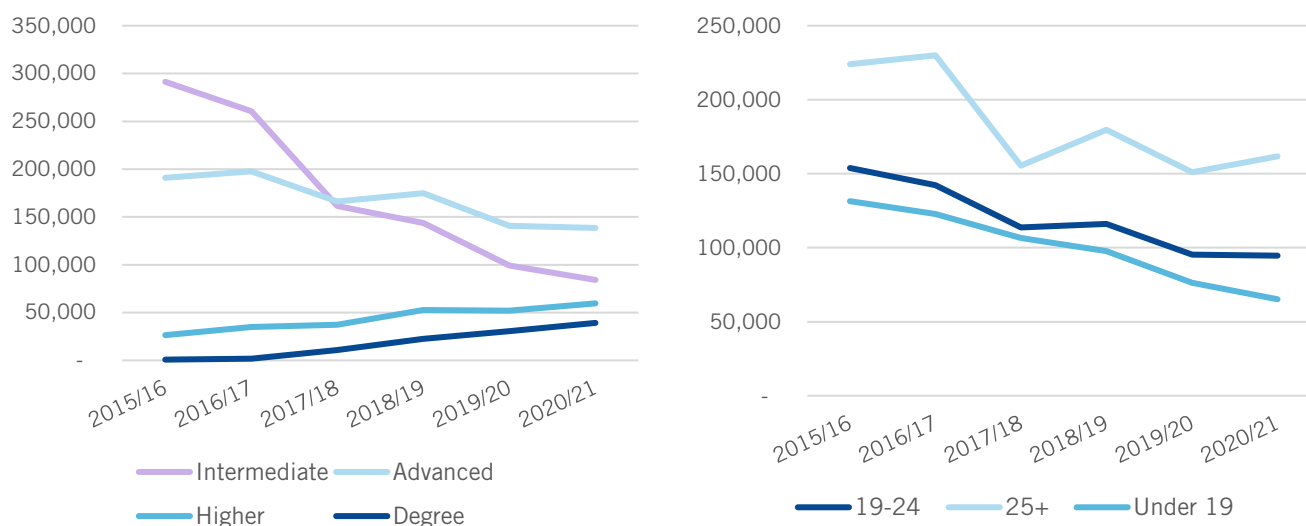
1. **Recognise that time, capacity, and resource** is required to deliver effective outreach.
2. Work experience placements are a key element. Employers should **ensure that where possible, work placements return to pre-pandemic levels, or higher**, but also that **the most promising aspects of online provision are retained and built upon**, particularly in terms of expanding geographic reach.
3. **Useful information** should include topics seen in our polling as sought after by apprentices:
 - a. Salary information
 - b. Career opportunities that available after completing their apprenticeship
 - c. Grade requirements to access apprenticeships
 - d. Understanding the balance between work and study
 - e. More information on how to apply to apprenticeships
4. **Partner with others where needed.** Partnerships can be the best way of achieving scale and reaching target groups via trusted organisations. Once it is known who is under-represented within the workforce or apprenticeship programme, work with suitable partners to reach these audiences. The Social Mobility Commission have compiled a useful [directory](#).
5. **Highlight the experiences and voice of apprentices themselves to young people.** However, endeavour to ensure such apprentices reflect the backgrounds of the group you wish to target, so young people can see themselves reflected.
6. **Consider accompanying outreach with targeted travel bursaries, including for interviews, as well as contributions towards necessary equipment.** Lack of funds as a result of travel costs and low wages can be a key barrier to young people taking up apprenticeships.
7. **Target teachers and parents, as well as young people themselves.** Reaching and educating those who are key influencers on young people's decisions is important so they have the knowledge to support informed decisions.
8. **Outreach should include younger age groups** so that students are fully aware of which subjects are relevant to specific sectors and what grades are needed for certain apprenticeships. This will help students come to an informed decision over time.
9. Work with schools to **identify the right timing during the school year to deliver outreach activities.** University admissions work to a regular annual timetable. Consider how recruitment timelines fit in with key decision points for young people in the school year.
10. **Track and monitor the diversity of the workforce, including apprentices,** in order to help see any gaps in applications, hires, progression or retention, target outreach towards particular groups, identify organisations to partner with, and track progress over time. **Including socio-economic background in diversity monitoring** is also key. To learn more about how to measure socio-economic background take a look at our [Employer's Guide](#).
11. Where possible, **build in processes to track the effectiveness of outreach to help evaluate success and share best practice.**

Introduction

Background

Access to apprenticeships for young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds is an ongoing problem, particularly among the most sought-after apprenticeship opportunities. Previous research by the Sutton Trust has highlighted the access gap for degree apprenticeships in particular, with access challenges similar to university itself.¹ Since the apprenticeship reforms in 2017 there have been a number of main trends. A decline in the number of apprenticeships overall (a trend further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic), with an accentuated decline among younger age groups. There has also been a shift in the composition of apprenticeships, away from levels 2 and 3 (Intermediate and Advanced), and towards Higher and Degree level. While the increase in higher level apprenticeships is to be welcomed, the fact that it has resulted in fewer opportunities for young people is of concern.

Figure 1. Apprenticeship starts 2015-2021, by apprenticeship level and age group

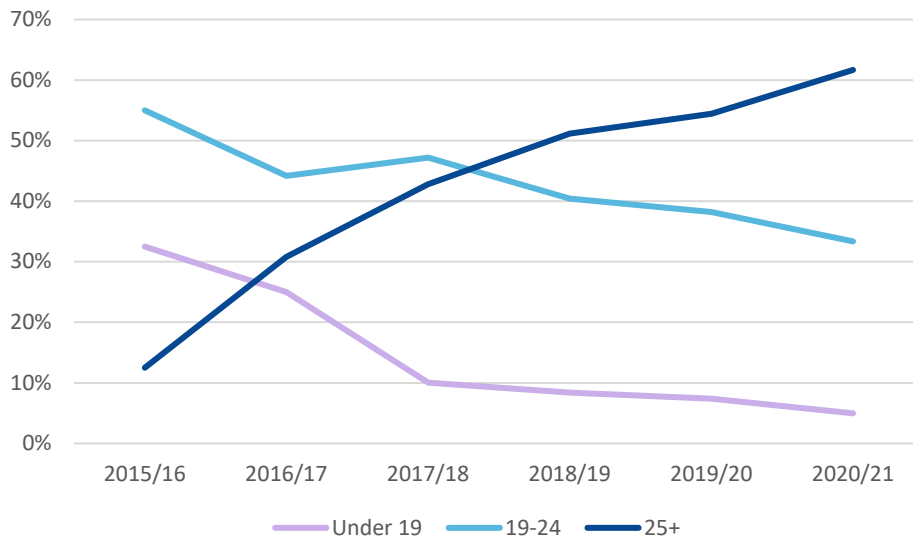


Source: [Department for Education](#)

The shift in the age profile of apprentices is not simply down to changes in the share among different levels. Even among degree apprenticeships alone, one can see a shift in the age profile over the past six years (Figure 2). The share of degree apprentices above the age of 25 has risen from 13% in 2015/16 to 62% in 2020/21. Despite being commonly presented as an alternative to university, just 5% of degree apprenticeship starts are being taken up by under 19s.

¹ C Cullinane and K Doherty (2020) *Levelling Up? Making degree apprenticeships work for social mobility*. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/levelling-up/>

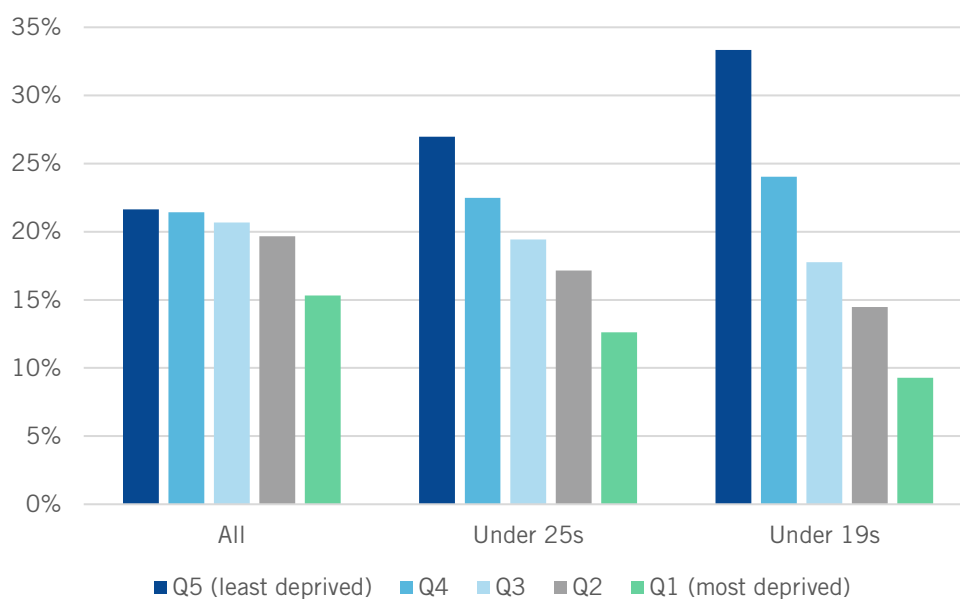
Figure 2. Share of degree apprenticeship starts by age group, 2015-2021



Source: [Department for Education](#)

As well as access issues for young people, there are also access gaps for the best apprenticeship opportunities when you look at deprivation, with negative implications for social mobility. Figure 3 shows that those from more affluent areas are most likely to take on higher and degree level apprenticeships, and those from the most deprived the least likely. However, this gap is even more acute at younger age groups, with three and a half times as many level 4+ apprentices from the most affluent areas compared to the most deprived. These trends all add together to raise significant questions about the future of apprenticeships as a lever for social mobility.

Figure 3. Share of higher and degree apprenticeships by deprivation, by age group



Source: [Department for Education](#)

Advice and outreach

Training opportunities for older adults is a vital element of the education sector, in terms of filling skills gaps in the economy, as well as providing ‘second chance’ opportunities for social mobility. Adult education has been decimated over the last decade.² However, this should not come at the cost of providing opportunities for young people. If we are to tackle access gaps, we need to increase both the level of demand among young people for such apprenticeships, and the efforts of employers to reach such young people to offer them these opportunities. Careers advice and outreach activity has a key role to play in this.

For a young person to make an informed decision about their future they need high-quality career information and guidance. In a world where young people are now more likely to change careers on average five to seven times, it is essential every young person is aware of all the different routes, careers and opportunities available to them.³ Currently, there is a disconnect between young peoples’ career aspirations and job availability in the UK, which could be addressed by more effective careers support.⁴ Bridging this divide would benefit young people, as it is shown that young people who experience interactions with employers are likely to earn more, and also benefit the economy, by addressing skills shortages.^{5,6} However, schools and colleges cannot diminish this disconnect without employers, who must play their part in delivering their knowledge and information about their opportunities into schools. The OECD Dream Jobs report found that effective career guidance has never been as important as it is now, and never before has there been a greater responsibility on employers to step up and work with schools.⁷

Careers information and guidance is even more vital for young people from less advantaged backgrounds, as they are less likely to receive support to make informed decisions.⁸ We know that providing career support from an early age gives disadvantaged students more time, and the opportunity to get the experience and information to decide on their pathway.⁹ Good quality advice and guidance is key for social mobility, and a vital element of this is outreach work from organisations such as employers, colleges, training providers, charities and universities.

Concerns were previously raised that too many students were not receiving impartial and independent information and guidance around apprenticeships, either from their schools or from external organisations and instead traditional academic pathways were being prioritised. The Baker Clause

² C Callender & J Thompson (2018) The Lost Part-Timers. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/The-Lost-Part-Timers-Final.pdf>

³ Careers Advice. (N.D) Available at: <https://careers-advice-online.com/career-change-statistics/>

⁴ N Chambers et (2020) Disconnected: Career aspirations and jobs in the UK. Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Disconnected-Career-aspirations-and-jobs-in-the-UK-1.pdf>

⁵ Chambers et (2020) Disconnected: Career aspirations and jobs in the UK. Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Disconnected-Career-aspirations-and-jobs-in-the-UK-1.pdf>

⁶ ET Kashefpakdel & C Percy (2017) Career education that works: an economic analysis using the British Cohort Study, Journal of Education and Work, 30:3, 217-234, DOI: 10.1080/13639080.2016.1177636

⁷ OECD (2020) Dream Jobs? Teenagers’ Career Aspirations and the Future of Work. OECD Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/education/dream-jobs-teenagers-career-aspirations-and-the-future-of-work.htm>

⁸ D Hughes (2017) User insight research into post-16 choices. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664227/User_insight_research_into_post-16_choices.pdf

⁹ D Hughes (2017) User insight research into post-16 choices. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664227/User_insight_research_into_post-16_choices.pdf

came into play in 2018 to tackle this problem and ultimately help to address productivity and skill shortages issues. The Baker Clause stipulates that schools must ensure that students in years 8-13 engage with education and training providers so that they are fully aware of the technical and apprenticeships that they could choose to pursue.¹⁰ However, concerns about compliance have consistently been raised.

