
CONSTRUCTION APPRENTICESHIPS

Opportunities. Challenges. Support.

OCTOBER 2025
UPDATE



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Foreword

Apprenticeships: The gold standard for construction skills

Construction has always needed, and will always need, a supply of new talent – and apprenticeships have traditionally been the industry’s preferred way of bringing through a new generation to provide future security and growth. They have been viewed as something of a gold standard, and their enduring appeal lies in the balance of practical learning and formal accreditation – a model that has consistently delivered results for both learners and employers.

With demand equal to the equivalent of more than a quarter of a million additional workers over the next five years, apprenticeships remain as relevant as ever but they will not be able to deliver the country’s skills needs alone and will necessarily form part of a broader landscape of training routes into employment in the sector.

The UK Government has stated that growth is its number one mission and construction will play a central role in delivering that. The country needs construction workers to build the homes we need, the infrastructure projects to support economic growth and help Britain’s built environment reach net zero. However, if construction doesn’t have the skilled and competent workforce it requires, the wider economy will be held back, and individual construction businesses will be held back from meeting their potential.

This all points to a real need for construction to develop many more apprentices than it does currently. CITB is here to support construction companies with this recruitment challenge of which part can be met by apprenticeships growth

We know it can be difficult for any employer, but especially small and micro employers, to take on apprentices. They may have stretched capacity, an unclear pipeline of work and may believe they lack organisational capacity to manage an apprentice.

The benefits of taking on an apprentice are huge. It is a chance to develop a person’s skills to benefit both the apprentice and the specific needs of a business. An apprentice will also boost a business’s capacity in the short-term and help with succession planning in the longer term.

CITB is here to support employers to take on an apprentice

Our New Entrant Support Team (NEST) helps employers find, recruit, fund, and retain an apprentice or new entrant as well as support for employers to access our apprenticeship grant.

Apprenticeships are a game-changer for a business, and a life-changer for apprentices. All of us with a stake in the future of the construction industry need to raise awareness of the enormous, enduring value they bring.

Leanne Land, Head of New Entrant Support, CITB



Executive summary

This report provides the latest insights into construction apprenticeships across England, Scotland and Wales. It reaffirms the enduring value of apprenticeships: to apprentices, to employers and to the British economy and society as whole.

We present an updated analysis of apprenticeship starts and completion rates. We look at who is becoming an apprentice, and which employers hire them. We also give an overview of how government policy has changed the landscape for apprentices and employers.

More broadly, this report provides a summary of the skills challenges industry faces and the opportunities to be seized.

We look at CITB's role and the support we provide to help make apprentices an attractive choice for businesses of all sizes throughout Great Britain.

The challenge

The recruitment challenge for construction has many aspects to it, including:

- The required recruitment numbers are high and rising
- Competition from other sectors is increasing
- Apprenticeship achievement rates are poor in England
- Many SMEs are reluctant to take on apprentices despite their future need for the skilled workers apprenticeships create.



1. CITB Construction Workforce Outlook - 2025-2029

Construction apprenticeship starts and achievements – Great Britain

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Apprenticeship Starts	28,524	29,554	31,224	31,256	30,447	27,248	35,420	33,408	32,935
Apprenticeship Achievements	14,221	17,142	17,940	17,560	14,447	13,148	14,306	14,562	18,520

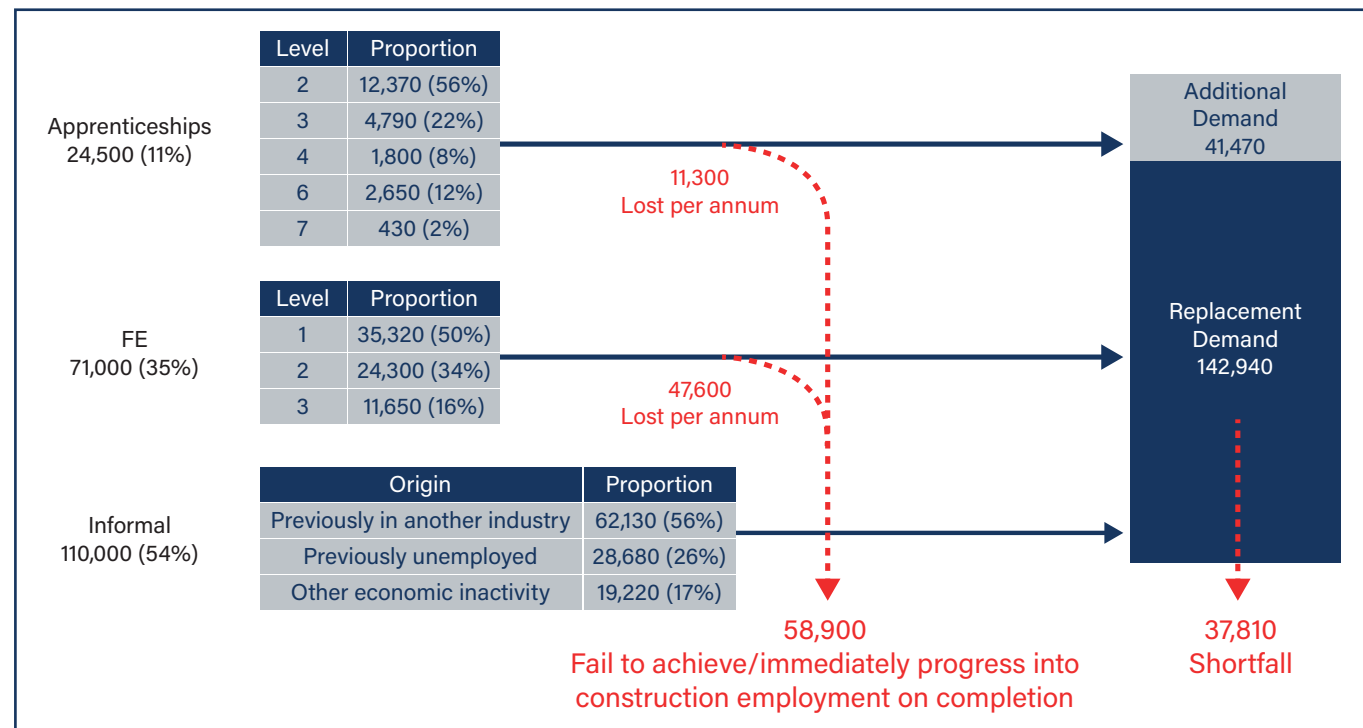
Note: See Figure 1 in the Appendix for data by GB nation

While starts must increase, achievements must also rise significantly in England. Only about half of those that start an apprenticeship in construction go on to pass an End Point Assessment and achieve the full qualification. While some apprentices who do not reach their End Point Assessment will eventually enter the construction workforce, many more won't. And the longer it is before people join the workforce the greater the likelihood is that they will need to refresh their skills.

Construction contributes 6% to Britain's economic output, and in addition it supports the growth in most other sectors. If we can solve our recruitment challenge, our sector and the wider economy will benefit.



Projected flows into construction, England 2023/24



Data sources and methodology

Apprenticeships: Data on apprenticeship starts is taken from the Department for Education (DfE) for the 2023/24 academic year, covering learners starting programmes in the Construction, Planning and the Built Environment Sector Subject Area.

Further Education (FE): FE enrolment data is also sourced from DfE for 2023/24. Enrolments are adjusted to focus on learners aged under 19, used here as a proxy for new entrants to construction occupations.

Progression rates: The proportion of apprenticeship and FE learners who progress into construction employment is based on the CITB report "Destinations of Construction Learners in Further Education" (2017), specifically Appendix B (p.59), which provides six-month destinations by learner group.

Informal entrants: Estimates of informal entrants (those entering construction from other industries, unemployment or inactivity) and their flows into the sector are derived from analysis of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Labour Force Survey five-quarter longitudinal dataset.

Demand for labour: Replacement demand reflects expected outflows of workers from the sector, while additional demand is taken from CITB's Construction Workforce Outlook, which forecasts workforce needs required to support projected output growth.

Shortfall calculation: The shortfall shown represents the gap between the effective 'supply' of new workers (after adjusting for non-completion and non-progression into construction) and total labour demand (replacement + additional demand).

Who recruits apprentices?

There are approximately 82,000 construction apprentices enrolled in learning across Britain².

However, only one in five (21%) construction businesses employ an apprentice and just one in ten (10%) employ more than one³. Large construction employers are much more likely to recruit an apprentice with 90% employing apprentices.

The construction industry is dominated by micro employers, which make up about 80% of businesses. Of those, 86% say it is unlikely they will recruit an apprentice in the next 12 months⁴. And only 16% micro businesses employ an apprentice. And yet these firms will be desperate for the capability and capacity that apprentices represents once they achieve their qualification.

If we are to increase apprenticeships starts across the industry, we must motivate, incentivise and support smaller companies to take on apprentices.

The challenge is that small and micro employers are often hard to reach, lack capacity and confidence in their pipeline of work. Crucially, they may not have organisational awareness or capability to hire, manage and carry out the admin for an apprentice.

Small firms are unlikely to be set up to use the online accounts required to manage apprenticeships. In addition, small employers usually employ a single apprentice. Often, they don't take on another apprentice straight away, leading to gaps in recruitment.

