



29 May 2020

This release includes summary statistics on key apprenticeship learning data in England for the latest month reported. DfE intends to continue to publish short updates on monthly apprenticeship starts as timely as possible and content in these repurposed releases will seek to include other analysis on the impact of COVID-19 once available. The next monthly transparency release is planned for June, where we will publish headline apprenticeship starts reported to date to April 2020, and will include latest data returned for May 2020.

The next full quarterly release will contain fuller quarterly breakdowns reported to date up to April 2020, which we aim to publish in July. This will include underlying data normally provided but, the commentary and tables will be subject to change so as to focus on more relevant measures or analysis to the current situation. The last quarterly release may be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-march-2020>.

We also plan to publish the end-of-year Further Education (FE) and Skills and Apprenticeships and Traineeships releases normally published in November.

Impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeship data and reporting

It is key to note for this release that COVID-19 has resulted in the closure of colleges and some employers are unable to start or continue apprenticeships as planned. Apprenticeship data for recent periods is always subject to a large degree of underreporting but, during the nationwide lockdown due to the pandemic, reporting will be further affected by collections remaining open on a voluntary basis to help reduce burden on the sector and employers.

To provide more transparency on continuing activity in the apprenticeship programme during the pandemic we have also provided the latest data reported to date for the month of April in the separate tables accompanying this release. It is key to note that in normal circumstances the first time a month is reported on it may typically represent only two thirds of the starts providers go on to report later in the year, so we would not normally release the data. Care should be taken with this data as interpretation of the level and particularly comparisons with other periods risks being unrepresentative. Given the level of underreporting, where reported to date figures are provided in this commentary April is not included in keeping with our typical approach to publishing the most robust year to date number and is provided in separate data tables.

It may be possible that the pandemic has affected reporting of apprenticeship learning during the period, and this could vary by provider. For example, some providers may have been unable to make returns due to the lockdown, or if they have made returns, these could be of variable completeness. Some providers may even provide more timely and accurate returns than usual at this point in the year for funding purposes.

We continue to seek your feedback on the type of breakdowns of most use during this period, such as national apprenticeship starts by age, level and individual standard etc, so we can consider going forward and in light of data quality assessments.

1. Summary statistics

Apprenticeships

Impact of the apprenticeship levy and COVID-19

As of May 2017, reforms have been made to how apprenticeship funding works, including the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and apprenticeship service. The profile of apprenticeship starts changed significantly since the introduction of the levy which, along with the introduction of apprenticeship standards (that are replacing frameworks), has impacted on the number and nature of apprenticeship starts and participation.

The latest monthly apprenticeship data now includes data relating to the period affected by COVID-19, i.e. from March 2020 onwards (note: the UK lockdown was announced on 23 March so is likely to have impacted on starts in the last week of March). Therefore, extra care should be taken in comparing and interpreting data presented in this release.

The apprenticeship starts data are based on the ninth Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data return for the 2019/20 academic year from data providers, with a return date of 6 May 2020.

Headline statistics

(Main table pack, table 3)

Latest figures for the first 8 months of the 2019/20 academic year (August 2019 to March 2020) show:

- Apprenticeship starts reported to date are 260,100
 - The proportion of starts on standards was 74.8 per cent (194,400)
 - The proportion of starts supported by ASA levy funds¹ was 66.5 per cent (172,900)
 - The proportion of starts by level was:
 - Intermediate level: 32.2 per cent (83,600)
 - Advanced level: 43.8 per cent (113,900)²
 - Higher level: 24.1 per cent (62,600)
 - The proportion of starts by age group was:
 - 16-18: 26.4 per cent (68,700)
 - 19-24: 29.5 per cent (76,800)
 - 25 and over: 44.1 per cent (114,600)
 - The number of apprenticeship starts reported to date for March was 19,600; in March 2019, the number reported at the same point was 25,600
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In March 2020 we published data³ for the first six months of the 2019/20 academic year (August 2019 to January 2020), which showed the total number of apprenticeship starts at that point had decreased to 198,600 from 214,200 in the first six months of 2018/19, a decrease of 7.3 per cent.

