



Skills
Development
Scotland

Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan

Final Report 2015-2021

December 2021

Foreword

Much has changed across the Scottish economy and the apprenticeships landscape since the Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan was developed.

Since the first report, which only covered Modern Apprenticeships, apprenticeships in Scotland have undergone a period of significant growth and transformation. Scottish Apprenticeships are more accessible to individuals across more ages and stages in their learning and career journey.

Foundation Apprenticeships are opening more opportunities for young people to access work-based learning and gain crucial employability skills whilst still at school.

Modern Apprenticeships have continued to evolve to meet employer and industry demand and offer opportunities in more professions that provide a higher level of qualification, such as accountancy.

Graduate Apprenticeships focus on upskilling within key sectors and enable individuals to gain a qualification up to Masters degree level whilst in an existing or new job.

As work-based learning opportunities have grown, SDS has worked with partners to attract and support individuals from all backgrounds and to address occupational segregation.

However, these issues remain complex and entrenched in society. We have worked to ensure inclusion, diversity and equality sits at the heart of everything we do.

Partnerships have been forged with equality groups and organisations to encourage more individuals who have protected characteristics to choose an apprenticeship. Working collaboratively over the last five years has provided SDS with intelligence, data and a better understanding of the needs of these key groups of people.

More than ever, employers need a diverse workforce to enable them and the economy to recover, sustain and thrive.

Our partnership working has also focused on industry by gaining the support of the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), employer organisations, sector bodies and learning providers to look at the needs of businesses and diverse individuals to help them to be more inclusive in apprenticeship recruitment.

In comparison to 2015, there has been an increase in uptake of apprenticeships by people from a black or minority ethnic community, care experienced and disabled people.

Whilst this is encouraging, there is still much to do as SDS and others continue to tackle deep-rooted, inherent issues in the workplace such as gender segregation and to continue to support the aspiration to halve the disability gap and tackle poverty.

As a result of COVID-19, there is a greater focus than ever on youth unemployment and harder to reach individuals and people from marginalised communities. The Scottish Government has identified work-based learning as playing a vital role in supporting Scotland's economic recovery and long-term prosperity.



Our work to improve participation across under-represented groups in apprenticeships therefore remains essential.

Equality and inclusion are integral to building a workforce that can successfully respond to the transition to net zero and Industry 4.0.

Moving forward, we will use our achievements and learnings to support our new 2021-2025 Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Outcomes.

Our work will encourage a more holistic approach to inclusive recruitment, to recognise the importance and value of diversity and inclusion in developing a successful workforce.

SAAB and employers will be at the heart of apprenticeship development, to ensure equity of opportunity embedded in the work-based learning system.

We will continue working with partners to increase opportunities for under-represented groups to support a strong, resilient and inclusive economy.

Frank Mitchell

Chair, Skills Development Scotland

Ministerial statement

Five years ago, the Scottish Government set out its aspirations through Developing the Young Workforce recommendations to raise the agenda on equality in the workplace.

This document is a summary of the collective achievement in the response to delivering against those recommendations through apprenticeships.

The work delivered in the past five years through the Apprenticeships Equality Action Plan has contributed to the Scottish Government's strategy to create a fairer Scotland.

Activity delivered through the Plan has supported the Scottish Government's goals by responding to recommendations and actions in the Race Equality Framework Scotland 2016-2030 and A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People: Employment Action Plan (2018).

The Scottish Government has supported additional funding to ensure people who identify as being disabled, care experienced or from a Black and Minority Ethnic community have the support in place to access apprenticeships.

Partnerships forged between SDS, equalities organisations and learning providers have ensured that those delivering apprenticeships are equipped in their work to support inclusivity.

Collaboration between partners has also given employers the tools and support to be inclusive in their apprenticeship recruitment.

Today, the Scottish Government is maintaining a focus on Fair Work and equity of opportunity.

The Scottish Government's National Strategy for Economic Transformation also aims to prioritise investment in the industries of the future and deliver new, good and green jobs.

Apprenticeships are playing an important role in recovery for both individuals and employers and it is vital to seize the opportunity to be inclusive in our collective efforts to build a strong, sustainable and diverse workforce.

In this work, it is important for employers to recognise the role they can play in creating equity of opportunity as they re-build their businesses and support the economy's net zero target.

Apprenticeships are backed by a well-supported system of funding, expertise and networks to give employers the very best support needed to meet the challenges they face now and in the future.

Fair Work can improve organisational reputation and recruitment, reduce staff turnover, and lead to diverse workplaces with a richness of talent and a diversity of ideas.

We know that many employers are already applying Fair Work practices, however, we also know that we need to do more to engage with those employers to share best practice so that we can unleash the creativity, talent and skills of all Scotland's people.

We believe that our public sector can work in genuine partnership with the private and third sectors to create the conditions for this to happen.



There have been notable achievements and progress made towards this work, however, the task is vast and there is still some distance to travel. The pandemic has exacerbated inequality for women, disabled people and ethnic minorities.

Apprenticeships can make a valuable contribution to further progress this work and help make a difference.

SDS and others continue to work together to demonstrate to employers the value that a diverse workforce through apprenticeships brings to businesses.

We have to work together to ensure everyone from all backgrounds and abilities can contribute to securing Scotland's future.

Jamie Hepburn,

Minister for Higher Education and Further Education,
Youth Employment and Training, Scottish Government.

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1. Background to the Report

About Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills agency in Scotland. Our purpose is to drive productivity and inclusive growth through investment in skills, enabling businesses and people to achieve their full potential. We engage with partners at national, regional and local level, flexing and shaping our delivery to meet community needs and priorities, while informed by the knowledge of effective practice from across the country and beyond.

We work to help create a Scotland in which:

- All people in Scotland have the skills, information and opportunities to succeed in the labour market.
- Scotland's businesses drive productivity and inclusive growth.
- The learning and skills system is dynamic and responsive.
- SDS leads by example and continuously improves to achieve excellence.

Further details on SDS' strategic approach and operational activities can be found in our [in our Strategic Plan 2019-22](#).

Scottish Apprenticeships

SDS uses the term 'Scottish Apprenticeships' to refer jointly to Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships in Scotland.

Modern Apprenticeships are the most established and well known. They provide individuals with the opportunity to secure industry recognised qualifications while in employment and earning a

wage. There are over 100 types – or frameworks – of Modern Apprenticeships available, covering a range of industries including chemicals and biotechnology, construction, creative and cultural skills, engineering and energy, financial services, food and drink, health and social care, hospitality and tourism, transport and logistics, and sport.

Foundation Apprenticeships were first introduced in the 2014/15 academic year at SCQF Level 6 and provide work-based learning opportunities for senior phase (S4-S6) pupils alongside their other studies. They are designed and developed in partnership with industry and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Frameworks are aligned to key sectors of the economy with known current skills shortages and projected future jobs growth. Foundation Apprenticeships provide young people with industry insight and experience of the workplace which can aid the successful transition from education into employment. During 2020/21, the Foundation Apprenticeship programme was piloted and extended to SCQF Level 4 and 5 to enable young people to achieve a work-based learning qualification at an earlier stage in their learning (S3-S4).

Introduced in 2017/18, Graduate Apprenticeships offer a combination of academic study and work-based learning at an advanced level. Delivered in conjunction with higher education partners and employers, they are accredited at SCQF levels 8 to 11 and lead to professionally recognised degrees or degree-level qualifications. They support the learning and development of employees to acquire the skills, knowledge and competence necessary to work and progress in their careers.

Our role in the delivery of apprenticeships

The Scottish Government is responsible for setting the policy, targets and budget for apprenticeships. Since 2021, SDS has been working with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to implement a new joint funding and delivery model for Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships, commencing in academic year 2021/22.

SDS continues to commission learning providers to deliver training and assessment services within Modern Apprenticeships in line with government policy and priorities. We evaluate the bids from providers, allocate volumes, and issue contracts. SDS then manages those contracts on an ongoing basis, including quality assurance of the provision, processing contract funding and building the capacity and capability of our providers including equality, diversity and inclusion.

Beyond this, we play a wider role in the promotion of apprenticeships, to both employers and individuals, including through our dedicated apprenticeship web service, our all-age careers service, and through various marketing campaigns delivered over the course of each year. Responsibility for the training, development, and assessment of individual apprentices is shared by a network of employers and learning providers across Scotland. Recruitment is usually undertaken by employers, though in some cases the learning provider may support this.

In leading the development of apprenticeship standards and frameworks, we also work in close collaboration with the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), which provides advice and makes recommendations on the guiding principles, operational

policy, systems and structures supporting apprenticeships in Scotland. Working in partnership, we aim to ensure apprenticeships are delivered according to local labour market needs.

We are committed to the ongoing delivery of high-quality apprenticeship experiences for both learners and employers. As part of this, we will continue to work with partners to support more young people into apprenticeships, contributing to the aims of the Young Person's Guarantee.

Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan

Published in 2015, our [Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan](#) outlined our priorities for improving diversity and equality of opportunity in Scottish Apprenticeships. The plan set out our intended approach towards the challenging targets set by the Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (DYW): Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy to:

- Increase the employment rate for young disabled people to the population average by 2021.
- Reduce to 60% the percentage of MA frameworks where the gender balance is 75:25 or worse.
- Increase the number of MA starts from Black Minority Ethnic (BME)¹ communities to equal the population share by 2021.
- Increase positive destinations year-on-year for care leavers by 2021.