Across the whole of construction, two in five (38%) businesses offer apprenticeships⁵, with 21% currently employing an apprentice⁶. Seventeen per cent of firms are likely to take on an apprentice in the next year, with that figure falling to 12% amongst micros⁷. Over two-thirds (71%) of employers said it was not likely at all that they would take on an apprentice⁸. This suggests there are deep rooted challenges in boosting the numbers of employers who view apprentices as a business opportunity.

Factors affecting apprenticeship recruitment

The Apprenticeship Levy was introduced in 2017. It was a major change in skills policy in England, putting employers in the driving seat of the apprenticeships system. Employers pay into the system and apprenticeship funding is accessed by them, rather than training providers. One effect of this is that the number of apprenticeship starts is open to market forces and increased volatility.

While the Apprenticeship Levy has encouraged higher level apprenticeships among older workers and the existing workforce, participation in entry level apprenticeships is falling, particularly among young entrants (under 19), which is significant when trying to attract new people into the industry. In fact, Level 2 starts for under 19's have fallen by more than 20% since 2017/18 compared to a 274% rise in the number of those aged 25+ starting a Level 6/7 apprenticeship.

However, where apprentices are employed in construction businesses, most are still undertaking a Level 2 apprenticeship (47%), followed by a Level 3 apprenticeship (31%), although Level 2 starts have fallen significantly since 2017/18 when they accounted for 65% of all starts.

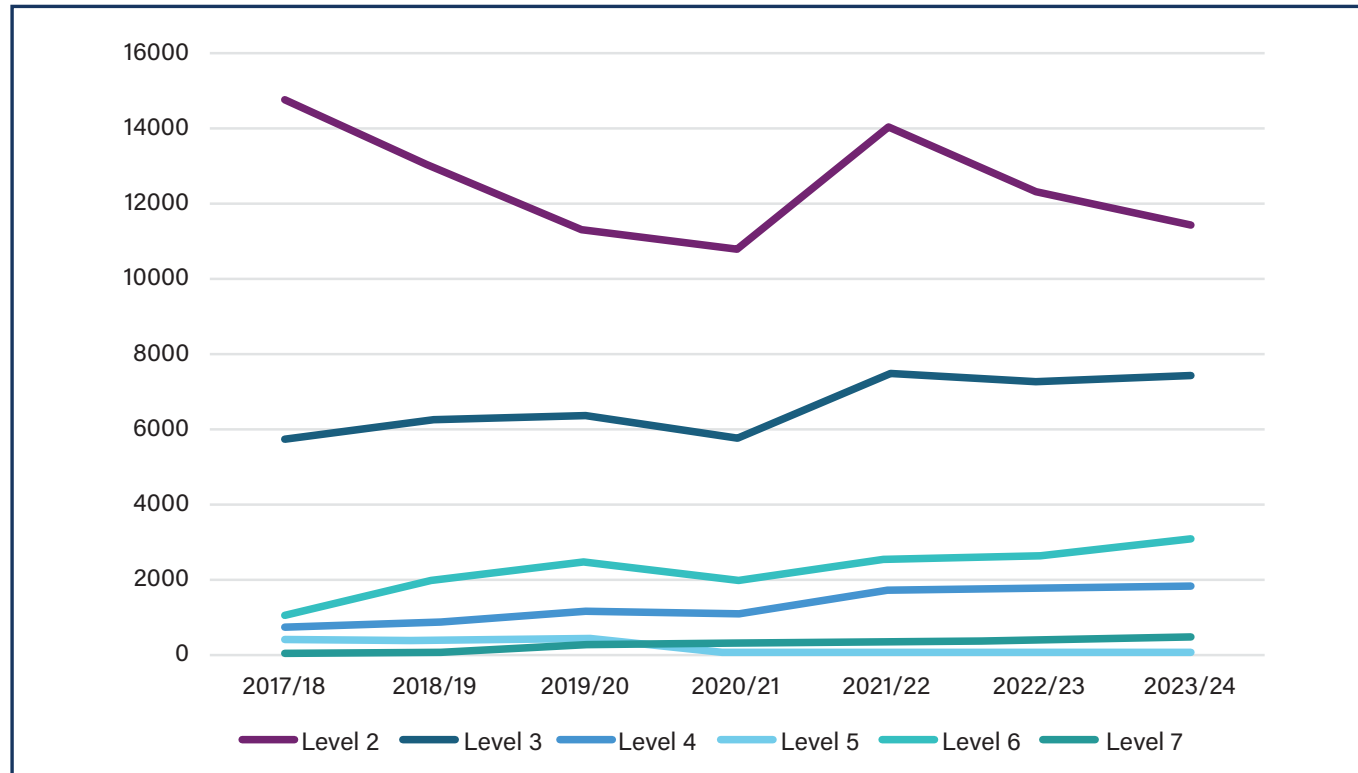
The proportion of Level 6/7 starts has increased from around 5% in 2017/18 to a point where they represent one in seven (15%) of all starts. There were no starts at Level 7 in 2017/18.

2. [Department for Education \(England\), Apprenticeships, Skills Development Scotland, Modern Apprenticeship Statistics, and Welsh Government, StatsWales - Work-based learning](#)

3-4. CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2024)

5-8. Ibid

Construction apprenticeship starts by detailed level 2017/18 to 2023/24, England



The UK Government has committed to replacing the Apprenticeship Levy with a new Growth and Skills Levy, designed to give employers greater flexibility to use their funding for a broader range of training. As part of efforts to rebalance apprenticeship provision towards younger learners and areas of skills shortage, the government is encouraging employers to fund a greater share of Level 7 apprenticeships themselves. This forms part of a broader attempt to address distortions in the system created by the existing Apprenticeship Levy, including the concentration of funding among older, more senior workers. Under the new Offer, funding eligibility will be based on assessed skills needs, employer demand, and consultation with sector bodies.

Level 7 apprenticeships, equivalent to a master's degree, are typically pursued by older employees or graduates seeking to upskill while continuing to work. While valuable for professional development, they are less suited to new entrants and have contributed to a decline in intermediate apprenticeship uptake, including in the construction sector.

As a result, one of the first major changes under the new policy will see funding for most adult entrants to Level 7 apprenticeships withdrawn. From January 2026, government funding for these higher-level programmes will be limited to those aged 16 to 21. Employers wishing to offer Level 7 apprenticeships to older workers will need to cover the full cost themselves.

The reform is intended to redirect more of the Apprenticeship Levy's funds towards younger people entering the workforce. However, funding alone is not the only barrier to boosting apprenticeship numbers. Other challenges, such as employer capacity, administrative burden, and navigating the system, also affect recruitment. In addition, accessibility, location of providers in relation to employers, and whether a suitable apprenticeship standard exists for a particular role remain recognised barriers for both employers and potential apprentices.

For employers, the main reason they give for not offering apprenticeships is not having apprenticeships available in their specific line of work (53%). A smaller proportion are put off by not knowing how to go about offering apprenticeships (16%) and apprentices taking up too much time or requiring too much supervision (15%)⁹.

Despite a cooling labour market, where hiring slows and vacancies decline, often reflecting pressure on employers, driven in part by the April 2025 increases to

employer National Insurance Contributions (NICs) and the National Minimum Wage (NMW), alongside growing economic uncertainty linked to potential US tariffs, there are still signs that employers are looking to recruit. However, many do not appear to view apprenticeships as part of their recruitment strategy. This highlights a continued need to raise awareness of the benefits of employing apprentices, as well as to improve support in identifying appropriate apprenticeship standards and suitable candidates.

Understanding what motivates employers to take on apprentices is essential. Business need remains the most common driver, with seven in 10 (71%) employers citing it as a reason¹⁰. Many report that decisions are closely linked to an increase in turnover or having a clear pipeline of current and future work, factors that provide the confidence needed to invest in training and long-term workforce development.

Historically, periods of greater stability or steady growth tend to be accompanied with an increase in apprenticeship starts.



