



**APPRENTICESHIPS AND THE PAY REVIEW BODY WORKFORCES: FINAL  
REPORT**

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## Executive Summary

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This report presents findings from a research project exploring whether and how apprenticeships have impacted recruitment and retention across the main public sector pay review body (PRB) workforces in:

- Primary and Secondary School Teaching;
- The Armed Forces
- The Police: and
- The NHS.

The research is particularly pertinent given recent regulatory changes to the national apprenticeship model, particularly in England where these changes have been the most significant. Indeed, the public sector has been positioned as a major contributor to the implementation of the government's 'refreshed' apprenticeship programme.

### General Context

- An apprenticeship is a distinctive form of vocational training. It allows the apprentice as a waged employee, rather than as an unpaid trainee, to combine workplace learning with a more formal educational component, ensuring that on completion they are capable of taking-up a designated work role.
- Based on perceived shortcomings in the capacity of apprenticeships to meet diverse stakeholder aims, the recent policy trajectory has been towards tighter government regulation of apprenticeships.
- In England this tighter regulation includes:
  - A target of 3 million new apprenticeship starts between 2015 -2020
  - A move from apprenticeship **frameworks**- a bundle of relevant qualifications- to apprenticeship **standards** - more precisely linked to specific occupational roles.
  - A formal end-point assessment, required to complete the apprenticeship.
  - An apprenticeship levy on employers, set at 0.5% of pay bills over £3million, effective from April 2017.

- The introduction of Level 6 degree-apprenticeships
- The setting of a funding band for each apprenticeship ranging from £1,500 to £27,000, and constituting the maximum training cost covered.

### **The Public Sector Context**

- Most public sector employers in education, the police, the armed forces and the NHS now pay the apprenticeship levy.
- Public sector organisations of 250 or more employees have been given a target of 2.3% of the workforce, starting apprenticeships each year from 2017 to 2020, with a statutory obligation to report annually on progress towards it.
- Most local authorities along with all police forces, the armed forces and NHS Trusts meet the 250 workforce-size threshold and have been set apprenticeship targets based on their 2016 headcount.
- Training and development pathways in the public sector have been re-configured around new apprenticeship standards. These standards have been organised around fifteen different sector-/activity-based routes. The health and sciences route has already developed a relatively large number of apprenticeship standards (88).
- There are other sector-based apprenticeships routes such as education and care comprising apprenticeships standards widely used by public service employers. As well as the sector routes, public sector employers will also draw upon more generic activity-based apprenticeship routes, for example digital, and business and administration.

### **Understanding Apprenticeships**

- Our report reviews data and literature on apprenticeships mainly in England, and to a lesser extent the other countries of the United Kingdom (which, while covered by the apprenticeship levy, have their own apprenticeship models).

Data sources drawn upon include those generated by:

- Responsible government departments routinely collecting data, principally from *the individual learner records* of apprentices.
- Government *commissioned bespoke pieces of research*

- Reports from research organisations, including thinktanks, universities and representative bodies such as trade unions.
- The main policy indicator used for incidence of apprenticeships is apprenticeship starts. ***Across the whole economy***, total apprenticeship starts over recent years have remained stable with around 500,000 a year. However, unpacking this aggregate figure suggests:
  - Over the last ten years, a significant majority of starts were for intermediate (Level 2) and advanced (Level 3) apprenticeships
  - A high proportion of apprentice starts are by older (age 25+) rather than younger workers
  - A significant proportion of apprentices are existing employees.
- In terms of sector patterns:
  - At 31 March 2019 1.9% of the public sector workforce was on an apprenticeship.
  - There has been a sharp fall in ‘health, public services and care’ starts from 139,000 in 2016-17 to 88,000 in 2017-18.
  - However, over the last decade, the number of starts on this route have remained relatively high, second only to business, administration and law.
  - In healthcare settings, currently the most popular apprenticeship standard is for the nursing associate. In addition, there are just over 1,000 individuals on nurse degree apprenticeships,
- There are different ways in which apprenticeships might plausibly address ***recruitment:***
  - **Preparing:** apprenticeships allow ***new*** employees to be taken on and prepared or trained to fill an occupational role.
  - **Upskilling:** Apprenticeships upskill new or existing employees, allowing the re-distribution of tasks and responsibilities in a manner sensitive to organisational recruitment pressures and needs.
  - **Progression:** movement through different apprenticeship levels provides new career pathways feeding hard to recruit or shortage occupations.

- Apprenticeships impact the **retention** of staff through providing new and enhanced career opportunities for existing employees, but also through improving the quality of working life of other employees as upskilled colleagues relieve them of workplace 'burdens' and in so doing reduce inclinations to quit.
- The literature on apprenticeships reveals a focus on three main themes:
  - Attraction;
  - Outcomes; and
  - Costs.

The report summarises key findings associated with these different themes.

## Research Approach

The primary research conducted for our study addressed the following questions:

- **Given recent reforms to the apprenticeship model, are public sector employers currently using this form of training to address staff recruitment and retention issues?**

If so:

- **How are public sector employers using apprenticeships to deal with recruitment and retention issues?**

And:

- **What challenges do they face in doing so?**

In pursuing these research questions, a three-part research methodology was adopted:

- **Expert interviews** (number=14). These interviews covered national policy makers and practitioners,
- **NHS Apprentice Leads Survey.** As the largest of the PRBs, it was viewed as important to build-up a detailed and comprehensive picture on the use and management of apprenticeships in the NHS. A survey was, therefore,

conducted of apprentice leads from all Trusts in NHS England. 116 usable survey responses were received, representing around half of NHS Trusts

- **Case Studies** Six case studies were completed: two NHS England Trusts and four police forces (two in the north of England and two in the south).

## Findings

### *Primary and Secondary School Teachers*

- Apprenticeship arrangements in teaching remain fractured and disconnected. Thus, there is a teaching assistant apprenticeship but the teaching assistant is unable to move on from this programme to a three-year degree teacher apprenticeship (In contrast to the NHS where the healthcare assistant can progress to nurse degree apprenticeship).
- There is a Level 6 teacher apprenticeship. However, this is a post graduate qualification and its take-up by schools and individuals had been limited for the following reasons:
  - The considerable range of already available entry routes into teaching.
  - The limited perceived value attached by stakeholders to this apprenticeship as a means of dealing with recruitment and retention pressures in teaching.
- The impact of apprenticeship reforms on the management of the teaching workforce should not, however, be completely discounted. The apprenticeship levy is paid by most community schools into the overall local education authority levy pot, with financial implications, not least their ability to pay staff.

### *The Armed Forces*

- The Ministry of Defence (MOD) proclaims itself ‘the largest provider of apprenticeships in the United Kingdom’. At this level, two main insider narratives emerged on the contribution apprenticeships made to the armed forces:
  - **Embedded:** Essential to the very nature of the armed forces is the preparation of personnel for service, and apprenticeships have long been the main vehicle for achieving the requisite vocational training and development.

- **Good news:** The capacity to deliver apprenticeships at scale, especially to young recruits, is seen as a 'good news' story to be 'celebrated' by the armed forces.
- The armed forces provide a wide range of mainly generic, rather than sector specific, apprenticeships, including in
  - Public services and health
  - Engineering
  - Telecommunications
  - I.T.
  - Logistics
  - Business administration
- Recent apprenticeships issues in the armed forces include:
  - The three branches of the armed forces paid their levy into a single apprenticeship pot and used it to the full.
  - The shift from apprenticeship frameworks to standards was welcomed by the armed forces, but the conversion of apprenticeship frameworks to standards by the deadline date of 1 August 2020 was proving a challenge.
  - Meeting the requirements for an End Point Assessment on all apprenticeships was creating a twofold challenge for the armed forces: finding assessors with the technical expertise to assess specialist military roles; and ensuring that assessors could reach sometimes hard to reach workplaces.
  - With the exception of a small leadership and management pilot, degree level apprenticeships had not yet gained traction in the armed forces.

### ***The Police***

- The centrality of apprenticeships to workforce management in the 43 police forces of England and Wales is relatively new, interfacing with three recent developments:



- **Workforce transformation** as set out in the strategic policy paper *Policing Vision 2025*. Supporting this vision, the College of Policing had helped establish a level 6-degree apprenticeships as one of three entry routes into the police constable role and as part of the new a Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF).
- The introduction of **the apprenticeship levy**. This was presented by police forces as a ‘happy coincidence’, with the levy providing a dedicated source of financial support for the training of Police Constable Degree Apprentices (PCDA).
- The policy commitment to **uplift police numbers** by 20,000. This commitment had created additional recruitment pressures. Thus, police forces were moving to a new degree apprenticeship model from a ‘standing start’ and at considerable scale and speed.
- **In terms of formal planning:**
  - Apprenticeship training represented a significant financial investment by individual polices forces keen to develop the necessary supportive infrastructure.
  - The need to procure accredited apprenticeship training for the PCDA from higher education institutions (HEI) had encouraged police forces to adopt partnership relationships and a more strategic approach to training.
  - The PEQF had encouraged police forces to model the balance between the three entry routes into the police constable role.
- Police forces had differed in their timing for the introduction of the PCDA. In some cases, PCDA programme had been up and running for some time; other forces were only just introducing it.
- The staggered introduction of the PCDA programme across police forces had affected the numbers of apprenticeships currently in place. However, there were some noteworthy differences between forces in the planned take up of the PCDA and in the balance between the PCDA and other entry routes.
- Approaches to the management of different aspects of the PCDA varied by force, but in general apprentices were attested as police officers from the outset, working as established members of their team. In the main PCDAs

were also guaranteed a full time, substantive post on successful completion of the apprenticeship programme. In determining apprentice pay and given the need to attract large numbers of apprentices, there was also pressures to converge at the upper end of the national PCDA range for start salaries.

- The recent introduction of the PCDA raised the following issues:
  - The most significant challenge faced by our case study police forces related to the costs and loss of frontline staffing associated with **abstraction**: the removal of the police officer from front line duty to allow for study time.
  - Forces needed to develop the **capacity and infrastructure**-mentors and supervisors- to support police officer degree apprentices.
  - The introduction of the PCDA particularly within the context of the PEQF required a significant change in the often informal '**learning culture**' of most police forces.
  - With the sharp and dramatic shift in entry requirements, questions emerged about the interface between police recruits and **existing police officers** with very different learning experiences and indeed qualifications

### ***The NHS***

- **Context.** Given the scale of the NHS apprenticeship programme, the last two NHS Pay Review Body (NHSPRB) reports (2018-19 and 2019-20) had raised issues about its impact on labour supply and workforce management. However, the NHSPRB had also highlighted the 'absence of firm evidence' on how this programme had impacted on healthcare staff recruitment and retention.
- **Strategies.** Using various proxy measure, the study explored whether NHS Trusts were adopting a strategic approach to apprenticeships. The picture was mixed depending on the measure used. Thus, the NHS Trust apprentice leads survey indicated that:
  - a Trust bespoke apprenticeship committee or working group was common: found in around a half of surveyed Trusts.
  - Despite enthusiasm amongst the national health service unions for the principle of apprenticeships training, participation by local union

representatives in the introduction and management of apprenticeships was patchy.

- Trusts were still having difficulty fully spending their levy: three quarters of respondents indicated that their organisation was very unlikely or unlikely to spend the levy in the financial year 2019-20.
- Only around a third of surveyed Trusts had a formal written apprenticeship plan, although close to two thirds of respondents viewed their apprenticeship approach as 'very closely' or 'closely related' to workforce planning.
- **Apprenticeship Take-up.** The apprentice leads survey indicated:
  - A rough balance in trusts between those on clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships
  - More existing than new employees on apprenticeships.
  - The nursing associate apprenticeship as the most commonly available programme, with the availability of other apprenticeships, including the nurse degree apprenticeship, patchy.
- **Apprenticeship Aims:**
  - Trusts were pursuing multiple aims in offering apprenticeships.
  - Many trusts placed weight on using apprenticeships to attract new and young employees to their organisations.
  - However greater emphasis was placing on the use of apprenticeships to provide training opportunities for existing staff, a way of retaining and providing career pathways for them.
- **Terms and Conditions**
  - The survey indicated that close to three quarters of Trusts employed their level 2 HSW apprentices on a fixed term contract.
  - Over two thirds of organisations guaranteed a job offer on completion, suggesting that apprenticeships were commonly seen as a pathway into a substantive post.
  - In terms of pay, well over half of the respondents noted the use of Agenda for Change Annex 21 in determining the level 2 HSWs' pay rate.

- In terms of outcomes, our survey suggested that apprenticeship non-completions were not a major concern.
- **Challenges:**
  - The 'headline finding' on challenges faced was not a surprise, with backfill costs cited as by far the most significant challenge facing Trusts in the introduction and management of apprenticeships. These were the often significant, costs required to cover apprentices away at college and on placements, and not covered by the levy.
  - There were, however, other challenges:
    - The capacity to supervise/mentor apprentices.
    - Funding the wages of new apprentices (also not covered by the levy).
    - Ensuring apprentices had functional skills.
    - Procuring quality training higher education institutions.
    - Arranging for the End Point Assessment.

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## 1. Introduction

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This report presents findings from a research project exploring whether and how apprenticeships have impacted recruitment and retention across the main public sector pay review body (PRB) workforces covering:

- Primary and Secondary School Teachers
- The Armed Forces
- Police Officers and
- National Health Service (NHS) staff<sup>1</sup>.

The research is particularly pertinent given recent regulatory changes to the national apprenticeship model. These have positioned the public sector as a major contributor to the implementation of a 'refreshed' approach to apprenticeships. Meeting the threshold for payment of the recently introduced apprenticeship levy, most public sector employers have also been set targets for and required to report on apprenticeship starts, feeding into a stated government aim of introducing three million new apprentices across the economy in England between 2015 and 2020<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, our report focuses mainly on apprenticeships across the PRB workforces in England. The new funding mechanism for apprenticeships, the levy, applies across the four countries of the United Kingdom. However, the use of the levy monies and the nature of the apprenticeship model are devolved matters and vary within the respective countries.<sup>3</sup>

The report comprises the following parts:

- **Context:** mapping recent policy and regulatory changes to the delivery of apprenticeships, especially as they relate to the public sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Those covered by the Agenda for Change agreement, which excludes doctors dealt with by their own PRB.

<sup>2</sup> Although more recently the government has moderated the likely achievement of this target: see <https://feweek.co.uk/2019/06/26/government-says-they-will-fail-conservative-manifesto-commitment-to-3-million-apprenticeship-starts/>

<sup>3</sup> For details on apprenticeships in Northern Ireland see: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/types-apprenticeships>; for Scotland see: <https://apprenticeshipsinscotland.com/> ; for Wales see: <https://gov.wales/become-apprentice>

- **Understanding Apprenticeships:** exploring the take-up of apprenticeships and theorising how apprenticeships might impact on recruitment and retention in the sector.
- **Literature review:** examining the literature on apprenticeships, particularly across the main PRB workforces, with a concentration on the extent to which evidence supports their use to address issues of recruitment and retention.
- **Research approach:** setting out our research approach to examining whether and with what consequences, changes in apprenticeship policy and practice have affected recruitment and retention across the main PRB workforces.
- **Findings:** presenting the results from our research, with a focus on apprenticeships in the healthcare and police workforces and to a lesser extent in teaching and the armed forces.

Drawing on our research findings, we will argue that:

- The impact of the refreshed apprenticeship model varies across PRB workforces, with limited consequence for recruitment and retention amongst primary and secondary school teachers and, for different reasons, the armed forces, but with significant implications for healthcare workers and police officers.
- Where apprenticeships do impact on recruitment and retention in the respective PRBs, they do so in very different ways: for instance, within the healthcare workforce outcomes have been closely related to the retention of staff, while in the police (for uniformed officers) and armed forces, they have centred much more on recruitment.
- At the same time, the different outcomes are still working their way through training, development and workforce planning systems, with the consequences of the new apprenticeship model still to emerge and likely to be contingent on other policy developments.

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## 2. Context

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### 2.1 General Context

With a centuries-long history in many Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, an apprenticeship is typically presented as a distinctive form of vocational training. It allows the apprentice as a waged employee, rather than as an unpaid trainee, to combine workplace learning with a more formal educational component, ensuring that on completion they are capable of taking-up a designated work role. It is a model with two related but distinct dimensions: an apprenticeship is a type of **training programme** and second an apprentice is a type of **employee**. These dimensions are captured by a recent government definition presenting an apprenticeship:

as a job .... (which) allows the apprentice to gain technical knowledge, real practical experience and wider skills required for their immediate job and future career. These are acquired through a mix of learning in the workplace, formal off the job training and the opportunity to practice new skills in a work context<sup>4</sup>.

The precision of this definition should not detract from continuing debate on the nature of apprenticeships, and the practices needed to give them meaningful effect. This debate has touched on how apprenticeships are conceived: the emphasis respectively given to on-and off-the-job learning; the transferability of the capabilities acquired; and the balance to be struck between the apprentice as a learner and as an employee. These differences of emphasis are captured by Fuller and Unwin's<sup>5</sup> distinction between expansive and restrictive apprenticeships. The former ensures a

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<sup>4</sup> Consultation on preventing misuse of the term 'apprenticeship' in relation to unauthorised training, 2015:7 Dept of Business Innovation and Skills

<sup>5</sup> Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2003) Learning as Apprentices in the Contemporary UK workplace: creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation, *Journal of Education and Work*, 16 (4) 407-425.

progressively deeper, more rounded learning experience allowing the apprentice to actively engage with an occupational community. The latter is a shallower, more prescribed training regime designed to equip the apprentice to perform a narrowly defined job role.

Debate has also centred on the goals underpinning apprenticeships, linked in turn to the range of actors with a stake in them. The interests of national policy makers in apprenticeships as a means of upskilling and improving employee productivity overlap with the sector-specific labour market needs of employers operating in different industries, and with the personal ambitions of individual employees as they progress their working lives. Indeed, the list of stakeholders extends beyond the state, employers and employees to include education providers and those employees co-working with apprentices, essential to the delivery of apprenticeships and with their own motivation for participating in the process.

The range of actors with a stake in apprenticeships is highlighted by the National Audit Office<sup>6</sup> (NAO) in setting out the objectives underpinning the government's current apprenticeship programme, to:

- meet the skills needs of employers
- create opportunities for apprentices to progress in their careers
- draw apprentices from a wide range of social and demographic groups; and
- create more quality apprenticeships.

In Britain, debate on the nature and aims of apprenticeships has both reflected and driven by shifts in public policy on vocational education<sup>7</sup>. Based on perceived shortcomings in the capacity of apprenticeships to meet diverse stakeholder aims, the recent policy trajectory has been towards tighter government regulation of apprenticeships. This is not least reflected in the fact that under the Enterprise Act,

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<sup>6</sup> NAO (2019) The Apprenticeship Programme <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/the-apprenticeships-programme/>

<sup>7</sup> Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2016) The aims and objectives of apprenticeships, in Where next for Apprenticeships? CIPD: London  
[https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/where-next-for-apprenticeships\\_2016\\_tcm18-14292.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/where-next-for-apprenticeships_2016_tcm18-14292.pdf)



2016<sup>8</sup>, ‘an apprenticeship’ became a protected title which could only be used in relation to a prescribed government model.

The emergence of this apprenticeship model can be traced to the early 1990s with the introduction in England of Modern Apprenticeships, initially centred on a (National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)) level 3 (‘A’ level) qualification, but with a route into it through a level 2 (GCSE level) National Traineeship. Government endorsement of the apprenticeship model for young people was enshrined in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009, which provided government guarantees of an apprenticeship opportunity for all qualified 16 to 19-year olds seeking but unable to secure one. The government also broadened eligibility for apprenticeship training by removing the upper age of 25 for participation in such a programme, in so doing opening up a form of vocational education traditionally seen as an option for young people<sup>9</sup>, to the whole of the workforce<sup>10</sup>.

More recent reforms, and the current apprenticeship system, were stimulated by two government commissioned reviews. The Wolf Review (2011)<sup>11</sup> was highly critical of vocational education for 14 to 19-year olds. It raised *inter alia* concerns about funding arrangements which in channelling apprenticeship monies directly to education providers, allowed them rather than employers to drive the nature and quality of the training process. Wolf strongly endorsed apprenticeships as a potential means of providing young people with workplace experience and learning but lamented the lack of opportunity to access or utilise them in this way. Indeed, in general Wolf’s characterisation of apprenticeships in practice implied they were delivered in a manner more in line with Fuller and Unwin’s (2016) ‘restrictive’ than their ‘expansive’ approach.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/12/contents/enacted>

<sup>9</sup> Which it still is in many developed countries see Table 5 page 29

<sup>10</sup> Mirza-Davies, J (2015) Apprenticeship Policy England prior to 2010, House of Commons <https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-7266>

<sup>11</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180504/DFE-00031-2011.pdf)

The Richard Review (2012)<sup>12</sup> echoed concerns about the quality of vocational training but with an emphasis on the need for apprenticeships to display more sensitivity to employer requirements. The review critiqued the existing apprenticeship system as driven by formal and narrowly conceived job-related qualifications, arguing for an approach more explicitly based on occupational skills, knowledge and behaviours. As the review noted:

The skill level of the (apprenticeship) standard and qualification should be driven by what is required to do a real and specific job well, not by a desire to fit with level definitions. (p6)

In the wake of these, and other concerns about apprenticeships<sup>13</sup>, the following reforms have been introduced, mainly in England<sup>14</sup> over the last few years and underpin the current system:

- **A government set target of 3 million new apprenticeship starts across the economy between 2015 -2020 in England.**<sup>15</sup>
- **The replacement of apprenticeship frameworks with a system of apprenticeship standards.** From the early 1950s apprenticeship frameworks were the basis for apprenticeship training. These frameworks were primarily centred on acquiring a bundle of competency-based qualifications such as an NVQ, and assessed on a rolling basis. The qualifications were, however, often disconnected from the work role: thus, under an apprenticeship framework, it was possible to acquire the requisite qualifications without necessarily having the right skills to do the job. The new apprenticeship standards, initially

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<sup>12</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/34708/richard-review-full.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> OfSted (2015) Apprenticeships: developing skills for future prosperity  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-developing-skills-for-future-prosperity>

<sup>14</sup> The apprenticeship levy was introduced across the four countries of the United Kingdom, but the other reforms list relate mainly to England inks to apprenticeship models in the other three countries are provided under footnote 2 above

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-kick-starts-plans-to-reach-3-million-apprenticeships>

referred to as ‘trailblazer standards’, are occupationally-focused. They comprise the designated skills, knowledge and behaviours required to undertake a specific job, with an end point assessment introduced to ensure that these qualities are in place.<sup>16 17</sup> The transition from frameworks to standards was completed on 1 August 2020, although during the fieldwork for this study, these two models still existed alongside one another.

- **An apprenticeship levy on employers, set at 0.5% of pay bills over £3million, effective from April 2017.** Rather than being channelled directly to education and training providers, the accrued levy monies are now notionally accessible only to the employer. Thus, an employer’s levy payment sits in its own designated ringfenced electronic account. These monies can be drawn upon by the individual employer but only for spending on prescribed items: principally those designed to meet apprenticeship training and assessment costs. They cannot be used to cover apprenticeship wages or backfill costs (the staff costs associated with replacing apprentice time away from the workplace). On a rolling basis, employers have two years to spend their own ring-fenced levy funds. After this period, unspent levy funds are clawed back by central government and lost to the employer. Clawback began in April 2019.
- **Employer responsibility to procure the apprenticeship training from a list of approved and registered providers held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).**

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://apprenticeships.blog.gov.uk/2017/08/01/apprenticeship-frameworks-and-standards-the-main-differences/>

- **A scheme allowing smaller employers not paying the levy to seek state funding through a co-investing scheme.** The government provides 95% of the apprentice training costs, and the employer 5%<sup>18</sup>.
- **The introduction of degree apprenticeships in 2015.** These apprenticeships are pitched at level 6 and 7 and complement other apprenticeships -intermediate, advanced and higher - as set out in Table 1 below. In accordance with the apprenticeship model, this form of level 6/7 training allows employees to acquire a degree as a paid apprentice, combining on- and off-the job learning, and, where supported by the employer, funded though the levy.