¹ SDS recognises that using umbrella terms such as 'Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)' can cause issues. When analysing data on participation in apprenticeships, we must be able to draw from a robust sample size. Thus, for the purposes of this update, we have included respondents from different ethnic groups which fall under the BME umbrella. However, we are clear in our recognition that there are distinct and unique identities and challenges facing different communities referred to as BME, which can be obscured in research that aggregates non-White groups together. In this context, and more broadly, we remain committed to understanding and addressing discrimination.

As well as responding to these ambitions, this plan also formed part of our response to the following national strategies and action plans:

- Race Equality Framework for Scotland and associated action plan
- British Sign Language (BSL) National Plan
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) – Education and Training Strategy for Scotland
- Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan
- A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan

In relation to care experience, the plan also contributed to fulfilling our duties as a corporate parent, as defined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and The Promise: Scotland's Independent Care Review, complementing the SDS [Corporate Parenting Plan](#).

Context of the Equality Action Plan's development

Our original action plan, and its subsequent annual reports, identified the complexity of the challenges surrounding under-representation of certain groups within apprenticeships. People need to be in, or newly recruited into, employment before they can undertake a Modern or Graduate Apprenticeship. The uptake of apprenticeships therefore tends to reflect the demographics of the wider workforce in each sector, resulting in evidence of cultural and societal issues such as occupational segregation by gender. As Scottish Government policy focuses apprenticeships primarily on younger people (16-24 year olds), recruitment is also impacted by the post-school destinations chosen by under-represented groups.

This includes, for example, the fact that women and people from ethnic minority groups are more likely to move into further or higher education after school than seek employment. Disabled, and care experienced young people also face additional structural barriers when moving into employment, particularly related to poverty. Since 2020 the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated many pre-existing inequalities and has continued to draw out more harshly the effect of deprivation on labour market participation, education and life chances for minority groups. Taking all this into account, and to bring about the necessary change, over the last five years we have undertaken activity aimed at:



Individuals – ensuring individuals, particularly young people and their parents/carers, are aware of the variety of opportunities available and are supported to access and successfully complete them.



Employers and learning providers – helping them to understand the importance and benefits of diversity and equality of access and providing them with information on how to support individuals from under-represented groups.



Partners – working with local, regional and national partners to utilise their expertise and influence in their fields, and ensure people have the support they need to access and sustain apprenticeships.

About this Report

Since 2015, we have reported annually on the progress we have made against the commitments and DYW targets set out in our original [Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan \(2019 Update\)](#). However, as we have now concluded the final year of this plan, this report provides an overview of our journey from the last five years. It details our:

- key achievements since 2015.
- learning gained through the delivery of our activity aimed at increasing equality and diversity in apprenticeships.
- planned future activity in relation to helping address both individual and system wide challenges to remove barriers to apprenticeships, and more widely inequality in education.

In the following sections, we address in turn the questions of what we have achieved and learned, what is still to be done, and in response what our future focus will be. Each section contains reflections on:

- Evidence and Understanding of the Issues
- Strategic Partnerships to Influence Policy and Practice
- Building capacity across the delivery landscape, and
- Outcomes.

Timeline

The timeline on the following pages provides a summary of UK and Scottish Government policy and legislation introduced since 2010 which had an impact on our work in relation to equality and apprenticeships, and the services, projects, and publications we launched in response.

“When seeking employment Care Experienced young people can face structural barriers and discrimination. This can range from a lack of qualifications...poor mental health as a result of patchwork mental health intervention or for some the lack of stable relationships past the age of sixteen to help them grow and develop”.

Who Cares Scotland

Policy & Legislation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality Act 2010 Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Developing the Young Workforce - Scotland's Youth Unemployment Strategy 2014 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 Career Education Standard launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Government Labour Market Strategy Creating a Fairer Scotland: A New Future for Employability Support in Scotland Fair Work Framework Race Equality Framework for Scotland Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British Sign Language (BSL): National Plan 2017 to 2023 Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) - Education and Training Strategy for Scotland Enterprise & Skills Strategic Board (ESSB) established

2010-14 2015 2016 2017

SDS Activity				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern Apprenticeship Awards held for the first time (2010) Scottish Apprenticeship Week launched (2011) Employability Fun commences (2013) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDS Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan published 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDS Corporate Parenting Plan 2015-18 Foundation Apprenticeships delivery commenced Apprenticeships.scot launched Scottish Apprenticeship Awards held for the first time Improving Gender Balance Scotland project introduced Modern Apprenticeships for all delivered in partnership with BEMIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDS contracted learning providers required to complete quality Action Plan Enhanced funding launched for disabled and care experienced young people (up to 29) undertaking an MA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate Apprenticeships launched SDS Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Report 2017-2021 published SDS Regional Equality Executives team created Mentoring for women in STEM (Equate Scotland) project delivered CPD workshops programme launched for SDS contracted MA training providers SDS commissions Institute of Physics to develop an accredited module on Gender Bias

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairer Scotland Duty No One Left Behind: next steps for employability support National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) Three Year Strategy - 2018-2021 ESSB Strategic Plan launched SAAB Gender Commission established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future Skills Action Plan A Fairer Scotland for Women: Gender Pay Gap Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (incorporation) (Scotland) Bill Scotland's Careers Strategy OECD Review of the Apprenticeship System in Scotland The Promise: Scotland's Independent Care Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Government Economic Recovery Implementation Plan Introducing the Young Person's Guarantee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Work: Action Plan 2021-2025 Launch of SDS led Career Review
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2018 **2019** **2020** **2021**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDS Corporate Parenting Plan 2018-2021 published SDS/SAAB Employer guides to inclusive recruitment launched Ethnic Intersectionality Incentive piloted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIAG Equality Action Plan published Pre-apprenticeship programme for refugees in partnership with City of Glasgow College and GTG Training Ltd 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> L4/5 Foundation Apprenticeships piloted FA (Level 4-6): Increasing Equalities pilot to support care experienced/disables learners access work-based learning opportunities delivered SDS COVID-19 response. Launch of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprentice Transition Plan Enhanced Adopt an Apprentice offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apprentice Employer Grant Pathway Apprenticeships launched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SDS Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025 SDS commissions three projects lead consortia to design and deliver pipelines into STEM for young women SDS/SFC roll out FA/GA funding and delivery model
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Katie Hutton: Director of National Training Programmes & SDS Directors' Group champion for equality in service design and delivery

Endeavouring to achieve equality and diversity in participation and positive outcomes, from whatever service offered, is, to me, what public service should be all about. We set out five years ago to achieve a real difference in Modern Apprenticeships and then expanded this across the emerging apprenticeship family. What I know now is that there is a lot to learn, stakeholders may be suspicious of your motives, some roads that you set out hopefully on may lead to a bit of a dead end, and the lessons may not always be clear, but it is vitally important to keep on trying.

The prize is worth it. We know from customer feedback that participating in work-based learning is life-changing, so we must maximise the opportunities for those who are relatively disadvantaged. Whilst SDS does not have all the means of achieving change, it is important that we stretch every lever that we have – and work with others to influence where they have the responsibility – to make a real difference.

Our team has made progress over the last few years and I would like to thank the many stakeholders and partners who have helped us along the way. Your support, insight, connections, and challenge have been invaluable.

Whilst this is a report at the end of the five-year plan, it feels like just the beginning of the story. There is so much more to do. Some of the barriers are long-standing, cultural norms that will take collective will -- and effort - across stakeholders and customers to change. It is an important challenge that we need to continue to face, and that none of us should shy away from.

2. Delivering the Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan

What have we achieved?

This section provides a summary of our key achievements over the last five years in improving diversity in apprenticeships, increasing equality of access to work-based learning opportunities, and supporting the DYW targets.

It demonstrates how, through a wide range of policies, initiatives, and continuous improvement activities, we have embedded equality and diversity across our work-based learning activity.



Evidence & understanding of the issues

In our 2015 Plan, we set out a commitment to better understand the barriers faced by women, BME communities and disabled people in accessing apprenticeships. We later extended this commitment to investigating the challenges faced by care experienced young people.

Since then, we have taken a range of actions to deepen our understanding of the barriers encountered by different equality groups, including:

- Exploring the career decisions made by young people on apprenticeships, drawing on sources such as the Young People in Scotland Survey and our Senior Phase Survey.
- Undertaking analysis of the participation data from our work-based learning programmes. For instance, we worked with the Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities' (SCLD) to help us disaggregate our data on learning disability from a wider disability grouping to enable us to better target our support.
- Engaging regularly with key stakeholders including employers, learning providers, teachers, parents/carers and young people themselves. For example, working with the Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations Scotland (CEMVO), we held consultation activities with BME young people and their guardians. The aim was to understand young people's perceptions of apprenticeships and challenge any cultural or other barriers they may face in accessing these opportunities.

By drawing together more robust data and evidence we have developed a wealth of knowledge on the main challenges experienced by each equality group. As an example, enhanced funding for Modern Apprenticeships is now offered up to the age of 29 for disabled young people. This recognises that these young people often enter the labour market later than their peers. For example in 2019/20, 1,547 individuals were provided with additional support through this funding.