¹ During this reporting period a very small number of apprentices employed by organisations that do not pay the levy were funded using the apprenticeship service system. This was part of testing in preparation for the extension of the service to all organisations that do not pay the levy which happened on 9 January 2020.

² The proportion of starts at intermediate or advanced level was 75.9 per cent (197,500)

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships-march-2020>

Starts during the period affected by the COVID-19 lockdown

The data in this section is provided to give transparency on continuing activity in the apprenticeship programme during the pandemic. It includes data from 23 March when the lockdown was announced and includes those reported to date for April based on returns from training providers returned on 6 May. Starts for the period as reported at this point in 2018/19 are also provided. The data covering this period will be provisional until final data becomes available in November but will improve with later monthly returns given that providers can return data after the period it relates to.

As noted, we would not normally include data for the very latest month in this release due to completeness. For example, at this point in 2018/19, data reported to date for April starts was only 67.5 per cent of the final figure based on end of year data. Reporting of data by providers at this time may be further affected by the pandemic. Therefore, extra care should be taken in comparing and interpreting the data presented here.

Please note also: the timing of the provision mix over the year and between years changes significantly, therefore care should be taken interpreting the change in table 1 below from 2018/19 to 2019/20. Additionally, the 2018/19 data would also include more frameworks potentially supporting different sectors than the standards in 2019/20, so is included just for reference. Tables published alongside this release provide apprenticeship starts for the month of April in isolation.

There have been 13,020 apprenticeship starts reported to date between 23 March and 30 April 2020, fewer than the 26,330 reported for this period at this point last year (see table 1 below). As noted, final data will not become available until later in the year, therefore at this point it is unclear what the true number of starts in the affected period was or if the level of underreporting at this point in the year has been affected by the lockdown.

To note also, as reported in the April update – which included data prior to the lockdown – latest reported to date starts for 2019/20 were down on the same point in the previous year, with starts in all months (except September) in 2019/20 reported to date also being lower than those reported at the same point in 2018/19.

Of the starts reported during this period in 2019/20:

- Learners aged 25 and over make up nearly two-thirds (66.0 per cent) of starts; this was 55.8 per cent in the previous year.
- Intermediate apprenticeships accounted for 22.7 per cent of starts; this was 36.8 per cent in 2018/19.
- Higher apprenticeships accounted for 33.8 per cent, nearly double the proportion reported in 2018/19 (17.1 per cent).
- Business, Administration and Law and Health, Public Services and Care were the dominant sector subject areas comprising 70.2 per cent of starts in 2019/20. These were also the main sector subject areas the previous year, however they represented a smaller proportion of starts (61.3 per cent).

Table 1: Apprenticeship starts from 23 March to 30 April 2020, reported to date

(The return date for 2019/20 was 6 May 2020; the equivalent date for 2018/19 was 7 May 2019⁴)

	2018/19 (at this point last year)		2019/20 (reported to date)	
	Apprenticeship starts	Proportion of total	Apprenticeship starts	Proportion of total
Total starts	26,330		13,020	
Age				
Under 19	4,020	15.3%	1,040	8.0%
19-24	7,610	28.9%	3,390	26.1%
25+	14,700	55.8%	8,590	66.0%

⁴ Returns from providers are submitted on the 4th working day of the month <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-ilr-standard-file-specifications-and-reference-data>

	2018/19 (at this point last year)		2019/20 (reported to date)	
	Apprenticeship starts	Proportion of total	Apprenticeship starts	Proportion of total
Level				
Intermediate Apprenticeship	9,680	36.8%	2,950	22.7%
Advanced Apprenticeship	12,150	46.2%	5,670	43.5%
Higher Apprenticeship	4,500	17.1%	4,400	33.8%
Sector subject area				
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	260	1.0%	110	0.9%
Arts, Media and Publishing	50	*	70	0.5%
Business, Administration and Law	7,990	30.3%	4,730	36.3%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	650	2.5%	180	1.4%
Education and Training	380	1.5%	300	2.3%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	2,410	9.2%	620	4.8%
Health, Public Services and Care	8,140	30.9%	4,410	33.9%
Information and Communication Technology	1,560	5.9%	1,210	9.3%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	330	1.3%	120	0.9%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	4,560	17.3%	1,260	9.7%
Science and Mathematics	-	*	10	*