<b>Table1: Apprenticeships Levels</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Equivalent Educational Level</b>
<b><i>Intermediate</i></b>	2	5 GCSE passes
<b><i>Advanced</i></b>	3	2 A level passes
<b><i>Higher</i></b>	4, 5, 6 & 7	Foundation degree and above
<b><i>Degree</i></b>	6 & 7	Bachelor's or master's degree

- **The allocation of each apprenticeship standard to one of 30 funding bands, which range from £1,500 to £27,000.** This band establishes the maximum funds that any given employer can draw-down from their own levy pot to meet the training costs associated with the apprenticeship in question. The upper limit of the funding band also establishes the maximum price that the government will 'co-invest' towards an individual apprenticeship, where an employer does not pay the levy. Typically, the funding band for an apprenticeship is determined by the level and the length of time needed to complete it. For example, the funding band for a level 7-degree

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work#non-levy-paying-employers>

apprenticeship, taking at least 48 months to complete, is usually set at around £27,000.

- **The introduction of various minimum apprenticeship employment standards including<sup>19</sup>:**

- Although the time taken to complete an apprenticeship varies, often with level, a **minimum length has been set at 12 months** based on the apprentice working at least 30 hours week.
- **At least 20%** of the apprentice's paid hours, over the planned duration of the programme, must be spent **training off-the-job**<sup>20</sup>.
- Apprenticeships must offer training to level 2 (equivalent to GSCE A-C) in **Maths and English (functional skills)**, if the apprentice does not already have these qualifications. These functional skills must be acquired by completion of the apprenticeship.
- A **national minimum apprenticeship wage** was introduced in October 2010, following a recommendation by the Low Pay Commission (which now sets this rate). From April 2019 this rate stood at £3.90 per hour (although employers have discretion to pay above it). The minimum rate applies to apprentices aged under 19 and aged 19 or over in the first year of their apprenticeship - after the first year, these 19+ apprentices move to the appropriate age related national minimum wage rate. Apprentices aged 25 and over and not in their first apprentice year are entitled to the national minimum wage.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03052/SN03052.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/792228/OTJ\\_training\\_guidancev2\\_reissued\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792228/OTJ_training_guidancev2_reissued_.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/787717/Guide-to-Apprenticeships-260219-LR.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/787717/Guide-to-Apprenticeships-260219-LR.pdf)

## 2.2 *The Public Sector Context*

### 2.2.1 Recent Developments

Suggestive of the traditional ‘model employer’ approach by which the state sets the lead for the rest of the economy in workforce management, the public sector has been singled out by national policy makers to make a significant contribution to the delivery of the government’s apprenticeship programme. Public sector organisations of 250 or more employees have been given their own target of 2.3% of the workforce starting apprenticeships each year from 2017 to 2020, with a statutory obligation to report annually on progress towards it<sup>22</sup>.

The relevance of these reforms to the workforces covered by the pay review bodies was signalled by government estimations that most local authorities along with all police forces, branches of the armed forces and NHS Trusts met the workforce size threshold and were set apprenticeship targets based on their 2016 headcount<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, it is striking that while the government notes that ‘less than 2% of employers in the economy as a whole will be affected by the apprenticeship levy<sup>24</sup>, in the public sector most employers will be eligible to pay it.

The significance of these public sector apprenticeship targets and the apprenticeship levy to the largest of the pay review body (PRB) remit groups, the NHSPRB, was highlighted in its 2018 report. This noted (p35) that the apprenticeship levy will cost the NHS around £200 million in NHS England alone. Indeed, it is noteworthy that the ESFA directly manages the levy accounts of the 1,000 highest levy paying organisations, with 250 of these organisations being NHS Trusts (Personal correspondence with Health Education England (HEE), 2019).

Further reflecting the importance of the public sector to the government’s policy on apprenticeships, the ESFA has funded a team of seven Apprenticeship Relationship

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2017/9780111154991>

<sup>23</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/680544/Meeting\\_the\\_Public\\_Sector\\_Apprenticeship\\_Target.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/680544/Meeting_the_Public_Sector_Apprenticeship_Target.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy/apprenticeship-levy>

Managers, hosted by HEE and located in different regions of England to provide NHS Trusts with specialist support. The Local Government Association has been grant-funded to implement the Apprenticeship Accelerator Programme, which aims to advance the development and implementation of apprenticeship programmes in local authorities. In 2018, a Public Sector Apprenticeships Leaders Board was also set up comprising senior representatives from across government and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

Training and development pathways in the public sector have also been re-configured by the new trailblazer<sup>25</sup> system of apprenticeship standards. Trailblazers have been organised around fifteen different sector-/activity-routes, which, in turn, comprise the range of specific standards related to the different occupations falling within them. Set out in Table 2 below, the routes can be seen in part to be founded on discrete industry or service sectors (for example, construction and hair and beauty), but also on more general functional or activity-based employment categories (for example, business and administration, digital and catering). Most public sector employers (and indeed many other employers) will draw upon **both** the sector specific and the more generic activity-based apprenticeships.

<b>Table 2: Apprenticeship Standards by Route</b>	
<b>Route<sup>26</sup></b>	<b>Apprenticeship Standards</b>
Agriculture, Environment & Animal	35
Business & Administration	41
Care Services	10
Catering & Hospitality	12
Construction	105
Creative & Design	44
Digital	28

<sup>25</sup> Trailblazer groups were set up comprising employers from relevant sectors, to draft the specific apprenticeships standards. These were typically self-selecting employers, in other words, they were volunteers rather than appointees to the respective groups. The nature of these groups reflected to employer-driven and -sensitive nature of the apprenticeship reforms.

<sup>26</sup> Compiled from material on: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

Education & Childcare	13
Engineering & Manufacturing	167
Hair & Beauty	7
Health & Sciences	88
Legal, Financial & Accounting	41
Protective Services	19
Sales, Marketing & Procurement	32
Transport & Logistics	40

It is clear from Table 2 above that the health and sciences route has already developed a relatively significant volume of apprenticeship standards (88): with only construction and engineering and manufacturing developing a greater number. In health, this is still a work-in-progress with considerable scope to develop further, new apprenticeships standards linked to the many remaining NHS occupations. (It has been calculated that the NHS has around 350 different occupation.<sup>27</sup>) However, as Table 3 below highlights key occupational groups in the NHS have established apprenticeships standards: registered nurses (to degree level), healthcare support workers and nursing associates. The separate Care Route provides two apprenticeship standards which might also be drawn on by healthcare employers- the adult care and lead adult care worker.

The picture on the development of apprenticeship standards for other PRB workforces is patchier and more difficult to discern. In the case of education, there is a teacher apprenticeship, although this is a one-year graduate qualification (equivalent to the Post Graduate Certificate) rather than an undergraduate degree-level qualification which would allow someone to complete their full teacher training in taking it. Falling within the protective services route, there is a degree level apprenticeship standard for police constables, and a level 2 apprenticeship standard for HM forces personnel, although the armed forces are also likely to draw upon more generic apprenticeship routes, for example through the digital and engineering routes. Falling within the business and administration route, there is an apprenticeship which might well cut across PRB workforce domains: the public

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<sup>27</sup> [https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/about\\_nhs.html](https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/about_nhs.html)



service operational delivery officer, a 12-month level 3 apprenticeship (funding band £3,000) centred on front line public service staff and administrators.

<b>Table 3: Apprenticeship Standards Relevant to the Public Sector<sup>28</sup></b>			
<b>Standard</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Length (months)</b>	<b>Funding Band</b>
<b>Protective Services:</b>			
- HM Forces Service Person	2	12	£2500
- Police Community Support Officer <sup>29</sup>	4	12	£9000
- Police Constable (degree)	6	36	£24000
- Custody and Detention Officer	3	12	£3500
<b>Education and Care</b>			
- Teacher	6	12	£9000
- Teaching assistant	3	18	£5000
<b>Health and Science (e.g.):</b>			
- Healthcare support worker	2	12	£3000
- Midwife	6	48	£27000
- Nursing associate	5	24	£15000
- Registered nurse	6	48	£27000
- Senior healthcare support worker	3	18	£5000
- Occupational therapist	6	48	£24000
<b>Care Services:</b>			
Adult Care Worker	2	12	£3000
Lead Adult Care Worker	3	12	£3000
<b>Business and Administration:</b>			
Public Service Operational Delivery Officer	3	12	£3000

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

<sup>29</sup> The Police Community Support Officer (PMSO) is not covered by the Police Remuneration Pay Review but as will be noted the PMSO role can be a stepping stone into the Police Constable role.

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### 3. Understanding Apprenticeships

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Any attempt to generate and marshal evidence on the capacity of apprenticeships to 'bridge workforce gaps' across the PRB workforces requires an initial discussion of how this form of vocational training might plausibly impact on the recruitment and retention of labour. There is also a need to assess the capacity of recent apprenticeship reforms to prompt the changes in attitudes, behaviours and practices amongst key organisational stakeholders required to address the issues of workforce supply and demand. The existing research literature provides a starting point for exploring such issues.

As an internationally recognised and applied form of vocational education, research has been undertaken on apprenticeships in specific national contexts, and on a comparative basis<sup>30</sup>. Our discussion is principally focused on the data and literature covering apprenticeships in England, and to a lesser extent the other countries of the UK. This available material takes various forms:

- The government department responsible for the apprenticeship programme (currently the Department for Education) routinely collects data, principally from **the individual learner records** of apprentices, and regularly publishes statistical bulletins presenting headline findings.
- Over the years, the government has **commissioned bespoke pieces of research** on different aspects of apprenticeships. For example, a series of studies has been undertaken on apprentice pay, and the net benefit of apprenticeships to employers as well as on learner and employer experiences of apprenticeships. Some of these studies have provided more refined analysis of official statistics, others have generated their own, new data bases.
- Finally, a range of interested organisations, including thinktanks and representative bodies, have taken the initiative in undertaking **their own research**. Again, this has seen some (re-) analysis of existing official data along with the establishment of new and original data sources.

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<sup>30</sup>

<file:///C:/Users/K1211048/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/DGYT11O2/Quantitative%20Analysis%20Report%20September%202013.pdf>

In examining distinctive issues, these different studies complement one another. In overlapping, they provide an opportunity to triangulate or align findings to assess similarities and differences.

This section is divided into the following parts: the first explores **the take-up** of apprenticeships; the second sets out the arguments on how and why apprenticeships might facilitate and support the **recruitment** of staff; the third reviews the arguments on how and why apprenticeships might encourage and enable the organisational **retention** of workers. In presenting the general arguments underpinning the use of apprenticeships to recruit and retain, this discussion provides the basis for a more detailed review of the evidence base on the use and impact of apprenticeships, in Section 4.

### **3.1 APPRENTICESHIP TAKE-UP**

#### **3.1.1 Overview**

The main public policy indicator driving the evaluation of apprenticeship programmes has been apprenticeships starts. The government's 3 million target rests on starts, and much of the fine-grained official data presented on the profile of apprentices is similarly centred on starters. Data are available on apprenticeship completions and to a lesser extent movement into a permanent job role following completion<sup>31</sup>, but these are less commonly presented and drawn upon in official publications and reporting. As the NAO<sup>32</sup> notes, the focus on starts obscures the number of people who fail to complete their apprenticeships successful. The NAO puts at close to a third (32%) in 2016-17<sup>33</sup>, although this figure does vary by sector<sup>34</sup>

Across the whole economy, it can be seen from Table 4 below that the number of apprenticeship-starts over recent years has remained stable with around 500,000 a year<sup>35</sup>. There was a sharp dip in 2017-18 coinciding with and likely explained by the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. Organisations might well have been adjusting

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<sup>31</sup> Although as will be seen a significant majority of apprentices are existing employees, clearly ruling out an interest in whether a completed apprenticeship leads to a job.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-apprenticeships-programme.pdf>

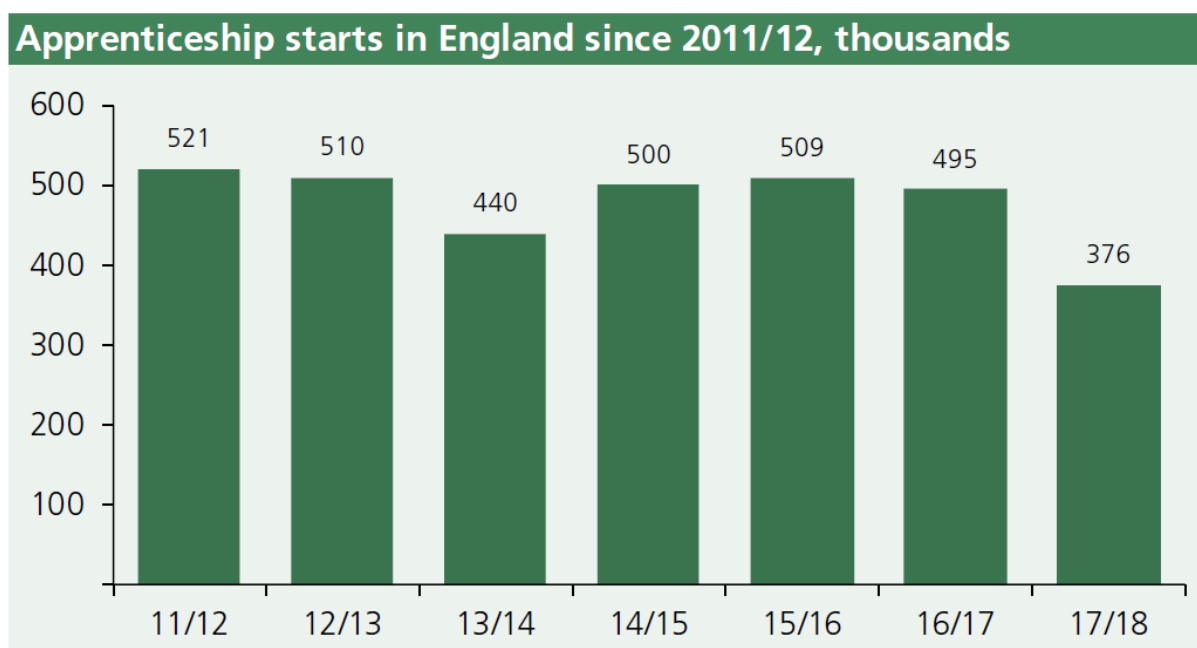
<sup>33</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-apprenticeships-programme.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> A Unison study puts completion rates at close to 80% in health  
[https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI_report_final.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03052/SN03052.pdf>

to the new levy arrangements and, with national delays in approving the registered list of training providers, faced challenges in procuring the necessary training. Employers might also have held back apprentice starts, not least to ensure that they could draw-down their upcoming levy monies to fund them. Indeed, with the new arrangements settling in, the most recent quarterly figures do suggest a pick-up in apprenticeship starts: between August and November 2018 there were 166,400 starts compared to the 147,200 in the equivalent quarter in 2017<sup>36</sup>. Indeed, the most recent figures indicate 260,000 starts between August 2019 and March 2020.<sup>37</sup>

Table 4<sup>38</sup>:



### 3.1.2 Fine grained picture

Unpacking the aggregate figures on apprenticeship starts provides a more nuanced picture, which suggests the following:

<sup>36</sup> Although this is still well below the 202,000 starts in Aug-Nov 2016-17 and 194,600 starts in Aug-Nov 2015-16.

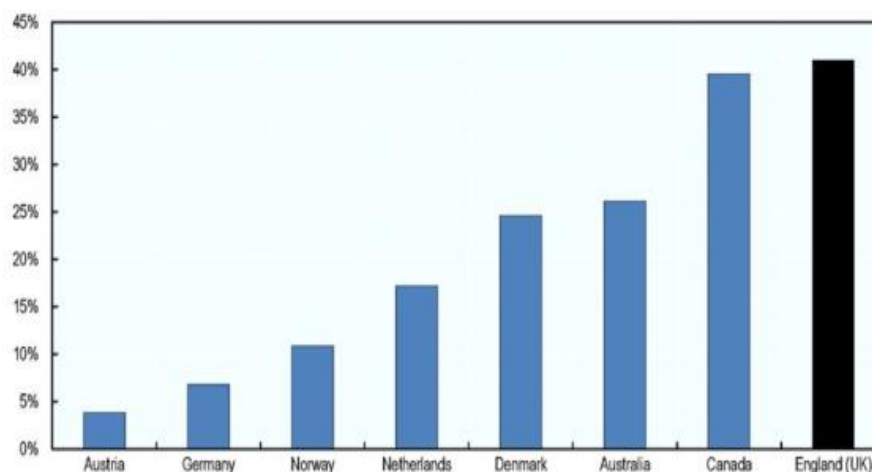
<sup>37</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/887800/2020-march\\_apprenticeships-and-traineeships-commentary\\_may-update.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/887800/2020-march_apprenticeships-and-traineeships-commentary_may-update.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf>

- **Level:** Over the last ten years, a significant majority of starts were for intermediate (level 2) and advanced (level 3) apprenticeships: in 2017-18, 87% of apprentice starts were still at levels 2 and 3, with only 13% at levels 4-7<sup>39</sup>. This should not detract from a striking shift in the balance between intermediate and advanced apprenticeships starts: in 2009-10 over two thirds of starts were level 2 and a third at level 3; by 2017-18 this difference had disappeared, with an even split on starts between these levels.
- **Age:** A significant proportion of apprentice starts are by older (age 25+) rather than younger workers. There has been a slight reduction in the age profile of starters in the last year or so, but in 2017-18, 41% of apprentice starts were still 25 or over; 30% between the ages of 24 and 19; and only 28% were under 19. The shift to a high proportion of older apprentices can naturally be traced to the removal of the age threshold a decade or so ago. As can be seen in Table 5 below, the significant proportion of older apprentices continues to be a distinctive feature of the English apprenticeship system.

**Table 5: Share of 25 year-olds and older amongst current apprentices (2012, 2014)**



Source: Kuczera, M. (2017), "Striking the right balance: Costs and benefits of apprenticeship", *OECD Education Working Papers*, No. 153, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/995ff011-en>; Data for England: BIS (2014), "Apprenticeships Evaluation: Learner Survey", *BIS Research Paper*, No. 205, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-evaluation-learner-survey-2014](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeships-evaluation-learner-survey-2014).

<sup>39</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf>

- **Status:** The employers' apprenticeship 2017 survey <sup>40</sup>, found that around a third of employer offered apprenticeships to existing employees. It is a difficult to find a precise figure on the proportion of apprentices who are existing employees, but a recent government survey of apprentice pay noted that as many as two thirds of apprentices were 'conversions' <sup>41</sup> in other words current employers simply re-badging their training programme as an apprenticeship. The significant number of existing employees undertaking apprenticeships through conversion perhaps helps explain the high age profile of apprentice trainees noted above.

### 3.1.3 Industry and Route

Most pertinent to this discussion is the distribution of apprenticeship starts by industry sector and route, highlighting the relative take-up of this form of training in the public sector. Building a picture of apprenticeship starts in these terms is not straightforward with the inconsistent presentation of data by sector and sub sector. However, there is scope to drill-down into the data to explore whether the aggregate patterns on the level, age and status of apprentices hold in the public sector.

The broadest picture of apprenticeship starts by sector is presented in Table 6 below, based on 'sector subject area'. Clearly, there has been a sharp fall in 'health, public services and care' starts from 139,000 in 2016-17 to 88,000 in 2017-18. However, over the last decade, starts through this route have remained second only to business, administration and law.

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<sup>40</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/659710/Apprenticeships\\_evaluation\\_2017\\_employers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659710/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2017_employers.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> BEIS (2017a) Apprenticeship Pay Survey 2016: England, BEIS Research Paper Number 15, [www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2016](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2016)

Table 6<sup>42</sup>:

Apprenticeship starts in England by sector subject area since 2009/10, thousands									
	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Business, Administration and Law	77	134	165	160	126	143	143	138	111
Health, Public Services and Care	44	90	109	123	109	130	132	139	88
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	43	55	70	66	65	74	78	75	59
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	62	103	108	101	87	90	85	75	54
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	21	22	14	14	16	18	21	21	23
Information and Communication Technology	13	20	19	14	13	16	16	15	18
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	15	22	20	14	11	13	15	14	9
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	6	7	8	7	7	7	8	7	7
Education and Training	1	4	8	8	5	7	8	9	6
Arts, Media and Publishing	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Science and Mathematics	-	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

A more refined picture is presented in a breakdown of apprenticeship starts by frameworks and standards. Table 7 below reveals a sharp fall in the number of framework apprenticeship starts in health and social care from some 86,000 to 17,000, unsurprising given the phasing out of such frameworks. Table 7 also suggests that some of this fall has been taken up by the number of starters on the new adult and lead adult care worker standards, which grew from a low base in 2016-17 of under a 1,000 to almost 20,000 in 2017-18.

Table 7<sup>43</sup>:

Apprenticeship starts in England by framework since 2016/17, thousands		
10 most popular frameworks in 2017/18		
	16/17	17/18
Business Administration	47	29
Children's Care Learning and Development	27	25
Construction Skills	20	18
Health and Social Care	86	17
Engineering	15	11
Management	47	11
Industrial Applications	17	10
IT and Telecoms Professionals	10	7
Care Leadership and Management	12	6
Vehicle Maintenance and Repair	9	6

Source: DfE/EFSA FE data library: apprenticeships

Apprenticeship starts in England by standards since 2016/17, thousands		
10 most popular standards		
	16/17	17/18
Team Leader/Supervisor	1.8	17.3
Adult Care Worker	0.5	10.2
Lead Adult Care Worker	0.3	8.4
Customer Service Practitioner	1.6	8.3
Operations/Departmental Manager	0.8	8.0
Hair Professional	0.6	6.2
Hospitality Team Member	0.8	5.7
Installation Electrician/Maintenance Electrician	1.9	5.5
Assistant Accountant	0.4	4.9
Business Administrator	0.0	4.8

Source: DfE/EFSA FE data library: apprenticeships

<sup>42</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06113/SN06113.pdf>

More detailed and recent (2018-19) data on current apprentices in **healthcare settings**, as provided by the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education presents a sharper picture of the distribution and nature of apprenticeships in this part of the public services. As Table 8 below indicates the number of current framework apprentices in healthcare settings is now quite low at around 9,000, relative to the 15,000 standards apprentices. The most popular **framework** is level 2 business and administration, and it is striking that a level 2 business and administration **standard** is unlikely to be developed in the near future: a concern to healthcare (and indeed other) employers and blocking-off an important apprenticeship entry route<sup>44</sup>. The high incidence of nursing associate apprentices under standards is striking, a likely consequence of the underpinning financial and infrastructure support provided by the government to this NHS flagship programme.