A stronger evidence base has also supported our work with learning providers and employers. The equality evidence now included in SDS's Skills Investment Plans and Regional Skills Assessments has enabled us to identify for partners and stakeholders specific equality actions relevant to their sector and/or geographical area. For instance, the Skills Investment Plan for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) highlighted the need for the sector to focus on attracting under-represented groups such as men or those from BME communities.

In response to this, SDS worked with a range of partners to hold regional events with diverse audiences to showcase jobs, career pathways, and routes into and opportunities within the ELC sector. In collaboration with Scottish Training Federation and the College Development Network, we also conducted a series of workshops with training providers in the sector, to help provide them with the tools to diversify their workforce. In line with the work undertaken we have seen an increase in the number of men undertaking their Modern Apprenticeships in childcare to 7% in 2020/21.

In the case of gender, our evidence is fundamental to underpinning our work with partners to tackle gender segregation in apprenticeships. The evidence presents a complex picture that shows that the imbalance in occupational uptake cannot be addressed by the actions of SDS alone. This was recognised and articulated as a key issue by SAAB.

Strategic partnerships to influence policy and practice

Tackling inequality in employment requires systemic change. We continue to support and engage in national initiatives which join together strategic partners to influence policy. Over the last five years, we contributed to the DYW Equality Group, the First Minister's Advisory Council for Women and Girls, and the steering group for Recognition of Prior Learning for Migrants and Refugees.

Working in partnership with Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB), we supported the establishment of the [Gender Commission](#) in 2019. The commission has an employer-led membership and includes representatives from trade unions, academia, school education and early years. The Commission explores the barriers facing gender bias in employment, recruitment and participation in programmes, in order to create recommendations for both practice and policy changes.

A key focus of the Gender Commission has been on the role of influencers and early years on the role of gendered attitudes to work. Working with the commission, over the last two years we have continued to use partnership approaches to support women into STEM learning and careers. For example, we held focus groups with young women in construction apprenticeships to understand what attracted them to the sector, and any potential challenges they faced in accessing opportunities. In parallel to this, we commissioned Equate Scotland to conduct research into recruitment practices within construction, and to develop recommendations to support the sector to encourage more women entrants. We are continuing to work closely with the construction sector to respond to these recommendations.

We have also supported successful one-off projects with SECTT and West College, SySTEM to encourage women to train as electricians or to enter the automotive industry with Arnold Clark.

In 2018, SDS funded the three-year [Improving Gender Balance \(IGB\) Project](#), delivered by the Institute of Physics in partnership with Education Scotland and Scottish Government. This project trialled interventions in schools which address gender imbalance in subject and career choices. Following the successful evaluation of the pilot, Education Scotland has led on further mainstreaming this approach across Scottish schools. In 2019, Improving Gender Balance Equality Officers were appointed across Scotland. SDS continues to work with these officers to ensure that learning from the pilot can be used to mainstream successful activity in all Scottish schools. During 2020/21, we began implementing activity in Falkirk and Clackmannanshire. This will be replicated across Scotland.

Our collaboration with key national organisations such as the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and the SFC provides us with communication channels to education practitioners. Through these relationships we raise awareness of the importance of diversity and potential barriers for under-represented groups onto Foundation Apprenticeships at school, and Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships post-school. For example, we undertook work with Education Scotland to support their national campaign on gender equality at a framework level for Foundation Apprenticeships.

Building capacity across the delivery landscape

While working to influence strategic change at a national level, our regional and local approach to tackling inequalities provides tangible, practical support and outcomes. Since 2015, as both apprenticeship investment and political interest in equality and diversity have grown, SDS has responded proportionately by allocating increased resource to ensure equality and diversity in apprenticeships.

Through a dedicated work-based learning equality team, we deliver at a national, regional and local level with the aim of building the capacity

of our partners to support young people through the employability pipeline into meaningful learning and work opportunities.

A key facet of this capacity building has been undertaken through our work to embed equality and diversity across key strands of our activity. Our team of regional Equality Executives work directly with employers, learning providers and local organisations. Collectively, we are better able to break down stereotypical assumptions about who apprenticeships are for, and to offer individuals from under-represented groups the preparation and support they need to successfully apply for available opportunities.

a) Framework Development

Introduced in 2017, [Technical Expert Groups](#) (TEGs), were created as a mechanism through which to embed equality and diversity considerations in the new approach to developing frameworks and standards. These groups help to develop apprenticeship frameworks through the expertise of its membership. The people who make up the TEG are from a specific sector or occupation and have the experience, knowledge and understanding of what is needed to develop a competent apprentice in their field. During the development process, we build in analysis of equality trends at sector level to ensure TEG members have a strong awareness of equality considerations as they develop the frameworks.

Following significant consultation with our partners and stakeholders, and analysis of existing equality data from previous consultation with equality groups and apprenticeship statistics, we published our [Equality Impact Assessment \(EQIA\) for Work Based Learning](#). Covering all work-based learning, this assessment guides delivery partners on how to tackle barriers to equality and diversity. It has been, and continues to be, used to inform the development of programme enhancements, including those designed to support economic recovery in response to COVID-19.

Through the introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships at SCQF Levels 4 and 5, we have worked with employers to provide opportunities for young people to access and achieve a work-based learning qualification at an earlier stage in their learning. This helps to challenge assumptions held by both young people and their parents/carers regarding the value of an apprenticeship, opening up the potential to attract a more diverse group of entrants. The programme also enables employers to make a structured contribution to school learning by providing real-life work scenarios. This adds value to learning and provides a pathway that leads to other work-based qualifications available in the Senior Phase and beyond, such as Foundation (at SCQF Level 6), Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships.

b) Quality Assurance

Although we do not recruit apprentices on behalf of businesses directly, we continue to use our commissioning and contract management processes to influence the actions of our contracted learning providers, including encouraging them to promote inclusive practices to employers.

We have also effectively embedded equality into our Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework for Modern Apprenticeship learning providers. Using the latest evidence, we have made year-on-year improvements in setting out clear guidance to providers on what constitutes as effective practice in supporting high quality outcomes for under-represented groups in apprenticeships. In short, Modern Apprenticeship learning providers are now required to complete an annual Quality Action Plan, which includes developing equality actions to ensure steps are taken to address under-representation in the recruitment and retention of apprentices. Providers must self-assess their own performance against these actions in relation to the SDS Quality Assurance and Improvement Framework. This is monitored by our Skills Investment Advisers, and assessed by a team of Quality

Assessors, who also visit providers to evaluate their performance. Analysis of reviews provides learning which identifies and informs continuous improvement activities.

Equality is also embedded within the thematic inspections of training providers that have been undertaken by Education Scotland.

Aligned to the approach used for Modern Apprenticeships, equality is also embedded into the commissioning process for Foundation Apprenticeships and Graduate Apprenticeships. Learning providers have, therefore, been required to evidence their approach to widening equality of access as part of quality management. Embedding equality into our commissioning process, and our Quality Action Plans and monitoring, has been a key driver of the steps now being taken by learning providers to support employers to recruit a more diverse range of apprentices.

c) Training, events and workshops

Since 2015, our aim has been to highlight good practice in apprenticeship recruitment and retention, while encouraging both employers and learning providers to share ideas and lessons learned, reflecting on the needs of different customer groups.

Key examples of this activity include:

- Co-designing CPD events for providers and our staff on topics such as transgender awareness, disability equality, hate speech, religion and belief, and supporting refugees. Topics are selected based on provider feedback on the support that they require. We have continued to evaluate and adopt a continuous improvement approach to the development of these events. When asked to evaluate these events, 96% of providers said they would recommend the training to someone else.

- Working with SAAB, providing a range of guides for our learning providers and employers across Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships, so they continue to have access to up-to-date information and resources on attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. For example, we collaborated with the mental health charity, Penumbra, to produce guidance for employers and apprentices about mental health and well-being.
- Holding networking sessions, such as our 'Get Connected' series, peer events and workshops for providers, creating opportunities to share good practice in supporting individuals from under-represented groups. Workshops were held on a range of topics, including promoting the mental well-being of apprentices, supporting care experienced young people, and attracting women into STEM sectors.
- Organising sector-specific events in Health and Social Care, Engineering and Manufacturing to encourage employers to recruit and support candidates from under-represented groups.

d) Marketing and communications

We have continued to mainstream diversity and inclusion across communications channels and marketing materials, encompassing messaging, accessibility, imagery and representation. This ranges from large-scale national campaigns to promoting targeted events aimed at individuals or employers. Scottish Apprenticeship Week, coordinated by SDS and supported by a range of stakeholders across the country, provides a platform for diversity and inclusion. For example, in 2020 the campaign – with the strapline 'Talent Without Limits' – celebrated the successes of award-winning apprentices from diverse and under-represented groups.

We prioritise a message of equality and diversity when choosing role models to be representatives of apprenticeships. This has included highlighting the achievements of women in STEM industries such as Engineering: Design and Manufacture and profiling talented apprentices from BME communities. The Scottish Apprenticeship Awards promote inclusive recruitment, giving recognition and promotion to businesses who have demonstrated a commitment to diversifying their workforce. The awards also provide us with an opportunity to promote and share good practice amongst employers.

During Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2020, we ran our first ever Equality Networking breakfast. The event aimed to encourage networking between Scottish apprenticeship providers and local equality organisations, including organisations working across race, disability, gender and with care experienced people. Around 40 providers attended to network with these organisations and find out what support they could offer in either recruiting or supporting candidates from diverse backgrounds.

e) Funding

Through embedding equality considerations into a review of our funding arrangement within our contribution rates approach, we have been able to support individuals towards addressing any financial or structural barriers that might prevent them from participating in an apprenticeship programme. For example, the highest levels of enhanced funding for Modern Apprenticeships, usually only available for 16-19 year olds, is now available for disabled and care experienced people up to age of 29. This policy recognises the potential for delayed entry into the labour market for these customers and has resulted in a positive impact on both the apprenticeship start and achievement rate for both groups.

We also introduced the Ethnic Intersectionality Incentive (EII) in 2018. The EII provided a small grant to learning providers who recruited individuals from BME groups who also faced additional barriers into employment or an apprenticeship (e.g., an apprentice from an ethnic minority who does not have English as their first language). We developed this funding in response to our recognition of the challenges faced in particular by both refugees and new Scots. The EII supported 83 people, the majority of whom were women that faced multiple barriers to entering and/or succeeding in a Modern Apprenticeship.

f) Supporting apprentices

While we have worked to build the capacity of learning providers and employers to support those from groups facing inequality into apprenticeships, we have also developed a number of resources aimed directly at the individual.

This has included translating our resources into other languages, including Urdu, Arabic and French, providing greater information on work-based learning to people whose first language is not English.

We also launched a new area on Apprenticeships.Scot which aims to address the needs of individuals who might be considering apprenticeship opportunities but require additional support prior to applying. Individuals are directed to an area which provides further information on work-based learning opportunities and offers one-to-one support from our careers advisers.

g) Responding to COVID-19

During 2020/21, we worked with learning providers and employers to shape our services to provide support to new and current apprentices, in an attempt to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic on their learning. This included the development of programmes such as the Apprentice Transition Plan, an enhanced Adopt an Apprentice offer, Apprenticeship Employer Grant and Pathway Apprenticeships. All of our COVID initiatives had enhanced arrangements for apprentices from equality groups.

“Progress on employment outcomes is not something that can be delivered by one section of society acting in isolation. It requires all stakeholders...to take active steps towards a more inclusive society for people...”

Fraser of Allander (report on Learning Disability)

Outcomes

a) Modern Apprenticeships

By the end of 2020/21, performance against the targets identified for Modern Apprenticeships by the Scottish Government in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce as follows:

Measure	2021 Target	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
% of MA Frameworks where gender balance is 75:25 or worse	60%	74%	70%	72%	72%	68%	70.1%
% of MA starts self-identified an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty	12.5%	3.9%	8.6%	11.3%	14.1%	15.4%	13%
% of MA starts self-identified being from a Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group	5.1%	1.6%	1.7%	1.9%	2.3%	2.4%	2.7%
Number of care experienced individuals who successfully take up an MA	Increase from baseline ²	0.9%	1.3%	1.6%	1.5%	1.7%	1.7%

² There is no published population figure for the proportion of the Scottish population who are care experienced. Published data in the Children's Social Work Statistics suggests 1% of the 16-25 year old population in Scotland is currently looked after or a care leaver, although this is only an approximation. SDS set its own baseline using this data.

Understanding the figures

Notable progress has been made against our 2015 targets, however there is still more work to be done. In summary:

- **Gender** – While we have sought to shift the gender imbalance in Modern Apprenticeships, there are some occupational groupings that have marked, historic gender segregation in the workforce, impacting the overall balance. This continues to be accentuated by the fact that the biggest Occupational Grouping is Construction and Related Apprenticeships where 2% of participants are female. The gender breakdown in the remaining occupational groupings (excluding Construction & Related) is 53.7% female and 46.3% male overall. In line with Scottish Government policy, we have increased the number of apprenticeships in STEM sectors over the same period, which tend to be based in traditionally male-dominated workplaces. Just 11.2% of starts in STEM frameworks in 2020/21 were females, compared to 88.8% males. There is still substantial work to do in this area and needs a joined up approach from the early years.
- **Disability** – The number of Modern Apprenticeship starts identifying as disabled increased year on year in line with our ambitions, exceeding our 2021 target for the first time in 2018/19. Although, due to the impact of COVID-19, the percentage of Modern Apprenticeship starts identifying as disabled dropped back to 13% in 2020/21. A significantly high proportion of disabled apprenticeships are in the retail and hospitality sector. When those sectors did not recruit during the pandemic, starts fell considerably. We will continue to review this as our response to the pandemic develops.

- **Ethnicity** – While we have not met the target, there has been sustained, incremental progress in the participation of BME individuals in Modern Apprenticeships. Substantial change in relation to greater BME participation will require targeted action to challenge embedded cultural stereotypes, bias and perceptions in relation to apprenticeships.
- **Care Experience** – The proportion of Modern Apprentices self-disclosing as care experienced has almost doubled in the last five years from 0.9% to 1.7%, although there is still room for further progress. Furthermore, in 2016/17 apprentices reporting they were from a care experienced background had an achievement rate of 58%, almost 20% lower than the overall rate. Closing this gap was made a priority by SDS. In 2020/21, the care experienced achievement rate was 66.3%, compared to 76.5% overall, representing a halving of the attainment gap over the five-year period.

Further information can be found in our [Modern Apprenticeship statistics: Quarter 4 2020-2021](#).

Moses takes first steps into childcare

Apprenticeships have helped 17 year old Moses Gonani realise his ambition to start a career in childcare.

Born in Zimbabwe, Moses moved to the UK as a boy and recently settled in Paisley.

When he arrived in Scotland, Moses got careers and learning advice from his uncle who works for Pachedu, which is an organisation that supports ethnic minority groups with employment and other services.

Moses chose to start an apprenticeship at Nursery Times in Paisley. As a male apprentice in a female-dominated workplace, Moses acknowledges there could have been a few obstacles but insists everything has gone well, thanks to the support of his colleagues.

Moses said: "My message to other men who are thinking about an apprenticeship in childcare is to go for it and not to be put off.

"My apprenticeship has given me a route towards where I want to go. I'm learning on the job, gaining qualifications and earning all at the same time."

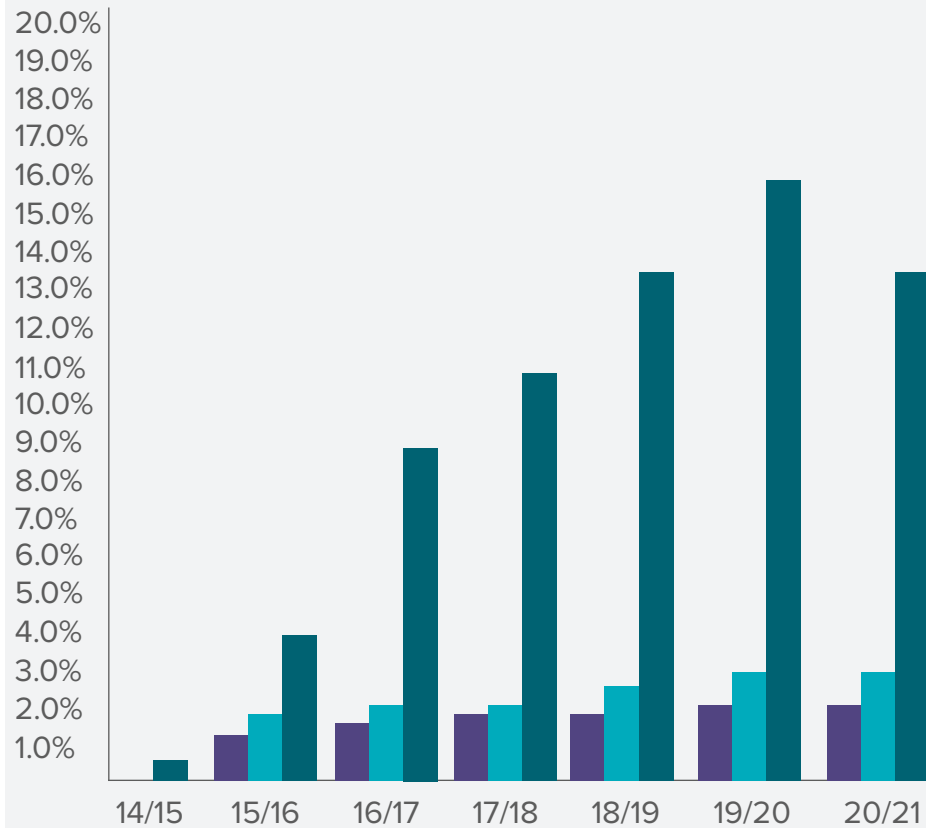
Nursery Times manager, Jennifer Clark said: "Apprenticeships provide people with valuable hands-on work experience and it allows us to train them up and then keep them on as a qualified staff member."