2. Apprenticeship service data as at 30 April 2020

Commitments

A commitment is where a potential apprentice, who is expected to go on to start an apprenticeship, has been recorded in the system. The apprenticeship service provides a self-managed service on which organisations and providers are able to add the details of an apprentice. Commitments may be either fully agreed or pending approval. A fully agreed commitment has agreement on the apprenticeship service from both the organisation and the training provider. A pending approval commitment means that details of an apprentice have been added but neither the provider and/or the organisation have finalised the commitment in the service. These commitments show an intent for an apprentice to start, however may not materialise into a fully agreed commitment in the future.

A commitment may be recorded on the apprenticeship service after the training start date has passed, therefore all data should be treated as provisional. Additionally, commitments pending approval do not require the recording of age or level. Data are fully captured when providers confirm details in the ILR.

Commitments include those with training start dates from March 2020 onwards, which may be affected by the impact of COVID-19 on apprenticeship training activity and may not potentially translate in to an apprenticeship start in a high proportion of cases during the period affected by the pandemic.

Organisations and providers do have the opportunity to amend/delete a commitment they have entered in the apprenticeship service system, prior to the data being fully captured when providers confirm details in the ILR. However, it is not possible to quantify how timely this is happening during lockdown, so commitments for future periods may overstate the true level or timing of future starts.

The commitments data now also include a small number associated with the apprenticeship service accounts of non-levy-paying organisations⁵. Care should be taken when comparisons are made of these latest figures to those published previously.

⁵ In the April release we noted that between 09 January and 31 March, accounts associated with non-levy-paying organisations had resulted in 2,480 commitments recorded

As at 30 April, the number⁶ of:

- Commitments recorded since the start of the apprenticeship service was 503,600.
- Commitments recorded for the 2018/19 academic year was 189,800 (of which 187,500 were fully agreed).
- Commitments recorded for the 2019/20 academic year so far was 160,500 (153,600 fully agreed⁷).

Table 2 below shows monthly commitments reported to date for 2019/20 so far, along with those reported at this point in 2019.

Table 2: Total number of commitments by training start date and age as reported at 30 April 2020 and at 30 April 2019⁸

Date committed to start	January	February	March	April	May	No date agreed	Total
Commitments for 2019/20 at 30 April 2020	19,800	14,800	13,900	5,400	1,700	1,600	57,300
Commitments for 2018/19 at 30 April 2019	20,200	16,600	16,200	10,600	1,300	1,400	66,500

Table show 2 shows that the commitments with a start date in April 2020 (5,400) are very much lower than those in April 2019 as reported at the same point (10,600). Care must be taken in interpreting these figures and intentions regarding commitments with future training start dates. Please see the notes at the start of this section on recording commitments on the apprenticeship service and caveats relating to COVID-19.

⁶ Commitments now include those associated with the apprenticeship service accounts of non-levy-paying organisations. Care should be taken when comparisons are made of these latest figures to those published previously.

⁷ At this point last year (201819 SN09) it was 174,400 (166,400 fully agreed).

⁸ Combining the figures for January to May will not add to the total shown for each year, as the total shows commitments from January in each year, which includes commitments beyond May, commitments where a date has not yet been agreed and may include some commitments from the next academic year. Please see tables 1 and 2 in the monthly table pack released alongside this commentary document.

About this release

This statistical release presents information on all age (16+) apprenticeships in England reported to date for the 2019/20 academic year, covering August 2019 to April 2020.

This release also contains latest data on commitments from the apprenticeship service. These official statistics are produced to provide transparency with regards to the apprenticeship service, an online service implemented in May 2017 that allows organisations to choose and pay for apprenticeship training more easily, and its usage.