According to Table 9 below on standards, there is a concentration of higher level (6/7) apprenticeships, but with barely over 1,000 nurse degree apprentices, there are clearly challenges in adopting this training model. These challenges were highlighted in a recent House of Commons Education Select Committee report which characterised the nursing degree as in 'poor health'<sup>45</sup>. The use of degree apprenticeships for registered professions requires an alignment between the standards set for the apprenticeship by the trailblazer group and by the profession's regulatory body. In the case of nurses, the Nursing and Midwifery Council requires trainee registrants, including nurse apprentices, to spend 50% of their time learning off-the-job, significantly inflating backfill costs and presenting healthcare employers with a major financial challenge. (This concern also raised by NHS Employers in their evidence to the NHSPRB in 2018 (see page 87 below)

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<sup>44</sup> <https://feweek.co.uk/2020/02/27/game-over-for-level-2-business-admin-apprenticeship/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmeduc/1017/101703.htm>



<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Apprentices</b>
Business and Administration	2	1,903
Business and Administration	3	1,119
Health Clinical Healthcare Support	3	831
Health Assistant Practitioner	5	614
Health and Social Care	3	550
Health Clinical Healthcare Support	2	424
Business and Professional Administration	4	390
Health Healthcare Support Services	2	332
Health and Social Care	2	281
Health Pharmacy Services	2	253
Health Pharmacy Services	3	243
Management	2	202
Management	5	194
Management	3	190
Children and Young People's Workforce	3	157
Customer Service	2	126
Improving Operational Performance	2	106
74 frameworks with <100 apprentices		1,149
<b>Frameworks total</b>		<b>9,064</b>

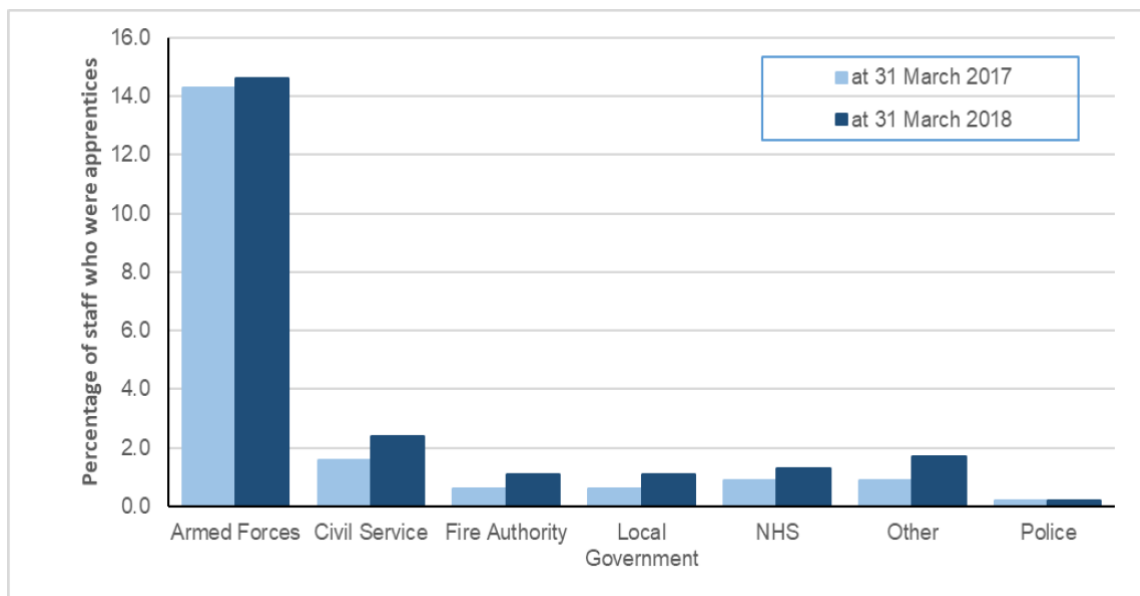
<b>Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Apprentices</b>
Nursing Associate	5	4,800
Senior Healthcare Support Worker	3	1,566
Healthcare Assistant Practitioner	5	1,387
Registered Nurse - degree (NMC 2010)	6	1,191
Healthcare Support Worker	2	1,149
Team Leader / Supervisor	3	736
Operations / Departmental Manager	5	633
Business Administrator	3	467
Senior Leader	7	430
Customer Service Practitioner	2	384
Adult Care Worker	2	355
Chartered Manager	6	333
Lead Adult Care Worker	3	244
Healthcare Science Practitioner (degree)	6	174
Advanced Clinical Practitioner (degree)	7	147
Associate Project Manager	4	127
Assistant Accountant	3	120
Children, Young People and Families Practitioner	4	118
73 standards with <100 apprentices		944
<b>Standards total</b>		<b>15,305</b>

<sup>46</sup> Data provide by Department for Education in personal correspondence

<sup>47</sup> Data provide by Department for Education in personal correspondence

The statutory requirement for public sector organisations to report on their progress towards the 2.3% apprenticeship target provides a further means of exploring the pattern of apprenticeships starts across the public sector. As indicated in Table 10 below these reporting data allow starts to be broken-down by public service sub sector. The proportion of apprenticeships starts as a proportion of employment is striking in the armed forces, where it can be seen that the figure now stands at close to 15%. In other sub-sectors, the figures are increasing but still quite modest at around 1.5-2.0%. Indeed, in aggregate terms out of a total 3,178,866 (headcount) workers in the public sector, 60,665 were apprentices at 31 March 2019, representing 1.9% of the workforce

**Table 10: Apprenticeship starts at start and end of 2017-18 as a percentage of headcount, by sub-sector<sup>4849</sup>**



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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/758186/Public-sector-apprenticeships-in-England\\_2017-to-2018\\_commentary-2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/758186/Public-sector-apprenticeships-in-England_2017-to-2018_commentary-2.pdf)

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Finally, these 2017-18 reporting data<sup>50</sup> suggest that public sector apprentices are distinctive in certain respects:

- They are older than the average apprentice. Only one in five of apprenticeship starts in the public sector were for learners aged under 19 compared to a third of starts for those not identified as public sector. The NHS and civil service were most likely to recruit apprentices from the '25 and over' age group (62.4 percent and 57.3 per cent of starts respectively).
- Public sector apprentices are more likely to be from ethnic minorities. 13.3 per cent of starts in the public sector were by apprentices from the Asian, Black, Mixed or other ethnic groups compared to 10.2 per cent of starts not identified as from the public sector.
- Higher-level apprenticeship starts were more prevalent in the public than the private sector, especially in the civil service and NHS. 30.5 per cent of starts in the civil service were at Level 4 and above and 27.7 per cent in the NHS. Starts in the armed forces and the police (uniformed and non-uniformed workers) were predominantly on intermediate apprenticeships (64.7 and 54.9 per cent respectively).

### ***3.2 UNDERSTANDING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION***

#### **3.2.1 Recruitment**

While attention has been drawn to public policy debate on the capacity of apprenticeships to support and facilitate employee recruitment, it remains important to explore the ways in which this form of training might plausibly address recruitment

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/774452/Apprenticeship-and-levy-statistics-January-2019\\_FINALv2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/774452/Apprenticeship-and-levy-statistics-January-2019_FINALv2.pdf)

needs at the industry and organisational level. These different ways include the following:

- Preparation
- Upskilling
- Progression.

Each is considered in turn.

**Preparation.** The most direct means by which apprenticeships connect to recruitment is in taking on a *new* employee who can be prepared or trained to fill an occupational role. The use of apprenticeships to bring new workers into the organisation appears to be an important employer rationale for adopting this form of training. A Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2016:4)<sup>51</sup> survey of over a thousand employers found that by far the most common reason for offering apprenticeships was ‘acquiring new talent’, cited by close to half of the respondents (43%). Such an approach generates an organisational ‘pipeline’ of fresh employees which not only compensates for an insufficient stock of fully capable and experienced workers in the local labour market but allows for the development of young people early on in their careers to fit with organisational needs.<sup>52</sup>

**Upskilling.** By upskilling a new or an existing employee, apprenticeships provide an opportunity to re-distribute tasks and responsibilities in a manner sensitive to organisational recruitment pressures and needs. This re-distribution might take various forms. First, the apprentice-trainee can be taken on to perform the same tasks as an established jobholder, albeit on a temporary or time-limited basis as they complete their apprenticeship. Thus, the organisation releases the apprentice at the end of the training period, with a view to re-hiring a new apprentice. The result is a constant churn of readily available apprentices negating the need to recruit to a permanent post.

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<sup>51</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/assessing-the-early-impact-of-the-apprenticeship-levy\\_2017-employers-perspective\\_tcm18-36580.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/assessing-the-early-impact-of-the-apprenticeship-levy_2017-employers-perspective_tcm18-36580.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32306/12-814-employer-investment-in-apprenticeships-fifth-net-benefits-study.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32306/12-814-employer-investment-in-apprenticeships-fifth-net-benefits-study.pdf)

Second, where the boundaries between job roles are permeable, a trained group of employees might be able to take on tasks formerly performed by another, more difficult to recruit group of workers. For example, in the NHS workforce, comprising myriad occupations with fragile job boundaries, the scope for the re-distribution of tasks remains considerable. In such circumstances, apprenticeships allow the upskilling of say support workers, then able to perform tasks formerly undertaken by those in shortage public service professions. It is noteworthy that apprenticeship standards have been developed for healthcare and maternity support workers as well as for teaching assistant and police community support workers<sup>53</sup>, roles with the capacity to take on tasks traditionally undertaken by the public service professional.

The use of apprenticeships to re-distribute tasks has sometimes been labelled 'substitution': in the first case above, the apprentice substitutes for the permanent employee and in the second, the apprentice-trained worker is upskilled to substitute for a higher graded employee. It is a contentious approach to apprenticeships, encouraging some stakeholders to view this form of training with caution and to call for protection against what might be viewed as the use of apprentices as 'cheap labour'<sup>54</sup>.

**Progression.** The scope for the employee to move through different apprenticeship levels provides the basis for new career pathways feeding hard to recruit or shortage occupations. Often referred to as grow-your-own<sup>55</sup>, such an approach has arguably been facilitated by the introduction of apprenticeships standards linked to specific occupational roles. Thus, career progression routes centred on occupational families are more readily established, with the employee able to move through apprenticeships levels to more elevated work roles. Such an approach is reflected in the 'occupational maps' being developed by the Institute of Apprenticeships and

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<sup>53</sup> While healthcare and maternity support workers fall within the remit of the NHSPRB, the teaching assistant and the police community support officers are not covered by the teacher and police PRBs. Nonetheless as stepping stones into the professions, all for these roles are important in exploring the use of apprenticeships on labour supply.

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2017/04/nhs-employers-tempted-to-view-apprentices-as-cheap-labour-warns-unison/>

<sup>55</sup> [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field\\_publication\\_file/grow-your-own-creating-conditions-sustainable-workforce-development-gita-malhotra-kings-fund-3-august-2006.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/grow-your-own-creating-conditions-sustainable-workforce-development-gita-malhotra-kings-fund-3-august-2006.pdf)

Technical Education <sup>56</sup>: At present these are a fairly crude bundling of apprentice standards at different levels within a particular route, say health and social care, allowing employees to envisage and plot a pathway through them.

### 3.2.2 Retention

Apprenticeships might impact the retention of staff through their direct effect on the career opportunities of the individual apprentice, but also through their consequences for the quality of working life of other employees. More specifically:

- As a form of work-based education, allowing for training whilst in employment, apprenticeships appeal to those employees most firmly embedded in the local community and, therefore, likely to stay in their new or upskilled roles on completion of a programme. Indeed, for many such workers, often let down when younger by the formal education system, apprenticeships represent an accessible and financially viable way to train.
- In more general terms, where sectors or organisations can establish career pathways rooted in succeeding apprenticeship levels, existing employees can envisage opportunities to progress their working lives, providing a rationale for remaining with their current employer. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development recently advised employers, 'To make the most of your apprenticeships offer, you should see this as a long-term approach to grow your own workforce, helping you to ensure that the skills you need stay in your organisation.'<sup>57</sup>
- The scope to pursue a career through an apprenticeship while remaining within the organisation is particularly significant in relation to degree level apprenticeships for registered professional roles. For example, the traditional full-time degree route for the registered nurse takes the student away from the employer, with no guarantee of a return on qualification. Keeping the trainee in their existing workplace, the nurse degree apprenticeship provides the

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<sup>56</sup> <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/occupational-maps/>

<sup>57</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/apprenticeships-guide-2017\\_tcm18-10897.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/apprenticeships-guide-2017_tcm18-10897.pdf)

employer with a much better chance of retaining them as a registered nurse on their completion of the programme.

- At the same time, apprenticeships might facilitate greater mobility within the external labour market by providing employees with a portable, accredited qualification. Industry specific apprenticeships, for example in health, education and police services, might prompt inter-organisational movement but act as a check of movement beyond the sector. Generic apprenticeships, for instance in business administration, are perhaps more likely to stimulate career movement not only within but also across sectors.
- There is an important age dimension to the use of apprentice-based career pathways, contributing to staff retention. Traditionally aimed at young people, apprenticeships have been a way of not only refreshing a workforce and ensuring a pipeline into it, but also of keeping young people in the local community. The use of apprenticeships to retain young people in organisations and communities through such pathways is likely to assume increased significance with the forthcoming introduction of 'T' levels. 'T' levels will be rooted in twenty-five subject areas including education and health. The former is due to start in Autumn 2020, and the latter in Autumn 2021. The introduction of 'T' levels opens-up the possibility of even more extended career pathways if they can be aligned with apprenticeships.
- As noted above, the knock-on consequences of apprenticeships for retention rest on the scope they provide to re-distribute tasks and responsibilities across the workforce. Where one part of the workforce is upskilled, it allows other parts to divest themselves of activities which are seen as routine, burdensome or distracting. Freed-up and with newly established career development opportunities, workers able to re-direct tasks in this way are more likely to remain in the organisation.

In summary this section has set out a range of plausible arguments as to how and why apprenticeships address issues of employee recruitment and retention. In the next section we explore the research literature on apprenticeships, in particular

whether this literature provides evidence for the effective use of this form of training to deal with such labour supply issues.



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## 4. The Evidence Base

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A general review of the voluminous literature on apprenticeships reveals a focus on three main themes:

- Attraction
- Outcomes; and
- Costs.

Each theme is considered in turn, with a focus on the insights provided on the relationship between apprenticeships and recruitment and retention in the public sector.

### 4.1 Attraction

In broad terms, the emphasis explicitly placed by employers on the use of apprenticeships to recruit and retain staff should not be overstated. The CIPD survey quoted earlier (see p36 above) indicated that while the most important reason, well under half of the surveyed employer used apprenticeship to attract new talent. A recent Department for Education (DfE) survey covering over 4,000 employers, suggested an even lower proportion. It found that the most important reasons for introducing apprenticeships, cited by close to a third, was the loosely framed option of 'meeting the needs of the business'<sup>58</sup>, with well under a fifth (17%) of respondents seeing recruitment and retention as the most important reason for introducing this form of training. Indeed, in health (16%) and education (15%) this proportion was even lower.

The apprenticeship levy might encourage the greater use of apprenticeships to attract new employees, but this is likely to be related to the quality of the 'apprenticeship offer'. In part the quality of an apprenticeship will lie in future **job**

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<sup>58</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/659710/Apprenticeships\\_evaluation\\_2017\\_employers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659710/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2017_employers.pdf)

**guarantees and career opportunities.** Thus, according to the most recent DfE apprentice learner survey in 2017, covering almost 5,000 Level 2 and 3 apprentices, for close to a third (30%)<sup>59</sup> the main reason for taking this form of training was to 'enter and progress a career'.

An apprenticeship is most likely to result in a post and career where it is explicitly tied to a specific job vacancy, while appointment to a permanent rather than fixed term employment contract on becoming an apprentice provides a high degree of future job security. The evidence on whether employers offer apprentices job guarantees is scarce, although *de facto* a significant majority of apprentices do remain with their employer on completion of their programme. Around two-thirds of employers (65%) in the DfE survey reported that all of their recent apprentices were still with the organisation. The apprentice learner survey, 2017, confirmed this figure with six in ten (60%) who completed their apprenticeship still with the same employer.<sup>60</sup> The proportion was slightly higher in health with 69% of employers noting their apprentices were employed on completion, although the figure was lower in education at 57%. These figures tie in with the contractual status of the apprentice, with the apprentice learner survey indicating that nearly three quarters of apprentices were on a permanent contract (74%).

Alongside future job guarantees, **the pay** received by the new apprentice whilst in training might also impact the attractiveness of an apprenticeship offer. The importance of pay to apprentices should not be overstated. The learners survey, 2017, found that only 10% of new apprentices took up the opportunity because they wanted to be paid during training. However, with a modest statutory minimum apprenticeship rate, concerns, particularly amongst trade unionists, about the level of apprenticeship pay have remained. In some sectors these concerns have encouraged collective attempts to further regulate apprenticeship remuneration. In the health service, for example, the NHS Terms and Conditions Handbook (Agenda for Change) has an annex (21) on trainee pay, although not explicitly couched in terms of apprenticeships. Where the trainee is involved in a programme of less than

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<sup>59</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/659709/Apprenticeships\\_evaluation\\_2017-learners.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659709/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2017-learners.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Although caution is needed in interpreting this figure given that many apprentices are existing employees

twelve months, the role can be subject to job evaluation as a means of determining pay banding. <sup>61</sup>Employers are encouraged to pay those involved in a longer training programme a percentage of the pay band maximum (around 70-75%)<sup>62</sup>.

However, these attempts at regulation have met with patchy success as a basis for safeguarding apprentices pay. While a Unison study<sup>63</sup> in 2015, based on Freedom of Information (FOI) returns from 233 (around 80% of) NHS Trusts, found variation in employer approaches to apprentice pay, the 'most prevalent approach to starting pay was the use of the statutory minimum rate for apprentices, regardless of the job role' (2016:7). Across a range of apprenticeship frameworks and levels around a third of NHS Trusts were paying at the statutory minimum rate, a finding which prompted union claims of apprentices as 'cheap labour'.

A broader picture of apprentice pay is presented by a 2018 government-commissioned study capturing data through interviews with 9,582 British employers<sup>64</sup>. As highlighted by Table 11 below, in general median and mean pay rates within and across the countries comprising Britain, for level 2/3 apprentices, sat well above the 2018 and 2019 statutory minimum apprentice rate (see Table 12 setting 2018 and 2019 statutory minimum wage rates), although it is noteworthy that mean and median hourly pay rates for level 2/3 apprentices were close to the statutory national minimum wage for those aged 21 and above. The survey also reveals variation in pay by apprentice framework, with median pay in the 'health, social and sports care framework, at £7.59, toward the higher end of the rates paid under the different frameworks. However, the proportion of employers revealed by the survey as still paying below the age-appropriate statutory minimum pay rates remains quite high. A relatively small proportion of employers (12%) report paying the minimum rate for 16-18 years-old apprentices in 2018. Yet for 19-20 (34%), 21-

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<sup>61</sup> This is unlikely to apply now to apprenticeships with their minimum one-year training period.

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.nhsemployers.org/tchandbook/annex-21-to-25/annex-21-arrangements-for-pay-and-banding-of-trainees>

<sup>63</sup> [https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI_report_final.pdf)

<sup>64</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/630070/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2016-report-gb.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630070/apprenticeship-pay-survey-2016-report-gb.pdf)

24 (34%) and 25+ (28%) this figure is close to a third and slightly higher than in a similar survey conducted in 2016.

<b>Table 11: Mean and Median Apprentice Pay Rates<sup>65</sup></b>		
	2018	2018
	Mean (£ per hour)	Median (£ per hour)
<b>Level 2/3:</b>		
England	6.97	7.64
Scotland	7.74	8.04
Wales	7.85	8.19
Great Britain	7.10	7.70
(Health, Social Care & Sport)		(7.59)
<b>Level 4+ :</b>		
England	10.99	12.52
Scotland	10.58	12.09
Wales	10.71	11.83
Great Britain	10.94	12.46

<sup>65</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/857209/aps-2018-19-gb-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/857209/aps-2018-19-gb-report.pdf)

Table 12: Statutory Minimum Wage Rates 2018 and 2019 <sup>66</sup>		
(£ per hour)		
	April 2018	April 2019
25+	7.88	8.21
21-24	7.38	7.70
18-20	5.90	6.15
Under 18	4.20	4.35
Apprentice rate	3.70	3.90

## 4.2 Outcomes

Once attracted to an apprenticeship, the recruitment and retention impact of this form of training is likely to depend on whether the programme of training is completed and with what consequences for career development.

There have been some concerns about the quality of reporting on the **completion of apprenticeships**, particularly at the organisational level. The Unison<sup>67</sup> FOI NHS survey<sup>68</sup> notes that well over a third (39%) of NHS Trusts do not record data on whether the apprentice achieved an accredited qualification. Notwithstanding this poor organisational reporting, the survey notes a completion rate of<sup>69</sup> 84% in health.

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<sup>66</sup> Source *ibid*

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<sup>68</sup> [https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI_report_final.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> On degree programme drop out rates vary by discipline and university. On average they are around 10%, but closer to 5% for health based degrees see <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/which-universities-have-the-highest-first-year-dropout-rates>

A more broadly-based study<sup>70</sup>, drawing on data from Individual Learner Records in 2011-12 suggested a much lower completion rate with some variations between levels and frameworks. In overall terms the proportion of apprenticeship completions within thirty-six months emerged as just over two-thirds (69%). In health and social care, completion was slightly lower (64%) but in the armed forces markedly higher (83%).

In terms of outcomes following completion, attention has already been drawn to the employer and learner apprentice surveys which suggest that around two thirds of apprentices stay with the organisation. Indeed, the Unison FOI survey<sup>71</sup> suggests that this figure may be even higher in the NHS at around three-quarters (74%). It is a finding likely explained in part by the fact that many apprentices are existing employees.

Certainly, attitudinal data suggest that apprentices see their training in positive terms, with likely implications for how they view their current employer and employment. For example, the apprentice learner survey<sup>72</sup> indicates that over two thirds (68%) of existing employees are more satisfied at work after their level 2 or 3 apprenticeship than before they started the apprenticeship. This figure is even higher at 86% for newly recruited apprentices. The apprentice learner survey, 2017, also suggests more tangible outcomes. Exactly half of completing apprentices noted that they were promoted, this figure being somewhat lower in health (40%) and education (33%). With completed apprenticeships often leading to promotion, it is somewhat surprising that a much lower proportion of employees registered receipt of a pay increase. The learner survey reveals that overall, around a third of qualified apprentices (32%) received such an increase, the proportions being closer to a quarter in health (25%) and education (24%).

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<sup>70</sup> An analysis of the duration and achievement of apprenticeships in England M. Bursnall, V. Nafilyan, S. Speckesser Briefing Note 004 September 2017, Centre for vocational education research

<sup>71</sup> [https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/06/NHS-Apprenticeships-UNISON-FoI_report_final.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/659709/Apprenticeships\\_evaluation\\_2017-learners.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659709/Apprenticeships_evaluation_2017-learners.pdf)

More generally, the wage premium associated with completion of an apprenticeship has been a key theme within the research literature. Indeed, a wage premium has often been presented by policy makers and researchers as indicative of the relationship between this form of training and productivity. (Thus, the wage premium received is seen as an employee's share of improved organisational performance). Typically comparing pay movement over time amongst those with and without an apprenticeship (controlling for a variety of personal and organisational characteristics), evidence on the apprentice wage premium varies somewhat by country. An Austrian study<sup>73</sup> suggested a 5% pay premium in the medium term, with French<sup>74</sup> and German<sup>75</sup> studies less able to find a clear pay differential between with and without the qualification. British studies<sup>76</sup> have suggested a positive apprentice wage premium, albeit varying by such factors as apprentice level and framework, age<sup>77</sup> and gender<sup>78</sup>. For example, using data from the Annual Population Survey (APS) for April 2011-March 2012, researchers found completion of a Level 2 Apprenticeship led to a 14.7% increase in wages, relative to staying at Level 1 without completing an

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<sup>73</sup> Festerer, J., J. S. Pischke, R. Winter-Ebmer. (2008). Returns to apprenticeship training in Austria: evidence from failed firms. *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, 110(4): 733- 73.