Equality in Modern Apprenticeships: The picture in 2021

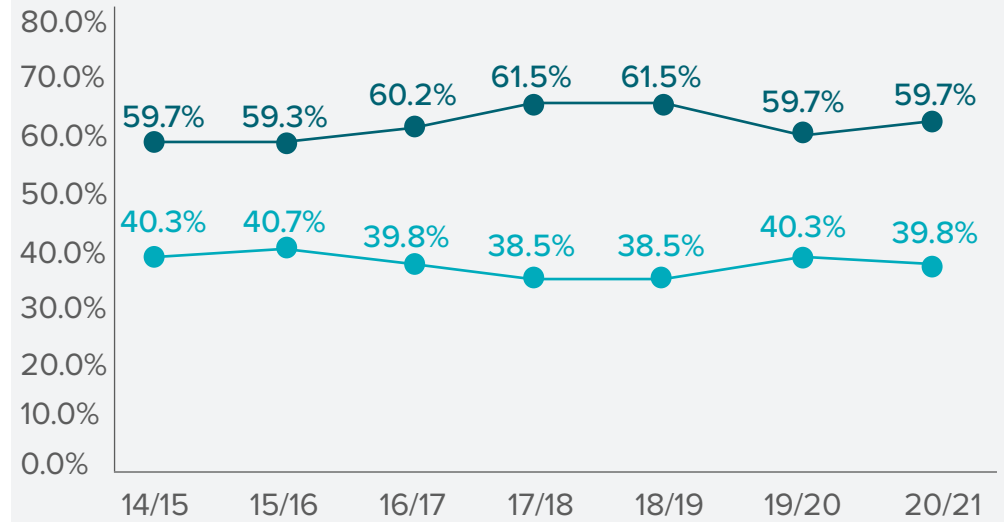
% of MA starts identifying as...

- Identifying as Care Experienced
- Identifying as BME
- Identifying as Disabled



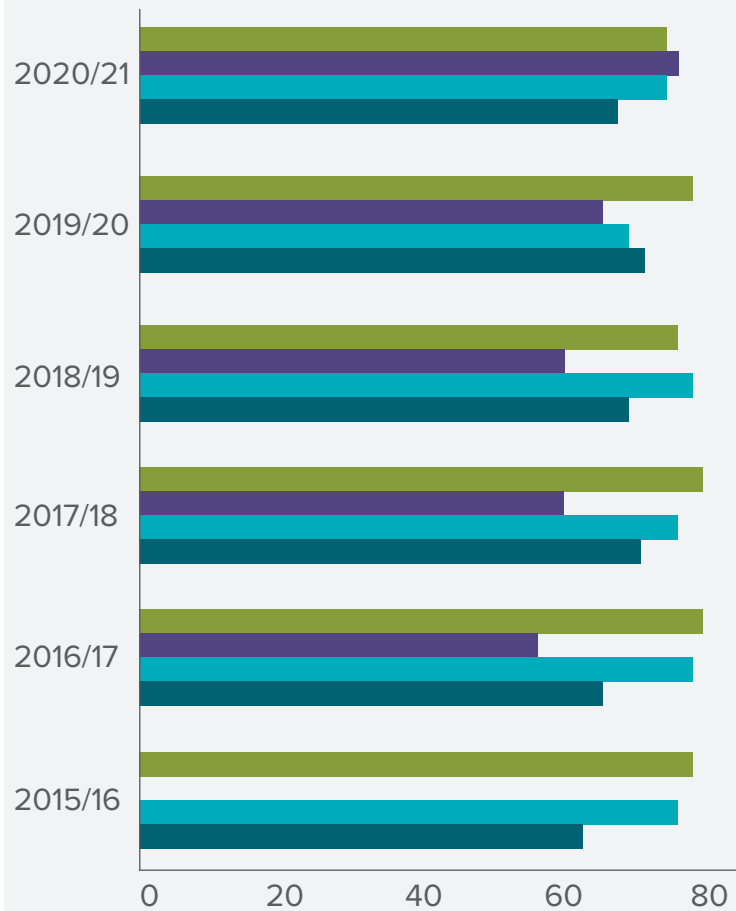
Proportion of Starts by Gender

- Female
- Male



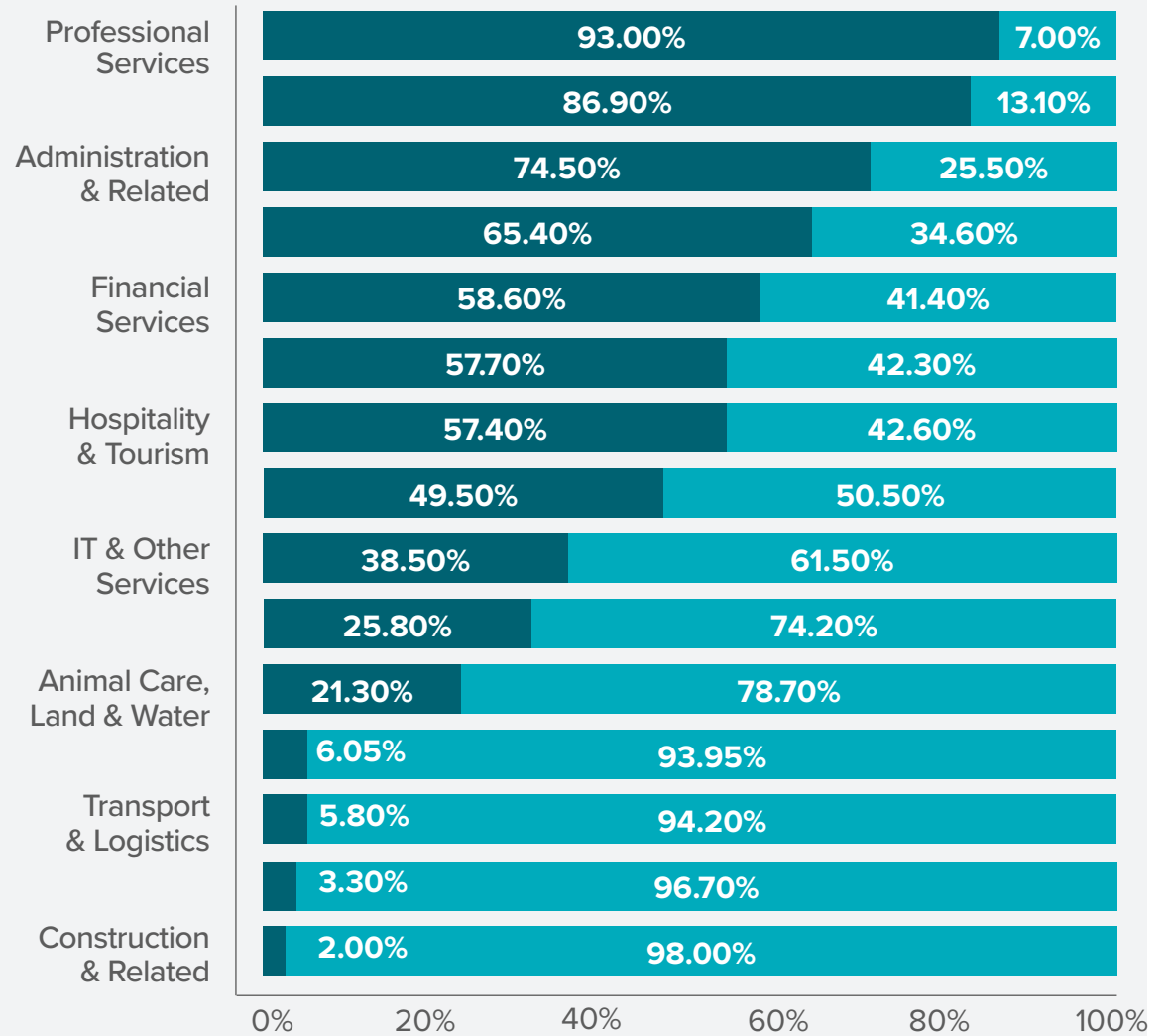
MA Achievement Rate (%)

- Overall Achievement Rate
- People who self-identified as Care Experienced
- People who self-identified Ethnicity
- People who self-identified an impairment/health condition or learning difficulty



MA Starts 2020/21 by Gender and Occupational Grouping

- Female
- Male



b) Foundation Apprenticeships

As Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks expand, we have monitored participation across key equality groups, using data and evidence to inform our activity. The information below outlines equality data for each year of the programme. Each group (cohort) of apprentices is categorised according to the year they started their FA – 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Start figures for FAs are reported as at 30th September for each year:

Measure	Cohort 1 (16/17)	Cohort 2 (17/18)	Cohort 3 (18/19)	Cohort 4 (19/20)	Cohort 5 (20/21)
Total number of starts	346	1244	1535	3450	2975
Uptake by Gender	M-5.3% F-49.7%	M-46.3% F-53.7%	M-43.3% F-56.7%	M-43.0% F-57.0%	M-52.0% F-58.0%
% of FA starts self-identified an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty	7.8%	7.4%	7.1%	16.3%	17.6%
% of FA starts self-identified being from a Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group	4.6%	4.9%	6.1%	6.5%	6.4%
% of FA starts identifying as being care experienced.	-	7.8%	5.1%	2.4%	2.8%

Understanding the figures

Overall participation in Foundation Apprenticeships is still relatively low, and although increasing year on year we must take care when analysing the data for trends, given the breakdown numbers associated with specific groups are relatively small.