Interventions that support students to build their social capital, including employer exposure, are particularly valuable for disadvantaged students, and more employer involvement in advice and guidance has also been highlighted as something young people would like more of.^{11,12} Outreach work delivered to young people supports them to make informed decisions, widens their aspirations and equips them to transition successfully onto their next steps. The transition from school to work is complex and can be confusing, and concerns have been raised that it can be incoherent for people who do not go on to university.¹³

Apprenticeships are complex and differ significantly across employers, including which apprenticeship standard and level is offered, the salary, and when, where and how they recruit. Through outreach from employers or organisations involved in apprenticeships, young people can start to explore different career options, learn how they access apprenticeships and gain an understanding of the qualities employers value in their apprentices. The Social Mobility Commission found that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds may be less likely than their peers to engage with careers provision.¹⁴ This is due to a variety of reasons, but includes young people being unable to ‘become what they cannot see’, so outreach is crucial in showcasing apprentice experiences and developing students’ breadth of knowledge surrounding the world of work.

We know young people are still not receiving consistent information on apprenticeships in school, although Sutton Trust data has shown that awareness and interest is rising among both students and teachers.¹⁵ UCAS have found that two in five students believe more information and advice would have led to them making better choices, and almost a third of students had not received any information about apprenticeships from their school.¹⁶ Students often turn to parents for support with making key decisions, and those parents who had undertaken an apprenticeship themselves are twice as likely to encourage their child to pursue that route over a traditional degree. However, 30% of parents do not

¹⁰ IPPR (2019) The Baker Clause: One Year On. IPPR. Available at: <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/the-baker-clause-oneyear-on>

¹¹ Social Mobility Commission (2021) Pathways to success Increasing online careers advice engagement for disadvantaged young people. Social Mobility Commission. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1023814/For_Publish_-_Pathway_to_success.docx_1_.pdf

¹² Education and Employers (2010) Helping young people succeed: the role of employers. Education and Employers. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/research/helping-young-people-succeed-the-role-of-employers/>

¹³ House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility (2016) Overlooked and left behind: improving the transition from school to work for the majority of young people. House of Lords. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldselect/ldsocmob/120/120.pdf>

¹⁴ Social Mobility Commission (2021) Pathways to success Increasing online careers advice engagement for disadvantaged young people. Social Mobility Commission. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1023814/For_Publish_-_Pathway_to_success.docx_1_.pdf

¹⁵ The Sutton Trust (2018) Apprenticeship polling 2018. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/apprenticeship-polling-2018/>

¹⁶ UCAS (2021) Where Next? What influences the choices school leavers make? UCAS. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/file/435551/download?token=VUdIDVFh>

know that apprenticeships exist at degree level and one third of parents that UCAS surveyed were unaware that it was possible to apply for a degree apprenticeship alongside a university application.¹⁷

Teachers can also lack informed, comprehensive knowledge around technical and vocational routes including apprenticeships, partly down to having only experienced the A-Level and university route themselves.¹⁸ This can influence whether they recommend apprenticeships to students. In our previous research, 64% of teachers would rarely or never advise a high performing student to opt for an apprenticeship, and 37% of these teachers stated that was because of lack of information.¹⁹

Existing programmes

There are many organisations and programmes delivering apprenticeship information to support teachers and schools, such as the ASK (Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge) Programme, Amazing Apprenticeships and the Careers and Enterprise Company. ASK for schools and colleges is a DfE funded programme which offers free support to educational establishments in England with the aim of increasing awareness and understanding of apprenticeships, traineeships and T Levels.²⁰ Amazing Apprenticeships are an approved partner of the ASK programme who create engaging resources to build awareness of apprenticeships whilst also supporting a range of audiences to navigate apprenticeships (see Case Study). The Ask programme and Amazing Apprenticeships have a sole focus on apprenticeships and technical pathways, whereas The Careers and Enterprise Company cover all elements of career guidance. They are the main government partner for supporting schools and colleges to deliver careers education in England and their mission is to help every young person find their best next step. They support schools and colleges through various resources, tools, and training but also work with employers. This work includes connecting employers with education establishments through their careers programmes, where employees can become 'senior business volunteers' who work with the career leaders in schools. The work these organisations and others are doing has contributed to the rise in awareness and understanding amongst students and teachers, but we know that there is still a way to go.

¹⁷ K Bell (2021) Informing parents is the key to unlocking the next generation of apprentices. HEPI. Available at: <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2021/02/17/informing-parents-is-the-key-to-unlocking-the-next-generation-of-apprentices/>

¹⁸ House of Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility (2016) Overlooked and left behind: improving the transition from school to work for the majority of young people. House of Lords. Available at: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldselect/ldsocmob/120/120.pdf>

¹⁹ The Sutton Trust (2018) Apprenticeship polling 2018. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/apprenticeship-polling-2018/>

²⁰ Apprenticeships.gov.uk (2021) The ASK programme. Available at: <https://www.apprenticeships.gov.uk/influencers/ask-programme-resources>

Case Study 1 – Amazing Apprenticeships

[Amazing Apprenticeships](#) are a leading organisation who work directly with schools and colleges to improve the quality and availability of information about apprenticeships available to teachers and careers advisers, students and their families.

Established in 2010, Amazing Apprenticeships support more than 4,500 schools and colleges across England with a variety of initiatives, including the government's flagship [ASK Programme](#). Launched in 2015, this programme, funded by the Department for Education, has engaged over 1 million students to increase their awareness and understanding of apprenticeships through accessing resources, workshops and interactive sessions.

Alongside this, Amazing Apprenticeships partner with a wide range of organisations and employers to educate parents, carers and teachers. They produce resources that are used widely by the Careers and Enterprise Company, National Careers Service, Department for Work and Pensions and others to dispel myths and positively promote the benefits of apprenticeships.

Amazing Apprenticeships also provide apprentices with a platform to share their unique stories to inspire others. Their recent 'Apprentice Stories' campaign has shone a light on the wide range of apprenticeship opportunities by featuring apprentices of all ages, backgrounds and geographies in roles from zoo keeping to fire fighting.

As advocates for disadvantaged and under-represented groups, they also take on a thought leadership role when it comes to widening access to apprenticeships and tackling complex social mobility issues. Amazing Apprenticeships have launched several initiatives to help the apprenticeship community to think how apprenticeships can be used to provide opportunities to less advantaged individuals. The 12-month '[Genie Programme](#)' works directly with employers to help them explore social mobility and how their apprenticeship programmes can be re-designed to diversify their workforce. They have also engaged thousands of individuals in the 'Time For Change' series, which brings the sector together with influential experts to challenge the audience to make small changes to their apprenticeship programmes to achieve a big difference.

The work of Amazing Apprenticeships focuses on the importance of inspiring the apprenticeship community to do things differently, to challenge inequalities in the system and to showcase new and interesting approaches that ensure greater access to apprenticeships for all.

Benefits and room for improvement

The complexity of apprenticeships means that outreach can provide the detailed knowledge of specific apprenticeship programmes that teachers and parents are unlikely to have. Apprenticeship outreach is important for all students, but especially key in reaching people who do not have support networks who fully understand apprenticeships and the benefits they can present. Not only does employer outreach help to inform students about opportunities or careers they may be unaware of, but the more employer contact young people have, the less likely they are to become NEET (Not in education, employment or training).²¹ Employer interactions are well documented as being beneficial, so much so, that they make up the 5th Gatsby Benchmark. The Gatsby Benchmark – *Encounters with employers and employees*, requires that every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace.²² There is particular value in employer engagements for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and can help to level the playing field between disadvantaged young people and their more advantaged peers when it comes to accessing networks of support.²³

Outreach is not just a necessity for target audiences to learn about a range of apprenticeship opportunities but is also beneficial to employers in extending their recruitment reach to a larger talent pool. It is encouraging to see that the value of apprenticeships for employers is shifting, as they appreciate that they can diversify their workforce and acquire or develop their talent through this route. Two thirds (67%) of employers now say that making apprentices accessible to those from lower socio-economic groups is important to them, including 79% of levy paying employers.²⁴ An increased understanding that to reach the best apprentices, employers need to develop and invest in their outreach strategy is emerging. However, in a recent report by St Martin's Group, researchers found that more still needs to be done to promote the profile of apprenticeships, and suggested that this include providing targeted outreach to encourage more starts, particularly for those in areas of deprivation.²⁵ The 5% Club have shown similar findings, stating that employers must actively engage in outreach activities to showcase their apprentice programmes, and ensure public promotion of commitment to inclusion by featuring diverse role models.²⁶

Outreach is traditionally associated with universities and reaching groups who would be less likely to access university independently. The access gaps to university are widely known, with huge amounts of money, time and effort going into widening access. The same culture of outreach and widening participation work does not yet exist for apprenticeships, even though the pattern of young participation in degree apprenticeships now looks very similar to that of first degree undergraduates,

²¹ A Mann (2014) It's who you meet: why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults. Education and Employers. Available at: https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/its_who_you_meet_final_26_06_12.pdf

²² Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014) Good career guidance. Gatsby Foundation. Available at: <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

²³ J Hunt et al (2021) Effective Careers Interventions for Disadvantaged Young People. Careers and Enterprise Company. Available at: https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/media/3ogdxqu1/bit67-cec-report_v3.pdf

²⁴ C Cullinane and K Doherty (2020) Levelling Up? Making degree apprenticeships work for social mobility. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/levelling-up/>

²⁵ The St Martin's Group (2021) The real costs and benefits of apprenticeships. St Martin's Group. Available at: <https://stmartinsgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/The-St-Martins-Group-The-Real-Costs-and-Benefits-of-Apprenticeships.pdf>

²⁶ The 5% club (N.D) Practical solutions to apprenticeship barriers. 5% club. Available at: <https://www.5percentclub.org.uk/wp5pc/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Practical-solutions-to-apprenticeship-barriers.pdf>

with the proportion of apprentices from the most educationally disadvantaged POLAR quintile the same as other undergraduates at non Russell Group universities (13%).²⁷ In previous Sutton Trust research we found that degree level apprenticeships disproportionately go to more advantaged people, with just 13% of degree apprentices coming from neighbourhoods in the bottom fifth of deprivation, with over twice as many (27%) from the most advantaged areas. In recognition of the access challenges that clearly exist, outreach needs to become more embedded into the apprenticeship world.

The pandemic has also had a considerable impact on apprenticeships. As shown in Figure 1, overall starts, at all levels, for 2020/21 are 18 percent lower than those recorded in 2018/19 – the year before the pandemic, with starts by under 25 year-olds down by 25 percent. A strong contrast to the year on year increase which is continuing for over 25 year olds. Back in 2015/16, 66,160 under-25-year-olds from the most deprived areas started an apprenticeship. This year only 23,440 apprenticeships were started by under 25-year-olds from the most deprived areas, a 65% decrease in the last five years for young people in the most deprived areas. This identifies a clear need for outreach and widening participation work around apprenticeships so they can reach their social mobility potential, alongside work to increase the supply of available apprenticeships.

To get a reflection of current provision and gain an understanding of what is being considered best practice we conducted interviews with a variety of employers, universities and outreach delivery organisations. We then surveyed recent apprentices to understand the information and support they received before starting their apprenticeship, and the gaps that remain.

²⁷ C Cullinane and K Doherty (2020) Levelling Up? Making degree apprenticeships work for social mobility. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/levelling-up/>

Methodology

To investigate apprenticeship outreach activities, this study used data from:

- A series of interviews with levy employers and universities offering apprenticeships.
- A survey of people who are currently undertaking an apprenticeship at any level, or have completed an apprenticeship at any level over the past 3 years, conducted by YouGov.