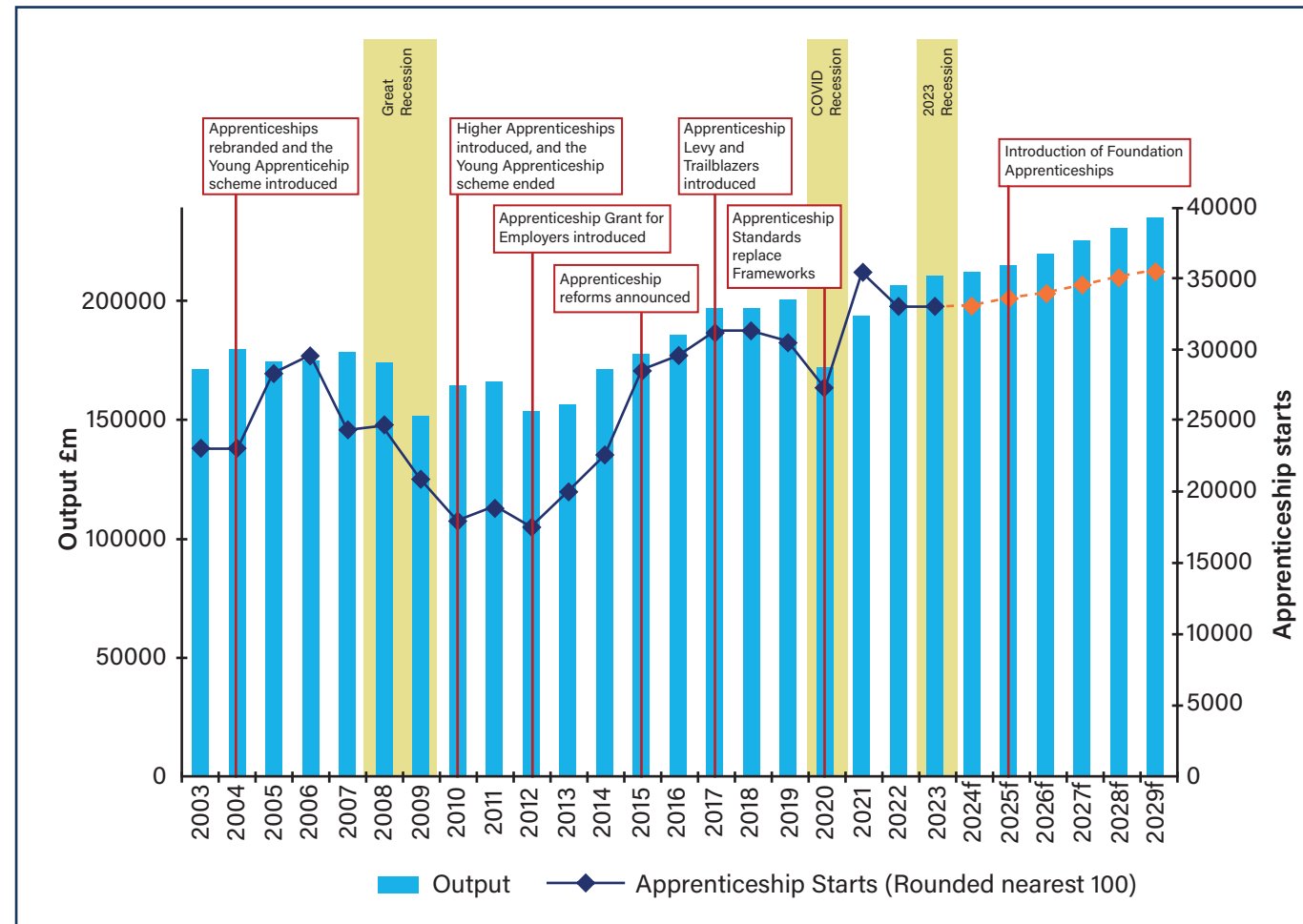
9. Ibid
10. CITB Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2023 (September 2024)

3x

Around three times the number of apprenticeship starts are needed to keep pace with demand.



Apprenticeship starts and construction output 2003/04 to 2023/24 and projections to 2029/30, Great Britain



Projected apprenticeship starts and achievements

Assuming no major changes to apprenticeship policy, the projected period of steady output growth from 2025 to 2029 is likely to support a gradual increase in apprenticeship starts. The introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships adds to an expanding menu of training options, alongside Modular and Flexi-Job Apprenticeships, though it remains too early to assess whether these newer models will deliver a meaningful net increase in overall apprenticeship numbers.

Currently there are 30,000 advertised job vacancies in the construction sector, 11% above their pre-pandemic level (January to March 2020) and about 36% above their historic levels¹¹. A quarter (26%) of construction businesses report that finding suitably skilled staff is their key challenge¹².

Meeting the industry's annual recruitment needs through apprenticeships alone would require roughly three times the number of apprentices. This is a level that's clearly unachievable in the short term, even if it were desirable. While demand for skilled workers is rising, and shortages persist, even in a cooling labour market, employers remain cautious about taking on apprentices. This means apprenticeships will continue to play a vital, though not exclusive, role in addressing workforce gaps. The success of other training routes will likely depend on how well they can offer the same practical relevance, structured progression, and credibility that have long defined the apprenticeship model.

11. Office for National Statistics, Labour market overview, UK: October 2024 (Release date: 15 October 2024)
12. CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2024)

It's estimated that about 47,000 of those currently enrolled on a construction apprenticeship will achieve their qualification over the next two years¹³.

Not all those who achieve their apprenticeship will enter employment. Only about six in 10 (55%) immediately enter work, although others will continue in training (38%)¹⁴.

To boost the number of starts and completions the industry needs to showcase apprenticeship success stories to highlight the benefits of hiring an apprentice.

Employers are cautious about recruiting apprentices, despite recruitment pressures.



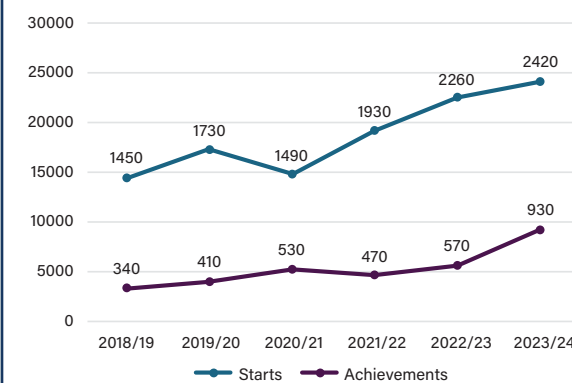
How construction apprenticeships are changing society

Unless otherwise stated, all figures cited in this section relate to construction apprenticeships in England only.

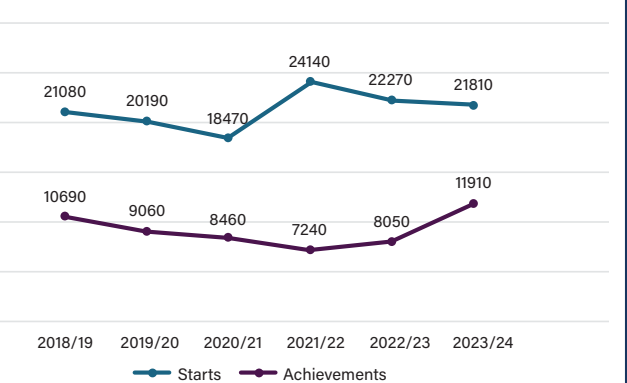
The number of females starting construction apprenticeships has risen dramatically in recent years, increasing by two-thirds (62%) from 1,450 in 2018/19 to 2,420 in 2023/24¹⁵. The number of women completing their apprenticeship rose from 340 in 2018/19 to 930 in 2023/24.

Male starters increased by 15%, from 21,080 in 2018/19 to 21,140 in 2021/22, but have since dropped back down to 2018/19 levels. Male achievements decreased by a third (32%) between 2018/19 and 2021/22, from 10,690 to 7,240, but have since recovered and are currently 11% above 2018/19 levels.

Female starts and achievement year-on-year, England 2018/19 - 2023/24



Male starts and achievement year-on-year, England 2018/19 - 2023/24



While the numbers remain small, the rise in female starters suggests a future with greater gender diversity in traditionally male-dominated construction trades. Changing attitudes towards gender roles and the introduction of policies aimed at promoting gender equality will help to decrease the gender gap and the skills gap.

13. Department for Education (England), Apprenticeships, Skills Development Scotland, Modern Apprenticeship Statistics, and Welsh Government, StatsWales - Work-based learning
14. CITB Destinations of Construction Learners in Further Education (June 2017)
15. Department for Education (England), Apprenticeships

Deprivation

Apprenticeships can be a great way to support social mobility. They help a person gain a trade and many go on to own their own business.