<sup>74</sup> Bonnal, L., S. Mendes, and C. Sofer (2002). School-to-work transition: apprenticeship versus vocational school in France. *International Journal of Manpower*, 23(5), 426-42

<sup>75</sup> Parey, M. (2016). Vocational Schooling versus Apprenticeship Training. Evidence from Vacancy Data. Mimeo

<sup>76</sup> Dearden, L., S. McIntosh, M. Myck, and A. Vignoles (2002). The Returns to Academic and Vocational Qualifications in Britain. *Bulletin of Economic Research*, 54(3), 249-74.

Bibby, D., F. Buscha, A. Cerqua, D. Thomson, and P. Urwin (2014). Further development in the estimation of labour market returns to qualifications gained in English Further Education using ILR-WPLS Administrative Data. Project Report. Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

[https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/BIS%20Estimation of the labour market returns to qualification s gained in English Further Education - Final - November 2014.pdf](https://www.aoc.co.uk/sites/default/files/BIS%20Estimation%20of%20the%20labour%20market%20returns%20to%20qualification%20s%20gained%20in%20English%20Further%20Education%20-%20Final%20-%20November%202014.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> McIntosh, S. and D. Morris (2018). Labour Market Outcomes of Older Versus Younger Apprentices: A Comparison of Earnings Differentials. Centre for Vocational Education Research, London School of Economics. Discussion Paper 015

<http://cver.lse.ac.uk/textonly/cver/pubs/cverdp016.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> Cavaglia, C., McNally, S. and Ventura, G. (2018) Do Apprenticeships Pay? Evidence for England, Centre for Vocational Education Research <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/obes.12363>

<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/is03.pdf>

Apprenticeship. Completion of a Level 3 Apprenticeship was associated with a wage return of 23.6%, relative to people staying at Level 1 with no Apprenticeship.<sup>79</sup>

### 4.3 Costs

**Cost- benefit analysis.** There has been a considerable interest amongst researchers and commentators in the broader costs and benefits associated with apprenticeships. This interest has ranged from prescriptive guidance<sup>80</sup> on how the balance between costs and benefits might 'best' be struck, to business case modelling and empirical research on the net organisational value of apprenticeships. The research literature on this issue has been uneven, particularly in terms of methodological approach. Studies have varied in terms of the benefits and costs included in the calculation as well as in the timeframe used to assess net outcomes. For example, a relatively recent cost-benefit study, drawing upon data for Switzerland and Germany, evaluated apprenticeships quite narrowly in terms of whether there were net financial gains to the employer from using cheaper apprentices rather than skilled labour.<sup>81</sup>

In Britain the predominant research stream on the net benefits of apprenticeships was a series of studies undertaken by the Institute of Employment Studies, Warwick University, between 1995 and 2012. These studies focused on young apprentices in around a half dozen case study industries, including engineering, construction, retail and social care. This work did not cover apprenticeships in public services aligned with the PRB workforces, although a dedicated health sector apprenticeship study using the same methodology was undertaken in 2012 by the Warwick researchers<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>79</sup> Cavaglia, C., McNally, S. and Ventura, G. (2018) Do Apprenticeships Pay? Evidence for England, Centre for Vocational Education Research <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/obes.12363>

<sup>80</sup> CIPD (2017) Apprenticeships that Work: A Guide for Employers [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/apprenticeships-guide-2017\\_tcm18-10897.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/apprenticeships-guide-2017_tcm18-10897.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> S. Muehleemann and S. Wolter, Return on investment of apprenticeship systems for enterprises: Evidence from cost-benefit analyses, IZA Journal of Labor Policy 2014:3-25.

<sup>82</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/310039/bis-14-789-employer-investment-in-apprenticeships-in-the-health-sector.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/310039/bis-14-789-employer-investment-in-apprenticeships-in-the-health-sector.pdf)



The value of these Warwick studies lies in the use of a common methodology based on a clear and consistently applied set of apprentice costs and benefits. This facilitates a comparison of net costs and benefits across sector. Thus, the researchers presented apprenticeships costs as including<sup>83</sup>:

- wages/allowances paid to the apprentice;
- supervision costs of providing on-the-job training;
- fees for off-the-job training;
- any tool and travel allowances; and
- administration costs.

While the benefits associated with apprenticeships were related to:

- the relative productivity of fully experienced workers trained within the organisation  
*versus* those recruited externally;
- a better organisational fit between those trained in-house and the working practices of the organisation;
- improved labour retention of apprentices trained within the organisation; and
- removal of difficulties recruiting suitable fully experienced workers from the external labour market.

The findings from the Warwick **healthcare study** on the net costs of apprenticeships are worth reviewing in detail. According to Table 13 below, this study points to some variation in net costs by apprenticeship level, type of worker and healthcare work role. For example, the net cost of a Level 3 clinical support worker apprenticeship was almost £2000 higher for a new employee in comparison with an existing one. This likely reflects the higher mentoring and supervisory costs required to support the former through the programme. At the same time, it is clear from Table 13 that there were net financial benefits from three of the healthcare apprenticeships examined - the level 2 clinical support, business administration and engineering

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<sup>83</sup> <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/net-benefit-to-employer-investment-in-apprenticeship-training-ier.pdf>

apprenticeships- suggesting the potential value of this form of training to healthcare employers.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Apprenticeship Level</b>	<b>Net Cost</b>
Clinical Support Role (New)	2	-£850
Clinical Support Role (New)	3	£6350
Clinical Support Role (Existing)	3	£4500
Business Admin	2	-£1800
Business Admin	3	£5400
Engineering	2	-£1500

The net financial benefits accruing to at least some of the apprenticeships in healthcare is placed into even sharper relief when contrasted with the findings from the Warwick cross-sector study. As indicated in Table 14 below, the cross-sector findings suggest apprenticeships invariably generated net costs (see Table 14 below). Indeed, looking across the healthcare and cross sector studies, there is a striking contrast in the costs and benefits associated with the delivery of the same level 2 business administration apprenticeship. In health (see Table 13), there was a net £1800 saving, the broader industry study revealing a net £4500 cost (see Table 14). It is a finding which points to healthcare as perhaps better prepared and or able than other sectors to deliver apprenticeships in a cost-efficient way.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/net-benefit-to-employer-investment-in-apprenticeship-training-ier.pdf>

**Table 14: Net Cost of Apprenticeships<sup>85</sup>**

Sector	Apprenticeship		
	Level 2	Level 3	Level 2 and 3 combined
Engineering			£39,600
Construction			£26,000
Retailing	£3,000		
Hospitality	£5,050		
Transport and Logistics	£4,550		
Financial Services	£7,250	£11,400	
Business Administration	£4,550		
Social Care	£3,800		

**Note:** Data have been rounded to nearest £50.

These data on the net costs of apprenticeships do need to be treated with some caution. The organisations involved in these studies, particularly in health, were paying apprentice salaries well above the statutory minimum apprentice rate, reflecting ‘good practice’ but inflating costs. More fundamentally, the Warwick methodology did not appear to include the backfill costs associated with apprenticeships, a significant omission. Indeed, these Warwick studies preceded the most recent reforms to the apprenticeship model in England, likely to have a significant impact of the net costs of apprenticeships. Thus, the new 12-month minimum period for apprenticeship along with the requirement for 20% of working time on the off-the-job learning, are likely to increase backfill costs. In the case of higher or degree apprenticeship such costs are likely to especially significant (see above regarding nurses). These Warwick studies also related to apprenticeship frameworks rather than standards. Finally, the Warwick studies pre-date the major reform of the financial arrangements underpinning apprenticeships, with the introduction of the levy likely to impact employer cost benefit calculations.

<sup>85</sup> <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/net-benefit-to-employer-investment-in-apprenticeship-training-ier.pdf>

**The levy.** With the **apprenticeship levy** introduced just three years ago, evidence on its use and consequences for employer decision-making is still limited. There have, however, been a few studies, suggesting a positive employer response to the levy, not least in terms of its impact on the recruitment and retention of staff. Thus, an Open University<sup>86</sup> 2018 survey of 750 senior business leaders indicated that almost two thirds (65%) felt the apprenticeship levy would 'help organisations attract and retain talent'. More generally these leaders felt the levy would increase apprenticeship take-up: over 40% of respondents in levy paying organisations saw the levy as increasing apprenticeships amongst existing employees and over a third saw them increasing newly recruited apprentices.<sup>87</sup> A similar survey by the CIPD<sup>88</sup> of around 1,000 business leaders echoed these results, with 40% of leaders from levy paying organisations in the public sector indicating that they would be developing a new apprenticeship programme in the wake of the levy, and around 20% expanding their existing programme.

However, such general findings again need to be treated with some care. As noted above, the initial impact of the levy seems to have been to depress rather than increase apprenticeship starts. Indeed, the Open University revealed an underlying scepticism about the levy, seen by 40% of business leaders as 'little more than a tax on employers'. Such a view might well reflect the current capacity of organisations to use their levy monies. Calculating that the levy had generated a pot of £1.8 billion, the Open University noted that only £108 million (8%) had so far been withdrawn<sup>89</sup>. Moreover, the CIPD survey suggested that an increase in apprenticeship training, funded through the levy might well lead to a reduction of other forms training: over a

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.open.ac.uk/business/sites/www.open.ac.uk.business/files/files/apprenticeship-levy-one-year-on.pdf>

<sup>87</sup> Although as noted above this yet to feed through to apprenticeship starts

<sup>88</sup> CIPD 2018 Assessing the early impact of the apprentice levy - employer perspective  
[https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/assessing-the-early-impact-of-the-apprenticeship-levy\\_2017-employers-perspective\\_tcm18-36580.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/assessing-the-early-impact-of-the-apprenticeship-levy_2017-employers-perspective_tcm18-36580.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> A figure likely drawn from National Audit Office 2019 report on apprenticeship programmes  
<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/The-apprenticeships-programme.pdf>

quarter (26%) of leaders in the public sector felt this was likely to be the case. In such circumstances the levy would have a 'deadweight effect', perhaps holding back the pursuit of more efficient and effective organisational approaches to vocational training. In short, while employers may have a positive view on the levy and its consequences for apprenticeship programmes, this is yet to be fully reflected in practice, and particularly in the use of levy monies. Whether practice changes, and organisations draw more heavily on levy funds in the future as new systems and requirements settle down, is an open question.

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## 5. RESEARCH APPROACH

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Drawing upon the general discussion above on context, uptake and evidence, this section sets out our research approach to an evaluation of apprenticeships across the PRB workforces, with a specific focus on how they relate to issues of recruitment and retention. As noted in the preceding sections of this report, recent reforms to the apprenticeship model, particularly in England, have significant implications for workforce management and development in the public sector. This is reflected not only in most public sector employers being required to pay the apprenticeship levy, but in the setting of a challenging apprenticeship target, regularly monitored and reviewed. Moreover along with employers in the rest of economy, the public sector has been required to recast its approach to apprenticeships, replacing a frameworks model revolving around the acquisition of a narrow set of qualifications often disconnected from the requirements of a particular job role, with a trailblazer standards model, more sharply focused on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to undertake a specific occupation. At the same time, the substantive consequences of these reforms, particularly for recruitment and retention across the PRB workforces, remain uncertain and worthy of more detail analysis.

In the absence of previous studies examining the link between apprenticeships and recruitment and retention across the main PRB workforces, our research questions are basic and broadly framed as follows:

- **Given recent reform to the apprenticeship model, are public sector employers currently using this form of training to address staff recruitment and retention issues?**

If so:

- **How are public sector employers using apprenticeships to deal with recruitment and retention issues**

And:

- **What challenges do they face in doing so?**

In pursuing these research questions, a three-part research methodology was adopted<sup>90</sup>:

- **'Expert' interviews.** Covering national policy makers and practitioners, these interviews were designed to explore different stakeholder perspectives on whether, how and with what consequences apprenticeships were being used to address labour supply issues across the PRB workforces. A total of 14 national representatives from the following organisation were interviewed<sup>91</sup>:
  - **School Teachers' PRB:**
    - National Education Union (1)
  - **Armed Forces' PRB:**
    - Ministry of Defence (2)
  - **Police Remuneration Review Body:**
    - College of Policing (2)
  - **NHS PRB:**
    - Health Education England (HEE) (4)
    - Skills for Health (1)
    - NHS Employers (2)
    - Royal College of Nursing (1)
    - Unison (1)

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<sup>90</sup> The research was approved by the King's College Ethics Committee: project reference number MRA-19/20 14681

<sup>91</sup> Each interview lasted around an hour. There was a rough balance between those conducted face to face and on the phone.

- NHS Apprentice Leads Survey.** As the largest of the PRBs (both in terms of pay bill costs and workforce size) and the most likely to be affected by recent changes to the apprenticeship model, a survey was conducted on this form of training in NHS England. Designed to generate data on all three of our research questions, the survey covered apprentice leads in the 250 or so Trusts in NHS England. It was administered in the first two weeks of January 2020. The online survey link was circulated by HEE’s seven regional apprenticeship<sup>92</sup> relationship managers to their own apprenticeship lead networks. The survey received 155 ‘hits’ with 116 usable survey responses. This represent a decent response rate of close to half (46%) of NHS Trusts<sup>93</sup>. It can be seen from Table 15 below, that there was a good spread of responses by HEE region. Recognising that the number of Trusts varies by region, the response rates from the South West, London and Midlands were particularly high, with Trusts from the north west and south east likely under-represented in the survey.

**Table 15: Regional Distribution on Responses to NHS Apprentice Leads Survey**

	%	Count
East of England	12.07%	14
London	19.83%	23
Midlands	18.97%	22
North East/Yorkshire	13.79%	16
North West	7.76%	9
South East	3.45%	4
South West	24.14%	28
Total	100%	116

<sup>92</sup> With thanks to the HEE in helping administer the survey

<sup>93</sup> The NHS Confederation notes 251 Trusts in NHS England <https://www.nhsconfed.org/resources/key-statistics-on-the-nhs>



- **Case Studies.** Building on the expert interviews and NHS apprentice leads survey, the final element of the research was a series of case studies. The purpose of these cases was to develop a more in-depth, context specific understanding of how and with what effect apprenticeships were being used. From the outset the intention was to draw such cases from different parts of the public sector, with their final selection dependent on where light might best be shed on the use of apprenticeship to address recruitment and retention issues. In the event, it was decided to focus on two cases from NHS England and four from the police service, a choice prompted not least by analysis of our expert interviews which suggested that apprenticeships had assumed particular importance to workforce management in these parts of the public sector.

Table 16 below presents the profile of the selected cases and lists those interviewed in undertaking the fieldwork. As can be seen, the cases were drawn from different parts of the country. Three of the four police cases were similar in terms of workforce size, with around 5,000 employees in total. The fourth police force chosen was one of the largest in the country. Both NHS cases were acute Trusts, with one slightly larger in workforce terms than others, and located in different types of catchment areas: one a highly urban area, the other less so, and, as consequence, with slightly different labour market pressures.

<b>Table 16: Case Study Profiles</b>			
<b>Case</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Workforce Size (Headcount)</b>	<b>Interviews</b>
<b><i>Trust 1 (T1)</i></b>	London	9,300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apprenticeship Programme Manager</li> <li>- Head of Nurse Education</li> <li>- Development Nurse Bands 1-4</li> </ul>
<b><i>Trust 2 (T2)</i></b>	South	11,600	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apprenticeship Lead</li> <li>- Head of Wider Healthcare Teams Education</li> </ul>

<b>Police Force 1 (PF1)</b>	South	5,000 (3,000 officers plus 2,000 staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Director of development &amp; Police Qualification Education Framework (PEQF) Strategic Lead</li> <li>- Head of Learning and Professional Development.</li> </ul>
<b>Police Force 2 (PF 2)</b>	South	45,000 (31,000 police officer plus 14,000 staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head of Education</li> </ul>
<b>Police Force 3 (PF 3)</b>	North	5,000 (3,000 police officers plus 2,000 police staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Co Ordinator for the Implementation of PEQF</li> </ul>
<b>Police 4 (PF4)</b>	North	5,400 (2,900 police Officers and 2,500 staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspector for Core Learning Delivery</li> </ul>

Integrating these different data sources- expert interviews, the survey and the case study- the next section of the report, presenting the findings, is organised around the different PRB workforces:

- Primary and Secondary School Teachers
- The Armed Forces
- The Police and
- NHS Workers

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## 6. FINDINGS

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### 6.1 Primary and Secondary School Teachers

The potential use and value of apprenticeships to recruit and retain teachers has been flagged-up by national policy makers in education. For example, the Department for Education *Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy*<sup>94</sup> references apprenticeships as a possible support for the development of ‘specialist’ teaching careers. As the strategy notes: ‘We will unlock the potential for significant investment in career pathways by making it possible for schools to spend their apprenticeship levy to enable their staff to develop and take on these distinct roles.’ (p26)<sup>95</sup>

However, apprenticeship arrangements emerging in teaching have remained fractured and relatively piecemeal. A level 3 teaching assistant (TA) apprenticeship has been developed, along with a level 6, year-long post graduate teacher apprenticeship. However, these arrangements leave a gap, with the absence of a three-year degree apprenticeship in teaching to link the level 3 and 6 apprenticeships and denying the sector, and particularly TAs, a workplace learning route into the profession, at undergraduate level.

Even without such a route, there was some initial enthusiasm for the level 6 graduate apprenticeship as means of dealing with recruitment pressures in teaching, providing the basis for a grow-your own approach<sup>96</sup>. As a school Trust chief executive noted:

This programme (the level 6 teacher apprenticeship) has the capacity to transform teacher supply. If every school in England had one postgraduate teaching apprenticeship that could train thousands of

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<sup>94</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/786856/DFE\\_Teacher\\_Retention\\_Strategy\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/786856/DFE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_Report.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Precisely how apprenticeships might support the development of specialist teachers roles is left stated in the strategy

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/careers/2019/mar/05/schools-to-grow-their-own-teachers-with-pgce-apprenticeships>

teachers per year. If each school had two apprentices, then we would have enough new teachers to meet demand comfortably.<sup>97</sup>

This enthusiasm has proved somewhat premature. The Level 6 apprenticeship has been available through schools<sup>98</sup>, broker organisations<sup>99</sup> or higher education providers<sup>100</sup>. Nonetheless, developing and securing buy-in to it from employers and potential trainees has been difficult. The take-up of the level 6 post graduate teacher apprenticeship has been low. It was hoped to appoint 1000 post graduate teacher apprentices: at the start of the academic year 2018, there were only 94<sup>101</sup>. This failure of apprenticeships in teaching to gain traction perhaps accounts for the fact that recent School Teacher's Review Body reports (2018-19 and 2019-20) make no mention of them.

The difficulties with apprenticeships in teaching have been threefold:

- In a technical sense, the problems associated with the development of an undergraduate teacher apprenticeship<sup>102</sup> relate to the nature of teacher training, and especially the weight placed on Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). Essential to becoming a teacher, QTS is acquired through different qualifications: an undergraduate degree or post graduate qualification. With apprenticeship standards modelled on preparation for the performance of a specific job role, the different pathways to Qualified Teacher Status are difficult for the system to handle. As McInerney<sup>103</sup> has noted:

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<sup>97</sup> <https://www.tes.com/news/if-schools-get-behind-new-teaching-apprenticeship-we-can-resolve-teacher-supply-crisis>

<sup>98</sup> For example: <https://www.kingsmead.hackney.sch.uk/page/?title=Post%2Dgraduate+Teacher+Apprenticeship&pid=35>

<sup>99</sup> For example: <https://www.teachingapprenticeships.com/teaching-apprenticeships/>

<sup>100</sup> For example: <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/supporting-business/apprenticeships/teacher-apprenticeship/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.tes.com/news/teacher-apprentice-scheme-only-hits-10-target>. It has proved difficult to acquire more recent figures.

<sup>102</sup> 31.10.18 Times Educational Supplement, S. Exley Non-graduate teaching apprenticeship shelved

<sup>103</sup> <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/why-teaching-apprenticeships-are-a-mess-and-how-to-solve-it/>

‘What a technical route cannot have is an undergraduate apprenticeship which leads to the same job outcome as a postgraduate apprenticeship ... (The government) wants to put teaching assistants without degrees onto undergraduate-level apprenticeships and, at the end, give them QTS. But it *also* wants to create a postgraduate apprenticeship route which *also* grants QTS. This is a no go.’

This is not the place to explore whether and how these difficulties might be overcome.<sup>104</sup> Suffice to say that at present attempts to address them do not appear to be prominent amongst policy makers and practitioners. As our NEU interviewee noted:

We haven't got teaching apprenticeships on our agenda at the moment (Teaching\_Interviewee1)

- The low take-up of the graduate apprenticeship is explained by the range of other entry routes into teaching such as the high profile Teach First<sup>105</sup> or more prosaically the university-based Post Graduate Certificate in Education programmes. As one of our interviewees stressed:

There are so many routes into teaching: an apprenticeship isn't the first things that comes to mind. (Teaching\_Interviewee1)

These alternative routes are perhaps more likely to be attractive to potential teacher trainees than one labelled as an ‘apprenticeship’. Traditionally, this is not the most ‘natural’ stepping-stone for graduate students seeking to move into a profession. As our interviewee continued:

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<sup>104</sup> A not dissimilar challenge has arisen but been addressed in the case of the police constable role, with different entry routes developed including the degree apprentice, the degree holder and pre-join degree (see below).

<sup>105</sup> <https://www.teachfirst.org.uk/>

As a graduate, an apprenticeship is not the first qualification that would come to mind. A graduate apprenticeship doesn't sit comfortably in people's minds. (National Teaching\_Interviewee1)

- In a broader sense, the patchy interest in apprenticeships displayed by some stakeholders is indicative of the limited value attached to apprenticeships as a means of dealing with recruitment and retention pressures in teaching. As Association of Teachers and Lecturers (2016) has noted:

Any presumption that this teacher apprenticeship route will plug skills gaps, particularly in areas like Maths and Science should be avoided, as evidence suggests that this gap results, not from the lack of supply of entrants with the relevant skills to the labour market but because of higher incentives, in terms of pay rewards or prospects, in other sectors.<sup>106</sup>

Notwithstanding these challenges and concerns, the impact of apprenticeship reforms on the management of the teaching workforce should not be completely discounted. The introduction of the apprenticeship levy, for example, has financial implications for many schools, not least their ability to pay staff. These implications will vary by school type and status<sup>107</sup>. Community schools are likely to pay the levy. With the local authority as the employer, the £3 million pay bill threshold is typically met, with payment of the levy representing a new and additional cost to the school. Indeed, with the local authority top-slicing and controlling the levy funds, the capacity of schools to readily access and use their levy monies becomes an issue of interest, if such funds are not to simply be written-off by them.