Interviews

Video interviews were conducted online with ten Apprenticeship Levy paying employers, three universities and three other organisations involved in the apprenticeship landscape. We chose to focus towards large levy paying employers, as they generally have more capacity to deliver outreach on a larger scale. They will likely have had different experiences and reflections to SMEs, so this needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings. We contacted a range of organisations; some we already knew were delivering apprenticeship outreach and some where this wasn't known. We tried to capture views of stakeholders across a range of sectors and spoke to key informants in the organisations who agreed to be interviewed. We also approached a few organisations who are key players in the apprenticeship sector, but not as large levy paying employers, to help get an overall view of what outreach was taking place.

The sample included four professional services employers, two financial sector employers, one gas provider, one consultancy firm, one retail employer, one pharmaceutical firm, one apprenticeship education organisation, three universities, one member organisation and a charity. Interviewees were asked what their apprenticeship outreach currently looks like, what the biggest challenges are to delivering outreach and about elements of good practice they had seen elsewhere.

Interviews were carried out under the Chatham House Rule, with one interviewer asking questions whilst another made notes. In order to encourage participants to speak freely, the interviews were not recorded and were conducted in an informal manner, structured with the same questions throughout each interview. Thematic analysis on the interview data was then conducted. Using the platform Taguette the responses were coded into eighteen categories, which have roughly been grouped into the seven sections outlined in the interview findings section of this report. We have highlighted where common themes occurred or where unique findings stood out. We have pulled out quotes that particularly conveyed points made.

Survey of apprentices

In order to understand the perspective of apprentices themselves, the population of interest was defined as those who are currently doing an apprenticeship or have done so over the past 3 years. This was to capture an up to date picture of outreach activities and the information being received by apprentices, as well as focus on those most likely to still be able to recall their experiences in order to answer questions accurately.

The polling sample consists of 857 people living in the UK aged between 16 and 54, who were surveyed between the 28th of September and 20th of October 2021.²⁸ The sample was selected from the YouGov panel, with questions answered online. Questions focused on the outreach activities they have been involved with (as well as those they would have like to have experienced), how useful such activities were, and apprentices' experience of the application process.

In order to calculate breakdowns by socio-economic background, those taking part in the survey were asked about the occupation of the main earner in their household when they were 16 years old. The responses were then used to determine a social grade, a classification based on occupation, developed for the National Readership Survey. Social grade is one of the most common ways to determine socio-economic status based on occupation, splitting responses into two groups. The ABC1 group represents 'middle' class (here also referred to as higher socio-economic class, or as individuals from better-off backgrounds), and C2DE - 'working' class (also referred to here as those from lower socio-economic or poorer backgrounds). It should be noted that as these are two broad groups, it is likely they underestimate the diversity within these groups.

Additionally, to look at differences in responses by ethnic background, respondents have been grouped into those from 'a White' background or 'Black, Asian or Minority Ethnicity' background, in order to account for small sample sizes for some ethnicities. Whilst the experiences of those in this group are likely to vary, nevertheless, this grouping has been done to identify broad differences between those from white and ethnic minority backgrounds.

When breaking down the polling sample by age, responses include 255 apprentices aged between 16 and 24, 265 aged between 25 and 34, and 337 aged between 35 and 54. Thus, the overall sample was skewed towards older apprentices. This group are different in a variety of ways to younger apprentices, including whether they were already working for their apprenticeship employer (indeed, 60% of apprentices aged between 25 and 34 as well as 75% of those aged between 35 and 54 already worked for their apprenticeship employer, compared to 27% of those aged between 16 and 24).

For most of the questions analysed, we have focused on aged 16-24. This not only accounts for the skewed nature of the sample, but as many of the questions relate to outreach activities experienced at school or college, it means that only responses of those who have recently passed through the education system are included. This is important so that respondents are more likely to be able to correctly recall their experience and will be more likely to be in education when the relevant policies discussed in this report were in place.

²⁸ The full sample size was 1,002 apprentices. Discrepancies in how some older apprentices had answered the screening question led to the decision to focus on those under 55.

Interviews with employers and universities

1. Outreach activities taking place

Motivation to run apprenticeships

The overall feeling of why employers chose to run apprenticeship programmes was to bring in different views, mindsets and diversify their workforce.

“Making sure we give opportunities to young people and making sure we have a diverse workforce. Apprentices bring in different values, views and mindsets. We need people who can think laterally and respectfully challenge each other”

– Professional service firm

“Attracting the most and best diverse talent into the business. We get different perspectives and ways of working through apprentices.”

- Professional service firm

Additionally, the sense that it was important to grow their own talent for future and longer-term skills came across, which backs up findings from a government study where 86% of employers said that apprentices helped to develop relevant skills and fill skills gaps.²⁹ This was balanced alongside the aim of setting young people up for the future and acknowledging the long-term engagement and commitment that apprentices have.

It was clear that there was not one overriding motivator but a multitude of reasons why it made good business sense, alongside a sense of responsibility to offer opportunities to young people. Long term engagement and commitment was emphasised, as well as better retention compared to graduates generally. This reflects a recent survey which found 65% of apprentices stay working for the company that trained them when they complete their apprenticeship.³⁰ It is well documented that employing apprentices contributes to improved staff retention, and in the most recent Apprenticeship Employer Evaluation, 67% of employers say that employing apprentices improved staff retention.³¹

One key difference to when employers recruited graduates was highlighted; the need for more pastoral care for apprentices. This was not framed as a negative, but simply an acknowledgment of what was needed for this group, with ultimately positive consequences.

²⁹ National Apprenticeship Service (2018) Achieving the benefits of apprenticeships: A guide for employers. National Apprenticeship Service. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800060/Achieving_the_benefits_of_apprenticeships.pdf

³⁰ National Apprenticeship Service (2018) Achieving the benefits of apprenticeships: A guide for employers. National Apprenticeship Service. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/800060/Achieving_the_benefits_of_apprenticeships.pdf

³¹ Government Social Research (2020) Apprenticeships Evaluation 2018-19: Employers. Department for Education. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875561/Apprenticeships_Evaluation_-_Employer_Report.pdf

“They are then embedded in the culture and tend to stay. Compared to grads who do a programme and then more likely to leave once qualified.”

- Professional service firm

The suggestion came across that some employers needed outreach work to ensure that their apprenticeship programmes diversified who they were reaching. For some, partnerships had been created solely to reach groups of people that employers were not able to themselves, while others had taken on the challenge of doing that outreach work themselves. This partnership way of working is discussed in more detail below.

“We are already tapping into more privileged talent, so we need to diversify in our source and invest in a different way.”

- Management and technology consultancy firm

Everyone we spoke to was involved in a variation of outreach work on some scale. So although we cannot identify the exact reasons people do not conduct any outreach at all, the challenges highlighted by those who already delivering outreach give us a good idea of the barriers that may be stopping some organisations from carrying out outreach. These challenges are covered later in the report. Additionally, not all employers feel they need to increase or diversify who they already attract and therefore do not need to invest time and money in outreach work.

Outreach activities

The outreach described by employers during our interviews covered a huge variety of activities. These included but weren't limited to:

- virtual events
- school visits
- career fairs
- general marketing materials
- mentoring
- work experience
- social media content
- employability days
- STEM ambassadors

The outreach was generally targeted at young people, but there were virtual events for teachers and parents too. Some employers had whole websites dedicated to outreach materials with digital activities for all audiences, some more interactive than others so that content could be accessed at suitable times. Some employers focused more on attending events they were invited to or targeting specific schools with newsletters, resources, and information around programme openings. There were examples of tutoring and mentoring sessions taking place, sometimes delivered by apprentices, and sometimes targeted at specific groups of students.

2. Partnerships

Partnering

Several employers told us that there were instances where they had partnered with organisations, other than schools and colleges, to deliver their outreach, and this was seen as being important to deliver outreach on a large scale.

“(We) reached around 23,000 people through partnership events compared to 828 just on our own events. So we really see the value of partnerships in the reach they have.”

- Professional service firm

Examples of these organisations were career services, youth organisations, local community groups, charities, and the Careers and Enterprise Company. Although sometimes viewed as expensive, the reason for these partnerships was usually to reach people that employers weren't reaching.

“We want to reach a wider talent pool but are unaware of how to seek this talent. Would say that many other large employers would agree. - There is a cost but outreach not possible without investment and commitment.”

- Financial services employer

Whether this was because they didn't know how to reach these groups or because it was too resource heavy was unclear. It was evident however that partners could sometimes be the 'translator' between young people and the corporate world, through using more appropriate language and breaking down perceptions of companies and sectors. In some instances, companies struggled to reach young people, whereas partners had already got relationships in place and had trust and reputation embedded. Another benefit of working with partners was that they could provide certain profile and demographics of audience that employers weren't able to access themselves.

The Sutton Trust has played its own role in this, partnering with employers to introduce the Apprenticeship Summer School since 2020 (see box).

Sutton Trust Apprenticeship Summer School

The Sutton Trust fight for social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life. Sutton Trust programmes support over 6,000 high attaining young people each year from less advantaged backgrounds to access leading universities, apprenticeships, and careers, helping them to raise and then realise their aspirations.

Over the last few years, the Trust has focussed on embedding degree-level apprenticeships into programmes and launched the Sutton Trust Apprenticeship Summer School. This programme was launched because although high-quality apprenticeships have the potential to be powerful vehicles for social mobility, [Sutton Trust research](#) has shown that they have come with problems for fair access. Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are losing out on these opportunities. As outlined in this report the information that students receive around apprenticeships is still inconsistent. The Trust, to play their part in tackling this, launched the summer school which offers young people from low and moderate incomes the opportunity to gain insight into what it takes to be a degree apprentice.

[The Sutton Trust Apprenticeship Summer School](#) is delivered in partnership with leading employers. Employers that have supported the programme cover a range of sectors and have included the likes of PWC, Accenture, Arup, Coca-Cola European Partners, GSK, Co-op, NatWest Group, CPS, KPMG and Lewis Silkin, with Amazing Apprenticeships also supporting the programme.

The programme helps young people to make an informed decision about their future careers. They gain an in depth understanding of higher and degree apprenticeships, what they involve and whether an apprenticeship is the right choice for them. They meet current apprentices, experience networking opportunities, and engage with peers also exploring the apprenticeship pathway. Students also learn how to access apprenticeship opportunities; the different application processes employers use and what employers are looking for in their apprentices.

The programme was launched as a digital programme in 2020 due to the pandemic. Each cohort has seen approximately 120 high attaining young people from less advantaged backgrounds successfully gain places on the programme. Now in its third year, and if circumstances allow, it will be transitioning to a residential model in 2022.

Schools

In our interviews, employers told us that many relationships were forged with schools, with varying levels of success. Some focused locally and targeted specific schools depending on certain demographics. Whether the school had a sixth form was mentioned as being a possible barrier for engagement, because funding incentivises schools with sixth forms to keep students rather than encouraging them to explore other options (the problem the Baker Clause was introduced to address). The other issue raised was that sometimes providers and employers found it difficult to speak with students. It was also flagged that it may be more difficult for SMEs to find the time or capacity to build relationships with schools. The inconsistency of school resources and capacity around careers advice was also mentioned. A lack of understanding of apprenticeships from school staff also came up, with some giving the example of large groups of students being sent to outreach activities even though they were not interested in apprenticeships.

The disconnect between the employer experience and the school experience is not new, and many attempts have been made to address the issue. Programmes designed specifically to tackle this already exist, such as the Inspiring the Future programme, where schools and colleges are matched with registered volunteers from a variety of professions, making it easy for teachers to reach employees as and when they need them.³²

The Co-op Group's successful model has been highlighted in the below case study.

Case Study 2 – The Co-op Group

The Co-op Group sponsors the [Co-op Academies Trust](#) (CAT), which include 28 schools and nearly 30,000 students across the North of England – it was one of the first businesses to sponsor a multi-academy trust.

The Co-op's sponsorship of CAT is based on partnership and collaboration. The Co-op believes that through a close working relationship with a major business, CAT and all of the students it supports, can benefit. The Co-op also advocates more widely for more and better engagement between UK businesses and schools. It aims to lead by example to encourage businesses, particularly within its' own supply chains, to share resources with schools, students and communities in order to promote social mobility.