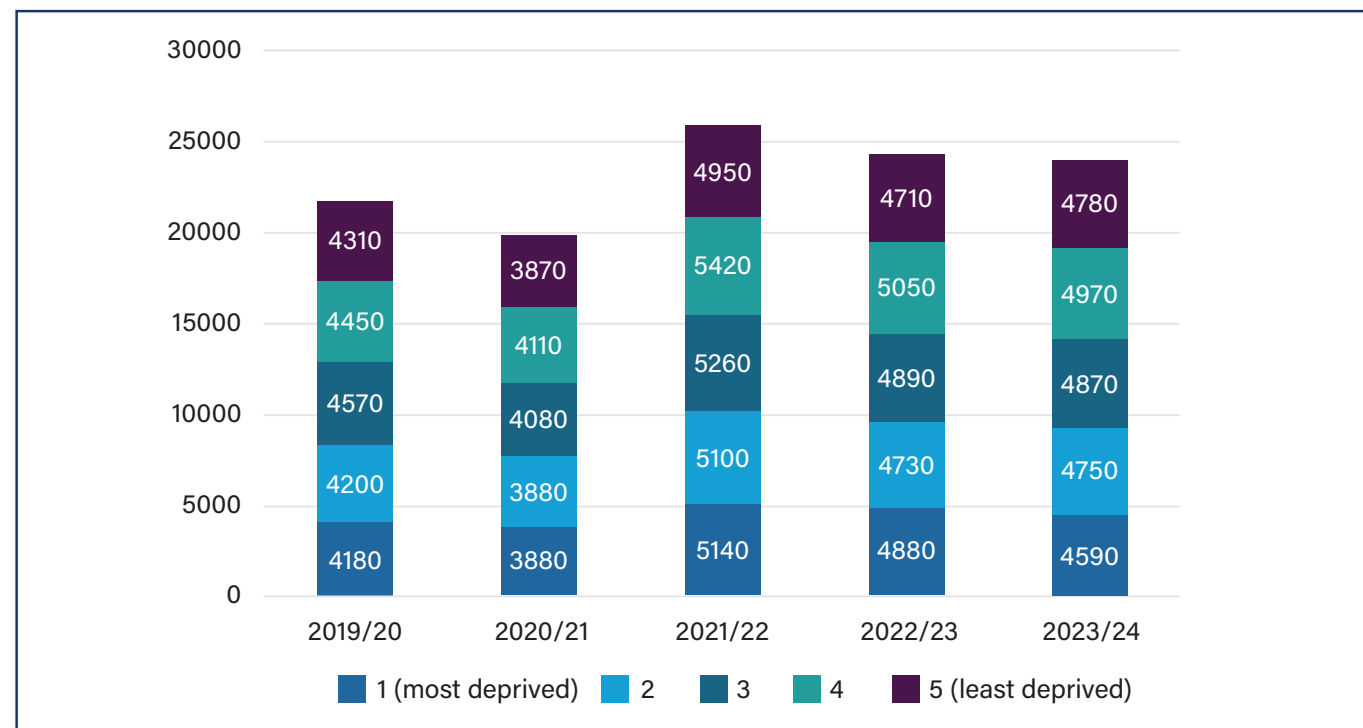
But, apprenticeship starts have dropped steadily over the past two years with those from the most deprived backgrounds experiencing an 11% reduction compared to those from the least deprived backgrounds. This is a concern for policymakers who see skills and training as a key to unlock greater social mobility, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Individuals from the most deprived backgrounds doing a construction apprenticeship are also less likely to achieve compared to those who are from more affluent backgrounds¹⁶.

Apprenticeships can be a great way to support social mobility. They help a person gain a trade and many go on to own their own business.



Number of starts by deprivation level, England 2019/20 – 2023/24



16. Department for Education (England), Apprenticeships

Achievement rate by deprivation level, England 2020/21 – 2023/24

	1 (most deprived)	2	3	4	5 (least deprived)
2020/21	54.8%	55.9%	59.3%	61.6%	60.8%
2021/22	47.1%	51.8%	55.7%	56.3%	57.1%
2022/23	47.7%	51.6%	54.9%	55.8%	54.3%
2023/24	51.7%	56.3%	59.0%	58.4%	53.9%

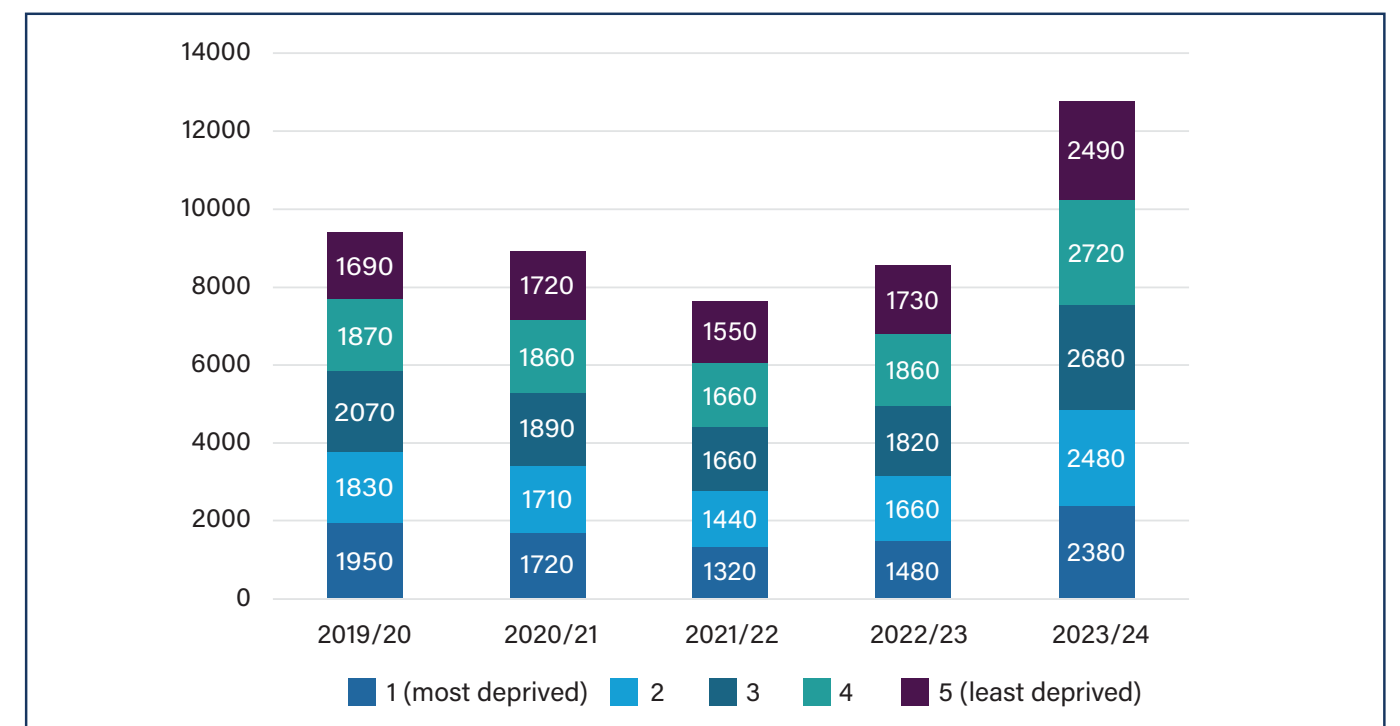
Younger people (aged 16-18) from deprived backgrounds in particular are more likely to have immediate financial pressures. This may lead them to seek quick employment, rather than starting and completing apprenticeships that could have higher earning potential with greater progression opportunities in the long run.

Older apprentices, aged over 24, from deprived backgrounds are similarly less likely to achieve their apprenticeship than either their counterparts from less deprived backgrounds or even their 19-23 year old peers from deprived backgrounds. This could be attributed to a combination of financial and family responsibilities and obligations, such as bills and dependents that makes training difficult.

Until 2023/24 overall achievement rates have gone down for people of all deprivation levels. This decline is likely to be an aftershock of the pandemic and the subsequent reduction in the number of starts. However, the negative impact on achievements was more pronounced among those from the most deprived households. This suggests that economic changes caused by Covid may have had a more severe impact on those who are more deprived.

In addition, the pandemic further entrenched inequalities, with those from deprived backgrounds facing greater challenges in accessing and completing apprenticeships. This disparity could be due to factors such as limited access to technology for remote learning, poorer mental health, financial pressures, and less-useful support networks.

Number of achievements by deprivation level, England 2019/20 – 2023/24



Employers' perspective of apprenticeships

Employers who provide apprenticeships do so because they know it benefits their business. Firms which started providing apprenticeships in the last five years thought it was a good way to recruit and train new staff, as well as upskilling existing staff.

Apprentices are seen as a way of succession planning, making it easier to attract and recruit young people. They also offer the opportunity for more diversity and inclusion in the construction industry.

The most common benefit businesses report is that apprenticeships allow them to train people the way that they want, or to mould them to how they do things (86%). The second most common reason is that apprenticeships allow the business to improve or to maintain skill levels (53%), while a third of businesses (37%) say they improve productivity¹⁷.

Businesses are also increasingly identifying social benefit or community benefit-related drivers for offering apprenticeships. The proportion identifying corporate social responsibility as a benefit has increased markedly from 18% to 29%¹⁸.



The benefits of taking on an apprentice

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 It's a more cost-effective way to recruit staff | 5 An extra pair of hands can allow an employer to take on more work |
| 2 It can improve productivity | 6 Apprenticeships can be flexibly tailored to the needs of a business |
| 3 They inject a breath of fresh air into a business | 7 Employing an apprentice can teach your workforce new skills |
| 4 They develop specific skills, based on business needs | 8 Businesses can attract the very best in future talent. |

17. CITB Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2023 (September 2024)
18. Ibid

How can more employers be encouraged to take on apprentices?

If the challenge is to encourage more employers to take on apprentices, what would make a difference?

Research by CITB suggests that, while some employers have no intention of taking on apprentices, for others support would make a real difference.

For employers who do take on apprentices, about a third (34%) value funding. A similar proportion (31%) say help with identifying apprentices and screening potential candidates (29%) are important factors¹⁹.

For those who don't employ apprentices, around one in six (16%) firms indicate that funding would make a difference. Help with finding a training provider and organising the process are also popular, with 15% and 11% of businesses who currently employ apprentices respectively identifying these factors²⁰. They also scored highly among businesses who do not employ apprentices.

This suggests that financial incentives alone might not be sufficient to attract new employers into offering apprenticeships. It also lends weight to the view that incentivising new businesses to offer apprenticeships requires active support, including non-financial help.