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<sup>106</sup> **Approving the development of new Teacher Apprenticeship Standards, October 2016 Association of Teachers and Lecturers** <https://www.atl.org.uk/Images/ATL-Response-to-Teacher-Apprenticeship-Proposal-Consultation.pdf>

<sup>107</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/720362/A\\_guide\\_to\\_apprenticeships\\_for\\_the\\_school\\_workforce.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720362/A_guide_to_apprenticeships_for_the_school_workforce.pdf)

In academy trust schools, where the trust is the employer, payment of the apprenticeship levy will depend on whether trust size and pay bill costs meet the levy threshold. Around two-thirds of secondary schools and a quarter of primary schools are now academy trusts. Clearly, the emergence of multi-academy trusts (MATs), increases the likelihood of such schools reaching the threshold and paying the levy. Certainly, most trusts, around sixty per cent of trusts, comprise a single school, but this does mean that most academy schools are in MATs.<sup>108</sup>

## 6.2 The Armed Forces

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) proclaims itself ‘the largest provider of apprenticeships in the United Kingdom’<sup>109</sup>. Despite, or maybe because the MOD positions itself in these terms, neither of the last two pay review reports (2018-19<sup>110</sup> and 2019-20<sup>111</sup>) has made hardly any mention of apprenticeships. This is not to detract from the attention drawn in both reports to the relationship between training and possible skill shortages in parts of the armed forces. The 2018 report stated:

Our view remains that it is of critical importance that investment in training capacity for key skill shortages is recognised by MOD as an essential element of any long-term solution. (p88)

This view was echoed in the 2019 report, which notes that:

In next year’s evidence on any key skill shortages, we would welcome MOD’s analysis of how a training pipeline should best operate, especially in addressing long-term Manning and Operational Pinch Points<sup>112</sup> in categories such as pilots. (pxix)

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<sup>108</sup> M. Hutchings and B. Francis (2018) The Impact of Academy Chains on low income pupils, London; Sutton Trust

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-opportunities-in-the-ministry-of-defence>

<sup>110</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/728367/CCS207\\_CCS0318277118-1\\_AFPRB\\_2018\\_Book\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/728367/CCS207_CCS0318277118-1_AFPRB_2018_Book_Accessible.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/819468/AFPRB\\_48th\\_Report\\_2019\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819468/AFPRB_48th_Report_2019_Web_Accessible.pdf)

<sup>112</sup> Pinch points are defined by the armed forces as insufficient trained strength to perform operational tasks

Ahead of this evidence, there is value in exploring the ‘hinterland’ of apprenticeships in the armed forces, in particular their use in managing the recruitment and retention of military personnel.

### 6.2.1 Context

Apprenticeship programmes are separately managed by the three branches of the armed forces - the army, the navy and the air force. There is, however, an apprenticeship team overseeing policy developments and liaising with key national institutions such as the Department for Education and the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education. This team sits in the Training, Education and Skills, Recruitment, Re-settlement Section of the MOD. At this level, two main insider narratives emerged on the nature of apprenticeships and the contribution they made to the armed forces: the first centred on how apprenticeships were deeply **embedded** in the armed forces; the second related to apprenticeships as a **‘good news story’** for the armed forces.

**Embedded:** Essential to the operational effectiveness of the armed forces is the preparation of military personnel for service, and apprenticeships have long been a key vehicle for achieving this requirement. As the Armed Forces Annual Report and Account 2018-19 notes:

Defence needs a skilled, sustainable, capable workforce trained and equipped to defend the nation’s interests; the MOD apprenticeship programme is intrinsic to the achievement of this aim. (p23)<sup>113</sup>

Indicative of the long history of apprenticeships in the armed forces, one of our interviewees light heartedly recounted that ‘Nelson had been an apprentice’, while making references to apprenticeships as ‘being part of the armed forces DNA’:

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<sup>113</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/831728/MOD\\_Annual\\_Report\\_and\\_Accounts\\_2018-19\\_WEB\\_ERRATUM\\_CORRECTED\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831728/MOD_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2018-19_WEB_ERRATUM_CORRECTED_.pdf)



We rely on vocational and technical training and have done so for a very long time. Vocational and technical training are key to what the armed forces do. (Army\_Interviewee1)

Associated with different roles or trades in the armed forces, apprenticeships are routinely undertaken by recruits on taking up their posts. This has led to apprenticeships becoming intrinsic to the organisational culture, assumed and accepted as the principal source of training for new personnel. More tangibly this has ensured the development of infrastructure and systems to deliver apprenticeships in an efficient and effective way. Indeed, the armed forces personnel are not only major consumers of apprenticeships, but institutionally the armed forces are also a major accredited provider of apprenticeship training to meet this demand.

**Good news:** The capacity to deliver apprenticeships at scale, especially to young recruits, has attracted the ‘good news’ label and encouraged calls to ‘celebrate’ the armed forces’ activities in this respect:

We have a good pass rate. We train people in skills to national standards and that has got to be good. (Army\_Interviewee2)

The public policy emphasis on apprenticeships has given added resonance to this positive story. The Armed Forces Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19 proclaims:

We achieved the target of enrolling 50,000 apprentices in the MOD, 16 months ahead of the target date (p7)<sup>114</sup>:

Placing this figure in context, there are just over 130,000 members of the armed forces (plus around 60,000 reservists and 59,000 civilian staff). In any given year there will be between 11-13,000 apprenticeship starts (dependent on recruitment levels) and at any one time, there will be 20,000 individuals on-programme. Indeed, it is claimed that:

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<sup>114</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/869612/20200227\\_CH\\_UK\\_Defence\\_in\\_Numbers\\_2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869612/20200227_CH_UK_Defence_in_Numbers_2019.pdf) A figure which includes civilian workers as well as military personnel

Over 90% of our non-commissioned military recruits are offered an apprenticeship on the back of their trade training (p5)<sup>115</sup>.

### 6.2.2 Arrangements

As implied, apprenticeships in the armed forces are principally focused on new recruits. The opportunity to undertake an apprenticeship is central to the recruitment offer and explicitly stated in the forces' recruitment literature. There is a basic Level 2 Her Majesty's Force Apprenticeship available to marines in the navy and infantry personnel in the army. However, the armed forces draw upon over ninety different apprenticeship standards from a range of apprenticeship routes. An impression of the diversity standards available is provided by the current army recruitment literature which lists the following available apprenticeship options:<sup>116</sup>:

- Public services and health
- Engineering
- Telecommunications
- Animal care
- I.T.
- Logistics
- Construction
- Business administration

Apprenticeship opportunities likely attract recruits to the armed forces, although our interviewees admitted that they did not have firm evidence to support this impression. However, the scope for recruits to acquire an apprenticeship while on a 'normal armed forces salary' rather than on the minimum apprenticeship pay rate,

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<sup>115</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/847640/1\\_October\\_2019\\_SPS.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/847640/1_October_2019_SPS.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> <https://apply.army.mod.uk/what-we-offer/regular-soldier/skills>

with guaranteed employment in the armed forces on completion, has likely added to the attraction of this employment proposition:

Apprenticeship may be the reason you join, because you know you will do an apprenticeship as part of your journey and we won't kick you out at the end of that. They won't be on national apprenticeship wage; they will get the wage of a sailor, a soldier or an air man. At the end they stay, and we use them in those roles. (Army\_Interviewee2)

You get a national qualification; you are getting it in work; getting properly paid. That apprenticeship is enabling you to do your operational role, and eventually if you leave the armed forces having done an apprenticeship you might go on to do a higher level one. (Army\_Interviewee1)

### 6.2.3 Issues

The armed forces have distinctive organisational features affecting their approach to apprenticeships. Occupationally diverse and geographically dispersed, the armed forces must constantly be in a state of operational readiness. They are not unusual in having a developed and sharply defined hierarchical structure but are perhaps unique in terms of disciplinary rigour underpinning it. In part, these features have facilitated approaches to apprenticeships:

We've had it easier than others. We have always trained people; the system was set up to support the apprenticeship programme. (Army\_Interviewee1)

At the same time, these organisational features have created challenges, apparent in examining the armed forces' response to recent reforms in the apprenticeship model.

**Apprenticeship levy.** The three branches of the armed forces pay their levy into a single apprenticeship pot<sup>117</sup>. With take-up of apprenticeships so high, the forces have not faced problems in fully spending it. Indeed, additional funding is typically required to meet the armed forces' training requirements:

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<sup>117</sup> The MOD civil service has its own pot.

We grow our own trained workforce. Apprenticeships were there but the levy makes you focus on that because you pay a lot in, so you use it.

(Army\_Interviewee1)

**Frameworks to standards.** The shift from apprenticeship frameworks to standards was welcomed by the armed forces. The forces have been widely represented on the employer trailblazer groups convened to draft the new apprenticeship standards, providing them with broad influence over the development of apprenticeship standards. As noted in the Armed Forces Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19:

Fully supportive of the Government's Apprenticeship Reform aimed at improving the quality of apprenticeships for all, the MOD is involved in Trailblazer groups which are developing the new Apprenticeship Standards. Defence develops these standards in collaboration with employers from different sectors of industry, so the standards will prepare Defence personnel for work both inside and outside of MOD. (p64)<sup>118</sup>

The establishment of national training standards has also been seen to support the portability of the apprenticeships particularly for those seeking a 'second career' on leaving the armed forces:

We want to create apprenticeships that are transferable and recognised elsewhere. We want them to be linked to an occupation, so they are useful for people when they leave. (Army\_Interviewee1)

However, conversion of apprenticeship frameworks to standards by the deadline date of 1 August 2020 has proved a challenge for the armed forces. It has been no small task to find apprenticeship standards that align with the range of job requirements to be found in the armed forces:

The big effort at the moment is to convert frameworks to standards given the sheer numbers of apprenticeships we do. There may be some areas where

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<sup>118</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/831728/MOD\\_Annual\\_Report\\_and\\_Accounts\\_2018-19\\_WEB\\_ERRATUM\\_CORRECTED\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/831728/MOD_Annual_Report_and_Accounts_2018-19_WEB_ERRATUM_CORRECTED_.pdf)

we had a framework and there might not be a standard that matches.  
(Army\_Interviewee1)

Training needs to fit job requirements and if a standard doesn't fit a job requirement we have to find another standard. (Army\_Interviewee2)

**End Point of Assessment (EPA):** Meeting the requirements for EPA has created a twofold challenge in the armed forces: finding assessors with the technical expertise to assess specialist military roles; and, in a more practical sense, ensuring that assessors can reach at times geographically and logistically inaccessible workplaces:

(EPA) has to be independent so you have to contract it: if you have over 90 standards that is lot of contracting work to do. Because of location, security or say if you are on a submarine, it is quite hard to actually do the EPA. Having to work with the Institute for Apprenticeships (and Technical Education) to ensure we meet their independence criteria, but we may need some adjustment. We have some fairly unique circumstances. Sometimes we don't have the experts sometimes in the location where they are.  
(Army\_Interviewee2)

**Degree apprenticeships:** Apprenticeships in the armed forces are mainly at levels 2 and 3. With the exception of a small leadership and management pilot, degree level apprenticeships have not yet taken off in the armed forces. Indeed, more generally, this is indicative of the limited use made of apprenticeships as a vehicle for career progression in the armed forces. There has been sensitivity to this limitation, with a suggestion of future work on developing such career routes:

Apart from the degree apprenticeship pilot people can't say 'I want to go and do an apprenticeship in say leadership'. We don't have that flexibility at the moment, that will come but we're not in that space at the moment.  
[Army\_Interviewee2]

**Learning time and supervision:** Coping with apprenticeship time-off for training has not emerged as a particular problem in the armed forces. Indeed, it cannot be allowed to become a problem given the basic organisational need to ensure a fully staffed military frontline. The minimum time required for off-the-job learning has

principally met by providing this training on bloc, upfront and at the outset of the apprenticeship.

Similarly, the armed forces did not appear to face the challenge of supervisory capacity to look after and mentor apprentices. The intrinsically inclusive, supportive and disciplined nature of the armed forces facilitates the management of this aspect of apprenticeships:

Young sailors, soldiers and airmen [and airwomen] have a whole process of supervision for their training for apprenticeship. You have a chain of command. I am not sure anything more has been added by apprenticeships because it (supervision) is part of the military system. (Army\_Interviewee1)

### **6.3 The Police**

The Police Remuneration Review Body (PRRB) has explicitly engaged with apprenticeships. In 2018 and 2019 it was asked by the government to assess the NPCC's pay proposals for police constable degree apprentices (PCDA). In 2018-19, the PRRB expressed concerns that the proposals were less developed than had been expected and that there was continuing uncertainty about how different entry routes into the police constable role would fit together and the timescales for delivery. In light of these concerns, the PRRB recommended the introduction of interim arrangements for the starting pay and progression of apprentice constables. Forces were given flexibility to set the starting pay at a level between £18,000 and pay point 1 of the existing police constable scale, and following twelve months, apprentices should move to the next pay point on the existing police constable scale (point 1 or 2), subject to satisfactory completion of Year 1 of their apprenticeship. However, ongoing uncertainty about entry routes and their consequences for pay determination remain, with the 2019 PRRB report recommending a continuation of the interim pay progression arrangements. PRRB engagement with apprenticeship pay only touches, however, on one aspect of a form of training with major implications for the recruitment of police constables (and to a lesser extent Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), who are not covered the PRRB remit but still might seek to become police constables).

### 6.3.1 Context

The centrality of apprenticeships to workforce management in the 43 police forces of England and Wales is relatively new and still unfolding. It can be traced to the interface between three recent developments, producing a complex dynamic on how apprenticeships are viewed and used in policing:

- Workforce transformation
- The implementation of the apprenticeship levy.
- The government proposed 20,000 uplift in police officers.

**Workforce transformation:** The emergence of apprenticeships within the police service can be placed in the broader context of a new strategic approach to policing in England and Wales, as set out in Policing Vision 2025. Published in late 2016 by the NPCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, this document called for and set out a new approach to policing, sensitive to major challenges facing the service associated with, for example, terrorism, cybercrime and organised crime.<sup>119</sup> An efficient and effective response to these challenges was seen, *inter alia*, to rest on the development of more a professional policing workforce:

The (police) service provided is critically reliant on the quality of its people. It needs to be delivered by a professional workforce equipped with the skills and capabilities necessary for policing in the 21st century (p8).

Policing Vision 2025 does not make specific mention of apprenticeships, but they figured prominently in the ‘workforce transformation’ plans<sup>120</sup> subsequently published by the College of Policing, the regulatory body for the police workforce, in early 2018. Broadly drawn and setting out various workstreams cutting across the whole of the police workforce, apprenticeships assumed significance for two groups of workers:

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<sup>119</sup> <https://www.npcc.police.uk/documents/Policing%20Vision.pdf>

<sup>120</sup> [https://www.college.police.uk/About/Workforce-Transformation/Documents/COP\\_workforce\\_transformation.pdf](https://www.college.police.uk/About/Workforce-Transformation/Documents/COP_workforce_transformation.pdf)

PCSO and Police Constables. For PCSOs, an entry level 4 apprenticeship standard was developed and has now been approved. For police constables three entry routes were proposed and then adopted as part of the new Policing Education Qualifications Framework (PEQF):

- A three-year level 6 **police constable degree apprenticeship** (PCDA) (now approved)
- **Degree-holder entry** (DHE): open to all those with a degree and followed by a two-year work-based graduate level programme in-service.<sup>121</sup>
- **A pre-join degree** (PJD). open to those acquiring a three-year specialist undergraduate degree in professional policing, followed by a short on-the-job training programme in service.

The scale of the change envisaged with the introduction of these entry routes can be gauged by reference to the arrangements they replaced. Thus, the new standard approach as set out in the PEQF was to succeed a model of recruitment allowing police forces considerable discretion in approaches to the recruitment of police constables. As a consequence, a variety of lightly regulated approaches across forces in England and Wales had emerged over the years. In general, however, the pre- PEQF entry requirement for police constables was based on a level 3 qualification (equivalent to an 'A' level), typically followed by a two-year in-service Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). Under the PEQF entry to the role would rest on the achievement of a level 6, degree level qualification. In 'one fell swoop', therefore, the police constable role was shifting from an occupation founded on 'A' level qualifications to a graduate profession.

More generally, the use of apprenticeships as an important vehicle for developing the workforce was relatively novel within police forces<sup>122</sup>. Our four case study forces all indicated that their previous use of apprenticeships had been limited. In effect apprenticeships were being developed in the police service almost from a 'standing start':

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<sup>121</sup> A similar entry route had previously existed as the graduate conversion programme

<sup>122</sup> There had been attempts to pilot police apprenticeships in Wales, but these had not been taken up more widely.



If you go back two years or so there were very few forces that were utilising apprenticeships in any sort of volume. (National-PoliceInterviewee\_1)

Apprenticeships were not really around in the police before the PEQF. (PF1\_interviewee)

**The apprenticeship levy:** The introduction of the apprenticeship levy has overlapped with and to some extent come to shape the implementation of the new police constable entry routes. Generally, the levy was seen by our interviewees as a 'happy coincidence'. All police forces qualified for payment of the levy, and although it was drawn from the organisation's own funds, the levy has become an 'ear marked' and dedicated source of financial support for the training for the PCDA:

With the inevitable additional learning and assessment that was coming in anyway, one major factor was the levy pot and the fact (that police forces) could draw down some of this funding. It (the PCDA) became a very attractive option. (National-PoliceInterviewee\_1)

Certainly, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy has shaped behaviours, for example, placing pressures on forces to use their levy money:

We were looking at apprenticeships long before the levy. The levy came along and overtook our development. It made things difficult in that we had to up the pace a little. (PF2\_Interviewee2)

You can't ignore the fact the government and its policy around the levy is encouraging forces to engage with apprenticeships. Every force is a levy paying organisation. They want to get as much of that money back in the door as they can and the only way to do that is apprenticeships. (National-PoliceInterviewee\_1)

Indeed, the levy affected priorities, privileging the development of PCDA entry route as a means of ensuring levy spend:

(The PCDA) was a way forces could train police officers and draw from the levy rather than losing it after 24 months. So we built the apprenticeship programme first, and after that we'll look at graduate entry. (National-PoliceInterviewee\_2)

The introduction of the levy also prompted the use of other apprenticeships: generic apprenticeships for example, in business administration, as well as more sector-specific ones such as dog handler. However, in the context of the PEQF, there was a concern to ensure that the levy was not too depleted by these other apprenticeships, weakening the forces' capacity to fund the PCDA:

With those background government policies what a force didn't want to do is have 100 business administration people at level 2 or apprenticeship level, a smattering of project managers on apprenticeships, all supporting the dwindling line of frontline police officers. So it was critical we had a mechanism, to access apprenticeship funding that delivered people into roles that we needed at the frontline. (PF2\_Interviewee1)

**Police Officer Uplift.** The policy commitment to uplift police numbers by 20,000 has presented police forces with a dilemma. With the need to recruit more police constables onto a degree level programme, the apprenticeship route has become a key route into the role. However, the very use of this route from a 'standing start', at speed and scale, has created new challenges for forces, not least the need to develop new supportive apprenticeship infrastructure and a new learning culture:

The bit where suddenly added complexity came in, was the uplift\_numbers: the 20,000. So we went from a projection of 250 people coming into the organisation next year, to 500 and on top of that we have a new educational scheme to bring them in on that gives us some challenges. (PF2\_Interviewee1)

Indicative of the pressures created by the uplift was the need for police forces to generate a new recruitment pool. The chair of the National Police Chiefs' Council has suggested that with one in ten applicants successful, half a million new applications would be needed to achieve the 20,000 uplift.<sup>123</sup> (See pp80-84 below for a more detailed discussion of these and other challenges).

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<sup>123</sup> <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/boris-johnson-police-officers-recruit-martin-hewitt-a9099706.html>

### 6.3.2 Arrangements

Against this backdrop, the introduction of apprenticeships into the policing workforce, and particularly the PCDA, can be considered along the following dimensions:

- **Formal planning:** This first dimension relates to the degree of formal or strategic planning underpinning police force approaches to apprenticeships. In general terms, police forces had not always found it easy to adopt a strategic approach to (workforce) issues:

Historically police forces have not been the best at planning through no fault of their own, mainly because they have never known what budget they'll be working with. (National Police\_Interviewee1)

However, apprenticeship training represented a significant financial investment by individual police forces,<sup>124</sup> with, our four case study police forces keen to develop the necessary supportive infrastructure. One force (PF3) had established an apprenticeship management group chaired by a senior member of staff. This group reported to the PEQF board reporting directly to the force's Chief Officers Board. Another force (PF4) had similarly set-up an apprenticeship steering group involving staff from workforce planning, finance and the apprenticeship delivery team.

More substantively, a strategic approach was pressed on police forces by their need to procure accredited training for the PCDA from higher education institutions (HEI), sometimes for the first time and for extended periods of time:

The new routes are forcing them (police forces) to plan over much longer periods of time not least because they are having to sign contracts with HEIs that are multi-year contracts. (National Police\_Interviewee1)

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<sup>124</sup> The Greater Manchester police force 10 year PEQF training tender to HEI is value at £59 million. see <http://bidstats.uk/tenders/2019/W44/714014765>

Indeed, in one of the case studies, the creation of a consortium of police forces to procure the necessary PCDA training was indicative of a new strategic planning approach to this aspect of workforce management.

The PEQF had also prompted forces to plan by encouraging them to model the balance between the three entry routes into the police constable role. In general, the case study police forces had discounted the use of the pre-join degree as a means of dealing with their short and medium term recruitment needs. Only around a dozen universities had applied to deliver the professional police degree, with graduates at the earliest coming 'on-tap' in three years-time. This left deliberation on the relative use of PCDA and PDE routes as a means of addressing immediate workforce needs.

For our case study police forces, the balance between these two routes in part rested on financial modelling. The costs associated with the respective routes clearly varied. PCDA training costs could be drawn down from the levy pot. For the pre degree joiners, higher education costs would be met by the learners themselves although the training cost for the two-year post degree programme would have to be met by the forces themselves and from non-apprenticeship funds.

Some forces were, however, taking into account a wider range of factors, sensitive to the fact that the different routes generated recruits with very different personal and demographic profiles. Thus, in a number of the case police forces, widening participation into the force and ensuring that the workforce reflected the local community it served, were important considerations. In certain instances, this encouraged the use of the PCDA as a more affordable and accessible form of training to the local population:

With the three new (police constable entry) routes, there was a concern that policing should be able to represent the community it serves, and here there is recognition that not everybody has a degree. So we couldn't just say right to join the police you have to have a degree. The apprenticeship was a critical mitigation in terms of there being an earn-as-you-learn route that does not require a degree upfront. The entry requirements for the apprenticeship route are exactly the same as for

the outgoing initial learning programme, which is a level 3 A level requirement, so that equality and diversity aspect is important in this context. The other routes require you to be a graduate and that potentially isolates half of the community that the force may be representing. (PF3\_Interviewee)

This emphasis on widening participation in the use of the PCDA was further reflected in another of our case studies:

What we have done is use the opportunity of PCDA to focus on positive action: so getting the organisation to be more representative of community in (the area), by age gender, BAME status. The programme has been the catalyst for some good work there. (PF4\_Interviewee)

- **Starts and Numbers:** Table 17 below provides details on the start-up and use of the PCDA by our case study police forces. These details are presented alongside the use of the Degree Holder Entry and placed in context by (re-) presenting the size of the police officer workforce, the level of annual recruitment and the expected 2020-21 uplift in the respective forces. One of our cases is clearly an outlier in being so large, encouraging some caution in comparing its approach to the other cases.

The Table below indicates the following:

- All case study police forces were recruiting a significant number of staff on an annual basis, although as a proportion of their police officer workforce the figures varied between 4 and 9%. It is noteworthy that the highest annual recruitment figure (9%) was in the city-based police force, possibly reflecting the high turnover that comes with a more competitive labour market.
- In general, the uplift in police officer numbers appeared to involve a doubling of recruitment levels for 2020.

- The timing for the introduction of the PCDA differed between our case study forces. One of our forces had started their programme in March 2019 and another of the forces commenced its programme in February 2020. The remaining two forces planning to 'go live' later in 2020 (July and September).
- The staggered introduction of the PCDA programme across police forces affected the numbers of apprenticeships currently in place. However, some noteworthy differences in the take up of the PCDA and in the balance between the PCDA and DHE were apparent.
- Thus, the number of apprentices in PF3 at 126 over the next couple of years was comparatively modest, with the force placing much greater weight on the DHEP route in taking four cohorts of 50. In PF4 and PF2 the emphasis was much more on apprenticeships. PF4 took on almost 200 apprentices in 2019 and was only just developing its DHEP route. PF2 was planning to launch with an even higher number of apprentices, close to 400, with a much more limited in-take of 50 through DHE. While still some way off its launch of the PCDA, PF1 was adopting a similar approach with a 60/40 PCDA/DHE balance.