Foundation Apprenticeship uptake at SCQF L6 continues to be well balanced across male and female pupils. Since they were introduced in 2016, there has been a steady growth in the proportion of females participating, now at 58% of total uptake. Although female participation in Foundation Apprenticeships has continued to increase year-on-year, gender splits across frameworks continue to reflect the gender imbalance seen across subject choices and occupational groupings. Persistently, more females are choosing the social services frameworks while more males opt for engineering and financial services. Although some progress has been made with regard to the proportion of females participating in male dominated frameworks, we recognise there is still more to be done.

Initial Foundation Apprenticeship data for disabled and ethnic minority groups participation is encouraging. We will continue to monitor this and work to ensure that individuals from all groups can access these opportunities.

Data shows a decrease from 2020 onwards in the proportion of care experienced individuals participating in a Foundation Apprenticeship. We intend to undertake work to establish if this is due to under-reporting, under-representation, or the impact of COVID-19, and will seek to identify mitigating actions accordingly.

Further information on equality in Foundation Apprenticeships can be found in our 2021 [Progress Report](#).

c) Graduate Apprenticeships

Participation in the Graduate Apprenticeship programme is similarly monitored across key equality groups to identify any areas of under-representation.

Measure	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total number of starts	276	921	1160	1158
Uptake by Gender	M-81.9%	M-65.1%	M-67.7%	M-64.8%
	F-18.1%	F-34.9%	F-34.9%	F-35.2%
% of FA starts self-identified an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty	9.9%	7.8%	9.9%	9.7%
% of FA starts self-identified being from a Mixed or Multiple; Asian; African; Caribbean or Black; and Other ethnic group	3.6%	3.6%	4.3%	5.2%
% of FA starts identifying as being care experienced.	-	-	-	-

Understanding the figures

Since 2017/18, the proportion of females registering for a Graduate Apprenticeship has almost doubled from 18.1% to 35.2%. Females now account for over a third of new Graduate Apprentices.

Between 2019/20 and 2021/22, there was a slight decrease (0.2%) in individuals self-declaring an impairment, health condition or learning disability. This is a shift from previous years where these figures increased year on year. We anticipate that this was due to the impact of COVID-19.

There has also been an increase in the number of registered Graduate Apprentices self-identifying as from a minority ethnic community. At 5.2%, this is more than reflective of the proportion of minority ethnic groups within the working age population in Scotland.

The proportion of registered Graduate Apprentices self-identifying as care experience has remained static.

Further information on equality in Graduate Apprenticeships can be found in our [2021 Progress Report](#).

Two-way approach to tackle gender gap

Graduate Apprenticeship provider, Heriot-Watt University has taken the lead in a collaboration to tackle the gender gap in uptake within some of Scotland's major industries.

The university created partnerships with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and a range of equality organisations with an aim to educate girls about apprenticeship opportunities in key sectors whilst encouraging employers to change workplace culture and recruitment practice.

The university held a partnership event for employers highlighting the challenges facing current gender landscape in Scotland and the positive action employers can take to create a more gender balanced and diverse workforce.

The event was run in partnership with SDS, Equate Scotland, Girl Geek Scotland and WATT Women in STEM.

The session attracted a number of employers not yet engaged with Graduate Apprenticeships through the university, indicating the interest from industry to tackle this issue through work-based learning.

Following the event, the university is now working with Equate and SDS to set up a working group with key organisations to tackle the gender gap. Initially, work will focus on the Engineering and Energy sector.

The work is being led by Lynne Somerville, Business Relationship Manager for Heriot-Watt Graduate Apprenticeships and Sara Dodd, Digital Business Strategist at the university and formerly Director at CodeClan, consultant at SQA and owner of her own tech business.

Lynne said: "The university wants this work to support all apprenticeship offers and, through our delivery of Graduate Apprenticeships, we want to be part of change for a future where there is more scope for women to enter the sector at senior level rather than entering an industry that has an embedded culture that does not support equity of opportunity."



What have we learned?

The activity undertaken between 2015-2021 to mainstream equality and diversity in apprenticeships ranged in focus, scale and size. Common themes and lessons learned emerged from this work, which are summarised in this section.

Evidence & understanding of the issues

While our rich data has helped us to identify the main issues faced by equality groups in accessing apprenticeships, we recognised that this could be further enhanced, where possible, by analysing disaggregating data on particular protected characteristics. For example, disaggregating our data on learning disability from a wider disability grouping enabled us to better target our support. We have also learned that quantitative data is more effective when complemented by insight from co-design activity with people who have lived experience of the issues and barriers we are trying to address. For example, we held focus groups with care experienced young people, and staff from Barnardo's and Action for Children. The aim was to understand young people's perceptions of apprenticeships and any potential barriers they may face in accessing these opportunities. This feedback was used in conjunction with data to inform our activity in supporting care experienced young people.

We know that the self-disclosure and monitoring of equality information can be sensitive issues. However, encouraging both is fundamental to ensuring the needs of individual learners are being met, allowing them to complete their apprenticeship. Since 2015, we have evolved and enhanced the ways in which we engage with learning providers in relation to disclosure. We have invested significant resource in supporting learning providers to create safe environments in which to encourage people to disclose their

information, and to understand the importance of collecting accurate equality monitoring data. Training on disclosure, formal guidance and practical tips have all been delivered to learning providers. We also monitor provider queries on disclosure, updating the guidance annually to ensure it covers the key information required to support apprentices. This has led to increased return rates and substantial improvements in the quality and validity of the data we hold on the equality characteristics of apprentices.

Strategic partnerships to influence policy and practice

Under-representation and disparities in outcomes, seen across education and in the wider workforce, cannot be addressed by any one organisation or single approach. Partnership working is critical to addressing these issues.

From our evaluation and experience from 2015-21, we know that ad hoc and project-based approaches to tackling inequality, undertaken on their own, do not have sufficient impact to tackle the deep-rooted cultural barriers some groups face in accessing apprenticeships. We have also observed that work to address inequality is inconsistent across the stages of the education pipeline, and not being given sufficient priority to generate the necessary systemic change. To have any real, sustained impact, intervention approaches will require long-term, joined-up, system-wide collaboration with all relevant stakeholders committed to progressing and reporting on the same clear, measurable objectives. We learned that, where utilised, this approach furthers opportunities to address barriers to apprenticeships in a more systematic and sustainable way.

Entrenched and intractable issues such as the horizontal occupational segregation by gender in the labour market require concerted on-going action and alignment of our resources and those of partners. Over the past five years we have worked with partners to

test and pilot approaches in order to determine the critical success factors required to establish pipelines from school to employment that support young women into STEM careers. We have learned that:

- we need to consider how we align the supply of, in this case young women, to labour market opportunities.
- marketing can help to make apprenticeship offers attractive to young women when messaging aligns to their values, and relatable images of women are used.
- Buddying and mentoring have been fundamental to supporting a positive work environment for woman undertaking apprenticeships in non-traditional sectors.

There are three projects currently running across Scotland which aim to develop local pipelines for young women from school into STEM apprenticeships. Commissioned by SDS, the projects are being led by West College Scotland, University of the Highlands & Islands and Napier University. They will conclude in 2023 and will be evaluated in order to share any learning at both a local and national level.

Building capacity across the delivery landscape

Multi-faceted approaches are required to change the diversity of participation within work-based learning. It is important to work with educators, learning providers and employers to challenge barriers and stereotypes in apprenticeships, and to ensure equality of access and opportunity is mainstreamed at all stages of the education pipeline.

Our learning in relation to effectively embedding equality and diversity at all stages of the apprenticeship process was fundamental to informing the creation of the new TEG approach to developing apprenticeship frameworks, as part of the Strategy for Standards and

Frameworks. As referenced earlier (p.x), TEGs represent a sector-based and employer-led approach to apprenticeship framework development. Part of the role of the TEG is to ensure that, as part of the development process, there are no unintentional barriers to certain groups being able to undertake the apprenticeship.

We know that learning providers have strong ambitions to recruit and attract a more diverse workforce, however they are often unsure how to proceed. In 2015, we started to address this through the introduction of “Get Connected” events, which linked learning providers to different community groups or third sector organisations to gain insight into how to attract and support equality groups into employment. Building on our learning from these events, we have approached the capacity building of providers over the last five years in a number of ways, including through a comprehensive programme of CPD, best practice and networking sessions, and equality resources.

In 2015, we delivered a significant amount of one-to-one support to learning providers on equality. While this reach was effective to a degree, we quickly realised that greater impact could be had through utilising a ‘one-to-many’ approach which reduced duplication and facilitated CPD events and provider led peer-to-peer discussions. Bringing learning providers together helped them to share best practice in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, allowing the collective upskilling of everyone involved. As a result of COVID-19, we had to move our event series online. This has resulted in a significant increase in engagement from providers from across urban and rural Scotland. This was demonstrated through the uptake of our needs assessment training, as barriers to physical attendance were negated, due to the digital format. We will continue to use a digital interface for our capacity building events going forward.

Feedback from learning providers has taught us that, in relation to the development of our equality resources, ease of access to information is key. Recognising this, we created a single repository of information and resources for providers on a range of topics including, mental health, and supporting care experienced apprentices. Furthermore, working in collaboration with the SAAB Employer Engagement Group, we developed inclusive recruitment guides for employers, making it as easy as possible to access the information, empowering them to develop inclusive and streamlined recruitment practices.