Encouraging wider employer participation is not only key to expanding the number of apprenticeship opportunities, but also to improving achievement and completion rates. While there is no definitive evidence that either small or large firms consistently achieve better outcomes, the type of support they provide does matter. Larger employers may benefit from more structured training resources, but smaller businesses can offer closer mentoring and more tailored support, which can also contribute significantly to successful outcomes. Ensuring employers are well-supported to offer apprenticeships, in ways that work for their size, capacity, and sector, is therefore vital both for uptake and for apprentices' success.

Getting micro and small firms to take on an apprentice is key to unlocking growth in apprenticeship starts.



19. CITB Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2023 (September 2024)
20. Ibid

Opportunities for apprenticeships across England, Scotland and Wales

In Scotland and Wales, apprenticeship achievement rates are significantly higher than in England, exceeding 70%.

Apprenticeship achievement rates in construction by nation, 2018/19 to 2023/24

Nation	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
England – Construction & Built Environment	65%	63.1%	58.5%	53.6%	53%	56.7%
Scotland – Construction & Related	79%	78%	81%	75.4%	72.3%	72.9%
Wales – Construction	79%	^	^	71%	73%	69.0%

^ The standard performance measures were not produced in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the disruption of the pandemic.

The greatest opportunity to grow apprenticeship numbers lies in increasing starts among small businesses and improving achievement rates in England. While Scotland and Wales perform strongly, particularly on achievements, the challenges impacting completions in England are also evident in the devolved nations and pose a real threat to further progress or even reversing the momentum of achievement rates.

In Wales, the skills landscape has seen significant changes. The creation of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (now known as Medr) will for the first time oversee all elements of the education, training and skills landscape, including funding, oversight and strategy. Medr’s initial focus, in a construction skills context, has been to explore the possibility of reinstating the Level 2. This is a notable shift given the previous policy direction in Wales of moving apprenticeship provision to Level 3, which, while raising qualification standards, may have inadvertently limited entry-level accessibility. Reintroducing a Level 2 pathway could stimulate an increase in completions although challenges will persist in completing the assessment of learners. Medr

has also started the process of reviewing the wider apprenticeship programme across all sectors with a view to informing the procurement exercise when the apprenticeship contract is re-commissioned in 2027. Wales has also taken positive steps in introducing degree apprenticeships in Construction Management, Civil Engineering, Quantity Surveying, Building Surveying, and Real Estate. A recent report from the Senedd’s Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee²¹ highlighted the need for a vocational education and training strategy and for Regional Skills Partnerships to collate and understand labour market intelligence.

In March 2025, the Scottish Government confirmed £100 million funding to support 25,500 new Modern Apprentices (MAs) and 2,500 Foundation Apprentices in the 2025-26 Budget. Modern Apprenticeships in construction continue to experience high demand and accounted for 25.6% of all MA starts in 2024/25 (the second highest occupational grouping) and 33.7% of all MAs in training²². Yet demand for MA starts in a range of key sectors, including construction, continues to outstrip the funding within Skills Development Scotland’s (SDS) available budget.

In Scotland and Wales, apprenticeship achievement rates are significantly higher than in England, exceeding 70%.

21. [Welsh Parliament Economy, Trade and Rural Affairs Committee, Apprenticeship pathways \(July 2025\)](#)
22. [Modern Apprenticeship Statistics, up to the end of Q4 2024/25](#)

The post-school education and skills delivery landscape in Scotland is undergoing transformational reform. This means uncertainty for the future delivery of Modern Apprenticeships. The Tertiary Education and Training Bill provides the legislative framework to the Scottish Government’s proposed reforms. This means that, if the Bill passes, the responsibility for national training programmes, including apprenticeships, will transfer from SDS to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). For employers and training providers, key questions remain over the future funding model; the level of funding available; and how delivery will happen once responsibility is transferred to the SFC.

Given the stronger apprenticeship outcomes in Scotland and Wales, there may be lessons for England. The branding of Modern Apprenticeships arguably resonates more with younger audiences by presenting a contemporary, youth-focused route. In Wales, shared apprenticeship schemes such as Cyfle in West Wales have produced strong results by enabling smaller employers, who might not have sufficient work to support an apprentice alone, to participate collectively. That said, both Scotland and Wales are undergoing significant policy reform, and future changes to funding and delivery models could place pressure on the very strengths that have underpinned their apprenticeship performance to date.

The Spring Statement announced £600 million of investment in construction training over the next four years in England. This includes the creation of Technical Excellence Colleges, the expansion of Skills Bootcamps, and the introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships in England, shorter, more flexible training lasting around eight months. These are

designed to be more accessible for school leavers and individuals (aged 16-21), not yet ready for a full apprenticeship, potentially broadening the pipeline, especially for those from disadvantaged or non-traditional backgrounds.

Financial incentives for SMEs to offer Foundation Apprenticeships could increase employer participation, particularly among smaller firms that struggle with the cost and complexity of full apprenticeships. However, concerns remain. Some argue that the proposed eight-month duration is still too long and may overlap unhelpfully with Level 2 apprenticeships. Others warn that reducing the duration further could compromise quality, leading to perceptions of Foundation Apprenticeships as “watered-down” alternatives, an issue in a safety-critical industry like construction.

There is also a risk that Foundation Apprenticeships may displace existing demand. If employers or young people who might otherwise offer or pursue a full Level 2 apprenticeship opt for the shorter alternative instead, the overall number of apprenticeships may not increase. Without clear progression pathways, Foundation Apprenticeships could become “dead ends” rather than effective stepping stones into skilled employment and progression.

The first Foundation Apprenticeships launched in August 2025. They focus on priority sectors aligned with the UK’s industrial strategy: Construction and the Built Environment, Engineering and Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, and Digital. These apprenticeships will be supported by an employer incentive payment to help cover the additional costs of supporting new entrants, such as coaching and mentoring.



The UK Government aims to achieve up to 30,000 Foundation Apprenticeship starts over the course of the current Parliament. Based on construction's current share of apprenticeship starts (around 7%), this could conservatively translate to an additional 2,100 starts. However, given the government's focus on stimulating growth in construction, the actual number may be higher, though there is a risk that some traditional apprenticeship starts may be displaced due to substitution.

In terms of funding, apprenticeships in Wales are fully funded by the Welsh Government, with employers only required to pay the apprentice's wage. In contrast, in England, employers who do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy, or levy-paying employers who have used up their levy funds, are typically required to contribute 5% of the training costs through a process

known as co-investment and the government pays the remaining 95%. There are exemptions where the government may cover 100% of the training costs such as for apprentices aged 16 to 21. However, for many employers, particularly smaller firms, the need to co-invest could make apprenticeships less financially attractive than fully funded models.

This issue is especially pertinent given ongoing inflation in labour, materials, and energy costs, which may leave businesses with limited capacity to invest in training. It could also affect the UK Government's ability to meet its aim of reducing economic inactivity and increasing employment through the "Get Britain Working" plan, particularly when it comes to supporting older workers into skilled roles.

How CITB supports apprenticeships

The New Entrant Support Team

Created to support employers across Britain, our New Entrant Support Team (NEST) team provides free direct support to employers. This includes help with recruitment, paperwork, accessing grants and funding, and ongoing mentoring throughout an apprenticeship.

The role of NEST is to work with employers to remove the barriers they may face employing and retaining new entrants, particularly apprentices.

NEST can:

Recruitment

Help employers to get the right apprentice by signposting them to useful employment resources and helping advertise apprenticeship vacancies to attract potential candidates for free.

CITB Funding

Make sure employers are set up to receive CITB apprenticeship grants:

- Attendance grant: £2,500 (per year, per apprentice)
- Achievement grant: £3,500 (on successful completion of the apprenticeship).

Admin

Help with paperwork, liaising with training providers, and setting up employers' Government Digital Account. This allows employers more time to focus on the job.

Retention

Stay in touch to make sure employers have the support they need to help their apprentice achieve and become a fully-fledged employee on completion.



Additional Apprenticeships Data

Figure 1: Construction apprenticeship starts and achievements by nation

Construction Planning & Built Environment – England

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Apprenticeship Starts	21,470	21,210	22,680	22,550	21,910	19,950	26,120	24,530	24,230
Apprenticeship Achievements	9,510	11,980	12,420	11,030	9,470	8,990	8,310	8,340	12,300

Source: [Department for Education \(England\), Apprenticeships](#)
Data period is academic year, i.e. August to July

Construction & Related – Scotland

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Apprenticeship Starts	4,894	5,934	6,104	6,111	6,417	5,033	6,540	6,623	6,410
Apprenticeship Achievements	3,081	3,557	4,000	4,915	4,977	4,158	4,436	4,612	5,110

Source: [Skills Development Scotland, Modern Apprenticeship Statistics](#)
Data period is financial year, i.e. April to March

Construction Planning & the Built Environment – Wales

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Apprenticeship Starts	2,160	2,410	2,440	2,595	2,120	2,265	2,760	2,255	2,295
Apprenticeship Achievements	1,630	1,605	1,520	1,615	^	^	1,560	1,610	1,110

Source: [Welsh Government, StatsWales - Work-based learning](#)
Data period is academic year, i.e. August to July

^ The standard performance measures were not produced in academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 due to the disruption of the pandemic.