These statistics will continue to evolve over time as more data are collected and their relationships to other further education measures becomes more established. Caution should be taken interpreting what apprenticeship service data may mean for the overall apprenticeship programme given this is intended to grow over coming years. It has the potential to be affected by other factors, for example, users typically take time to adjust to recording data on a new system.

Please see the User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics that accompanies this release for links to data for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>

Changes included in the June release

We are currently reviewing available data and information relating to the period affected by the pandemic to determine what may be suitable/relevant for users to have in the public domain, which may include information on breaks in learning and pauses as reported on the apprenticeship service.

Replacement of further in year releases during 2020

As the demand increases for statistics and data to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department for Education has had to change its data gathering and release practices, focussing efforts on priority analysis and statistics. Our statement of 26 March 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics#announcements>) explains this further, and, in line with guidance from the Office for Statistics Regulation (<https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/covid-19-and-the-regulation-of-statistics/>) the decision has been made to replace all in-year statistical releases relating to further education and apprenticeships for the 2019/20 academic year.

The current releases and measures we publish may now provide very little value and/or may be misleading given how the pandemic will have impacted on both apprenticeship training and provider reporting from March. While collections remain open, we have no way to quantify how robust any reporting by providers will be during the period affected by the pandemic. Where there are updates, they may well be small corrections to pre lockdown periods. Therefore, given the expected large drop in starts from March, comparing a participation measure in say the third quarter of 2019/20 to this point in 2018/19 would offer no meaningful insight to activity in the third quarter.

We will publish the end-of-year releases normally published in November but, the replacement of the remaining in-year dates will enable us to provide release(s) with more relevant information to cover the period affected by the pandemic. Headline data would still be central to releases but we wish to seek to refocus releases on the most relevant material that offers comparison of fresh insight where available.

This means headline statistics such as apprenticeship starts will still be available, and to similar timescales to those currently but, we intend to repurpose our releases to focus on the most relevant information available.

We are consulting users on this and seeking feedback on key data needs, which can be provided via FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk. In particular, we are seeking user feedback on key data needs in terms of the regularity of data needed and also the type of breakdowns users would find most useful, e.g. similar to those we currently publish such national apprenticeship starts by age, level and individual framework/standard etc, so we can consider going forward and in light of continued data quality assessments. We will keep users updated of further changes via the Department for Education statistics website (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>).

Future releases and the new Explore Education Statistics platform

The DfE is changing how we release our statistics to further modernise our approach to dissemination. This will be through a new DfE statistics dissemination platform known as 'Explore Education Statistics' (EES) to make our data and statistics easier to find, access, navigate and understand. Please see here for more information: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/statistics>. We are hoping to move to the new platform as soon as possible in 2020 but cannot confirm this yet.

The EES system offers a step change for users in making data and releases easier to find and through use of a new table tool, giving more interactive access to our data. We are also adopting a more concise and user-friendly

presentation of commentary and headline data. In addition, the move to EES will, over time, make production and dissemination of statistical releases more efficient and flexible.

We will also seek to improve navigation to our data by consolidating releases and providing more seamless links to all supporting tables. In EES we hope to have two releases: a Further education and skills release, and an Apprenticeships and traineeships release. The latter will bring all apprenticeship data together in one place and update relevant sections on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis. For example, the next update of progress towards the public sector apprenticeships target is planned to be in November 2020.

We are looking to run webinars on the new EES release via sector bodies before launch.

There will be on-going developments to the platform over time as well as how we use it to release our statistics, therefore we would welcome feedback on what users find helpful or not.

Methodology and technical information

As with many policy areas, further education is a broad and changing topic. In order to understand the impact of policy and methodology changes on any data published in this release, see the User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics that accompanied this release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>

Feedback

For any queries relating to changes we are planning to make to how we publish our data and statistics, please contact: FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk.