Through learning, and in response adapting our 'wrap around' approach to building the capacity of providers, we have empowered many to take action. For example, Rainbow Rooms worked with Barnardo's to develop a programme for young men in care to explore barbering as a career. Xtra-mile worked with the Sikh Sanjog to develop a programme to enable Sikh women to enter into Modern Apprenticeships, and Print Scotland collaborated with CEMVO to reach out to BME groups with their opportunities. Each of these represents the actions of individual learning providers, but collectively they have helped to increase the participation and achievement for these underrepresented groups.

We know that parents and carers are the primary influence on young people making decisions about their future. As such, they play a pivotal role in ensuring apprenticeships are seen as a desirable pathway for young people. Feedback received in 2019/20 from parents and carers we engage with suggested that there was room to improve our communications and increase awareness of our products and services, as well as the available routes and pathways into apprenticeships. In response to this, we undertook a learning and review phase on how to better engage with parents/carers. We refreshed our cross-organisation approach to parental engagement in 2021 to inform future activity, including situations where parental

influence regarding apprenticeships may be an additional barrier to equality and diversity in apprenticeships.

Outcomes

Targets have been very useful in driving improvement in equality, diversity and inclusion across work-based learning. However, there is no single, short-term solution which will achieve substantial change in the face of embedded societal and cultural bias and perceptions of apprenticeships. While still an important mechanism to catalyse change, apprenticeship targets need to be reframed in the context of recognising both the impact of earlier subject choices in school and the post-destination trends of equality groups. They must seek to help individuals beyond first positive destinations to sustainable outcomes and equity in the longer term.

Creating a SySTEM to address gender balance in electrical sector

A partnership between Scottish Electrical Chartered Training Trust (SECTT), West College Scotland and Equate is focused on switching more females on to the electrical sector through apprenticeships.

The SySTEM programme was created to encourage young women to enter West College Scotland's pre-apprentice electrical installation course in order to support a pipeline of talent for SECTT, which works alongside employers to train and recruit apprentices for the industry.

The pre-apprenticeship course was designed to provide young people with the skills to get a role as an apprentice electrician in the domestic or industrial sector.

The 18 week course enables the individuals to gain vital personal skills employers look for, such as team working and communication, practical job skills and access to work experience.

Through SySTEM, the partnership took specific steps to help attract more females to the programme.

Advertising aimed at women included images of female electricians and messaging known to appeal to the audience such as no costs, flexible learning and support given.

The steps also included activity to help remove barriers to access the course, including offering an initial drop-in information session where they could bring a friend and expenses to attend would be reimbursed.

In the first SySTEM intake, which took place at the College's Paisley campus, five females enrolled and four successfully completed the programme, with two already offered apprenticeships.

“Gender stereotyping has an impact on the decisions that girls and boys, and young women and men, make about subject and career choice. As children and young people progress through the education and skills pipeline, their ideas about gender and work become increasingly fixed. This results in gender segregation in subject choice in school, further and higher education, skills programmes, and the labour market”.

Close the Gap

Steven Grier, Country Regional Manager for Scotland & LRG North at Microsoft and Chair of Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board Employer Equalities Group

Being Chair or member of any equalities board is a role where the ultimate ambition is to “do yourself out of a job” as it is hoped, of course, that soon your services will no longer be required.

The informal mission statement of the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board Employer Equalities Group (SAAB EEQ) is to ensure that a person from a protected characteristic group should find it no harder than any other person to access an apprenticeship.

This ambition supports the work that needs to be addressed across the entire jobs and skills landscape in Scotland.

Since the creation of the Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan, I believe the societal pace of change in the last five years on all areas of equality, diversity and inclusion has been staggering.

There’s a huge amount of work to be done, however, we should celebrate the progress made, particularly on ‘visible’ inequalities.

Certainly, as an employer five years ago, my eyes were opened on joining the EEQ on the scale of the equalities challenge across the career landscape, particularly in the SME space, which is crucial to the Scottish economy.

In my own organisation there is a palpable positive change in both the culture of our organisation and our success as we continue our focus on diversity, equality and inclusion at pace.

More broadly, there is now an overwhelming body of evidence to support the fact that having a diverse and inclusive workforce is more than “just being the right thing to do” and is, in fact, a huge differentiator for the wellbeing of employees and contributes massively to a more profitable and successful company. Those successful outcomes are more quickly achieved by starting early on in a career journey and embedding equality into apprenticeships recruitment.

The EEQ Group’s first area of focus was on gender equality in STEM apprenticeships, and it has been great to see the progress that has been made there, both in my own technology industry and in others. Group members also quickly realised that there was hard work, progress and support required in many other areas.

We need to address the more ‘invisible’ inequalities, for example, neurodivergence and mental health. I am hopeful that technology advances will help here, however, I believe there will be many factors contributing to meeting the ongoing challenge.

Today, it is far easier for employers to access the right information to make informed, inclusive decisions. The underlying Government policies and plans provide the foundation, including the “Race Equality Action Plan 2017 to 2021” and “A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People”, which is an employment action plan that aims to at least halve the disability employment gap in Scotland.

In addition to this, partners including SAAB EEQ tackle specific areas requiring action. For example, the soon to report Gender Commission was established by SAAB EEQ in direct response to the systemic issues surrounding gender imbalance in apprenticeships and recognising that more information needed to be gathered and findings acted upon, by the key players - including employers - if real changes were to be made.

It will take determined focus and support from all partners in the economic landscape of Scotland, with commitment and allyship by agencies, academia and employers all supporting and working towards inclusive apprentice recruitment and development. We should all look forward to playing our part!

I look forward to leading the SAAB EEQ group to play its role in this drive to make apprenticeships more equitable, inclusive and accessible.



Partnership serves up support for apprentices

Enhanced Funding Contribution for those aged 20 to 29 has proved vital to enable staff at Leven restaurant, Base, benefit from apprenticeships.

As a former apprentice, Base owner Ewan Brown was keen to offer his own staff the chance to develop through work-based learning.

Apprenticeships learning provider MGT Training and SDS worked with Base and its staff to look at the needs of each employee and agree any additional support that had to be put in place to enable them to take an apprenticeship.

To date, 15 apprentices have started hospitality Modern Apprenticeships, with the business getting additional help to support the training of six apprentices through Enhanced Funding Contribution.

MGT Training assessors have been working closely with each apprentice to manage their additional support needs, which have included literacy difficulties such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.

Support for disability or health needs is needed in areas associated with mobility, sight, hearing, communication and mental health problems.

Funding contributed to more in-depth coaching and provision of equipment such as live scribe pens and software for those with dyslexia.

In addition, staff at MGT have also been able to provide their specialist support when other challenges have been presented such as bereavement, divorce, family breakdown and an apprentice becoming a carer for their younger sibling.

MGT has put in place a number of mechanisms aimed to support apprentices such as 1-2-1 meetings, using enabling language, reflective accounts, video, scribing, quiet zones, stop-start approaches, coaching and mentoring.

Director of MGT Training, Michelle Batt said: “We want to maintain a culture of equality and inclusion and respect at all times, to ensure that the apprentice feels valued rather than judged due to their traumatic experiences.”



Our future focus

Since 2015, we have made good progress in improving equality and diversity in apprenticeships, but much more remains to be done. As described in this report, the delivery of our Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan has provided valuable learning that will shape our activities going forward.

Evidence shows that COVID-19 has impacted equality groups disproportionately, in particular, exacerbating the existing inequalities faced by women, minority ethnic communities and disabled people. Against this backdrop, achieving equality of opportunity and outcomes for all in the labour market is a critical priority for Scotland's economic recovery.

There is now a renewed focus on work-based learning as a key component in supporting Scotland's economic recovery and long-term prosperity, ensuring that the workforce is ready to take on the jobs of the future and that no-one is left behind. SDS's work to improve participation across under-represented groups in apprenticeships therefore remains essential.

This section sets out the work we will now prioritise to help remove barriers to apprenticeships and continue to mainstream equality and diversity throughout work-based learning.

Evidence & understanding of the issues

Since 2015 we have used evidence to help us develop, deliver and adjust our services in ways which align with our ambition to improve diversity and equality of opportunity in apprenticeships.

We will continue to undertake formalised, robust evaluations of our activity, to inform our programme development and commissioning, helping us to determine 'what works'. In line with the successful

evaluation of, for example, the Enhanced Funding Contributions for Modern Apprentices, we anticipate this approach will prove effective in allowing us to test, innovate, scale up and share learning from more targeted work-based learning interventions.

Building on the strong evidence base already available to us, we will further utilise our research and data to examine, where possible, more disaggregated and intersectional equality information to help enhance the effectiveness of our targeted apprenticeship initiatives. We anticipate analysis of this data will be further complemented by insight from co-design activity with people who have lived experience of the issues and barriers we are trying to address. This forms the basis of one of the new SDS equality outcomes set in our [Equality Diversity Mainstreaming Report 2021-2025](#).

Our aim for the years ahead is to further embed co-design and co-production approaches into all stages of the work-based learning process, from design to delivery, including interventions that help support individuals to sustain their apprenticeship. We will seek to ensure that the inclusion of diverse, lived experience is obtained through talking directly to our customers, having dialogue with equality organisations, or by consulting with our equality employee networks at SDS.