Figure 2: Construction apprenticeship starts by age and level 2017-18 and 2023/24

Source: [Department for Education \(England\), Apprenticeships](#)

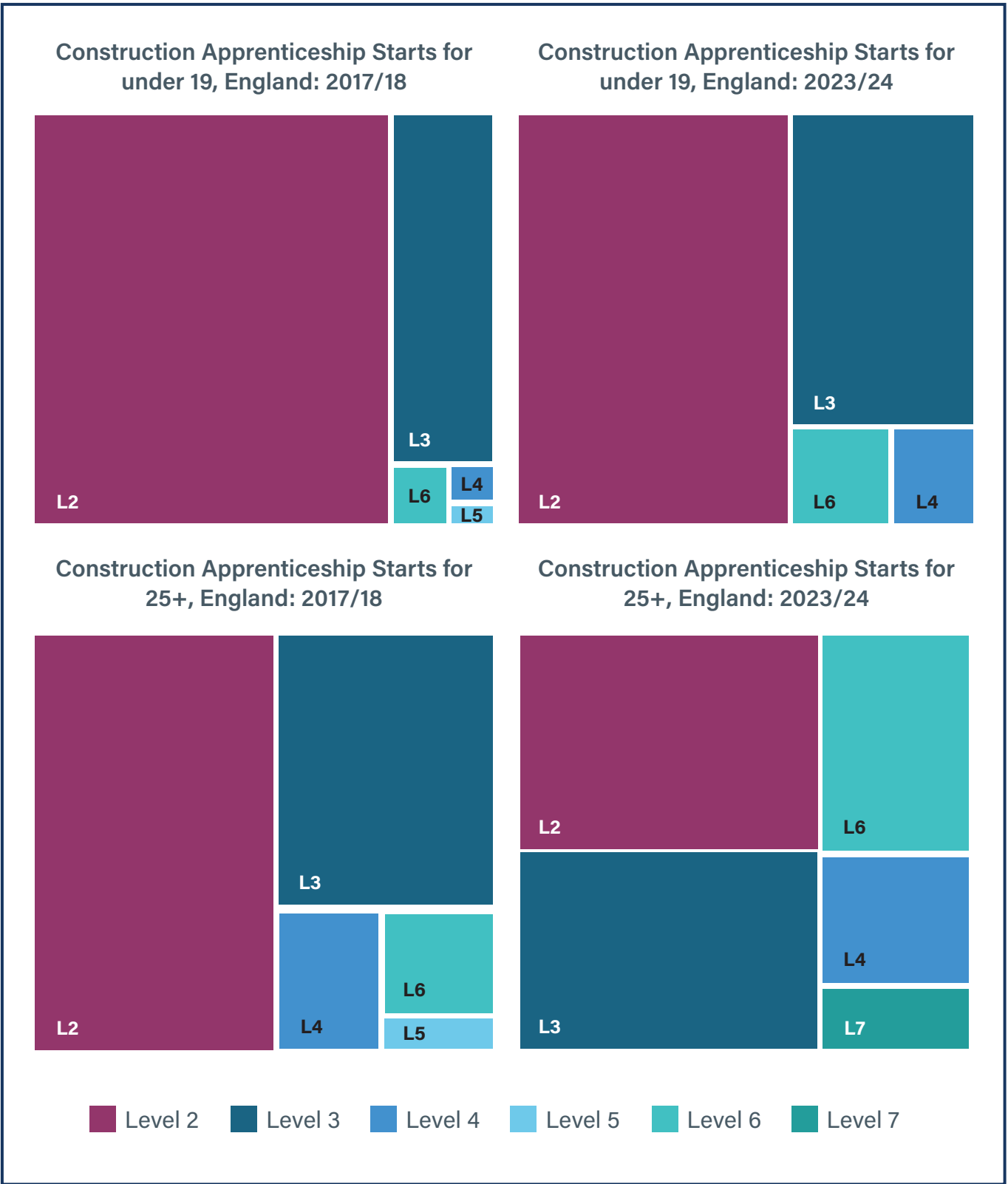
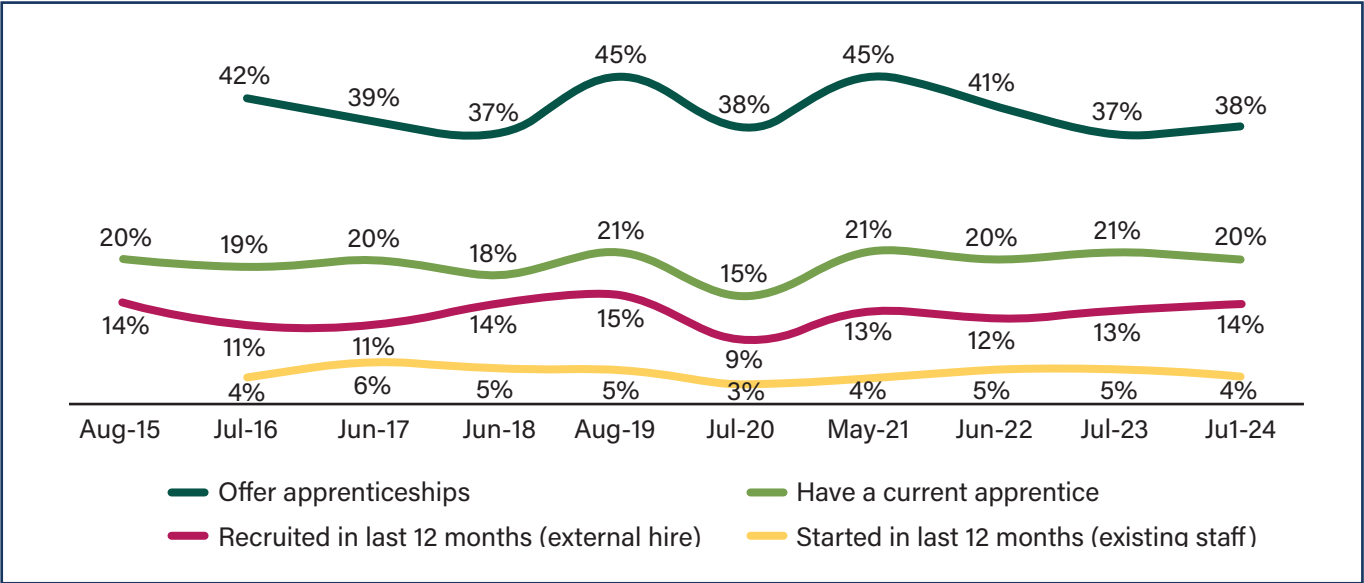
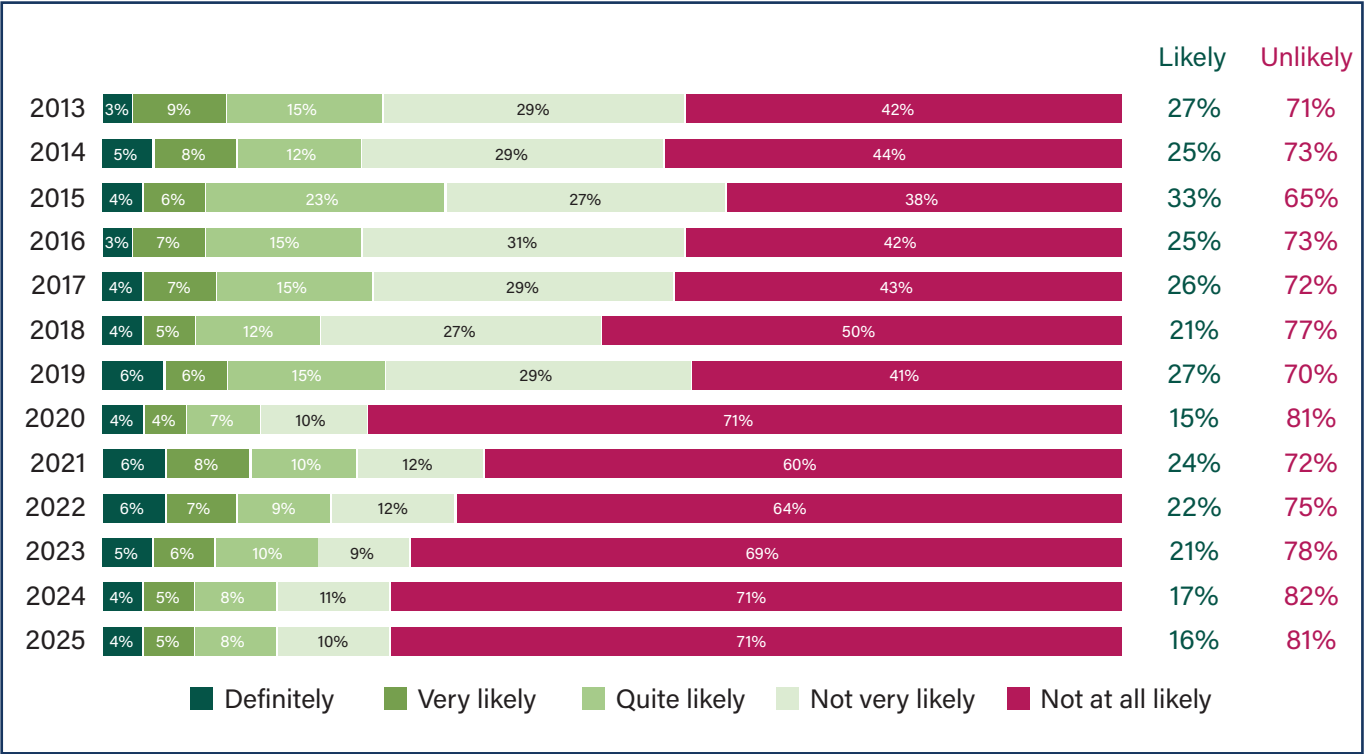