For example, during the summer of 2021, the Co-op ran a 5-week [Virtual Work Experience](#) (VWEX) programme to support CAT students. The programme was accessed by more than 1,500 students, providing insights into careers and future paths – including apprenticeships. Co-op suppliers, including Microsoft, ITV, Kellogg's and Procter & Gamble also ran sessions.

VWEX was a pragmatic response from the Co-op, to offer an insight into work when face-to-face opportunities could not be offered to students because of COVID restrictions. The experience of running the programme in 2021 suggests, however, that the approach has great potential for the future, because it opens up opportunities for students to hear from a range of employers, not just those in close geographic proximity or who 'someone' knows. It is for this reason that the Co-op plans to run VWEX again in summer 2022, bringing in more employers and offering the programme to more students, with a particular focus on schools in the most disadvantaged areas.

The Co-op intends to continue to offer 'traditional' face-to-face work experience in the future but will focus the offer on students with special needs and those who would gain most value from a real-life setting. The Co-op has also sought to create opportunities for students to progress from CAT to work at the Co-op. At Co-op Academy Connell, a Further Education college in Manchester, a unique scheme has been created called the [Co-op Young Business Leaders Programme](#). The scheme offers a paid work placement as part of the triple BTEC Business pathway.

The opportunity is open to Year 13 students, with the placement running alongside the BTEC course. Students are hosted within the Co-op Support Centre in central Manchester and experience a number of rotations across different teams and are supported by a mentor throughout. There is an opportunity for CYBL participants to 'graduate' to full time employment at the Co-op and transition directly onto apprenticeships to continue their learning and development.

³² Education and employers (N.D) Inspiring the future. Available at: <https://www.inspiringthefuture.org/about/>

When outreach is delivered

Generally, employers said that outreach was positioned around recruitment timelines, with most employers having peaks and troughs throughout the year, dependant on when they recruited. One suggestion was that the bigger the employer the earlier in the academic year they tended to recruit and therefore deliver outreach. Summer was noted as being difficult to reach students and National Apprenticeship Week was highlighted as being significant in terms of output.

3. Who the outreach is targeted at

Who is being targeted

Employers target a variety of different groups through outreach. The majority of employers interviewed said they were targeting people who may not apply for their apprenticeships or may not succeed in the application process, as well as underrepresented groups within the employer's business. There were examples of employers partnering with specific organisations to reach certain groups.

These groups include but weren't limited to:

- black students
- BAME students
- students with disadvantaged backgrounds
- female students
- FSM eligible students
- older career changers
- target schools
- care leavers
- students with special educational needs

Some employers had target lists and directed their focus on schools with high levels of deprivation.

The importance of socio-economic background

Employers generally stated that social mobility was at the forefront of their agenda when it came to recruitment or outreach work.

"Another driver for the organisation is social mobility as well as nurturing talent."

- Professional service firm

The importance of socio-economic background was talked about being a priority not just in apprenticeship programmes but across all routes into a career. Diversity of workforce was emphasised and the understanding that perhaps they were already tapping into more privileged talent through other streams, so were using apprenticeships to diversify and invest in a different way. One large employer had a team looking at upskilling and reaching people who might not usually access their opportunities whilst another had a partner relationship to monitor socio-economic backgrounds across their early talent pipelines.

4. Spending and reporting

The amounts being spent on apprenticeship outreach differed and can be difficult to define. The funding for apprenticeship outreach was sometimes in combined budgets for all early talent, general recruitment, or came from community budgets that covered many other projects. Sometimes this was held centrally, and at other times employers had more control and knowledge over local budgets. There were suggestions that some grad teams or programmes received more funding: one example was that £150,000 was being spent on traditional graduate programmes compared to £15,000 on their apprenticeships, although this wasn't seen as a specific problem as there was the potential to cross subsidise from the grad budget.

When asked about the amount of the apprenticeship levy employers are spending, it was sometimes the case that the individual we spoke to did not know, but responses ranged from just 20% being used to instances where nearly all was being used, with some instances of levy transfer either happening or planning to happen. It has been suggested that employers should be able to use levy funding for pre-apprenticeship programmes and other apprenticeship outreach work. Tesco for example, have proposed a reform to allow up to 10% of levy funds to be used to support high quality pre-employment and pre-apprenticeship programmes, in order for them to scale up the outreach and programmes they deliver with the Prince's Trust, helping young people at school to build their confidence and develop vital skills.³³ The Association of Schools and Colleges (AoC) called for the Government to reserve part of the apprenticeship levy and use this to support apprenticeships in a similar way to the widening participation funding that has been reserved in the higher education system.³⁴ In our interviews, mixed opinions were given on whether it would be beneficial to use a portion of the levy on outreach and widening participation, but it is worth noting we spoke to employers already doing outreach, so not employers who are unable to deliver outreach primarily because of lack of budget.

"We use all the levy already so probably wouldn't want to transfer any across to outreach really. Its already absorbed but this might be different for other employers"

- Professional service firm

Of those who thought it wouldn't necessarily help, the two primary reasons were either because budget was not an issue or that they were already using all the levy. However, employers who are not spending all their levy seemed to be the employers who would benefit and be interested in leveraging levy money on outreach activity. These employers were keen for any flexibility on levy spend, with some specifically reporting that it would be useful to increase staff capacity to deliver outreach or fund partners to deliver outreach. We know that during the 2020-21 financial year, £2,631 million was paid into levy-paying employers' apprenticeship service accounts whilst £1,314 million expired, so it is likely to be those employers whose levy is expiring instead of being used that could benefit the most.³⁵

Other flexibilities that were suggested to us included being able to put the levy towards apprentice salaries, extending the levy transfer window or receiving levy funds directly when an apprentice from a disadvantaged background was recruited. There have been many publications and discussions around

³³ Tesco (2021) Serving communities a little better every day: An economic and social impact report for Tesco. Available at: <https://tescoimpactreport.publicfirst.co.uk/>

³⁴ Association of colleges (N.D) Money from the apprenticeship levy should be used to promote access to apprenticeships and help raise quality. Available at: <https://www.aoc.co.uk/money-the-apprenticeship-levy-should-be-used-promote-access-apprenticeships-and-help-raise-quality>

³⁵ They Work For You (2021) Apprenticeships: Finance. Department for Education written question. Available at: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2021-07-13.32387.h&s=apprenticeship#g32387.q0>

potential levy flexibilities which echo these views. MPs such as Robert Halfon have called for SMEs to have apprentice wages subsidised for their first year and similar proposals were put forward by Labour, who proposed to use unspent apprenticeship levy to fund apprentice wages.^{36,37} The Association of Colleges have suggested that a portion of the levy should be reserved to support access to apprenticeships in a similar way that widening participation funding is used for the same purpose in higher education.³⁸

Tracking, monitoring, and reporting

Another inconsistency in employers' outreach activities seemed to be how or if outreach was tracked, monitored, or reported on. Some organisations in our interviews said that they relied on partners to report on the demographics of the audiences they engaged with, and some monitored their engagement rates at events through social media. Most seemed to encourage self-identifying whether you took part in any outreach and completing socio-economic indicators when applying for an apprenticeship. This gives a skewed picture of who the outreach is supporting as will only capture applicants. One employer flagged that they were only able to see how people found the apprenticeship programme if they were successful in securing an apprenticeship, so not just applicants but in this case only successful applicants. The information captured mainly seemed to be used for whether partnerships or events were providing return on investment, but it was noted that it can be difficult to track conversations to applications. One university highlighted the disparity between recording widening participation numbers for undergraduates and the nonexistence of such data for degree apprentices, although this was on the agenda to change within the university.

To know that outreach is effective and reaching those that organisations want to reach, it is important to be able to monitor or measure it. If apprenticeships are being used as a way of diversifying the workforce, it is essential to be tracking data over time to see if an apprenticeship programme is reaching those that are underrepresented or not. This can then help to structure outreach strategies and identify groups it is either not reaching or not being successful in gaining an apprenticeship. It can also give an idea of which partnerships may need to be forged to reach underrepresented potential talent.

5. University outreach vs Apprenticeship outreach

University vs Apprenticeship outreach

The overall feeling amongst employers interviewed was that apprenticeship outreach is nothing like graduate outreach, with less budget, resource and consistency, along with a feeling that no one has completely 'nailed' apprenticeship outreach. The age of targeted students was suggested as being a younger audience than when employers recruit graduates.

³⁶ B Camden (2021) Government should fund apprentice wages for SMEs, says Halfon. FE Week. Available at: <https://feweek.co.uk/government-should-fund-apprentice-wages-for-smes-says-halfon/>

³⁷ F Whieldon (2021) Labour Party calls for apprentice wage subsidy. FE Week. Available at: <https://feweek.co.uk/2021/01/08/labour-party-calls-for-apprentice-wage-subsidy/>

³⁸ Association of colleges (N.D) Money from the apprenticeship levy should be used to promote access to apprenticeships and help raise quality. Available at: <https://www.aoc.co.uk/money-the-apprenticeship-levy-should-be-used-promote-access-apprenticeships-and-help-raise-quality>

Separately, the level of funding that goes into university access outreach to break down barriers does not exist around apprenticeship outreach yet. However, the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill has been urged by Robert Halfon, Chair of the Education Select Committee, as the chance to look at the £800 million diversity and inclusion fund that universities spend and prioritise it towards students from disadvantaged backgrounds doing apprenticeships.³⁹

Another challenge highlighted was that employers and universities often have different priorities, which potentially leads to outreach that is not impartial, as they can be biased towards their own routes, courses or apprenticeships they offer. The lack of familiarity with apprenticeships presented a challenge in terms of their students knowing content, structure and application processes. This was in contrast to students applying to university, who had a much better understanding of what to expect.

Degree apprenticeships: Employer vs University responsibility of outreach

For degree apprenticeships, employers partner with universities, and it was clear from our interviews that these partnerships, in terms of delivering outreach, varied. Some universities felt the responsibility sat entirely with employers, whilst others spoke about a more collaborative approach, for example employers would come to open evenings. One interesting view was the value placed on widening participation coming too late in the process, after recruitment had happened, rather than being embedded from the beginning. Another opinion was that the degree element is what an apprentice keeps regardless of what happens with their employer, so the responsibility should lie with the more 'stable' party - which would be the university - however, this opinion was not reflected by employers. These conflicting views tended to mean that outreach was delivered by either the employer or the university, but rarely did they have a collaborative approach. However, some participants were satisfied with this state of affairs.

6. Delivery challenges

During our interviews, we spoke to employers about the challenges they faced when co-ordinating outreach activities. One of the main challenges, unsurprisingly given the circumstances over the last two years, was around virtual interaction. Issues were experienced around students having virtual fatigue, high drop out rates and getting timings and content right so students engaged and didn't switch off.

The pandemic inevitably meant that outreach has been transitioned to a virtual experience, where possible and employers flagged both pros and cons of this change. Becoming a virtual offer allowed young people to engage in areas they might not have before, with some webinars hugely attended. While barriers to online participation have been highlighted throughout the pandemic, as long as they could get online it has been a good level up for students. It enabled more conversations to happen, not only with students but also with teachers and parents and allowing misconceptions to be broken down by senior staff speaking to these audiences. However, virtual fatigue and low turnouts (after high sign ups) were noted as challenges leading to questions around whether the resource and time resulted in a good return of investment for businesses or not.

³⁹ Hansard (2021) Skills and Post-16 Education Bill second reading. UK Parliament. Available at: [https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-15/debates/EDE122F1-58C7-41BC-AA53-BC1908D08765/SkillsAndPost-16EducationBill\(Lords\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-15/debates/EDE122F1-58C7-41BC-AA53-BC1908D08765/SkillsAndPost-16EducationBill(Lords))

“Other virtual challenges around student engagement include:

- *Virtual fatigue.*
- *Trying to offer unique, fun ways to keep up engagement.*
- *Timings – trying to find the sweet spot between the right time and amount of content before students switch off.*
- *Getting the attendance to events – especially with partners. We are often promised so many attendees and then they don’t deliver/turn up.”*

- Professional service firm

Now students have returned to schools and are receiving in-person teaching they are understandably more focused on ‘catch up’ after two school years of disruption. This presents a new challenge of finding time within the school day to run virtual events, meaning students are often required to do this in their own time after school hours, sometimes as homework. Once again this raises the issue of the digital divide and anyone without a device, an internet connection, a suitable space to work or lack of support will find it harder to access such activities. This leaves the most disadvantaged students at greatest risk of not participating, not exploring, or understanding their options and not having access to good quality CIAG.