**Table 17: Apprenticeships in the Case Study Police Forces**

	<b>Number of Police Officers</b>	<b>Annual recruitment</b>	<b>Uplift (2020-21)</b>	<b>PCDA Start Date</b>	<b>Nos. of Apprentices</b>	<b>Nos. of Degree Holders</b>
PF3	3,000	100-120 (4%)	154	Feb.2020	One cohort a year: 2020-21- 36 2021-22- 90	2020: 4 intakes- March: 50 June: 50 Sept: 50 Nov: 50
PF4	2,900	220 (8%)	220	March 2019	2019: March 28 June 40 Sept 40 Nov 78 Total= 186	Introducing in 2020
PF1	31,000	2,750 (250 a month for 11 months a year) (9%)	400-500 a month	Sept. 2020	From Sept 60% non-degree incl. internal route	From Sept: 40% DHEP

PF2	3,000	210 (7%)	300	July 2020	From July: 380	From July: two cohorts of 25 Total: 50
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- **Apprentice terms and conditions:** While approaches to aspects of the PCDA varied by force, the status and the prospects of the police apprentices were fairly standard across the case studies. In all four forces, apprentices were attested as police officers from the outset, working as established members of their team:

Apprentices are cops from day one. They are held to the same code of ethics standard of behaviour (PF2\_Interviewee)

Moreover, subject to successful completion, PCDAs were guaranteed a full time, substantive post on completion of the apprenticeship programme. In determining apprentice pay, there were also pressures to converge.<sup>125</sup> A recently agreed national apprenticeship pay range (see above), running from £18,000 to £24,000, provided police forces with discretion on the PCDA starting salary. In practice, and particularly in the context of the uplift, the competition amongst forces for recruits had encouraged starting pay at the top of the range in our case studies.

Because (police) apprentice recruits were getting a free degree, some felt lower wages were okay. We took the opposite view and saw it as opportunity to attract talent. If you were offering 18K to someone who could earn elsewhere, you wouldn't recruit talent. So we took the view bring them in on highest pay point you could: it gives credibility to the role and it is a hard role. (PF3\_Interviewee)

In PF1 these very labour market pressures had prompted a change of approach: originally planning to pay at the bottom the PCDA pay range, the force was now clear it would have to appoint at a higher pay level to attract recruits.

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<sup>125</sup> Although there was some convergence of apprentice pay in our case study police forces, caution is needed in seeing these cases as representative. They were self-selecting cases and as a consequence might be more likely to adopt and keener to show case 'good practice' than other forces.

Because of the uplift in numbers and because all police forces will be actively recruiting, we've had to go back and review what we are going to do from a pay point of view. Originally, we were thinking of paying apprentices at £18,000. We're not doing that now. (PF1\_Interviewee)

Certainly, there were challenges in attracting (young) people to the PCDA. Alongside the uplift challenge, it was noted that the term 'apprenticeship' was seen to have negative connotations, particularly amongst those looking for a career as a graduate professional:

With the word 'apprenticeship' comes certain preconceptions. People still think of apprenticeships as in YTS or as a stereotype of apprentices in a garage earning their dues. So, it is about managing expectations as to what an apprenticeship is and means in the context of policing. (PF4\_Interviewee)

However, our case study police forces had worked hard at communicating the programme, and in one case more 800 applications had been received for the PCDA programme.

- **The PCSO:** The PCSOs are not covered by the PRPB. As non-warranted members of the police workforce, and counted in the staff rather than police officer numbers, they are used and treated by the various police forces in very different ways. However, sitting alongside the police constable role, it is legitimate to explore whether the PCSO role represents a stepping stone to becoming a police constable. Certainly, the College of Policing prioritised the development of a level 4 PCSO apprenticeship, alongside the introduction of Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship, as it sought to take forward the PEQF. And yet any attempt by the College, and indeed respective police forces, to establish and articulate a career pathway from the PMSO role to the police constable appeared to be tentative and under-developed.



This should not detract from the interests shown by some PCSOs in moving on to becoming police constables. This was reflected in the observations of one interviewee who noted that in a recent recruitment drive for police constables a significant proportion of the selected intake had been existing police staff, part of the 'police family', and included a number of PCSOs:

Around a quarter to the third of the (police constable) intake were members of the police family, and PCSOs were heavily represented amongst those. (PF3\_ Interviewee).

Moreover, early attempts were being made to map the requirements of the PCSO apprenticeship on to the PCDA, as a platform for PCSOs to draw upon their prior learning in moving onto the PCDA role:

There has already been a mapping to say that someone has undertaken a level 4 apprenticeship and then wanted to change tack and become a police officer they would be able to come across onto the PCDA and prior learning would be recognised. There is a lot of overlap, so it is possible to map across. (Police\_National Interviewee)

Replacing the former level 3 qualification, the new level 4 PCSO apprenticeship had not, however, been mandated by the College in the same way as the three new police constable entry routes. Indeed, as a consequence, one of our case study police forces had decided not to use the PCSO apprenticeship at all:

We have the (PCSO) role but under the existing curriculum and haven't tied it into the apprenticeship at the moment and it won't get done to 2021 at the earliest. (PF4\_ Interviewee)

For this force it was a question of priorities: an explicit decision had been made to concentrate on developing the force's capacity to deliver the PCDA. In this context, and given competing pressures, whether there is a willingness

and capacity across the police forces of England and Wales to develop a meaningful apprentice career pathway between the PCSO and the police constable, at present remains an open question.

### 6.3.3. Issues

In general terms, some of the challenges presented by the PCDA have been touched on above. The organisational pressures created by the PEQF to shift towards a new degree level of training as part of police professionalisation were seen by certain interviewees as deepened by the 20,000 uplift in police officer numbers and by the introduction of the apprenticeship levy. A range of additional, more specific challenges associated with apprenticeships also emerged from our case study police forces, and included the following:

- **Abstraction:** The most significant challenge faced by our police forces related to abstraction: the removal of the police constable from front line duty for study time. Abstraction was the core concern raised by the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire, who sought (unsuccessfully) a judicial review of the PEQF:

It (the new training model) will mean 40 fewer officers at any one time for front line policing - roughly 10% of his deployable strength – because the study time has been significantly increased compared to the current recruitment programme<sup>126</sup>.

Certainly, with a new mandatory minimum period away from the workplace required for college learning, the issue of off-the-job training time could no longer be side-stepped by police forces:

Hitherto we have had guidelines around protected learning time but haven't had to comply with them. Operational demand has always trumped protected learning time. In the new world it can't.  
(PF2\_Interviewee)

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<sup>126</sup> <https://www.lincs.police.uk/news-campaigns/news/2019/peqf-judicial-review-action-launched/>

Indeed, one case study police force had calculated a marked increase abstraction following introduction of the PCDA:

The PCDA does have a higher abstraction rate from the frontline. Our IPLDP (Initial Police Learning and Development Programme) was 17.7% off the job learning. Compared to currently calculated 25.6% for the PCDA. (PF4\_Interviewee)

In another case, the negative connotations associated with 'abstraction' in the context of the PCDA had prompted moves to avoid using the term:

We are trying to not call it 'abstraction' because that is perceived in quite a negative way: 'abstract' as in taking away from the frontline. We're trying to refer to it as investment in learning. (PF1\_Interviewee)

At the same time, there had undoubtedly been a considerable amount of work undertaken by the case study police forces to explore and mitigate the consequences of abstraction for frontline policing:

We've done a huge amount of modelling to determine what the operational impact would be: when officers are not available to go on front line duty. When learning away at university we needed to understand what the impact would be. [P2\_Interviewee] ]

This had encouraged careful thought over how the PCDA programme was structured, in particular, how and when off-the-job leaning was scheduled. In one force, for example, there was a slight increase in abstraction but more in the first than in the second and third years of the programme. In other forces attempts were underway to change working arrangements and re-design certain organisational features to minimise levels of abstraction. Moreover, a positive aspect of the police officer uplift, with its high number of new recruits and inflated staffing levels, was to minimise the likely impact of abstraction on frontline policing:

With the uplift it has taken the focus away from abstraction because we're recruiting a lot more officers. So abstraction is not seen as a risk, We're pumping out a lot more people out onto the streets. Without the uplift abstraction would be an issue. (PF2\_Interviewee)

The need to abstract was not, however, solely limited to the police constable apprentices but extended to the police officers required to support the apprentices as they trained on-the-job:

It is not just the abstraction of these student officers, but the abstraction of those people supporting them as well. When they come back and are doing street duties you need officers supervising them on a one to one basis when they are in new roles. (PF1\_Interviewee)

- **Supporting police officer apprentices:** This latter point draws attention to the challenge faced by forces in developing the requisite capacity and infrastructure to support police officer degree apprentices as they trained. One case study respondent noted:

There is a huge amount of work in creating the infrastructure needed to support this programme (the PCDA). This is one of the reasons we are only going ahead in 2020 because it takes a huge of work to get that right. (PF1\_Interviewee)

This challenge involved refreshing established supervisory arrangements through the apprentice's line manager and the existing specialist tutor constable role:

Your line manager is part of your support but also you've got the tutor constable: that same relationship as you had historically.  
(PF4\_Intervieww)

However, given the increased number of apprentices and their learning needs, the challenge was not just to refresh but also to scale-up the number of tutor constables. One force was planning to recruit and develop 55 new tutor constables, in the process establishing a new tier of specialist apprentice tutors. In the largest of our case study forces, it was noted:

We need to have in place over 300 tutor constables; that is a chunk to take off the frontline so we are having to go through a massive recruitment, training process to get them in place. (PF1\_Interviewee)

While the police officer uplift provided some relief on the abstraction of frontline staff, its impacts on the time and resource needed to support the increased number of apprentices was significant, leading some forces to question whether this might undermine general police service performance:

In the first few weeks we will have two students to one coach and that coaching role will be full time. What's the impact on our performance? It would be less if we were doing 250 apprentices, but it is getting blurred with the uplift. However, we manage the uplift, the numbers are so high it will have an inevitable impact on performance. The important thing in my mind is not to say yes it is this new educational framework that is causing these problems; no, it is the sheer volume of students in this organisation. (PF2\_Interviewee)

**Constructing a new learning culture:** The introduction of the PCDA, particularly within the context of the PEQF, required a significant change in 'learning culture' for most police forces. In part, this reflected the more intense involvement of higher education institutions in the delivery of programmes. Police forces and education providers needed to build new partnerships and develop shared standards and systems of working. The education providers had to become more sensitive to the operational needs of the police forces in delivering training programmes: for example, with apprentice cohorts being taken-on throughout the year by some forces, education providers needed to schedule a series of validation boards, rather than one at the end of the academic year

Less tangibly, established norms and values underpinning learning in police forces were also being challenged by the PCDA, for example those organisational assumptions related to how formal off-the-job learning interfaced with traditionally less formal on the job learning. Stressing the need for a much more integrated approach towards these forms of learning, one respondent noted:

Where we will see more of a challenge is on the education side. So historically on the Initial Learning Programme there has been a disconnect between the theory and the practice: where as soon (as the trainee) got to (the workplace) the tutor constable or line manager was saying 'forget what you've learnt at training school this is how we really do it'. Trying to get

everybody to understand this is a holistic process: that is going to be a culture change. (PF3\_Interviewee)

**Existing Staff:** In the context of the PEQF, in particular the sharp and dramatic rise in entry requirements to become a police constable, questions emerged about the interface between police recruits and existing police officers with very different learning experiences and indeed qualifications. As one respondent noted:

If you think of our workforce in totality, for decades to come we will have our existing workforce who were given 2 years training and a level 3 certificate at the end of it. Most of these individuals are efficient and effective police officers. Suddenly in come cohorts of apprentices. They are on the same starting salary as any other constable and they are having a £24,000 investment in them to get a level 6 apprentice qualification and protected learning time, the existing police officers didn't but probably should have got. Then into that team comes the degree holder, who has just spent three years funding themselves, has a £29,000 debt coming into the team and these three people will be looking at each other and there will be quite an interesting dynamic there. (PF2\_Interviewee)

This interviewee continued by noting that this tension between police officer generations was likely to encourage the search for new training opportunities:

We will be looking closely at the learning offer for our existing workforce and we are looking at offering them some of the credit bearing modules within the apprenticeship as lateral development in the organisation to offset that feeling of we're the neglected part of the workforce when it comes to learning. (PF4\_Interviewee)

## 6.4 The NHS

Given the size and complexity of the workforce covered by the NHS Pay Review Body, the consequences of the recent apprenticeship reforms were likely to be at their most far reaching and intense in this part of the public sector. The development of almost ninety new health trailblazer apprenticeship standards in a relatively short period of time was a testament to the impact of NHS commitment to the apprenticeship model. NHS policy makers viewed apprenticeships as central to their future workforce strategy with the NHS England Interim People Management Plan, 2019, noting:

Apprenticeships will continue to be critical in attracting people to the NHS from less well represented groups and supporting the development of new roles. They allow new recruits and existing staff to gain new skills and qualifications while working and they support better career progression (NHS, 2019:50).<sup>127</sup>

Given the scale of the NHS apprenticeship programme and its centrality to workforce management in the sector, engagement by the NHS Pay Review Body with this agenda in its last two reports (2018-19<sup>128</sup> and 2019-20<sup>129</sup>) was unsurprising. Both reports highlighted the importance of apprenticeships as a source of labour supply especially into nursing, flagging-up the significance of the level 5 nursing associate and level 6 nurse degree apprenticeships. More striking, however, was the attention the reports drew to the challenges associated with introducing and managing apprenticeships in the NHS, as expressed by submissions from various stakeholders. These challenges were reflected in: union concerns about the use of apprentices to replace workers at lower level pay bands; employer worries about backfill costs, constraints on their use of the apprenticeship levy funds and their

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<sup>127</sup> <https://improvement.nhs.uk/resources/interim-nhs-people-plan/>

<sup>128</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/720320/NHSPRB\\_2018\\_report\\_Web\\_Accessible.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/720320/NHSPRB_2018_report_Web_Accessible.pdf)

<sup>129</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/819464/NHSPRB\\_2019\\_Report\\_Web\\_Accessible\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819464/NHSPRB_2019_Report_Web_Accessible_1_.pdf)

capacity to supervise and mentor apprentices; and a shared union and employer failure to agree a national approach to apprentice pay<sup>130</sup>.

In the context of these challenges, the NHS PRB viewed the impact of apprenticeships on recruitment and retention with uncertainty and caution. Thus, the 2018-19 report noted 'The apprenticeship programme in the NHS is ambitious and we have yet to see firm evidence of the way in which it will help bridge the workforce gap.'

Drawing upon three data sources- expert interviews, the NHS apprentice leads survey and two NHS test case studies- we provide this 'firmer evidence' on how apprenticeships have impacted on recruitment and retention in the sector. These data sources are used in combination to address the following themes associated with apprenticeships:

- Strategies
- Take-up
- Aims
- Process and outcomes
- Organisational challenges

#### **6.4.1 Strategies**

**Infrastructure:** A variety of criteria were used to assess whether and in what sense healthcare employers were adopting a strategic approach to apprenticeships. The first centred on whether NHS Trusts had set-up an organisational infrastructure – dedicated roles, responsibilities, structures and systems - to deal with the apprenticeship agenda.

In terms of dedicated roles, Table 18 below indicates that a significant majority of our survey respondents (85%) had responsibilities extending beyond apprenticeships. Barely one in ten indicated that their posts exclusively focused on apprenticeships,

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<sup>130</sup> See NHS Pay Review Body Report

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/819464/NHSPRB\\_2019\\_Report\\_Web\\_Accessible\\_1\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/819464/NHSPRB_2019_Report_Web_Accessible_1_.pdf) pp33-34



although in both our case study Trusts there was a dedicated role managing the apprenticeship agenda.

Asked to state their job title, over a third, around 40 of the 112 survey respondents, did have ‘apprentice’ in this title, although this was often accompanied by terms such as ‘and widening participation; or ‘and vocational development/education’. Other job titles provided by the survey respondents suggested they were in more senior, quite broadly drawn roles, for example: ‘learning and development manager’, ‘training and development manager’, ‘workforce transformation manager’, However this was likely indicative of the type of person completing the survey, and should be taken as meaning a dedicated apprenticeship lead was not to be found in the Trust.

**Table 18: What are the responsibilities associated with your current post?**

	%	Count
My job responsibilities include but are broader than dealing with just apprenticeships	85.0	96
My job focuses exclusively on dealing with clinical apprenticeships	1.0	1
My role focuses exclusively on dealing non-clinical apprenticeships	1.8	2
My job focuses exclusively on dealing with clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships	12.4	14
Total	100	113

A stronger indicator of dedicated apprenticeship infrastructure was the presence of a bespoke apprenticeship committee or working group. Table 19 below indicates such a forum was quite common. found in around in half of our survey Trusts (56.8%), with a further quarter of Trusts (23.2%) indicating their intention to set one up. This still leaves around a fifth of Trusts without a dedicated apprentice management body (19.8%). In the absence of such a body, apprentice issues were discussed in more

broadly based ‘training and development’ or ‘People Management’ or ‘Workforce’ committees.<sup>131</sup>

Our two case studies had a dedicated apprenticeship committee, although it assumed slightly different forms in the respective Trusts. In Trust 1 a formal apprenticeship steering group had been established comprising representatives from nursing, administration and Allied Health Professional education with HR, finance, and even the unions present. In Trust 2 informal meetings took place every other week between the apprentice lead, the head of wider healthcare teams’ education and the head of resourcing and HR to check on apprentice numbers and take-up.

**Table 19: Does your organisation have an apprenticeship working group or committee?**

	%	Count
Yes	56.8	63
No, but we are planning to set up an apprenticeship working group/committee	23.4	26
No, and we have no intention of setting up an apprenticeship working group/committee	19.8	22
Total	100	111

In open comments, survey respondents noted the Sustainability Transformation Partnership (STP)/Integrated Care System (ICS) as the principal site for the management of apprenticeship issues. This was confirmed in responses to the survey questions. Thus, almost two thirds of respondents (62.4%) indicated that their STP/ICS had a dedicated apprentice working group/committee (see Table 20 below). Over three-quarters of survey respondents (76.6%) felt that their STP/ICS workforce board was strongly or very strongly supporting apprenticeships across the system (see Table 21 below). As one respondent noted:

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<sup>131</sup>If there was no dedicated apprenticeship committee/group respondents were asked where apprenticeship issues were discussed

Our (area name) Apprenticeship Leads Group is a valuable source of information and support, and allows us to share activity and products to support that activity. We therefore do not need to reinvent the wheel and can interact with our ICS.

The increasing importance of STP/ICS to the management of the apprenticeship agenda was further reflected in comments of a national interviewee:

Most STP plans talk about harmonising the approach to apprenticeships (across trusts). The words are often ‘harmonise approach to levy’, or ‘maximise use of the levy’. (NHS National\_Interviewee6)

The coordinated procurement of apprenticeship training by Trusts, a means of constructing viable and cost-efficient cohorts of apprentices, was presented as a particular stimulant for joint working at the STP/ICS level:

Procurement is one of the vehicles we've been able to harness to bring employers together. (NHS National\_Interviewee4)

This should not detract from ongoing unevenness in the degree to which STPs were engaged in the apprenticeship agenda. Our case study Trust 1 was in a catchment area adopting a regional approach to procurement, embracing a number of STPs. Its STP had also developed an apprenticeship policy, which ensured a degree of procedural alignment for example on the recruitment of apprentices. In Trust 2 the STP was ‘not a major player at the moment’, although it had recently asked for a paper to be written on the recruitment of nurse degree apprentices.

**Table 20: Does your Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) or Integrated Care Service (ICS) have an apprenticeship working group/committee?**

	%	Count
Yes	62.4	68
No	21.1	23
Don't Know	16.5	18
Total	100	109

**Table 21: How strongly is your STP or ICS workforce board seeking to support apprenticeships across the relevant footprint/geography?**

	%	Count
Very strongly	24.3	26
Strongly	52.3	56
Weakly	6.5	7
Very Weakly	0.9	1
Don't Know	15.9	17
Total	100	107

**Union Engagement:** Union involvement in the introduction and management of apprenticeships might also be taken as indicative of a strategic approach to this form of training. In general, the national unions were supportive of apprenticeships. As a national union official noted:

We think apprenticeships are a good thing and a good opportunity for the NHS to solve some of its staffing issues. (NHS National\_Interviewee 1)

Certainly, the unions continued to highlight the barriers and challenges perceived as inhibiting the development of apprenticeships (see below). These did not, however, distract national officials from encouraging their local to engage with their employers on the apprenticeship agenda (see for example the Unison Apprenticeship Charter<sup>132</sup>). Despite such encouragement participation by local union representatives emerged from our survey as at best patchy. Around forty percent of respondents indicated that their organisations had a trade union learning representative, but the proportion of respondents directly engaging with such a representative on the issue of apprenticeships was quite limited: only 6.7% did so 'often', and a further 41.0% 'sometimes' (see Table 22 below)

<sup>132</sup> <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2017/07/24508.pdf>

**Table 22: Do you personally discuss apprenticeship issues with any trade union officers or representatives?**

	%	Count
Often	6.7	7
Sometimes	41.0	43
Rarely	22.9	24
Not at all	29.5	31
Total	100	105

**The Apprenticeship Levy.** Over two years on from its introduction, our survey Trusts were still having difficulty fully spending their apprenticeship levy. Almost three quarters of respondents (74.0%) indicated that their organisation was very unlikely or unlikely to spend the levy in the financial year 2019-20 (see Table 23 below). This finding is in line with other surveys on levy spend, particularly a study by Unison which indicated an underspend of as much as 79%<sup>133</sup>. The reasons for this underspend will be more fully explored below in the section on challenges. However, it can partly be explained by the incremental development of the new apprenticeship standards in healthcare: clearly the range of available standards influenced how extensively the levy could be spent:

One of the biggest blockers was we had the levy to spend but not sufficient apprenticeship standards to spend it on. (NHS National\_Interviewee4)

Indeed, the proliferation of apprenticeship standards can partly be attributed to employers, keen to more readily access their levy monies. Thus, in the early days of apprenticeship standards at the level of the economy in general, there was a sense amongst employers that a streamlined and rationalised apprenticeship systems required very few such standards. However, with the realisation that to spend money on training, apprenticeships standards were required, there was an impatience amongst them to develop them at speed and scale. As one of our national interviewees noted:

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<sup>133</sup> . <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2019/11/It-doesnt-add-up-report-1.pdf>

Originally it was suggested that there would only be 100 standards economy wide; we're now through 500. This is seen as wonderful but what we're doing is breaking-up occupations and everybody is chasing this stuff because they want really tweaked things specifically for them as an employer. (NHS National\_Interviewee5)

This interviewee proceeded to note a specific case in healthcare, involving the specialist clinical practitioner, where employers had pushed for a new apprenticeship standard as a means of accessing levy funds<sup>134</sup>. Arguably the role was a contrivance, but to secure levy funds to meet the continuing professional developments needs of certain healthcare professions an apprenticeship standard, was needed and formulated. According to this interviewee, healthcare employers were seeking to rationalise their actions by claiming that the levy funds were after all 'their monies' to claim. But more critically, this behaviour might be classified as borderline gaming, and points to employer contrivance of occupational roles as the basis for apprenticeship standards.