Figure 3: Apprenticeships: usage over time (construction only)



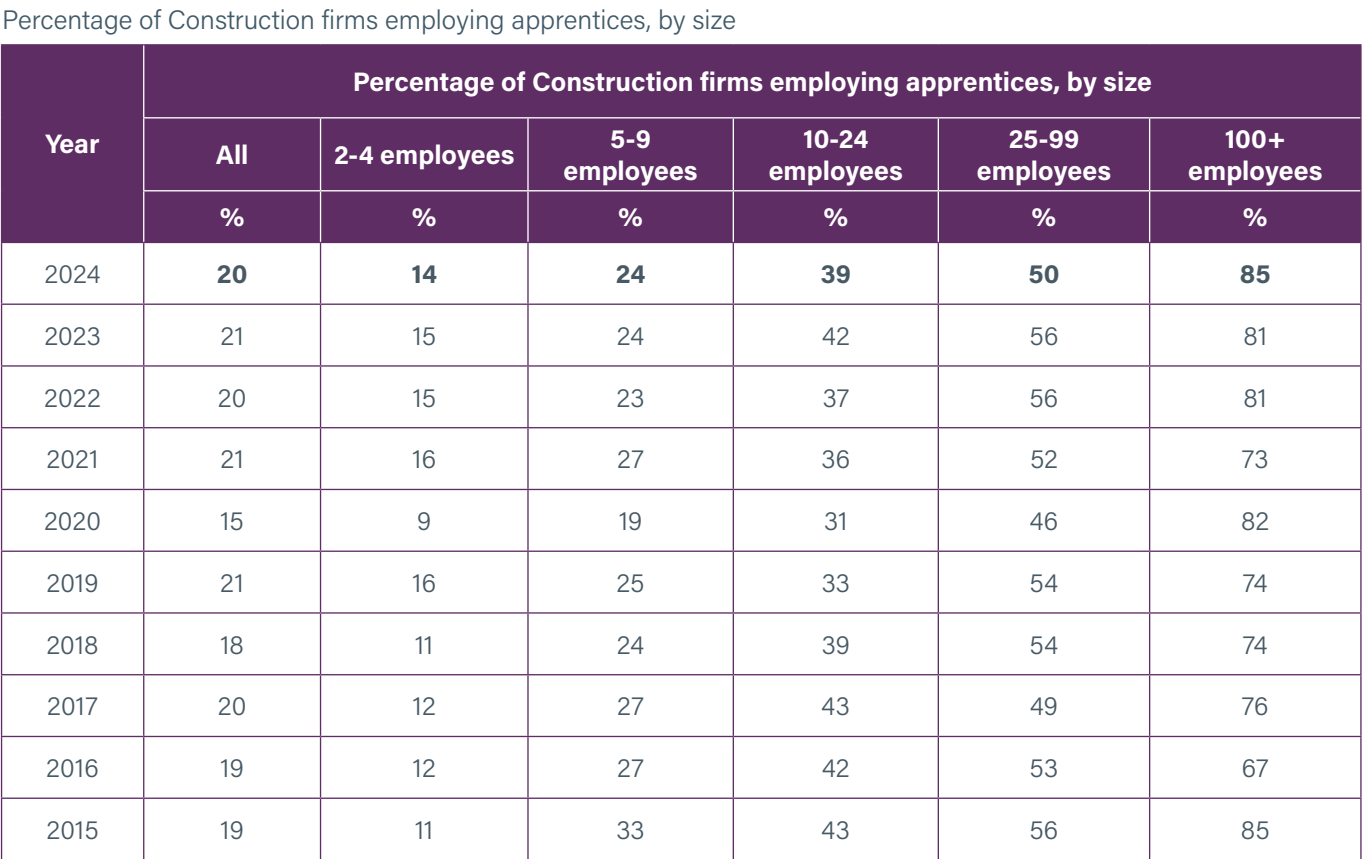
Source: CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2024)

Figure 4: The proportion of employers unlikely to start people on apprenticeships in the next 12 months has decreased



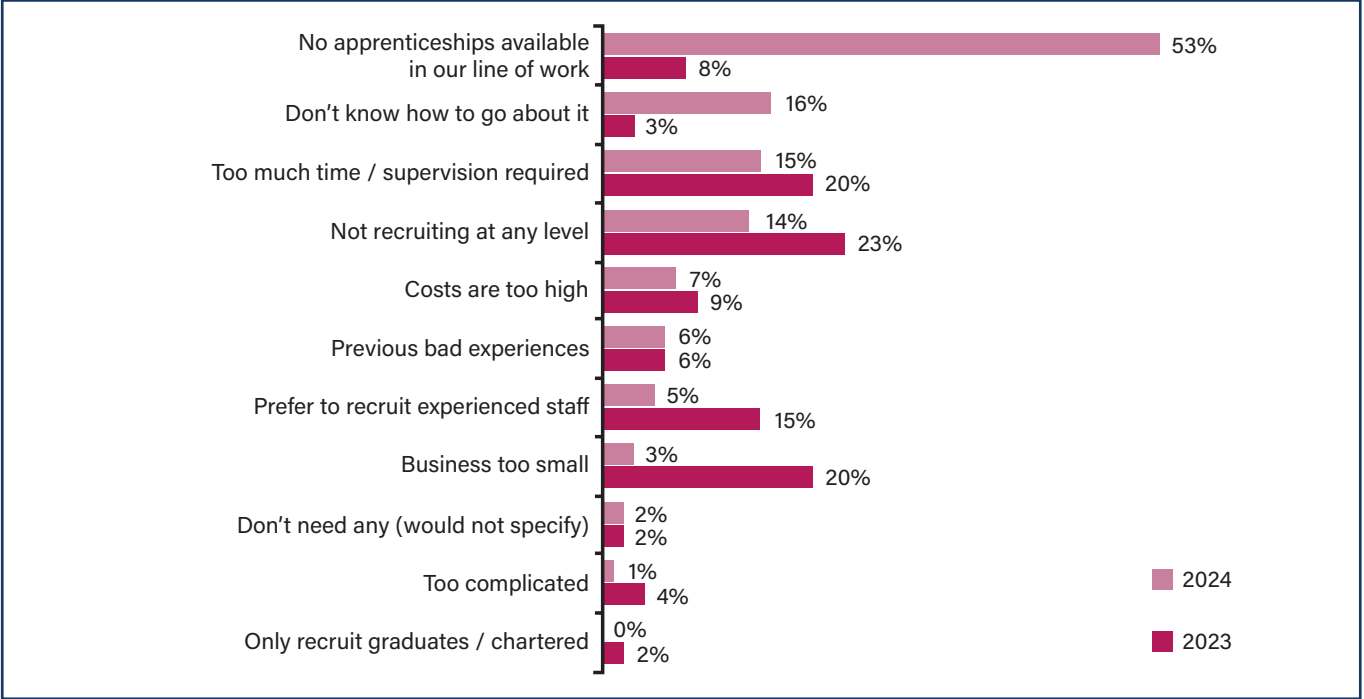
Source: CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2025)

Figure 5: Larger employers are much more likely to employ an apprentice than smaller firms