The other common challenge cited in our interviews with employers was around working with schools. The difficulties of getting to the right people within schools, maintaining these relationships, reaching a high number of schools and employers lacking the capacity to do this were all highlighted. It was perceived to be easier for large employers to do this piece of work and have the capacity to manage this. Even when employers had the resource to reach schools it was described as being difficult to maintain relationships and keep up to date with who the best people were to contact, especially if a careers lead moved elsewhere, with reengaging with such a school proving hard.

“(We) find it difficult to get into schools and maintain relationships. This is where third parties are useful.”

- Professional service firm

“When working with schools, not sure we have the right hook to draw them in. We need to tailor our activities and messaging to entice them but we don’t have the budget to strategise this.”

- Professional service firm

Other partnerships, although generally recognised as being positive, were flagged as having several challenges too. Some partners did not fulfil the reach they had promised, either geographically or in terms of numbers. Some participants reported a lot of time, resources and finance being put into partnerships that weren’t always worth the return on investment for companies. An employer gave an example where the partner had promised to reach 50+ students but with only 5 students signed up they had to cancel the event. This led to hesitation to reinvest in time, money and staffing to fulfil future events. Partnership outreach was thought to be expensive by some, although not always a barrier as some employers had significantly more budget than others to spend on outreach.

Internal challenges seemed to be less commented on but included the value of apprentices putting back into outreach not always being appreciated and outreach volunteers not always being the diverse range of employees they wanted to showcase.

7. Improvements and good practice

During our interviews, there were many suggestions of ways to improve both employers' own outreach work but also apprenticeship outreach generally. Improving information and guidance within schools was seen as being key, the consistency of the CIAG and tailoring it to students' needs.

Reaching parents either through schools or through employer outreach was another important area highlighted in our employer interviews as being crucial going forward. A recent UCAS survey of parents and carers found that almost one in three were unaware that you can apply for a degree apprenticeship alongside an undergraduate application.⁴⁰ As options in technical education and apprenticeships evolve at pace in the next few years, supporting parents and carers alongside students and teachers will be more important than ever.

Employers additionally acknowledged that more data needed to be collected as well as more student feedback on outreach to understand whether it was effective.

Ideas were suggested around how to improve the type of outreach in general such as developing a better hybrid physical-virtual model or scaling back on some events in order to have higher impact events. More specific ideas were also suggested such as increasing interaction with senior staff alongside using current or past apprentices for mentoring or application support.

Outreach was generally seen not to be happening early enough, with some students not having studied the relevant subjects and thus suggested that outreach should be taking place before GCSEs.

"Advice/outreach must be early on; students who are interested, often do not have correct subject grades"

– Financial services firm

Some employers noted that the outreach could be spread out across the year rather than frontloading it around vacancy openings.

"We need to do more across the year, rather than frontloading it around vacancies opening as students don't tend to make the immediate decision to choose an apprenticeship over other options such as uni."

– Pharmaceutical company

PWC were often mentioned in our research interviews as being the leader in the apprenticeship space and referred to as a good example of delivering excellent outreach around apprenticeships, with their targeted events doing well and hosting a unique platform to reach audiences. Some of the ways they are engaging with young people have been pulled out in Case Study 3.

Big brand names seemed to mostly be mentioned but specific examples were given of smaller organisation running good outreach. One such example was an Instagram campaign of a treasure hunt, which the organisation clearly had the right technical knowledge to implement, whereas big corporates sometimes don't have that skill within the recruitment teams. Another example was an employer going into schools with a physical robot to deliver a session and then once they were there spoke about IAG. Making up for a lack of scale and resources by harnessing the specific skills of an organisation in

⁴⁰ UCAS (2021) Where next? Improving the journey to becoming an apprentice. UCAS. Available at: <https://www.ucas.com/file/447046/download?token=SXAWMUda>

creative ways is important for SMEs. Overall, there was a general sense that no one was delivering perfect outreach but that there were pockets of good practice happening.

“No one has nailed it yet. It is nothing like university/graduate outreach.”

- Pharmaceutical company

Case Study 3 – PwC

PwC know that when people from different backgrounds and with different points of view work together, they create the most value – for their clients, their people and society. They value the contribution school and college leavers bring to the workforce and they provide opportunities for students from all backgrounds to join PwC through a range of routes, recognising that for some students a traditional university degree might not be the most attractive option.

PwC have School & College Leaver programmes, which students can join straight after A-Levels (or equivalent qualifications) and Flying Start degree programmes, where students will gain a full degree alongside real work experience with paid placements at PwC. Across both of these programmes, students can gain qualifications together with valuable real-world work experience. This can be especially helpful for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds who may not have had the same career guidance and support as their peers.

Activities are run throughout the year to promote school and college leaver opportunities, including working with partner organisations to deliver outreach to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Recently PwC have broadened this reach to focus on students of Black Heritage, partnering with organisations who can help to reach and engage with a wider audience to make their opportunities more accessible and to run online events and engage with their students.

Some of the programmes include:

- Virtual skills programme - Career Insight virtual sessions and their [Employability Skills Toolkit](#). Although available to all students, programmes are targeted at secondary school students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.
- Regular teacher/parent workshops on topics ranging from employability skills to the importance of inclusion and diversity in the workplace. This includes bitesize recorded sessions, which are accessible online at any time, for students, teachers and parents, increasing accessibility for students who may share one device per household for example.
- Regional virtual 'teacher insight' sessions for teachers to hear about our opportunities like skills sessions and a Virtual Insight Week, followed by an open Q&A. PwC also continues to add relevant content for students to their careers YouTube channel.
- Campaigns such as the [Virtual Classroom](#) programme, introduced as a response to the first lockdown as a way to reach and upskill students. These have varying monthly themes to address topics such as inclusion, application process skills, technology insights and upskilling.
- A [Virtual Insight Week](#) each summer, targeted at all students but is heavily promoted to students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- PwC run a work experience programme for Year 12 students each summer; “New World. New Skills - Schools Series”. These sessions are held specifically for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and positions for this programme are recruited through PwC’s partner organisations such as The Sutton Trust. Students are then invited to a hybrid week (online and in PwC offices, where restrictions have permitted), where they’ll learn more about PwC and our business areas, network with our people and enhance their employability skills.

From both the Virtual Insight Week and the New World New Skills programmes PwC hope students then go on to apply for their roles for the following year.

Survey of apprentices

In order to only include those who have recently experienced outreach activities in school or college, and are more likely to be able to recall their experience, the majority of data reported on in this section refers to those aged between 16 to 24. For some questions, all apprentices aged 54 and under have been included, but it must be considered that older apprentices are different in a variety of ways, including being more likely to be doing an apprenticeship with their existing employer, which may affect their responses.

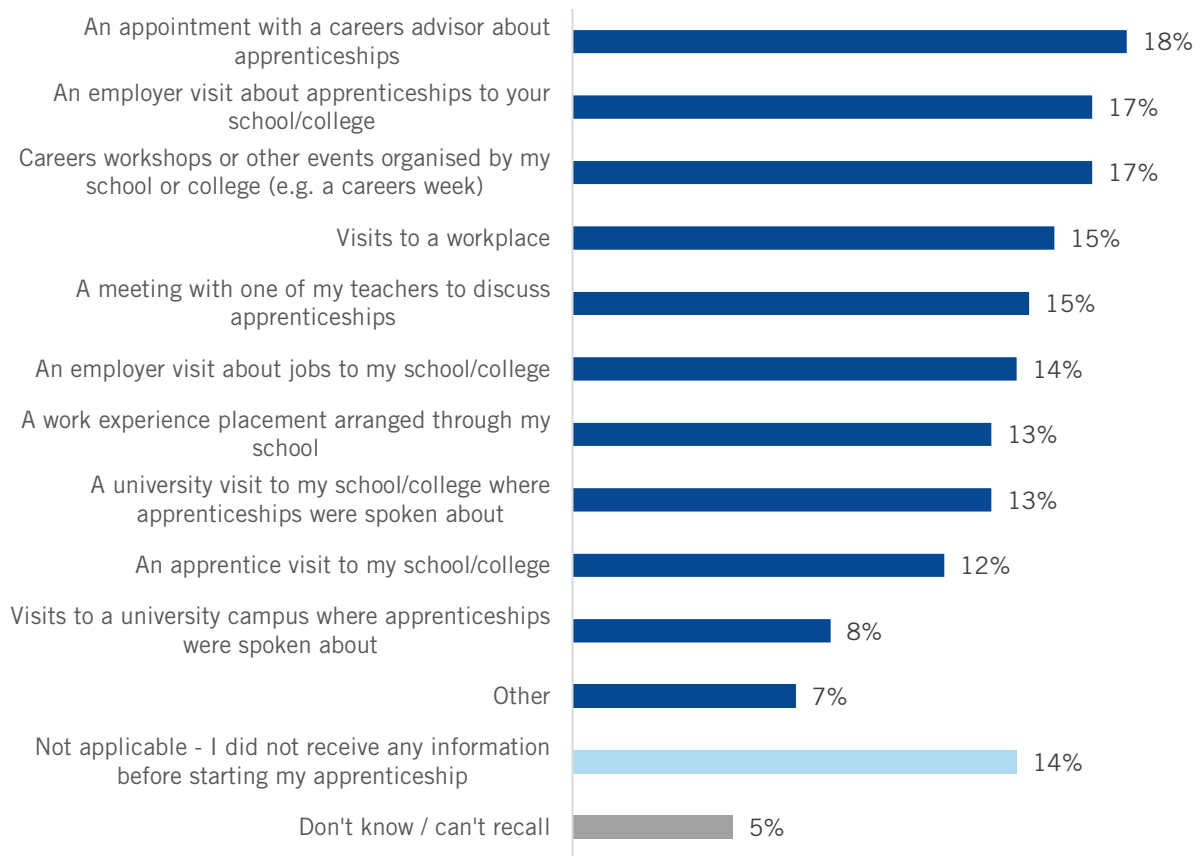
Outreach activities

In our survey of apprentices, participants were asked about the outreach activities they had participated in prior to starting their apprenticeship.

For apprentices aged between 16-24, the most common source of information was an appointment with a careers advisor about apprenticeships, which was reported by 18% of participants. Other common information sources included careers workshops and other events organised by a school or college (17%). When it came to an employer visit to a school or college only 17% of apprentices aged 16-24 had met an employer and 15% had visited a workplace (Figure 4). 14% said that they did not receive any information before starting their apprenticeship, highlighting that the CIAG around apprenticeships needs to still go further.

For those not already working for their apprenticeship employer, this was higher at 17%. They were also over twice less likely to say that none of the outreach activities they participated in were useful to help them find and start an apprenticeship (7% said this compared to 14% who had not worked for their apprenticeship employer before).

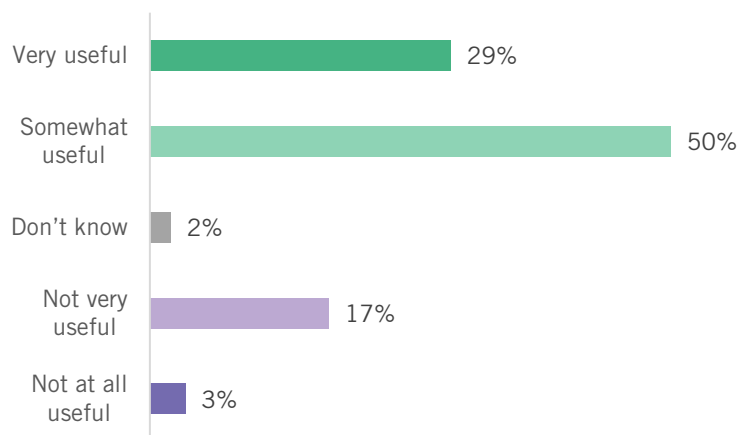
Figure 4. Sources of information received before starting apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Nearly 4 in 5 (78%) found all the information they received before starting an apprenticeship useful (Figure 5). However, 1 in 5 (20%) did not find any of the information that they received as useful.