Developing arrangements for the procurement of apprenticeship training has also been presented as an initial drag on employer use of the levy:

Procurement was a blocking issue because in the public sector we have to go through public sector procurement rules and for a lot people in education in health this was a new way of thinking. We tried to learn through other industries how this was done and tried to bring expertise into NHS associated with procurement models. (NHS National\_Interviewee4)

The growing approval of new standards and establishment of procurement arrangements has broadened the scope to spend the levy. Indeed, several of the national interviewees suggested that in the medium and longer term, underspend was unlikely to be an issue. This is not to negate the concerns of both NHS

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<sup>134</sup> This standard has been developed but is yet to be approved

See <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/specialist-clinical-practitioner/>

Employers and the unions on the regulation of levy spend, seen as inflexible and constraining:

The NHS has put £200 million into levy and we are concerned that employers get as much of that back as possible.... One of our concerns is the levy can't be spent on backfill and infrastructure which has quite a negative impact on how the NHS uses the levy. (NHS National\_Interviewee3)

Moreover, whether underspend is a temporary issue or not, from April 2019 levy funds started to be clawed back from Trusts on a monthly basis, creating an additional financial pressure:

Even though the time available to spend the levy has been extended to 24 months, because of the delay in some standards being agreed that has had an impact on levy running out before standards are agreed. (NHS National\_Interviewee3)

Both of our case study Trusts were underspending on their levy. For example, in Trust 2 from a monthly £180,000 levy payment, £80,000 was being spent, leaving an annual underspend of over a million pounds.

**Table 23: How likely is it that your organisation will fully spend its levy this financial year (April 2019-April 2020)**

	%	Count
Very Unlikely	34.0	34
Unlikely	40.0	40
Neither likely nor unlikely	8.0	8
Likely	14.0	14
Very Likely	4.0	4
Total	100	100

At the same time, to view capacity to fully spend the levy as indicative of strategic intent remains open to debate. Our two case study Trusts were able to point to Trusts maximising levy spend. However, they felt this was less a sign of strategic intent, and more of a 'scatter gun' approach. Rather than maximum spend being an 'end in its own right', our case study Trusts were more forensically exploring where apprenticeships were needed to address recruitment and retention needs, and in doing so avoiding the unnecessary use of levy funds<sup>135</sup>:

We're mindful of the public sector target and we're mindful of the levy but we're not allowing them to dominate. We're saying we want to use our levy to meet our workforce needs. So, we are not looking to recruit hundreds of people just to get people on apprenticeships if we haven't got jobs for them at the end. We are doing it in a gradual, we hope intelligent way. If you have a vacancy in admin could it be filled by an apprentice rather than by an experienced staff member? If you are looking to develop staff because of succession planning or changing roles, could you use an apprenticeship to help make that development happen? So that is why we are not using the levy and orbiting the target because we have not gone down the path of 'we must use it' and 'must get that target met.' [Trust1\_Interviewee1]

As a marker of strategic intent, this quote suggests that the **level** of spend is less meaningful than **how** the levy is spent. However, even on this basis, the strategic intent across our surveyed NHS Trusts still seemed at best patchy. Our survey respondents were directly asked if their organisation had a formal written plan on how the levy would be spent: only a third of Trusts had such a plan in place (36.0%) (Table 24 below). Most of the remaining trusts (46.0%) intended to develop one, but almost three years on from the launch of the levy, Trusts had hardly been 'quick off the mark' in this respect. Moreover, the substantive nature of any such apprenticeship plan remained uncertain. Thus, it is noteworthy that only 15.0% of Trusts had arrangements in place to distribute the levy by workforce group, with almost half (49.0%) having no intention of introducing them (Table 25).

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<sup>135</sup> In cases of underspend, examples were cited of organisations beginning to transfer their levy. This was becoming a two-way process, with some private sector organisation transferring surplus levy to NHS Trusts but also some Trusts transferring their levy to other health and social care providers in their area.



**Table 24: Does your organisation have a formal, written plan on how it will spend the apprenticeship levy?**

	%	Count
Yes	36.0	36
No, but we are in the process of developing such a plan	45.0	45
No, and we have no intention of developing such a plan	10.0	10
Don't Know	9.0	9
Total	100	100

**Table 25: Does your organisation have formal arrangements in place to distribute levy spend by workforce group?**

	%	Count
Yes	15.0	15
No, but we plan to	36.0	36
No, and we have no intention of doing so	49.0	49
Total	100	100

**Workforce Planning:** Aside from the levy spend, strategic intent might be explored through the relationship between an organisation's apprenticeship programme and its workforce planning: the skills required by the organisation and how they are to be delivered. Our survey asked respondents a direct question on whether the organisation's approach to apprenticeships was closely related to its workforce planning process (with a five-point response scale running from very closely to not at all). Just over a third of respondents (34.0%) indicated that apprenticeships were not closely related or related at all to workforce planning. However, close to two thirds of respondents (63.1%) viewed their apprenticeship approach as 'very closely' or 'closely related' to workforce planning (see Table 26 below).

The strength of the link is, however, dependent on interpretations as to what ‘closely related’ means. In Trust 1 the link was manifest in what the apprentice lead described as an ongoing, iterative process by which she kept in touch with the Human Resource Business Partners to be found in each of the Trust’s clinical and non-clinical divisions, discussing vacancies and whether they could be filled through apprenticeships. In Trust 2 this process also occurred at micro level, involving the lead and particular teams or departments facing recruitment challenges. At Trust 2, instances were cited of clinical engineering, business estate and theatres where staff shortages were being explicitly addressed through the use of apprenticeships. Indeed, in this Trust the use of the nurse degree apprenticeship reflected an attempt to deal with nurse shortages, encouraging a more general look at the take-up of different apprenticeship standards across NHS England (although as noted above the more general use of nurse degree apprenticeships across, was currently quite modest).

**Table 26: How closely related is the management of apprenticeships to workforce planning in your organisation?**

	%	Count
Very closely related	10.7	11
Closely related	52.4	54
Not closely related	29.1	30
Not related at all	4.9	5
Don’t know	2.9	3
Total	100	103

#### **6.4.2 Apprenticeship Take-up**

The issue of apprenticeship take-up was considered in two main ways: first, considering the profile of the apprentice workforce and then mapping the use of different apprenticeship standards.

**Profile:** In general, our survey pointed to a balance between clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships in Trusts: around half of respondents (53.8%) noted a balance, although a third (32.7%) noted a higher proportion of clinical to non-clinical apprentices (see Table 27 below). A more striking survey finding was the high take up of apprenticeships amongst existing staff relative to new starters or young employees. It can be seen from Table 28 below that close to sixty percent of respondents (58.7%) indicated that more existing than new staff were undertaking apprenticeships in their organisation, with only 6.7% suggesting that new staff were in the majority. In both our case study Trusts, it was noted that more existing than new employees were on apprenticeships.

**Table 27: In general, what is the current balance in your organisation between employees undertaking clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships?**

	%	Count
Most are undertaking clinical apprenticeships	32.7	34
Most are undertaking non-clinical apprenticeships	13.5	14
There is a balance between clinical and non-clinical apprenticeships	53.8	56
Total	100	104

**Table 28: In general, what is the current balance between new and existing employees in the take up of apprenticeships in your organisation?**

	%	Count
It is mostly new employees currently undertaking apprenticeships	6.7	7
It is mostly existing employees currently undertaking apprenticeships	58.7	61
There is a rough balance between the existing and new employees currently undertaking apprenticeships	34.6	36
Total	100	104

There are various possible reasons for the greater take-up of apprenticeships by existing staff. These will be explored more fully below in the report section on Aims. However, a couple of specific factors emerged in the case study Trusts. First with much of the recruitment in both Trusts conducted on a decentralised basis by departmental and team managers, persuading them to advertise job vacancies and recruit externally to an apprenticeship post was proving difficult and time consuming. The lead in Trust 2 noted:

It is a cultural thing. There is a feeling that the business managers want someone like themselves, and they don't exist out there and they are happy to sit on the vacancy rather than employ an apprentice. That is our challenge with that group of people. We have had meetings. It is also the fear of 'I will have to spend all my time training them'..... The managers are gatekeepers to apprenticeships not us. They keep saying to us go out to schools and tell them about jobs here but what's the point if the apprenticeships are only being offered internally. (Trust2\_Interviewee1)

Second and more specifically, the failure of the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education to approve a level 2 business administration standard had deprived Trusts (and other employers) of an important entry route into the

organisation<sup>136</sup> <sup>137</sup>. Indeed, this concern was raised by two separate survey respondents:

Apprenticeship standards like Business Admin level 2 are still not available and this gap will affect a large percentage of our workforce whose job role does not allow them to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours for Business Admin level 3 - affecting our ability to actively recruit school leavers and young people into the organisation as this is often the role they enter in on.

We are deeply concerned that certain frameworks (specifically Business Admin Level 2) will be switched off this summer with no appropriate standard being offered in replacement. The business administration is a particular concern as the level 2 has provided a fantastic introductory level qualification which has enabled a significant number of young people to gain skills and substantive employment in the Trust. The level 3 standard is not suited to this so, if no resolution is found, we will be unable to provide these opportunities which is a threat to our administration workforce plans.

**Mapping:** Our survey sought to ascertain the *availability* of the main clinical apprenticeship standards in Trusts. Table 29 below, presents the nursing associate as the most frequently offered standard, available in over ninety percent of respondent Trusts. This is hardly surprising given the targeted drive to recruit over 12,000 NA apprentices. Other widely available apprenticeship standards offered by around three quarters of Trusts included the Level 2 Healthcare Support Worker (HSW), Level 3 Senior HSW (adult Nursing) level 3 and Level 5 Assistant Practitioner. The wide availability of the latter is especially noteworthy given the high proportion of Trusts offering the NA apprenticeship, and suggests that the two standards (AP and NA) currently co-existed. The availability of level 6-degree apprenticeships was patchier. Around a half of the respondents were offering the registered nurse degree apprenticeship (56.1%). However, very few Trusts were as yet offering degree apprenticeships for the non-nursing professions - occupational

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<sup>136</sup> <https://feweek.co.uk/2019/06/28/ifa-rejects-level-2-business-admin-apprenticeship-leaving-employers-disappointed-and-upset/>

<sup>137</sup> <https://feweek.co.uk/2020/02/27/game-over-for-level-2-business-admin-apprenticeship/>

therapists (14.9%), physiotherapists (8.6%), ODPs (15.6%) and diagnostic radiographers (6.5%), although there were signs that a significant proportion of Trusts planned to introduce such standards, especially for OT and physios.

**Table 29: Apprenticeship Standards Offered by your Organisation (%)**

	Yes	No, but we plan to introduce	No, and we currently have no intention of introducing	Don't Know	N=
Healthcare support worker (HSW) (level 2)	75.3	8.9	14.9	1.0	101
Midwife (level 6)	3.5	25.3	65.5	5.8	87
Nursing associate (NMC 2018 level 5)	91.0	6.0	2.0	1.0	100
Registered nurse (level 6)	56.1	31.6	9.9	3.1	98
Senior HSW (level 3): adult nursing support	73.0	5.0	19.0	3.0	100
Senior HSW (level 3): maternity support	34.4	10.8	48.4	6.5	93
Senior HSW(level 3): AHP-therapy support	42.4	22.8	26.1	8.7	92
Senior HSW (level 3): children and young people support	22.8	20.7	42.4	14.1	92
Senior HSW (level 3): mental health support	23.9	7.6	58.7	9.8	92
Senior HSW (level 3): theatre support	35.5	10.8	47.3	6.5	93
Occupational therapist (level 6)	14.9	60.6	18.1	6.4	94
Physiotherapist (level 6)	8.6	67.7	16.1	7.5	93
Assistant practitioner (level 5)	71.7	12.	12.1	4.0	99

Diagnostic radiographer (level 6)	6.5%	40.2%	45.7	7.6	92
Operating department practitioner (level 6)	15.6%	41.7	32.3	10.4	96

While a useful indicator of Trust priorities, the availability of apprenticeship standards still leaves open questions on the actual take-up of these standards, and in particular the numbers of employees on them. In this respect it is interesting to focus in more detail on the nurse degree apprenticeship. One of national interviewees noted:

The building-blocks are there and it (the nurse degree apprenticeship) is going to help with nursing shortages. I think it is going to be a very solid pathway in the future (NHS National\_Interviewee4)

But went on to stress:

There are difficulties still around affordability.

It is interesting in this respect to contrast the use of the nurse degree apprenticeships in our two case study Trusts. The number of apprentices on-programme as a proportion of the Trust workforce was very similar: Trust 1 had around 200 total apprentices from a Trust workforce of around 9,300 (2.2%) and Trust 2 had 240 total apprentices from a workforce of 11,600 (2.1%): Moreover, both Trusts had introduced the nurse degree apprenticeship. However, the number of places commissioned by the respective trusts on this apprenticeship was very different. In Trust 1 there were currently 11 nurse degree apprentices (with a further cohort of 20-25 planned in the coming months). In Trust 2 the figure was much higher with there were 71 on nurse degree apprenticeships.

Much attention has been drawn to the general difficulties trusts face in introducing the nurse degree apprenticeship, particularly in terms of backfill costs in the context of 50% off the job learning time. However, the striking difference in the scale of the programmes in the respective case study Trusts suggests considerable scope for discretionary action on the part of Trusts as they engage with this apprenticeship standard.

Myriad factors explain the contrasting approaches adopted by the two case Trusts, and this is not the place to explore them in detail. In brief, however, both Trusts were driven to offer the nurse degree apprenticeships as a mean of addressing nurse shortages. However, the greater scale of the programme in Trust 2 derived from the development of the nursing workforce over a number of years, allied to the Trust board's commitment to the nurse apprenticeship programme, and some carefully worked through solutions to challenges, make it a cost-efficient proposition. More specifically:

- Over a number of years, Trust 2 had built-up its band 4 (assistant practitioner) nursing workforce, leading the Trust to engage only minimally with the nursing associate apprenticeship initiative, In so doing it was able conserve its time and resources for the development of more nurse degree apprentices. (In contrast Trust 1 had very few, if any, APs in nursing,)
- In Trust 2 the former band 2 HCAs, participating in the nurse degree apprenticeship, were upgraded to band 3 just for the three days a week they were supernumerary when training. For the other two days acting in their 'normal HCA day job' they were paid at their band 2 pay rate. This allowed the Trust to control the pay bill costs associated with the programme.
- In Trust 2 the board had agreed to pay for the ward backfill costs from its central reserves. With the board agreeing to 'take this hit' and giving the necessary funds to the divisions, there was financial certainty and the clinical areas were able to decide how they would fill the three supernumerary days:

We were saying this person will not be there for three days a week for four years: here is the money go out and recruit- bank or employ- spend it how you want. (Trust2\_Interviewee1)

- With guaranteed funding, engagement in the programme was dependent not on ward affordability but the quality of HCAs available to participate in the nurse apprentice programme:



One ward might have three good people but we could only afford one for the programme. We wanted the 50 best from the Trust and were able to say if there are three from your ward we can give you money for three. (Trust2\_Interviewee2)

### **6.4.3 Apprenticeship Aims**

Our survey explored broad aims by asking respondents to rate the importance of a list of possible reasons underpinning the introduction of apprenticeships in their organisations (on a five-point scale running from 'very important' to 'very unimportant'). To develop a clearer picture of priorities, respondents were then asked to identify the three most important of the listed reasons.

It is clear from Table 30 below that Trusts attached importance to many of the reasons. Indeed, of the listed reasons, only one - using apprentices as a cheaper source of labour- was seen as being of no importance at all: over three quarters of respondents (77.5%) viewed this reason as unimportant or very unimportant (although the slightly pejorative phrasing of this question might have contributed to this response). Other opportunistic reasons also emerged as being of limited importance: thus, well under half of the respondents attached any importance to the use of apprenticeships as a flexible source of labour.

While most of the other reasons were important to some degree, there were, however, differences of emphasis reflected in the proportion of respondents viewing the reason as 'very important.' In this respect, the story to emerge reinforces the picture presented earlier, with an apparent emphasis on the use of apprenticeships to support the development of existing staff, rather than to bring new or younger employees into the organisation. This, it is noteworthy (see Table 30 below) that the overwhelming majority of respondents saw the use of apprenticeships as 'providing career development opportunities for existing employees' (81.4%) and 'growing our own registered professionals' as being 'very important' (81.2%). Indeed, over two thirds (68.8%) viewed the use of apprenticeships to 'retain existing staff' as 'very important'. In contrast, just over half (55.0%) saw apprenticeships as 'very important' to recruiting new employees, and under a third (30.3%) saw apprenticeships as a

means of recruiting young employees as ‘very important’. Respondents also attached limited importance to particular expedencies: under a fifth (18.0%) saw meeting apprenticeship targets as ‘very important’, while only half (50.0%) saw ensuring the levy was fully spent as ‘very important’.

This use of apprenticeships to address the development needs of existing staff more fully emerges in examining the three most important reasons selected by respondents. Certainly, most of the reasons listed appear in the top three of at least some of the respondents. However, the most important reason chosen by 35 respondents is ‘providing career opportunities for existing staff’, while 28 cited ‘growing our own registered professionals’ as the most important reason and 18 ‘retaining existing staff’ (see Table 31 below). A noteworthy number (45) chose ‘recruiting new employees’ in their top three reasons, but this is a considerably lower number than the proportion choosing top three reasons centred on existing staff.

**Table 30: Reasons for Introducing Apprenticeships**

	Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant	N=
Recruiting new employees	55.0%	33.0%	11.0%	0.0%	1.0%	100
Retaining existing staff	68.6%	29.4%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	102
Growing our own registered professionals	81.2%	16.8%	1.98%	0.0%	0.0%	101
Providing a career development opportunity for existing employees	81.4%	18.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	102
Ensuring that our levy is fully spent	50.0%	34.3%	12.8%	2.0%	1..0%	102

Generating a source of cheaper labour	2.0%	3.1%	17.4%	30.6%	47.0%	98
Providing a flexible source of labour	14.3%	35.7%	24.5%	18.4%	7.1%	98
Dealing with shortages amongst certain occupational groups	48.5%	42.6%	6.9%	2.0%	0.0%	101
Upskilling existing workers to take on new tasks and responsibilities	57.4%	38.6%	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	101
Meeting an apprenticeship target	18.0%	47.0%	23.0%	10.0%	2.0%	100
Recruiting young employees	30.3%	46.5%	15.2%	6.1%	2.0%	99
Supporting the widening participation agenda	54.0%	40.0%	5.0%	1.0%	0.0%	100

**Table 31: Three most important reasons for introducing apprenticeships in your organisation (ranked by number of mentions)**

	Most Important (Count)	Second Most Important (Count)	Third Most Important (Count)	Total
<b>Providing a career development opportunity for existing employees</b>	35	27	12	74
<b>Growing our own registered professionals</b>	28	14	13	55
<b>Recruiting new employees</b>	13	19	13	45
<b>Retaining existing staff</b>	18	11	8	37
<b>Upskilling existing workers to take on new tasks and responsibilities</b>	5	14	12	31
<b>Dealing with shortages amongst certain occupational groups</b>	6	6	14	26
<b>Supporting the widening participation agenda</b>	4	4	18	26
<b>Ensuring that our levy is fully spent</b>	2	4	7	13
<b>Recruiting young employees</b>	0	4	7	11

<b>Meeting an apprenticeship target</b>	0	1	3	4
<b>Providing a flexible source of labour</b>	3	1	0	4
<b>Generating a source of cheaper labour</b>	0	2	1	3
<b>Total Count</b>	114	107	108	326

This emphasis on apprenticeships to support the career development of existing staff was apparent at national level, with one of our HEE interviewees noting:

We now have job families at entry level 2 through to level 7 and I am now able to show those standards in those job families, so you can see how each occupation connects in terms of career pathway potential. (NHS National\_Interviewee4)

In our case trust there was some weight placed on using apprenticeships to deal with recruitment and retention pressures. As noted In Trust 2:

(The Trust's apprentice programme) is linked to recruitment, retention and upskilling staff, and meeting our skills gaps. What is the point of it? What are we trying to do? Well it is about looking across the whole patch not just clinical, but estates and administration and asking where are the gaps and can the apprenticeship system help us with them and if so what will the cost of that be? (Trust2\_Interviewee1).

Indeed, in Trust 2 this focus on recruitment needs was reflected in the careful commissioning of apprenticeships.:

We will be going for some AHP degree apprenticeships this year and we'll do OTs (Occupational Therapists) but not physios because we don't need to do physio this isn't the area we need to recruit to. (Trust2\_Interviewee2)

However, supporting the survey findings, in both Trusts the majority of apprentices were drawn from existing staff, with apprenticeships used to enable career

development pathways for them. As the apprentice lead in Trust 1 noted in outlining the broad aims of the Trust's apprenticeship programme:

To provide *really good opportunities of development for all our staff* and an opportunity to recruit from a talent pool we don't normally recruit from and build up our future workforce: it is a great and realistic solution in terms of closing potential skills gaps in health. (Emphasis added).

(Trust1\_Interviewee1)

In Trust 1 this apprentice-based career pathway was most developed in nursing:

The most important thing is we are providing more opportunities for staff. So in nursing we now have HCAs on level 2 and 3 apprenticeships, and then there is the option to go for a level 5 nursing associate and then registered nurse degree: that goes beyond spending money; that is about having a robust career pathway; in a really important area of the NHS growing our own nursing workforce and that is what it is about, having those opportunities.

(Trust1\_Interviewee2)

In Trust 2 communications material had been produced which outlined such pathways in several job families:

- Nursing
- Estates, engineering and trades
- Health sciences
- Leadership and management
- Information and communication
- Allied health professions

#### **6.4.4 Terms and Conditions**

Apprentice terms and conditions of employment have been a lively area of debate amongst national policy makers and practitioners. Much of this debate has centred on trying to develop a national approach to apprentice pay, given the old Annex U of Agenda for Change, now Annex 21, was not originally conceived for apprentices and

given evidence, not least from Unison (see above in section 4.1) which suggested uneven employer pay practices. National stakeholders had been unable to reach agreement on national pay arrangements for apprentices, although it is noteworthy that very few of our survey Trusts acknowledged the use of their apprenticeships to reduce pay bill cost.

As a means of assessing the treatment of apprentices, our survey asked a series of questions on the employment conditions of Level 2 HSW apprentices in their organisation, one of the more popular apprenticeship standards. Although the findings are open to interpretation and should be treated with some caution, they are worth presenting. It is clear from Table 32 below that a significant majority of organisations, close to three quarters (73.8%), employed their level 2 HSW apprentices on a fixed term contract. However, this did not seem to detract from the likelihood of a permanent job on completion of the apprenticeship. Over two thirds of organisations (67.7%) guaranteed a job offer on completion, suggesting that apprenticeships were commonly seen as a pathway into a substantive post. In terms of pay, well over half of the respondents (58.9%) noted the use of Agenda for Change Annex 21 in determining the level 2 HSWs' pay rate. A similar proportion (54.2%) indicates their use of the national minimum apprenticeships wage. This seems a surprisingly high proportion. Some respondents might have interpreted this question as meaning their organisation paid **at least** the minimum rate.

**Table 32: Terms and Conditions for a new Level 2 HSW Apprentice**

<b>Trusts using the following practices:</b>	Yes %	Count	No %	Count	Total
A permanent contract	59.0	36	41.0	25	61
A fixed-term contract	73.8	45	26.2	16	61
A guaranteed job interview on completion of their apprenticeship	46.2	24	53.9	28	52
A guaranteed job on completion of their apprenticeship	67.7	42	32.7	20	62
The national minimum apprenticeship rate (or the age appropriate national minimum wage)	54.2	32	45.8	27	59

The Agenda for Change Annex 21 (formerly annex U) pay rate	58.9	33	41.1	23	56
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In our Trust 1 case study, apprentices typically came into the organisation on a fixed term contract, with the Trust’s commitment to the London Living Wage ensuring that level 2/3 apprentices were paid at the bottom of pay band 2. For apprentices employed in higher banded roles, Annex 21 was used to determine the apprentices’ pay. Apprentices at Trust 1 were not provided with job guarantees on completion of their programme. However, three months before the conclusion of their contract, there was a discussion between the line manager and the apprentice about career intentions and opportunities within the Trust. Indeed ‘a lot do stay on post-apprenticeship, recruited into vacant posts.’ (Trust1\_Interviewee1.) The absence of a job guarantee for apprentices in Trust 1 was moderated by the fact that few if any HCAs were recruited as apprentices: they were recruited to a substantive HCA post and then asked to go onto to a Level 3 apprenticeship. In Trust 2 the picture was similar: apprentice pay was mainly determined by Annex 21, fixed-term contracts were often used and although there were no job guarantees ‘We haven’t had to let any go post apprenticeship’.