A further area of focus for SDS going forward in relation to work-based learning, and more broadly, is enhancing our understanding of learner journey pathways for the main equality groups we support. The available data has made clear that whilst the education and skills system works well for most, there are clear areas for improvement, not least in improving the equality of experience and outcomes for different groups of learners. Through understanding of these journeys, we can respond in such a way that the identified barriers to apprenticeship participation, learning and achievement are removed, and inclusion and equality are promoted.

As data on learner journeys is currently collected separately across different parts of the education and skills system, we know more joined-up information is first needed across the whole system. This is a complex task which will take time and commitment from partners. In this context, we will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government and SFC to progress the longitudinal educational outcomes (LEO) project and the implementation of the Education and Skills Impact Framework.

Strategic partnerships to influence policy and practice

We will continue to strengthen our partnership working to influence actors with the direct responsibility for key areas of policy and practice which can impact on the uptake and long-term achievement of work-based learning across equality groups. This includes:

- Supporting the Scottish Government’s approach to economic recovery, delivering apprenticeship opportunities through DYW, and the Young Person’s Guarantee.
- Working with the government on an ongoing basis with regards to asks of SDS in relation to supporting equality groups through Scottish Government policy, action plans, and targets. This will include exploring funding and policy matters, particularly in relation to government contributions for Modern Apprenticeships.
- Collaborating closely with the SFC in order to align and optimise the impact of our activity in relation to both Foundation and Graduate Apprenticeships. Underpinned by our aim to encourage more uptake from under-represented groups, a key part of this delivery will focus on communicating how apprenticeships contribute to improving equality and diversity in the workplace, while also helping to dispel perceptions of sectors by exposing young people to the world of work at school.

- Working with learning providers and businesses – regardless of their size, sector or region – by encouraging employers to value and develop a diverse talent pool, supporting them to develop inclusive approaches to recruitment and sustainable growth.
- Engaging with industry under the leadership of SAAB to implement the future standards architecture for Scottish Apprenticeship Standards and Frameworks. This includes working on crucial developments such as the embedding of meta-skills. and the closer involvement of employees and employers in shaping equality in apprenticeship standards using real work situations.
- Considering, and implementing as appropriate, the recommendations from the SAAB Gender Commission, due to report its findings in 2021/22, on how to better support gender equality in work-based learning.

Building capacity across the delivery landscape

Co-ordinated engagement from both schools and employers at relevant points in the education pipeline is fundamental to raise the esteem of apprenticeships with young people and their parents, particularly from ethnic minority communities. In this context, we will work to harness new and existing partnerships with schools and employers, to engage parents and carers and help them to understand and fulfil the role they play as career influencers.

Through our new Parental Engagement Strategy, we will develop our service offer, face to face and digital, to ensure products and services support the roles parents and carers play as career influencers in the young person’s learning and career journey. This includes promoting and improving access for parents and carers to high quality career information and labour market intelligence.

We will also engage with our DYW partner and school co-ordinators at a regional level to enhance the collaboration between schools and employers to deliver activities and information to young people in relation to equality in apprenticeships. In line with any recommendations that come out of Scotland's independent Career Review, we will investigate the potential impact that early careers education could have on challenging gendered attitudes to work.

Recognising the role of employers in creating an inclusive workplace culture, it is essential that they all play a part in tackling inequality in the workplace. Without this, equality groups will face an unchanged labour market and workplace culture. To support employers, we will ensure equality considerations form part of our cross-business engagement activities, as part of the development of our new SDS Employer Engagement Action Plan. This will ensure a joined-up and co-ordinated approach across SDS that supports employers in the promotion of a diverse workforce. We will also continue to develop informed equality resources and events for employers, learning providers and apprentices.

Outcomes

Drawing on our experience of implementing both our Apprenticeship Equality Action Plan and Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) Action Plan, and in conjunction our learning from the last five years, we intend to move further towards building our activities from an enhanced cross-business approach. Published in April 2021, our new 2021-2025 Equality & Diversity Mainstreaming Outcomes provide a challenging, intersectional, and holistic focus for equality work across all SDS service design and delivery:

- **Outcome One** – People with lived experience of poverty, and from protected characteristic groups known to face inequality, have increased participation and improved progression in learning and employment.
- **Outcome Two** – Women and girls can access and sustain learning and careers which reflect their skills and interests, enabled by the adoption of gender-sensitive approaches from employers and key influencers.
- **Outcome Three** – Lived experience of people from protected characteristic groups is a fundamental component of the design and development of SDS services, improving their customer experience and outcomes
- **Outcome Four** – Businesses are aware of the benefits of diversity and fair work practices and increasingly adopt and embed them, improving the well-being of people from protected characteristic groups.
- **Outcome Five** – SDS benefits from increased diversity throughout our workforce, particularly in relation to gender, race and disability, and colleagues with protected characteristics feel heard, respected and fulfilled at work.

Our new outcomes frame our activity in relation to improving and supporting equality, diversity and inclusivity in work-based learning across both service design and delivery over the next five years, with a focus on those areas where less progress has been made. This includes improving our understanding of the customer journey, to better inform us of the challenges faced by different ethnic minority groups, and to address gender segregation in certain apprenticeship frameworks, e.g., in STEM sectors.

The Scottish Government has acknowledged that Scotland's economic recovery will be education-led and has reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to work-based learning, highlighting the importance of prioritising, safeguarding and embedding apprenticeships within the learning system. Working to embed equality and diversity at the outset of policy and service design, we will collaboratively develop meaningful work-based learning targets which reflect the needs of equality groups across Scotland. Collectively setting evidence-based and realistic targets presents an opportunity to continue to drive the step change necessary within both workplaces and society to widen access for equality groups into apprenticeships. .

As we progress into the recovery and beyond, SDS remain resolutely focused on driving real change in equality, diversity and inclusion across work-based learning, making an enduring difference to government's ambitions for a fairer Scotland and for inclusive economic growth.

“Despite high attainment levels at school and rates of entry to further and higher education after school, statistically, minority ethnic people are not receiving the labour market advantages which should be expected from their positive educational outcomes”.

Race equality Framework Scotland 2016-2030

Community links drive diversity for Diageo

Diageo has been working to increase the number of women in STEM roles both at Diageo and in the broader industry through apprenticeships, returnships and scholarships.

In Scotland, the overall gender diversity of the programme is 68% male and 32% female but in 2020 the firm recruited 10 engineering apprentices during the pandemic resulting in a 50:50 male/female split of intake.

Diageo identified ethnicity as a global inclusion and diversity priority and are defining similarly ambitious plans and goals on ethnic diversity as it has done for gender.

To support this work, Diageo contacted SDS in advance of this year's apprenticeship recruitment campaign, with an aim to reach individuals from ethnically diverse communities.

The company gained data insights from SDS to understand the ethnic populations around its operational sites and Shieldhall, in the West of Scotland, was identified as having the biggest opportunity to help the firm diversify its workforce.

The company and SDS worked with Intercultural Scotland and West of Scotland Regional Equality Council to understand the best approach to the recruitment process and get help to engage and attract individuals from ethnic communities.

Whilst community leaders spread the word about the apprenticeship opportunities, Diageo also spoke to colleges, universities and Developing the Young Workforce to tap into its young target audience and expanded their marketing drive through Awaz FM, a popular radio station with the Asian community.

Diageo stayed in touch with the community leaders and organisations to hold information sessions with individuals interested in the apprenticeships.

As a result, Diageo received applications from a number of strong candidates from minority ethnic backgrounds and, from those, employed four apprentices, which is a conversion rate of 33% from assessment centre into a positive destination.

The quality of applicants was so high that Diageo created an additional engineering apprenticeship post to ensure it didn't lose out on talent.

The percentage of females the business recruited in Scotland as part of the new intake rose to 67% and, combined with the number of apprentices from an ethnic background, 83% of the overall cohort supports equality and diversity.



Apprentice wellness programme makes perfect sense

Learning provider Sixth Sense Training's Apprentice Wellbeing Programme has already made a noticeable difference to the wellbeing of apprentices since being developed two years ago.

The programme involves a range of services to support the apprentice both in and out of work including free 24/7 counselling services (provided by a qualified healthcare provider), management support and awareness days for employers, and the provision of specialist disability equipment, software and training.

Sixth Sense has been providing additional support to apprentices with physical and learning disabilities for almost 10 years.

The addition of free professional counselling sessions was initially offered as a support service for training staff. After recognising its value, the business also made it accessible to apprentices as a wider service they now call the Apprentice Wellness Programme.

Sixth Sense Director, Sarah Tasker said: "There are a lot of mental health issues that affect our apprentices, which is why we added the counselling sessions to our range of support services.

"It is a free service for young people experiencing the pressures of modern life. And we know that those pressures don't dissolve once the working day is over so they've got 24-hour access to confidential, professional support and can arrange up to six one-to-one support sessions too."

The East Kilbride based business has a direct contract with SDS and deliver around 120 apprenticeships per year at various organisations ranging from local SMEs to worldwide organisations such as Zurich, AXA, Tennents, Abellio, Schuh and Baker Hughes.

The apprentices are undertaking various digital frameworks for example, Digital Marketing, IT Professional and Data Analytics and the business says as much as half of those apprentices require additional support in one way or another



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