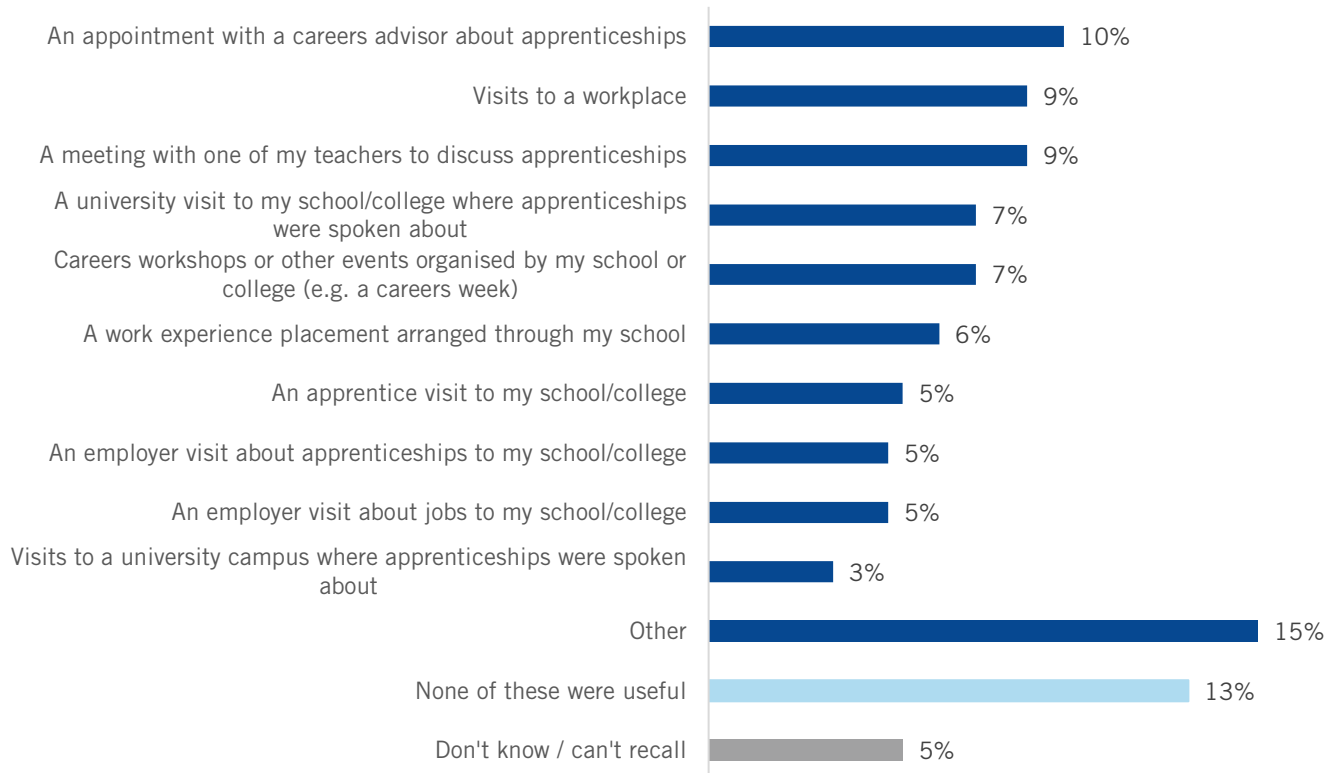
Figure 5. How useful all information received before starting apprenticeship was in helping to find and start an apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

10% said that the information given during an appointment with a careers advisor about apprenticeships was the most useful source (Figure 6), the highest.

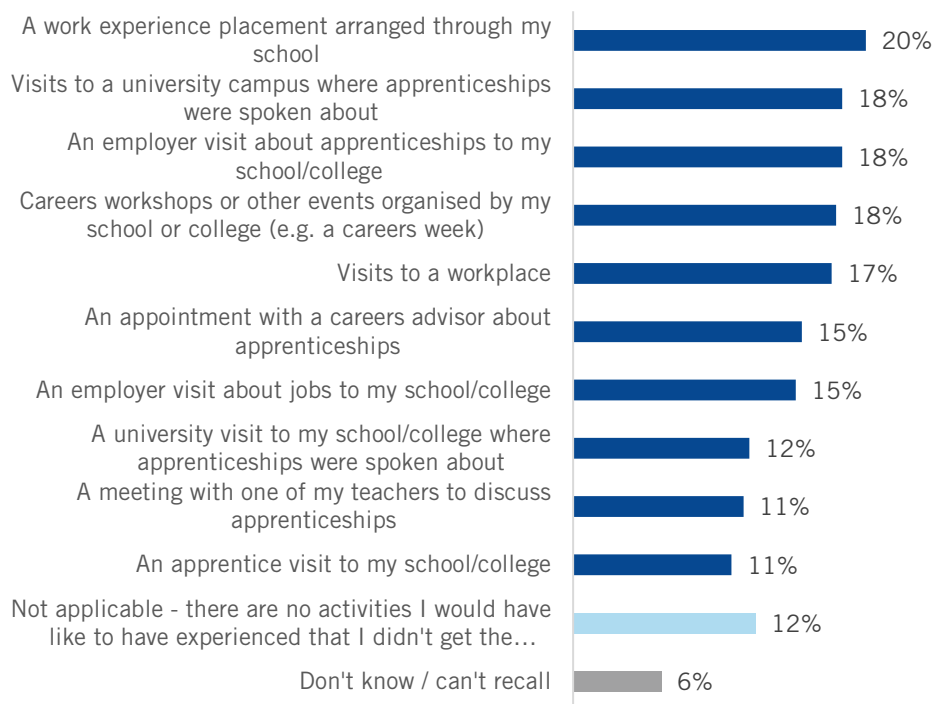
Figure 6. The most useful source of information received before starting apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

For young apprentices, work experience placements were the most common activity that respondents cited as something they would have liked to participate in before undertaking their apprenticeship, but were unable to (20% reported this; as shown in Figure 7). Other opportunities they would have liked to experience but couldn't included visiting a university campus visit where apprenticeships were talked about (18%) and experiencing an employer visit to their school or college that focused on apprenticeships (18%).

Figure 7. Activities respondents would have liked to experience before starting their apprenticeship but didn't have the opportunity to do



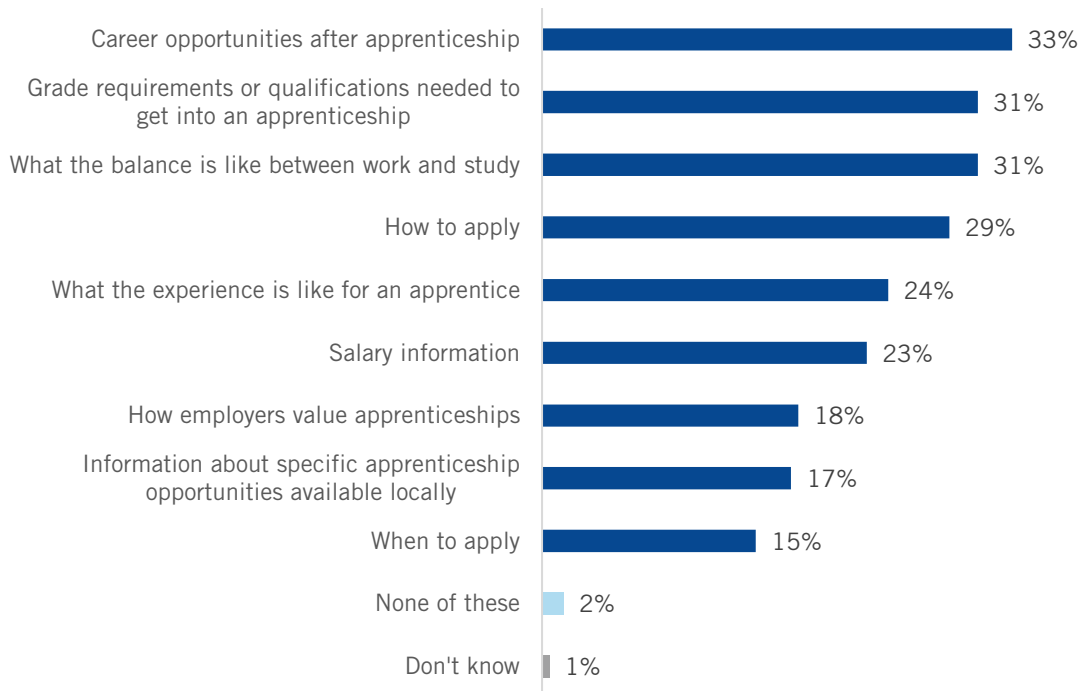
Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Those from a working-class background were more likely to say they would have liked a university visit to their school or college where apprenticeships were discussed, to have visited a workplace, to have visited to a university campus about apprenticeships, to have had a meeting with a teacher, and to have been able to do a work experience placement arranged through school.

Information received

When asked about the three most useful pieces of information given to them before starting their apprenticeship, 1 in 3 (33%) young apprentices said it was useful to know about the career opportunities that would be available after completing their apprenticeship (Figure 8). Other popular responses were finding out the grade requirements to access an apprenticeship (31%); knowing about the balance between work and study (also 31%); and information on how to apply (29%).

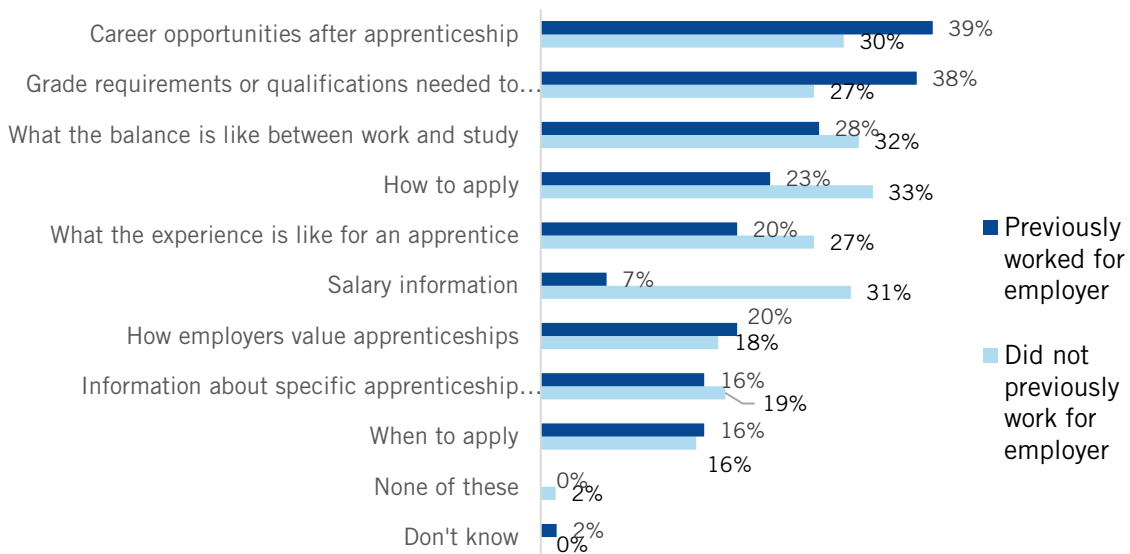
Figure 8. Most useful pieces of information (with respondents asked to select up to 3 options)



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Those who were not already working for their employer before starting their apprenticeship were over 4 times more likely to say that salary information was the most useful at 31% compared to 7% of those who did undertake an apprenticeship with their previous employer.

Figure 9. Most useful forms of information (with respondents asked to select up to 3 options) by whether respondents already worked for their employer who offered them an apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Looking at all apprentices aged between 16 and 54 who said they had not received any information before starting their apprenticeship: knowing what the balance is like between work and study was the most popular response when asked about the information apprentices would have liked to receive before they started their apprenticeship (37% said this, as shown in Figure 10). 31% thought it would have been useful to know more about the career opportunities on offer after completing an apprenticeship and 27% wanted to know salary information. When just considering those aged between 16-24, apprentices were more likely to have wanted to know about salary information, what the apprenticeship experience is like and the career opportunities available.