In terms of outcomes, our survey suggested that apprenticeship non-completions were not a major issue. Table 33 below indicates that two thirds (65.7%) of organisations had completion rates of over three quarters, although a not insignificant minority, almost a third of Trusts (29.3%), had between half and quarter of their apprentices not completing.

**Table 33: In general, what is the apprenticeship completion rate in your organisation?**

	%	Count
Under 25%	1.0	1
Between 25% and 50%	4.0	4
Between 51% and 75%	29.3	29
Between 76% and 100%	65.7	65
Total	100	99



The high proportion of respondents noting that **existing employees** were likely to receive a pay rise on completion on their apprenticeship is noteworthy (see Table 34 below). It can be seen that just under two thirds of respondents (62.7%) felt such a pay rise on completion was 'likely' or 'very likely'. In part, this reflects apprenticeships designed to prepare the trainee for a new, high graded role: for example, the nursing associate apprenticeship, often undertaken by existing staff formerly in an HCA role at pay band 2 and 3 - and the nurse degree apprenticeship - also often completed by existing HCAs or NAs, and likely leading to movement into a nurse post at pay band 5.

**Table 34: On completion of an apprenticeship, how likely is it that an existing employee in your organisation will move to a higher pay band?**

	%	Count
Very Unlikely	2.0	2
Unlikely	3.9	4
Neither likely nor unlikely	31.4	32
Likely	47.1	48
Very Likely	15.7	16
Total	100	102

The proportion of survey respondents suggesting that a pay rise is 'likely' or 'very likely' was, however, surprisingly high. While the logic of the new apprenticeship model, aligning standards with specific occupations, implied movement into a new, higher band role on completion, this was not always the case. For example, an HCA on pay band 2 might well complete a level 3 apprenticeship for a senior HCA role but on completion continue to sit in their band 2 role. In such circumstances, two scenarios present themselves: first, the HCA is drawing upon new and extended skills generated by the apprenticeship but in remaining in a band 2 role is being used as 'cheap labour'; or second, remaining in a band 2 role, the HCA does not use their newly acquired skills seen as beyond pay grade, in which case the level 3 apprenticeship arguably remains rather a 'waste of time and money'. The latter scenario was raised in Trust 2:

They (Band 2 HCAs) are enabled to get those skills during the apprenticeship but if they don't have a band 3 job to go to, they stay where they are, doing their band 2 job, The band 2 job says this is the limit of your responsibility and competence, so they might have more skills but just aren't able to use them, which is frustrating and expensive. (Trust2\_Interviewee1)

A similar point was raised in Trust 1 by an interviewee in nurse education:

For someone going into a new role who will undertake new learning, which is your traditional apprenticeship model on a formalised programme of learning, that is great, and we support that. But we also have very experienced staff that we're encouraging to access an apprenticeship programme who will develop themselves professionally in doing so but it won't end necessarily in a new role and that is where our challenges come from: does this sit as a new job, a new role or is this just a new learning opportunity. And that is where our challenges come from in deciding the purpose of this apprenticeship. (Trust1\_Interviewee2)

Data on the number of workers undertaking advanced apprenticeships but remaining in their current band on completion were not available. However, in Trust 2, concern about the inappropriateness of apprenticeship training for those keen to develop in their existing role had encouraged the use of an alternative qualification: the accredited High Development Award (HDA).<sup>138</sup> In terms of time and cost, Trust 2 questioned the value of a band 2 HCA with a level 2 apprenticeship routinely moving on to take a Level 3 apprenticeship, particularly in the absence of a new, more senior role for the HCA to move into on completion of the Level 3 programme. For the Trust, this did not detract from the need for the band 2 HCA with a level 2 apprenticeship to receive continuing professional development, However, the offer of the less resource intensive, and less personally demanding, HDA was seen as a more attractive option.

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<sup>138</sup> <https://www.nursingtimes.net/roles/nurse-educators/using-key-skills-training-to-boost-support-workers-confidence-09-07-2018/>

### 6.4.5 Challenges

We have already drawn attention to some of the organisational challenges faced by Trusts in introducing apprenticeships, especially in using them to recruit new staff. As a means of providing a comprehensive overview of these challenges, our survey asked respondents to rate the significance of the challenges faced by their organisation in managing apprenticeships. They were presented with a list of potential challenges and asked to rate them on a five-point scale from very significant to not significant at all. They were given an opportunity to raise other challenges not covered in the list provided (although few were raised). To develop a sharper picture of the acuteness of challenges, respondents were then asked to list their three most important challenges from the list provided.

The 'headline finding' on challenges faced is hardly a surprise with backfill costs by far the most significant challenge seen as facing Trusts in the management of apprenticeships. As can be seen in Table 35 below, almost three quarters of respondents (71.3%) noted this as 'very significant' challenge, a far higher proportion than for any other challenge. Over two thirds of respondents rated this as ***the most important challenge*** (see Table 36 below), again way ahead of any other challenge. As various survey respondents noted:

The inability to spend the levy on back fill costs has stopped us from being able to utilise the levy and solve workforce issues

We would love to offer more apprenticeships, but the backfill and salary costs are prohibitive.

Backfill is the biggest barrier for clinical apprenticeships. If there was some way we could use a % of the levy for backfill that would help us have more apprentices. The wards are so short staffed as it is, and the pressures they are facing are so high, we struggle to get apprentices in place.

These views were echoed in one of our Trust 1 case study interviews:

20% off the job scares a lot of people. It is one day a week off to train and if you're a small department 'how do I manage with losing someone one day a week'. It is important for the training provider to support us in explaining what

form that 20% takes, because if it is just presented as one day off at college that puts managers off. (Trust1\_Interviewee1)

**Table 35: The Significance of Challenges Faced by Trusts in Introducing Apprenticeships**

	Very Significant	Significant	Not significant at all	Don't Know	N=
Funding backfill costs	71.3%	18.8%	2.0%	1.0%	101
Funding the wages of new apprentices	38.6%	21.8%	15.8%	0.99%	101
The capacity to mentor and supervise apprentices	35.9%	34.0%	8.7%	0.00%	103
Continuing to deliver non-apprenticeship training	14.9%	22.8%	25.7%	6.9%	101
Procuring apprenticeship training from education providers	19.6%	18.6%	31.4%	0.00%	102
Organising the end point assessment	9.8%	26.5%	33.3%	4.90%	102
Meeting our apprenticeship target	14.9%	37.6%	17.8%	0.00%	101
Spending our apprenticeship levy	38.2%	31.4%	8.8%	0.00%	102
Ensuring starters complete their apprenticeship on time	16.7%	36.3%	10.8%	2.9%	102
Recruiting new apprentices	16.7%	37.3%	13.7%	2.9%	102

Retaining apprenticeships on completion of their training	14.7%	22.6%	26.5%	2.94%	102
Ensuring apprentices achieve level 2 numeracy	32.7%	29.7%	7.9%	2.0%	101
Ensuring apprentices achieve level 2 literacy	31.4%	25.5%	8.8%	2.0%	102
Arranging apprenticeships for part-time workers	6.9%	25.5%	20.6%	5.9%	102
Delivering the apprenticeship within the designated funding band	8.8%	16.7%	38.2%	6.9%	102
Managing the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account	16.7%	20.6%	31.4%	2.9%	102

**Table 36: Apprenticeship Challenges (Ranked by number of mentions)**

	<b>Most Important (Count)</b>	<b>Second Most Important (Count)</b>	<b>Third Most Important (Count)</b>	<b>Total (Count)</b>
Funding backfill costs	67	13	7	87
Funding the wages of new apprentices	19	28	3	50
The capacity to mentor and supervise apprentices	8	16	20	44
Spending our apprenticeship levy	5	13	18	36
Ensuring apprentices achieve level 2 numeracy	4	7	6	17
Procuring apprenticeship training from education providers	1	6	7	14
Ensuring apprentices achieve level 2 literacy	3	1	8	12

Managing the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS) account	0	4	8	12
Meeting our apprenticeship target	2	4	5	11
Organising the end point assessment	1	3	5	9
Ensuring starters complete their apprenticeship on time	2	4	3	9
Recruiting new apprentices	1	3	4	8
Continuing to deliver non-apprenticeship training	2	0	5	7
Arranging apprenticeships for part-time workers	0	1	5	6
Retaining apprenticeships on completion of their training	1	2	1	4
Delivering the apprenticeship within the	2	1	0	3

designated funding band				
	118	106	105	329

This stark finding on the significance of backfill costs as a challenge should not, however, obscure the more nuanced picture to emerge on the challenges faced by organisations in managing apprenticeships. Thus, Trusts faced a combination of challenges, with few, if any, of the challenges seen as being of ‘no significance at all’. It is noteworthy that most of the stated challenges are included by at least some respondents in their top three list (Table 36 above). Indeed, it was often the cumulative nature of the challenges faced which presented the major difficulty for organisations. As one respondent, capturing this cumulative impact, noted in ‘the comments’ section of the survey:

Every single aspect of delivering apprenticeships is a bureaucratic nightmare - don't know what more to say really. Funding rules, gov.uk websites, digital accounts, Ofsted requirements, etc, etc etc. ILR (Individual Learner Record) returns, etc are probably the worst set of systems and rules I have ever encountered. 20% off-the-job - not based on any quality rationale, a figure plucked from thin air which doesn't apply to all, and is completely inconsistent with having to reduce funding due to APL. EPA seems to be a complete mess. Why this tunnel-vision charge towards Standards, without qualifications? Why can't everyone be honest, and acknowledge that for 99% of employers, Standards offer no more choice or flexibility than Frameworks - stop the spin, people do not fall for it.

Another respondent also highlighted a combination of challenges:

The 20% off the job learning is a real challenge and getting line managers to support this for an existing employee is very difficult. I think a lot of smaller NHS Trusts just don't have the internal resource to implement the agenda fully. I think that the majority of providers (colleges and private provision) are delivering appalling levels of quality and with limited choice for specialist provision, there seems to be nothing we can do about it.



There were, however, specific challenges alongside backfill costs highlighted by respondents. Well over half of the respondents and sometimes close to two thirds or more highlighted the following as 'very significant' or 'significant' challenges (Table 35 below):

- The capacity to supervise/mentor apprentices (69.9%):

The continued limitation to apprenticeship usage and recruitment is the salary costs and the associated supervision and mentoring and cost of 20% off the job. This combination is limiting usage and uptake across all areas of the system. Along with the ability to support the volume of learners in the workplace. (Survey Respondent)

- Funding the wages of new apprentices (not covered by the levy) (60.4%)
- Ensuring the apprentices achieve level 2 numeracy (62.4%) and literacy (56.9%).

Certainly, there were challenges of less significance in relative terms with the following seen as 'very significant' or 'significant' challenges by only around a third of respondents:

- Procuring apprenticeship training from education providers (38.2%)
- Managing the Digital Apprenticeship Service (37.3)
- Organising the End Point Assessment (EPA) (36.3%)
- Delivering training within the stipulated funding bands (25.5%)

Indeed these (and other) challenges were raised by respondents in the open comments section on the survey and interviewees in our case study Trusts:

#### **Functional skills:**

The biggest challenge developing lower band and young employees is lack of Level 2 Maths and English - ability to use the Levy to fund Functional skills would (a) widen participation (b) contribute to social mobility agenda (c) spend the Levy (Survey respondent).

#### **Procurement:**

We are restricted with expanding our range of apprenticeships because we are a) waiting for apprenticeship standards to be approved and then b) waiting for training providers to deliver those new apprenticeships, particularly HEIs where there is a level of snobbery around degree apprenticeships.... Training providers rather than employers still hold the bulk of the power because there are often few choices of training provider for specialist apprenticeships (Survey respondent).

**EPA:**

End point assessment is an absolute nightmare to arrange and is incredibly bureaucratic and cumbersome (Survey respondent).

EPA is still an issue in the clinical setting (Survey respondent).

We have had a push to get EPA dates through from our providers. Sometimes there is a huge gap and ambiguity as to what happens next. Directly recruited apprentices are a pretty ambitious lot, and if they are on a fixed term contract and they are planning what next, it is a problem when they've done their apprenticeship but are still waiting for the EPA.

(Trust 1\_Interviewee1)

**Digital Apprenticeship Service:**

The DAS account is not fit for purpose which we have frequently reported to the National Apprenticeship Service. It does not filter start dates making Public Sector Duty Reporting difficult. It does not allow recording of completion meaning we need a parallel system to accurately monitor progression (Survey respondent).

The Digital account ESFA & IDAMS are so complex and take a lot of time to complete (Survey respondent).

DAS says we currently have 330 apprentices; we actually have 240. (Trust2\_Interviewee2).

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## 7. Summary and Conclusions

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In the wake of recent national policy developments, apprenticeships have become increasingly central to workforce management in the public sector. In part, these policy developments, especially the introduction of public sector targets and a mandatory requirement to report on them, have been designed to encourage a growth in the number of apprenticeships in the sector. However, in tightening the regulation of apprenticeships across the economy - for example, through the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, apprenticeships standards, end point assessments and minimum periods of off-the-job training – the policy shifts have had more profound implications for PRB workforces and their employers.

In general terms, these implications have assumed various forms:

- **Employment:** To the extent that individuals undertaking apprenticeship programmes are employed as apprentices, their pay and conditions become of direct concern to the PRBs. In parts of the public sector, there are employees participating in apprenticeship programmes not as apprentices but as existing employees. However, those employees with apprentice status are of interest to the PRBs in terms of their pay arrangements.
- **Finance:** With most public sector organisations meeting the payment threshold, the apprenticeship levy has generated a new financial commitment. Moreover, in some parts of the public sector with unspent levy already being clawed-back by central government, the levy represents lost funds. More broadly, in responding to regulatory requirements - for instance, the backfilling for staff away on apprenticeship training and developing and the organisational infrastructure required to supervise trainees- new and additional cost pressures have been created that the levy cannot be used for. In combination the emerging financial challenges associated with apprenticeships raise questions for the PRBs about the capacity of public sector employers to meet their pay bill and other employment costs.

- **Recruitment and Retention:** The policy drive towards the use of an increasingly rule-bound apprenticeship model feeds through to labour supply and human capital issues, often central to PRB deliberations on pay. More specifically, we have suggested that apprenticeships might influence **recruitment** in several ways:
  - **Preparing:** Newly recruited, often young, employees are prepared with a view to them performing a specific job role and joining a designated occupational community.
  - **Upskilling:** Employees, typically from within the organisation, are upskilled to allow them to **take-on** the tasks of those in hard- to-recruit occupations: sometimes referred to as substitution.
  - **Progressing:** Employees, again usually internal to the organisation, are upskilled with a view to them **moving into** these hard-to-recruit, often more senior occupations: sometimes labelled 'growing-your-own'.

In addition, we argued that apprenticeships might impact **retention** by:

- Providing an **accessible form of training** to those employees already firmly embedded in and reflective of the local community.
- Constructing **career development opportunities** and internal progression routes for new and existing employees.
- Improving **the quality of working life** for 'over-burdened' employees able to more confidently delegate tasks to upskilled workers and therefore less inclined to quit.
- Providing employees with a **portable 'qualification'** so enhancing their external labour market mobility.

In their deliberations, the PRBs have unevenly engaged with apprenticeships as an influence on recruitment and retention. The most recent reports from the School Teachers' PRB and the Armed Forces PRB make little, if any, reference to apprenticeships, albeit for very different reasons: in the former case, apprenticeships have yet to gain much traction; in the latter, apprenticeships are so well embedded

there appears to be very little new to say. Recent remits of the Police Remuneration Review Board have encouraged consideration of the new pay range for apprentice police constables, with the apprenticeship becoming one of three new entry routes into the role. The NHS PRB alone amongst the review bodies has touched on the recruitment and retention consequences of apprenticeships. Presenting the views of different stakeholders, it has, nonetheless, suggested that the evidence-base on the impact of this form of training on labour supply remains limited.

Seeking to strengthen this evidence base, our study mainly focused on the relationship between apprenticeships and recruitment and retention in:

- Primary and Secondary School Teaching;
- The NHS;
- The Armed Forces; and
- The Uniformed Police Service.

With a focus mainly on England, we addressed the following questions:

- Were employers in these parts of the public sector using apprenticeships to address recruitment and retention issues?
- If so, how were they using them? and
- What challenges were they facing?

In seeking to answer these questions, we interviewed stakeholders from national representative bodies across the four PRB workforces. It became clear from these interviews that apprenticeships were having the most significant recent impact on workforce management in the NHS and the police service. This encouraged us to undertake more detailed interview-based case studies in these sub-sectors: two NHS Trusts and four police forces. Moreover, given the scale of developments in healthcare we undertook a survey of apprentice Trust leads in NHS England.

## **7.1 Approaches to Apprenticeships**

Our findings on whether and how apprenticeships were used by employers, suggested very different approaches across the four PRB workforces:

- **Teaching:** The apprenticeship arrangements in teaching remained fragmented and arguably incomplete. Teaching assistant and graduate teacher apprenticeship standards had been approved. However, as yet, education was without an undergraduate degree teaching apprenticeship linking the two, in sharp contrast to policing and various healthcare professions where such degree apprenticeships had been developed. A consequence of these fractured arrangements, but also reflecting myriad entry routes into teaching, apprenticeships had not been taken-up in significant numbers by schools.
- **The Armed Forces:** Almost at the opposite end of the spectrum, apprenticeships in the armed forces were not only ubiquitous but deeply embedded in established systems. Moreover, reflecting the numerous trades found within the armed forces, apprenticeships were delivered to a wide range of standards. However, apprenticeships in the armed forces were almost exclusively a means of preparing new recruits rather being used to upskill existing personnel or provide them with career development opportunities.
- **Police Force:** In contrast to the armed forces, apprenticeships in police forces had taken off more recently and at considerable pace and scale, closely tied to broader attempts to professionalise the police workforce in the context of the newly introduced Policing Education Qualifications Framework. In common with the armed forces, there was an emphasis on the use of apprenticeships to prepare new recruits: the police constable degree apprenticeship was one of three entry routes into the police constable role. As a means of preparing new recruits, the importance of apprenticeships was boosted by the government's 20,000 uplift in police constable numbers. The police service, however, differed from the armed forces in the narrow range of the apprenticeship standards used: while the armed forces were delivering to over ninety apprenticeship standards, police forces were principally concerned with the implementation of the police constable degree apprenticeship and to a lesser extent the Police Community Support Officer apprenticeship.

- **The NHS:** Befitting a large, occupationally diverse and sophisticated workforce, the general NHS approach to apprenticeships was less easily characterised. However, the predominant approach to emerge centred less on preparation of new recruits and more on providing career development opportunities for existing staff. This is not to detract from the use of apprenticeships as a point of entry into NHS roles, and certainly NHS employers were working hard to establish apprenticeships as a way into the service. However, our case study and survey data suggested that there was an emphasis on the construction of internal career progression routes as a means of retaining staff and dealing with recruitment pressures associated with key occupational groups. Most striking was the attempt to develop a nursing career pathway, with progression from HCA through the nursing associate role to the registered nurse. Again, the conditional nature of such approaches should not be overlooked. This was reflected in the very different approaches adopted by our two case study NHS Trusts to the nursing degree apprenticeship.

## 7.2 Challenges

Despite these different approaches across the PRB workforces, our study revealed a range of general challenges facing public sector employers in introducing and managing apprenticeships. The 'jury still remains out' on the severity of these challenges. Many of the changes to apprenticeships were still settling down- for example, a handful of police forces were still to introduce the police degree apprenticeship- with the possibility of some challenges being worked through and overcome in the longer term. Moreover, organisational responses to these challenges often emerged in context specific ways, with individual NHS Trusts and police forces, for example, dealing with them in a manner sensitive to local circumstances and need. However, our study did reveal some deep-seated concerns, and whether resolved or not in the medium and longer term, at the time of writing there were many public sector employers grappling with apprenticeship issues. These concerns and issues included:

- **The Apprenticeship Levy:** Our four PRB workforces were engaging with the apprenticeship levy in different ways. Given the scale of apprenticeship training, the armed forces were comfortably spending their levy funds. With the introduction and rapid take-up of the PCDA, police forces were similarly spending their levy fund. Indeed, with the implementation of the PCDA already underway, the introduction of the levy to fund it, was seen a positive policy coincidence. In the NHS there was an ongoing underspend of the levy. There are grounds for arguing that this underspend will work its way out of the system in the medium term. However, with clawback of underspend already underway, trusts face an additional cost pressure, a pressure shared with many community primary and secondary schools which continue to pay the levy with limited opportunities to spend it.
- **Cover costs:** With a requirement that apprentices be allowed to spend at least 20% of their time on off the job training, employers were being challenged to deal with the resulting staffing cover and associated additional wage costs. This challenge had been particularly acute in the NHS and in policing, framed in the former as dealing with 'backfill' and in the latter, with 'abstraction'. Indeed, in the NHS backfill costs emerged from our survey as by far the most significant challenge, exacerbated by inflexibilities in how the levy fund could be spent: it could principally be used for training costs, but not for backfill costs (or indeed apprentice wages). In the case of the nurse degree apprenticeship requiring 50% off the job learning, such costs had proved to be a major barrier to the introduction of this standard with implications for its effectiveness in helping address nurse shortages. Such findings in large part confirm concerns raised in stakeholder evidence to previous NHS pay reviews and highlighted in recent NHSPRB reports.
- **Apprenticeship Standards:** The shift from apprenticeship frameworks to standards had created short-term administrative challenges. In the armed forces, for example, finding new standards to meet job requirements at scale was proving to be time consuming, while in 2017-18 the limited availability of apprentice standards in healthcare, given the time needed to develop them, initially contributed to underspend of the levy. More intriguing going forward is



possible employer gaming, especially in the NHS, around the development of standards: whether employers will attempt to 'manufacture' new occupations and associated standards to ensure access to levy funds.

- **Supervisory Capacity:** Supervision is often a hidden cost of apprenticeships, again with little scope to draw on levy funds to support it. In the armed forces this cost had been absorbed by highly inclusive, supportive and disciplined operational culture. In the police service and NHS considerable time, effort and resource had been devoted to developing this supervisory capacity, although not without difficulties in the case of NHS with its extensive range of supervisory and mentorship responsibilities.
- **End of Point Assessments:** EPAs remained an immediate administrative challenge across the armed forces, the NHS and police forces: in many instances the EPA needed to be procured separately from the training; EPAs could be problematic to undertake; and their timing had to be carefully managed.

Our research has revealed the growing importance of apprenticeships to workforce management across four of the PRB workforces. The apprenticeship levy and to a lesser extent apprenticeship targets have brought apprenticeships to the fore at senior management levels. A more regulated approach to apprenticeships has encouraged a degree of planning around associated issues and prompted policies and practices designed to improve and develop vocational training. However, the regulatory requirements underpinning the new apprenticeship model have also brought organisational challenges and pressures. Our study has been relatively small scale, but we have sought to shed some light on the nature and management of the new apprenticeships arrangements, in particular, whether and how they have impacted on recruitment and retention in key parts of the public sector.