3. Accompanying tables

1. Total number of commitments by training start date and age as reported at 30 April 2020
2. Total number of commitments by training start date and level as reported at 30 April 2020
3. All age apprenticeship programme starts by start month, level and age (August 2019 to March 2020 – reported to date)
4. All age apprenticeship programme starts by start month, level and age in April 2020 reported to date

Underlying data CSV monthly apprenticeship starts data covering breakdowns by sector subject area, framework/standard, age group, level, degree apprenticeship flag and funding type (2014/15 to 2019/20 - reported to date) *(to March 2020)*

Underlying data CSV monthly apprenticeship starts data covering breakdowns by sector subject area, framework/standard, age group, level, degree apprenticeship flag and funding type (in April 2020, reported to date)

Please see the table finder tool published in the FE data library for data tools and tables with additional breakdowns for annual full year 2018/19 academic year data and previous years:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fe-data-library-help-for-finding-data>

When reviewing the FE and Skills tables, please note that:

We preserve confidentiality	The Code of Practice for Official Statistics (https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/monitoring-and-assessment/code-of-practice/) requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure that our published or disseminated statistics protect confidentiality.
We round figures	Rounding is our primary approach to preserving confidentiality in our main tables, where headline volumes are reported rounded to the nearest 100. In the supplementary tables, volumes are rounded to the nearest 10. There may be exceptions to this in instances where any figure that is an exact duplicate of a value in the headline figures (e.g. Grand Totals), which are rounded to the nearest 100 and avoid contradictory figures. Percentages reported are calculated on pre-rounded data and given to one decimal place.
We suppress some figures	In the main tables, headline volumes below 50 are suppressed (this includes values of zero). In reality, very few figures in our main tables are small enough to be suppressed in this way. In the supplementary tables volumes below 5 are suppressed (this includes values of zero). A percentage of less than 0.5 per cent is suppressed.
We adopt symbols to help identify suppression	Symbols are used in the tables as follows: ‘-’ indicates a headline volume with below 50 in the main tables and below 5 in the supplementary tables. ‘*’ indicates a percentage of less than 0.5 per cent.
Coverage of the data	This release includes provisional data for the first 8 months (August 2019 to March 2020) of the 2019/20 academic year reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency in May 2020 by further education providers. Separate data for April 2020 is also provided based on the same data returns.

In order to understand the impact of policy and methodology changes on any data published in this release, details are provided in User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics document that accompanied this release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>.

4. Further information is available

Additional breakdowns of further education statistics are published online as supplementary tables. These include breakdowns by age, gender, ethnicity, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, region, local authority, parliamentary constituency, sector subject area and funding stream.

Please see the further education data library here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fe-data-library>

For further information on the monthly Apprenticeship Service data, please see the User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics document that accompanied this release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>.

5. The apprenticeship funding system

Changes in the way apprenticeship funding works were introduced and implemented from May 2017. Guidance about these changes and paying the apprenticeship levy can be found at this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>.

A key aspect of these changes was the introduction of the apprenticeship service, an online service to allow organisations to choose and pay for apprenticeship training more easily. Levy-payers are able to register on the apprenticeship service so that they can:

1. receive levy funds to spend on apprenticeships
2. manage their apprentices
3. pay their training provider

For more please see the User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics document that accompanied this release: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>.

6. Technical information

For further information, please see the User Guide to FE and Skills Statistics document that accompanied this release:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-and-skills-march-2020>

This provides further information on the data sources, their coverage and quality and explains the methodology used in producing the data, including how it is validated and processed.

7. Official Statistics

These are Official Statistics and have been produced in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

This can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

The Department has a set of [statistical policies](#) in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

8. Get in touch

Media enquiries

Press Office News Desk, Department for Education, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

Tel: 020 7783 8300

Other enquiries/feedback

Matthew Rolfe, Further Education Statistical Dissemination Team, Department for Education, 2 St Paul's Place, Sheffield, S1 2JF.

Email: FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk



Department for Education

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About this publication:

Matthew Rolfe, Further Education Statistical Dissemination Team, Department for Education,
2 St Paul's Place, Sheffield, S1 2JF.

Email: FE.OFFICIALSTATISTICS@education.gov.uk

Download: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education-and-skills-statistical-first-release-sfr>

Reference: [Apprenticeship and Traineeships: May 2020]



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