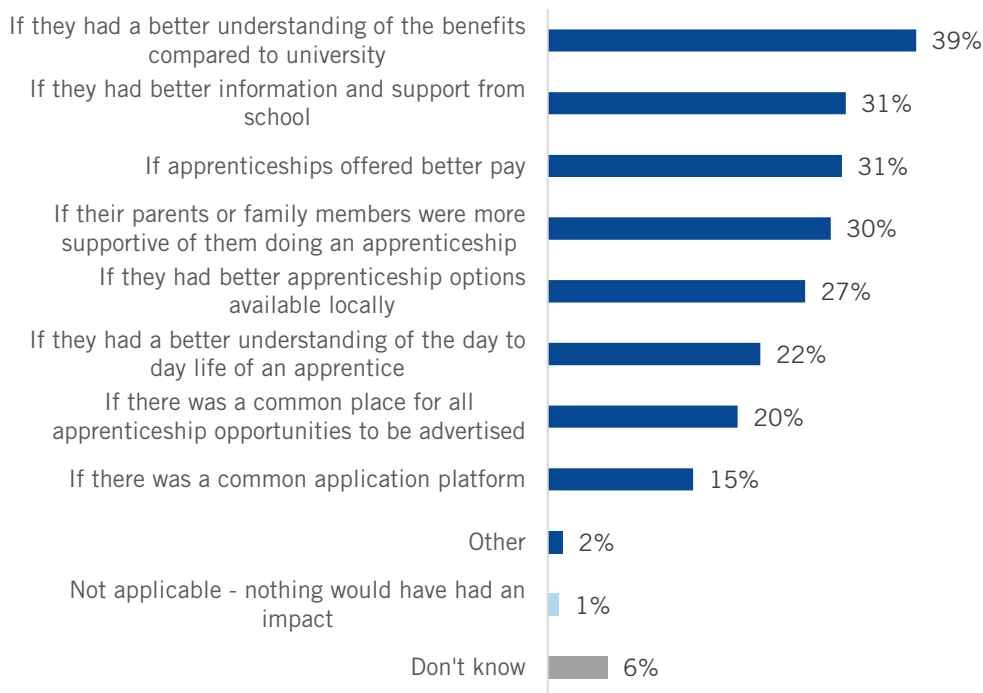
Figure 10. Forms of information apprentices would have liked to have received (with respondents asked to select up to 3 options), who previously said they did not receive any information before starting their apprenticeship



Note: All apprentices 16-54

When asked about what could have encouraged their friends, peers and-or classmates to choose an apprenticeship, almost one in three (31%) young apprentices said that better information and support from their school could have encouraged them. Other forms of encouragement included better understanding the benefits of an apprenticeship compared to university (39%); and better pay (31%).

Figure 11. Factors which may have influenced friends/peers/classmates to do an apprenticeship (with respondents asked to select up to 3 options)



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Motivations for choosing an apprenticeship

There was a wide range of responses when apprentices were asked about their main reason for taking their apprenticeship. The most popular response from 16-24 year old apprentices was that they were looking for a job and it looked like a good option (14%). 13% said that they wanted to get into work whilst still learning and 11% thought that it was the best way to progress for their chosen career. 11% reported that they wanted to avoid the debt of university, and 10% that they needed to earn a salary while studying.

Figure 12. Main reason for doing an apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Those from a working-class background were more likely to cite avoiding the debt associated with university and seeing an apprenticeship as an option when searching for a job as a good option as the main reason for choosing an apprenticeship.

Young apprentices undertaking an apprenticeship at higher or degree level (levels 4-7) were most likely to report they 'were looking for a job and it seemed like a good option' (15%) whilst those doing an apprenticeship at level 2 or 3 were most likely to say they 'wanted to get into work whilst still learning' (16%; Figure 13). When looking at apprentices of all ages below 55, the most popular response at all levels was that it was offered by their employer as a 'good opportunity'. For those undertaking an apprenticeship with their current employer, almost half cited this as the main reason for undertaking the apprenticeship.

Figure 13. Main reason for doing an apprenticeship by apprenticeship level



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

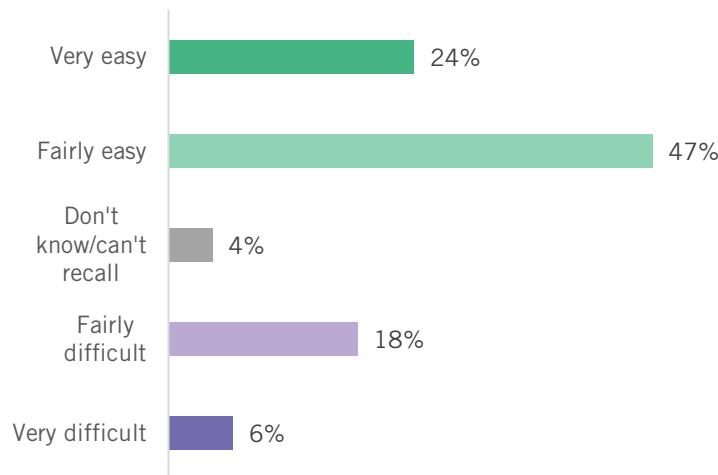
The most popular source for finding an apprenticeship for those aged between 16-24 was the ‘Find an apprenticeship’ government website, with 22% citing this as where they found their apprenticeship. 20% said they found the role on a general job website such as Indeed, and a further 20% said they found out about the role directly from their current employer. 17% said the role was identified from the company’s website, 11% said UCAS, and 5% said they used another source.

Those aged between 16 and 24 doing a higher level apprenticeship (levels 4 to 7) were almost twice as likely to say they had found out about the opportunity from their employer (27% reported this compared to 14% of apprentices doing either a level 2 or 3 apprenticeship). When looking at responses for all apprentices aged below 55, 44% of those at level 2-3 and 55% of those at level 4-7 said that they had found the opportunity through their employer.

The application process

Apprentices were also asked how they found the application process for the apprenticeship, as well as who supported them during the process. The majority of young apprentices (71%) found the process easy to navigate, although 1 in 4 (25%) found the process difficult to navigate. 6% found the process very difficult. Working class apprentices were more likely to say that the application process was difficult to navigate compared to middle class apprentices. It should be noted that these figures of course also reflect survivorship bias.

Figure 14. How easy or difficult respondents found the apprenticeship application process

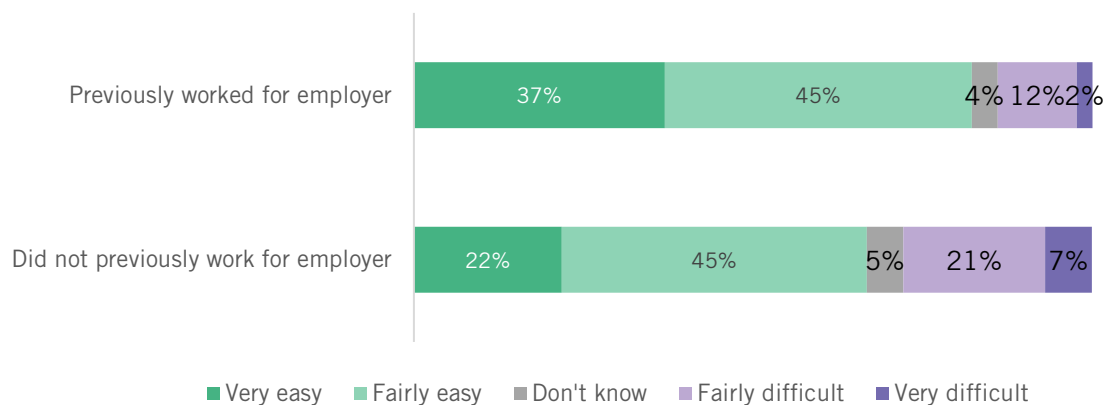


Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

When looking at responses for all apprentices in our sample, higher level apprentices were around twice as likely to say that the application processes was difficult to navigate; 27% of those doing a level 4-7 apprenticeship reported this compared to 13% of those undertaking an apprenticeship at level 2 or 3. Younger respondents undertaking a higher apprenticeship were more likely to say the application process was difficult (at 37%) compared to both level 2/3 apprentices of that age (13%) and higher level apprentices of all ages.

Those who were not already working with their current employer when they were offered their apprenticeship were more likely to say the application process was difficult to navigate, at 28%, compared to 14% of those who are doing an apprenticeship with their existing employer.

Figure 15. How easy or difficult respondents found the apprenticeship application process by whether respondents already worked for their employer who offered them an apprenticeship

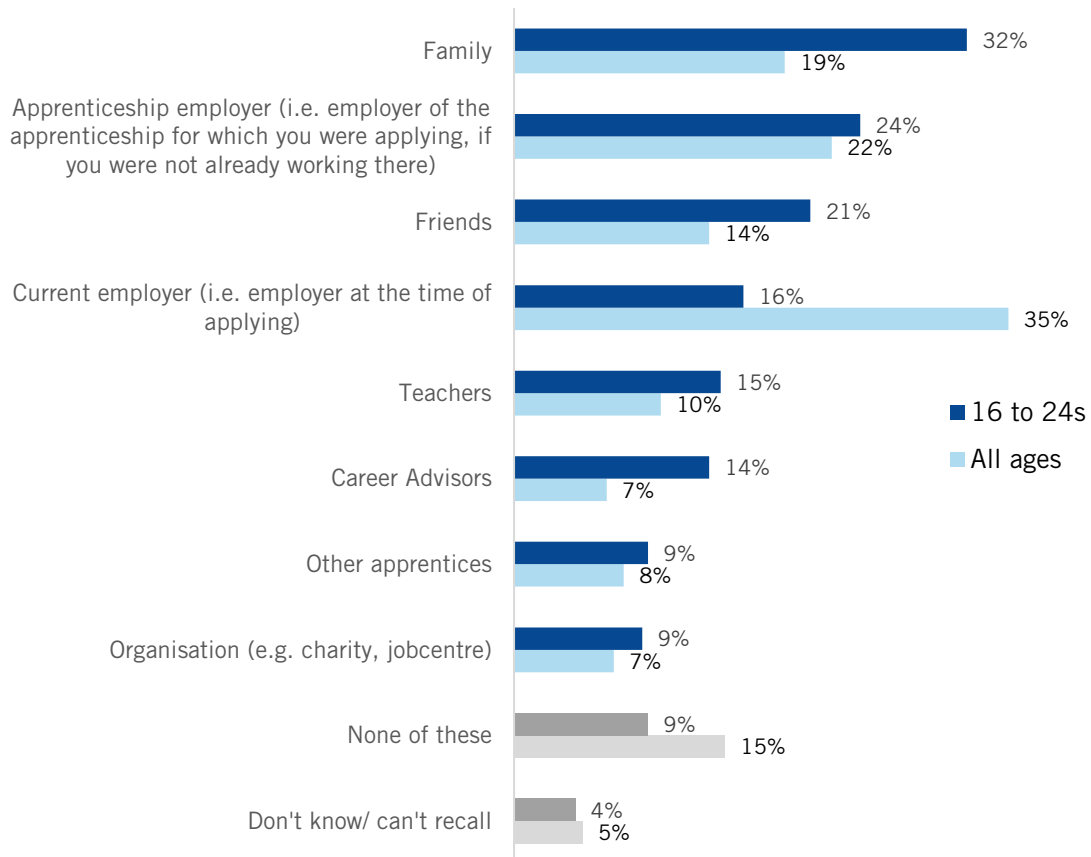


Note: All apprentices aged 16-54

In terms of sources of support with their application, for apprentices ages between 16 and 24, the most common forms of support with the application process were from family (32%), apprenticeship employers (24%) and friends (21%) (Figure 16). Only 15% said that teachers had supported them

with the application process and 14% said the same about careers advisors. Less than 1 in 10 (9%) said that an organisation (such as a charity or job centre) supported them.

