



**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith  
Minister for Skills**

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27 March 2025

Dear colleagues,

Today, my department published the latest data on apprenticeship achievements. We are making excellent progress together and I wanted to thank you for your efforts.

**The apprenticeship achievement rate (QAR) for apprenticeship standards has increased by 6 percentage points, now standing at 60.5% for the 2023/24 academic year, compared to 54.3% last year. This is the biggest increase since the standards were introduced and a fantastic result. Achievement volumes for standards are also up by 13% at 174,570, compared to 154,010 last year.** We have observed remarkable improvements from our providers, with almost a third of providers recording 70% or above.

Apprenticeships continue to deliver great outcomes. As outlined in the Department's Further Education outcomes publication, 94% of apprentices that achieve their apprenticeships go into work or further training; with 93% remaining in sustained employment. Apprentices who were participating in Level 2-5 apprenticeships in the 2021 – 2022 academic year will drive £25bn of economic growth over their lifetime, demonstrating apprentices' importance to our mission to grow the economy<sup>1</sup>. We can only make this happen if more apprentices continue to complete their training.

The progress to date is testament to our partnership and the hard work of colleges, HEIs, ITPs and employer providers. For example, college achievement rates for standards have improved from 57.4% to 62.4%, an increase of 5.0 percentage points; and ITPs have increased from 51.2% to 57.7%, an increase of 6.5 percentage points.

I also recognise that achievement rates do not always capture the full picture; and we must look at wider measures too. **So, I am equally pleased that our data shows that we currently have 90% of learners in good or outstanding providers – which is also a significant achievement, up from 86% last year.** <sup>2</sup>

These improvements reflect the focus and dedication of all those involved with apprenticeship delivery; and I would like to highlight how we will continue to build on this success.

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<sup>1</sup> [Measuring the net present value of further education in England - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/measuring-the-net-present-value-of-further-education-in-england)

<sup>2</sup> As at end January 2025, 502,000 learners were participating with an apprenticeship provider whose latest overall full Ofsted judgement was good or outstanding, based on participation data reported to DfE covering August 2024 and January 2025 (provisional 2024/25 ILR); the equivalent of 90%. The calculation excludes apprenticeship providers who do not yet have a full Ofsted inspection outcome.

## 1) Making things simpler – for learners, employers and providers.

We have heard clearly that our processes and systems do not always help you to focus on quality; and we will continue to work with you on this. We have already made strong progress, for example:

- We recently launched the "**Your Apprenticeship App**", as part of our ambition to empower apprentices and improve their end-to-end journey. The app, along with direct emails, provides learners with easy access to essential tools, resources, and support at key points in their apprenticeship journey. If you haven't already looked at this – and I know many thousands of people have already downloaded it – I would encourage you to do so, so you can see how it can help to support your apprentices.
- The 'One click' employer onboarding process was released recently, allowing providers to complete onboarding process for an employer that they can then approve in a single step. This allows both providers and employers to spend more time focusing on delivering quality training, instead of administration.
- In February, the Government announced a new '**Simplified payment system**' for apprenticeships. This will transform how we approach payments and remove the need for employers to administer data for their apprentices; and re-use data already supplied by training providers, halving the administration burden on employers.

We have been guided through these challenges by our Expert Provider Group and a wide range of other employers, providers and representative groups; and I look forward to continuing this collaboration.

## 2) Flexibility – where that is the right thing to do

Whilst we will not compromise on quality, we do understand that flexibility in the right places will improve outcomes. So, we have been looking closely at how we approach English and maths, duration and assessment.

- We have listened to employers and providers on the **English and maths requirements**. Whilst all apprentices will be required to develop job-specific English and maths skills, employers now have more flexibility over when a standalone qualification will be required on top of this for adult apprentices. This will mean thousands more apprentices qualify in key sectors, including construction and adult care, each year.
- **The minimum duration of an apprenticeship will be reduced to eight months.** There will be more flexibility for apprenticeships to be less than 12 months where that makes sense – for example where people have high levels of prior learning,

or in sectors that do not work in 12-month cycles. Employers will have more flexibility to develop their talent base quicker and grow their businesses faster.

- We also recognise some of the unintended consequences of the **End-Point Assessment model**, which you are telling us can be unnecessarily burdensome. So, in February, we confirmed the new principles we will be working to in future. New, more efficient assessment plans will be created for all apprenticeships, making better use of experts within providers, removing any duplication of assessment, and improving the timeliness of assessment, all while retaining valid and robust assessments that employers can trust.

### 3) Support and Challenge

We will continue to make the improvements that will enable you to deliver better provision; but challenge you to improve too.

- The new **apprenticeship accountability framework** – which looks at a wide range of quality indicators beyond achievement rates - was updated in April 2024, and I am delighted by the sector's response to this. Whilst most providers are delivering high-quality provision, we have challenged it where it falls short; and providers are responding positively. Those with an accountability improvement plan have improved their QARs significantly between 2021/22 and 2023/24. We will keep the framework under review to make sure it continues to drive improvement in future and maintains the strong levels of performance our providers are delivering, as we move towards a more flexible Growth and Skills levy.
- I also want to **better support employers**. High-quality work-based learning relies on the effective collaboration between employers, training providers, and learners. By partnering with established employer networks, we will develop resources that support employers to deliver their commitments effectively, to help their employees succeed, progress and thrive and realise the bottom-line return of a workforce with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours.

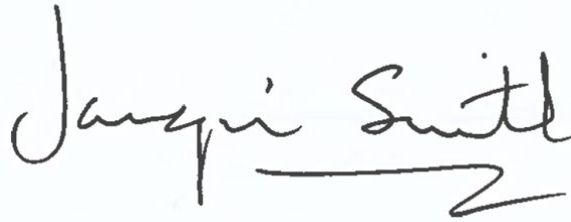
Clearly, we have made strong progress, but I don't want to stop here. We will continue to press on with these improvements; and go further.

Skills England will help us build a more responsive skills system that balances the agility we all know is needed, with a longer-term, strategic view of our skills needs. We will continue to build a reformed, more flexible Growth and Skills Levy, including by introducing foundation apprenticeships, which will open-up opportunities for young people and employers alike, as a crucial building block towards long, successful careers.

I want to thank you for your dedication to improving apprenticeships. We have

achieved lots already; and I look forward to working with you to do even more.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background. The signature reads "Jacqui Smith" in a cursive style, with a horizontal line underneath the name.

**The Rt Hon Baroness Jacqui Smith  
Minister for Skills**