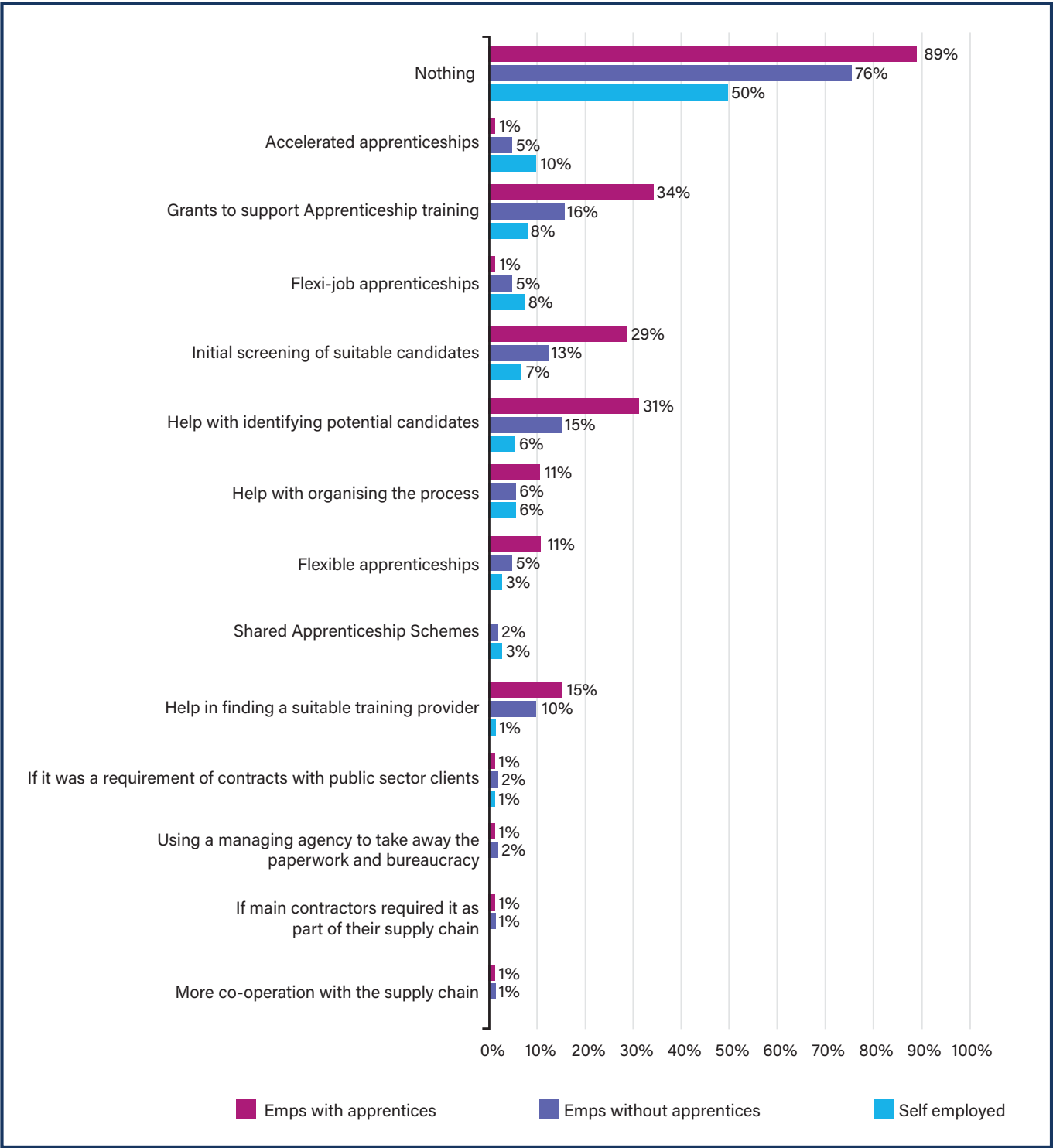
Source: CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2024)

Figure 6: Barriers to offering apprenticeships



Source: CITB Employer Panel Employer: Attitudes and Motivations regarding Learning and Training (August 2024)

Figure 7: Ways in which construction businesses could be encouraged to take on (more) apprenticeships



Source: CITB Skills and Training in the Construction Industry 2023 (September 2024)

Figure 8: Achievement rate by deprivation level and age, England 2020/21 – 2023/24

	2020/21			2021/22			2022/23			2023/24		
	16-18	19-23	24+	16-18	19-23	24+	16-18	19-23	24+	16-18	19-23	24
One (most deprived)	52.5%	58.7%	53.8%	45.8%	49.6%	45.9%	46.7%	51.5%	44.5%	48.6%	55.4%	53.4%
Two	53.5%	60.6%	55.0%	50.8%	55.7%	48.1%	50.8%	54.0%	49.5%	55.3%	58.7%	55.1%
Three	56.2%	66.0%	57.3%	54.0%	60.2%	53.1%	54.3%	58.0%	51.1%	57.6%	61.1%	59.3%
Four	58.5%	67.5%	60.6%	55.5%	59.7%	51.6%	57.4%	57.3%	47.9%	56.1%	61.0%	59.4%
Five (least deprived)	59.4%	66.0%	55.0%	56.2%	58.9%	56.2%	57.2%	53.0%	48.2%	58.4%	58.7%	58.1%

Source: Department for Education (England), Apprenticeships

Figure 9: Apprenticeship starts by region in England from 2018/19 to 2023/24

Starts Region	Academic Year						
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
North West	3,680	3,620	3,480	3,550	4,350	3,920	4,040
Yorkshire and The Humber	3,070	3,070	3,220	2,930	3,700	3,270	3,050
South West	2,760	2,990	2,690	2,720	3,610	3,330	3,280
South East	3,170	2,980	2,790	2,460	3,230	3,110	3,150
West Midlands	2,000	1,990	2,010	1,840	2,120	2,060	2,100
North East	2,110	1,930	1,840	1,590	2,150	2,020	2,030
East Midlands	1,990	2,150	2,160	1,690	2,360	2,330	1,990
London	1,490	1,560	1,440	1,320	1,830	1,860	1,930
East of England	2,030	2,040	2,070	1,720	2,520	2,360	2,400

Source: Department for Education (England), Apprenticeships

Note: Excludes outside of England and unknown

Appendix

Apprenticeship policy timeline

- **2004** – Advanced Modern Apprenticeships and Foundation Modern Apprenticeships were rebranded to Apprenticeships. Age limit of 25 removed.
- **2004** – Scotland retains the term “Modern Apprenticeships,” marking a divergence from England and Wales, which rebranded provision simply as Apprenticeships.
- **2009** – Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act placed apprenticeships on a statutory footing for the first time in England, giving young people a right to an apprenticeship place.
- **2010** – Higher Apprenticeships introduced.
- **2012** – Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16-24-year-olds introduced.
- **2013** – Richard Review of Apprenticeships published recommendations to simplify and improve apprenticeships, leading to the development of employer-led “standards” (later delivered via Trailblazers).
- **2014** – First Trailblazer standards launched. Employer-designed apprenticeship standards piloted, marking the start of the transition away from frameworks.
- **2015** – UK Government announced apprenticeship system reform plans and set a target of 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020.
- **2016** – Apprenticeship Levy legislation introduced via the Finance Act 2016, setting the groundwork for the 2017 launch.
- **2017** – The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) established to help shape technical education and apprenticeships in the UK.
- **2017** – Apprenticeship Levy began. Large employers must pay 0.5% of their pay bill if this is over £3m.
- **2017** – Employer-designed standards rolled out nationally. Trailblazer approach embedded as the new system, with frameworks beginning to be phased out (fully withdrawn in 2020).
- **2017** – Apprenticeship National Insurance Contributions introduced to encourage more businesses to take on apprentices.
- **2017** – 12-month minimum length of apprenticeship introduced, must include off-the-job training, usually in colleges.



- **2017** – Introduction of the End-Point Assessment in England.
- **2019** – Employers who pay the levy, can transfer up to 25% of their training budget to a smaller company within their supply chain.
- **2019** – T Levels introduced (first teaching in 2020). While not apprenticeships, these formed part of the wider technical education reform agenda alongside apprenticeships.
- **2020** – UK Government replaced apprenticeship frameworks with apprenticeship standards. Transition must be completed by 31 March 2025.
- **2020** – Covid-19 apprenticeship support schemes: Incentive payments and flexibilities introduced to sustain starts during the pandemic.
- **2020** – Apprenticeship frameworks fully withdrawn in England. From 1st August, all new starts were required to follow employer-designed standards, completing the transition begun in 2014. Existing learners on frameworks were allowed to finish their programmes by 2025.
- **2021** – Digital Apprenticeship Service introduced for employers paying the Apprenticeship Levy who want to access apprenticeship funding.
- **2022** – Digital Apprenticeship Service became mandatory for all employers.
- **2023** – “Get Britain Working” Plan announced. Apprenticeships highlighted as part of strategy to reduce economic inactivity and support workforce participation.
- **2023** – Maximum limit of 10 apprenticeship starts removed for small employers who don’t pay the Apprenticeship Levy.
- **April 2024** – The UK Government begins fully funding apprenticeships for SMEs, for anyone up to 21 years old.
- **2024** – Unused Apprenticeship Levy funds become unavailable to use by large employers. Unused funds support apprentice starts and existing learners with other employers.
- **2024** – Funding geared towards Levels 6 and 7 rather than Levels 2 and 3. Approximately 40% of Apprenticeship Levy is now spent on Level 4+. This has led to a gradual decline 16-17-year-olds doing apprenticeships, particularly affecting construction.
- **2024** – Government announces that Skills England will take over the function of IfATE.
- **2024** – The Government announces its intention to widen the Apprenticeship Levy into a new Growth and Skills Levy to allow a broader range of training to be funded through the levy, although a timeline for implementation is yet to be released.
- **2024** – Wales establishes the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr), bringing all post-16 education, training, and skills into a single body.
- **2025** – Government launches the first seven Foundation Apprenticeships, including three in construction. These apprenticeships are designed to provide young people (aged 16 to 21) with entry-level, work-based training in sectors facing skill shortages.
- **2025** – Funding for Level 7 (postgraduate) apprenticeships restricted to 16- to 21-year-olds only from January 2026.
- **2025** – Scotland passes stage 1 of the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) Bill, transferring apprenticeship oversight from SDS to the SFC.



For information on how CITB can support employers with apprenticeships:
[citb.co.uk/apprenticeships](https://www.citb.co.uk/apprenticeships)

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