Figure 16. Sources of support during the application process by age



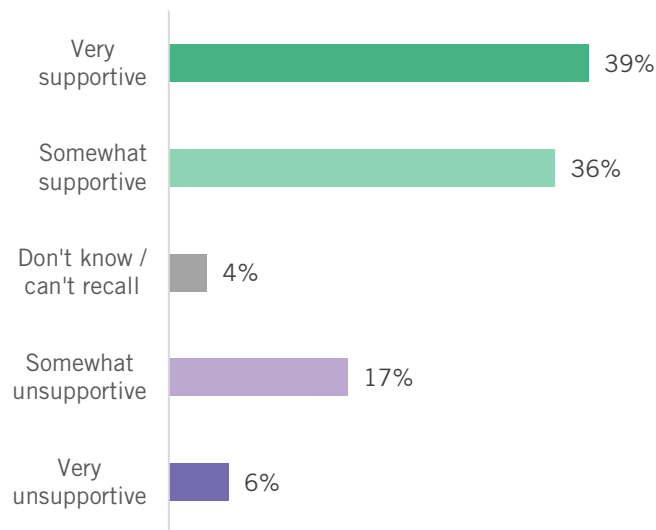
Note: All apprentices aged 16-54

When including responses from apprentices of all ages under 55, support mostly came from their employer before starting their apprenticeship (35%) or the organisation which is now their employer (22%) (also shown in Figure 16). Those who didn't work with their current employer prior to starting their apprenticeship were more likely to say they had support from their family and friends with their application than those who did previously work with their current apprenticeship employer; this group were more likely to say they had support from their employer (at the time of applying) with their application.

Whilst there were not many notable differences when considering ethnic background across the survey, it was notable that 16–24-year-old apprentices from a Black or Minority Ethnic background were 16 percentage points less likely to say that they had received support with their application from their family at 19%, compared to 36% of those from a White background. However, this group were more likely to have received support from other sources compared to those from a White background (for example, 15% said they had received support from an organisation like a charity compared to 7% of White apprentices).

When respondents were asked whether their friends and family were supportive of their decision to pursue an apprenticeship, 3 in 4 young apprentices (75%) said that they were generally supportive, although around 1 in 5 (22%) said that they were unsupportive. Perhaps surprisingly, those from a working class background were less likely to have friends and family that were supportive of their decision. Additionally, friends and family of those from poorer background may be worried about how taking an apprenticeship could affect someone’s future and their potential earnings.

Figure 17. Extent of support from friends and family of decision to pursue an apprenticeship



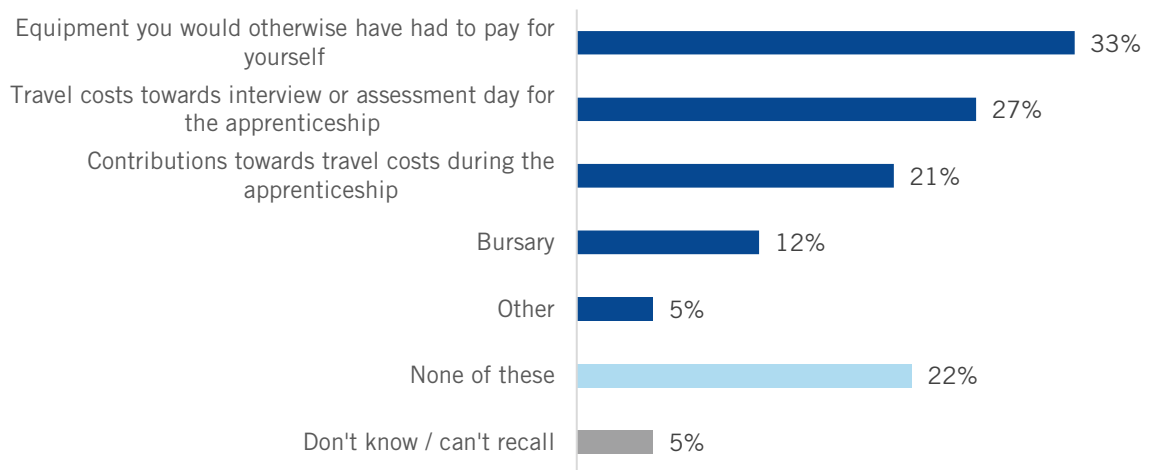
Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Young apprentices from an ethnic minority background were nearly three times more likely to say that their friends and family were unsupportive of their decision to pursue an apprenticeship, at 42% compared to 15% of students from a White Background. 1 in 10 of apprentices from an ethnic minority background felt their friends and family were ‘very unsupportive’ compared to 4% of White apprentices.

Financial support

A third of apprentices aged between 16 and 24 (33%) received at least one form of financial support from their employer during their apprenticeship (as shown in Figure 18). Over 1 in 5 (22%) said they did not receive any form of financial support.

Figure 18. Financial support provided by employer during apprenticeship



Note: Apprentices aged 16-24

Interestingly, those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity backgrounds were more likely to report that they received most forms of financial support listed (apart from 'contributions towards travel costs during apprenticeship'), with only 10% reporting that they did not receive any financial support – those from a White background were nearly 3 times more likely to say they did not receive any financial support, at 27%.

Discussion

This report has shown that while many associate apprenticeships with social mobility and disadvantaged groups, diversifying workplaces through apprenticeships isn't something that happens automatically. It requires concerted effort to target, inform and support under-represented groups, to prevent the most sought-after opportunities going to the already advantaged.

Work experience plays a key role in this. In previous Sutton Trust research published in July 2020, it was found that the circumstances surrounding the pandemic and the transition to virtual engagement led to three fifths of employers (61%) cancelling some or all their work experience placements.⁴¹ Work experience is just as vital for people who are considering an apprenticeship. 80% of an apprentice's time is spent in the workplace, but due to the transition to digital learning, apprentices can now spend 100% of their time in the workplace (with the 20% off-the job training done online). So it is essential they are aware of what to expect in the working environment. 1 in 5 apprentices aged between 16-24 that we surveyed said they would have liked to have had a work experience placement before their apprenticeship, but they were unable to. We know that young people find these placements extremely valuable, as shown in last year's youth census report where 86% of students who had undertaken work experience agreed it helped them make decisions about their future and 76% said it helped them understand what it feels like to be at work.⁴² This is even more important for anyone wishing to pursue an apprenticeship, as it gives a taste of what to expect and could lead to better completion rates. Therefore, every effort should be made by all parties to ensure that where possible, work placements are returning to pre-pandemic levels and being highlighted and offered to all students, including those interested in apprenticeships. While there are challenges in transitioning to a hybrid approach, it is also important that the best aspects of online provision are retained, including the wider geographical reach of such activities.

Outlined throughout this report many stakeholders contribute to the information and guidance that young people receive, and positively, the interest and knowledge surrounding apprenticeships is increasing. However, with a significant number of apprentices surveyed not receiving any information before starting their apprenticeship, it is clear that the information surrounding apprenticeships is still not reaching every student. This year's Youth Voice Census report positively showed that nearly 86% of young people state that they have had apprenticeships discussed with them, however only 29% of those young people would be likely or very likely to apply for an apprenticeship.⁴³ So, although information about apprenticeships is now being conveyed to most students the issue becoming apparent is that this isn't necessarily translating into choosing to pursue the apprenticeship pathway.

As we highlighted in our previous research, schools should be supported to provide good quality careers advice on apprenticeships that inspires students to want to explore this option; and the information gap among schools and teachers should be addressed, with better access to Information and resources. This information should include areas that were seen in our polling as the most sought after by apprentices; salary information, career opportunities that would be available after completing their

⁴¹ E Holt-White and R Montacute (2020) COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief #5: Graduate Recruitment and Access to the Workplace. Sutton Trust. Available at: <https://www.suttontrust.com/our-research/coronavirus-workplace-access-and-graduate-recruitment/>

⁴² Youth Employment (2020) Youth Voice: Census report 2020. Youth Employment. Available at: https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-YEUK-Census-Report_FINAL.pdf

⁴³ Youth Employment (2021) Youth Voice: Census report 2021. Youth Employment. Available at: <https://www.youthemployment.org.uk/dev/wp-content/themes/yeuk/files/youth-voice-census-report-2021.pdf>

apprenticeship, grade requirements to access apprenticeships, knowing about the balance between work and study and information on how to apply. The diversity of application routes, portals, processes and timings poses significant challenges to young people, particularly in comparison with the harmonised university route.

Career guidance is often delivered around when students need to make decisions about their next steps, but the Behavioural Insights Team found that the time when young people are developing their understanding of jobs and pathways is equally as important.⁴⁴ Restricting outreach to employers' recruitment timelines does not necessarily align with when would be best suited for young people to build an understanding of different routes they could pursue. It is likely to benefit both young people and employers if employer contact was started earlier than just key decision moments or recruitment time periods. Young people would have a deeper understanding of what their pathways entail, and employer contact with students tends to help employer recruitment too.⁴⁵ This is key for apprenticeships because students need to develop an understanding of this route over time.

Employers should proactively work with education institutions with diversity in their student bodies and other partners to provide opportunities to gain understanding of apprenticeship routes. Within our employer interviews it was evident that this was happening, but that certain challenges remained. The Good Careers Report found there was no shortage of schemes in England to link employers with schools and colleges, but employers instead spoke of unanswered offers of help.⁴⁶ These findings resonated through our conversations with employers who spoke of plenty of initiatives taking place but flagged challenges around reaching schools and building the right relationships. However, teachers often speak of experiencing the same barriers from their side. The Education and Employers Taskforce found that teachers say they would engage more employers in their schools if it was easier to find the right people to do suitable activities at the right time in the school year.⁴⁷ This contrary experience underlines that the process of bringing together schools and employers needs to be made easier and clearer for both sides, and expectations should be set on both sides as to what is necessary for both parties to benefit from the partnership.

Partnerships seem to be the most effective method of reaching groups of people that may be under-represented in employer's workforces, and to enable outreach to be delivered on a larger scale. Building and investing in good, collaborative relationships at the earliest stage is valuable to enhance outreach activity. Although partnerships have generally been described positively to us, they also come with challenges, including not always providing a return on investment. Every employer may need a different partnership depending on who they cannot reach themselves. They may also want different things from a partnership, so it is important the aims are thoroughly considered in advance. Another barrier for some employers was cost, and we think it is these employers who would benefit from being able to use levy allowance on outreach and widening participation work.

⁴⁴ The Behavioural Insights Team (2016) Moments of choice. Behavioural insights team. Available at: <http://38r8om2xjhh125mw24492dir.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Moments-of-Choice-report.pdf>

⁴⁵ M Morris et al (1999) The impact of careers education and guidance on transition at 16. DFEE Publications.

⁴⁶ Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2014) Good career guidance. Gatsby Foundation. Available at: <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/gatsby-sir-john-holman-good-career-guidance-2014.pdf>

⁴⁷ A Mann et al (2015) Key issues in employer engagement in education: why it makes a difference and how to deliver at scale. Edge Foundation. Available at: <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Key-Issues-in-Employer-Engagement-in-Education.pdf>

While interviews conducted for this report showed a number of employers leading the way, a culture of widening participation should be cultivated more widely across the sector, similar to that around access to university. This should happen in several ways. The spending of levy money on access activities should be both permitted and promoted for outreach work, but also bursaries, recruitment, or travel for disadvantaged apprentices. For all employers in England, the total value of expired levy funds between May 2019 and April 2020 was £847 million. From May 2020 to February 2021, the latest period for which figures are available, the total value of expired levy funds is £1,039 million.⁴⁸ Allowing some flexibility with how employers can use the levy could help to minimise the amount of unspent levy and keep the money within the sector and utilised to help widen access. This could be ringfenced, or employers encouraged to spend a certain proportion of their levy on access.

Alongside employers, universities are crucial in ensuring degree apprenticeships are successful. Minister of State Michelle Donelan has recently instructed higher education institutes to rewrite their access and participation plans to improve outcomes for disadvantaged young people and start focusing on increasing the proportion of students on degree apprenticeships.⁴⁹ This is positive news, but the differences between apprenticeship and traditional university outreach were flagged in our interviews, such as apprenticeships needing the opportunities to be available and therefore rely on a strong economy unlike university places. Universities cannot simply just roll out degree apprenticeships, they must build relationships with employers in order to offer the apprenticeships that employers actually need and are willing to fund, alongside working with schools and colleges to highlight the benefits and develop the understanding of these opportunities with students, teachers and parents.

Overall, there are some fantastic examples of work being undertaken to ensure all young people are aware of the benefits of apprenticeships, but more work needs to be done in identifying and sharing best practice in apprenticeship outreach, as well as growing the approach at greater numbers of employers.

⁴⁸They Work For You (2021) Apprentices: Taxation. Department for Education written question. Available at: <https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2021-03-25.176017.h&s=apprenticeship#g176017.q0>

⁴⁹ Department for Education (2021) New levelling up plans to improve student outcomes. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-levelling-up-plans-to-improve-student-outcomes>

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