



## Apprenticeships policy

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Author: James Mirza-Davies  
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Skills and training are devolved policy areas. This note covers apprenticeships in England.

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract.

Apprenticeships policy is the responsibility of the Department for Education if the apprentice is aged under 19, and the responsibility of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills if the apprentice is aged 19 or over.

Other House of Commons Library Standard Notes that may be of interest include:

- [Apprenticeships statistics](#)
- [Apprenticeships and small businesses](#)

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# 1 Overview of apprenticeship system

Skills and training are devolved policy areas. This note covers apprenticeships in England. Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training. A successful apprentice will receive a nationally recognised qualification on completion of their contract.

The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) has responsibility for apprenticeships in England. The NAS was created in April 2009 and is responsible for promoting apprenticeships to employers and learners, supporting employers through the process of recruiting and training an apprentice, and maintaining the national online apprenticeship vacancies system which allows employers to post vacancies for aspiring apprentices.<sup>1</sup>

There are 170 different apprenticeships (known as ‘apprenticeship frameworks’) available in 13 broad sector subject areas.<sup>2</sup>

A typical apprenticeship framework includes: a National Vocational Qualification (which examines the apprentices’ work-based skills), a Technical Certificate (which examines the apprentices’ theoretical knowledge), Key Skills (which examine the apprentices’ transferrable skills, for example, numeracy and literacy) and employer rights and responsibilities.

Apprenticeship frameworks can be studied at different qualification levels:

- *Intermediate Apprenticeships* are Level 2 qualifications, equivalent to 5 GCSE passes;
- *Advanced Apprenticeships* are Level 3 qualifications equivalent to 2 A-Level passes;
- *Higher Apprenticeships* lead to Level 4 qualifications and above.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.1 Training costs

Department for Education (DfE) funds training for apprentices aged under 19. Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) provides the funding for apprentices aged 19 and over. DfE and BIS cover a proportion of the cost of training apprentices through the NAS. The amount they contribute depends on the age of the apprentice:

- 100% of the training costs if the apprentice is aged 16-18;
- 50% of the training costs if the apprentice is aged 19-23;
- Up to 50% of the training costs if the apprentice is aged 24 and over.<sup>4</sup>

If employers choose to deliver additional qualifications as part of an apprenticeship on top of those identified by the relevant Sector Skills Council,<sup>5</sup> then these qualifications will be paid for by the employer not the government. Employers are free to fund apprenticeships themselves without any support from government.

Employers offering new Trailblazer apprenticeship standards are operating under a new funding model, discussed further in Section 3.1.

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<sup>1</sup> NAS website, [About us](#)

<sup>2</sup> Apprenticeship Frameworks Online, [Frameworks Library](#)

<sup>3</sup> Gov.uk, [Apprenticeships](#)

<sup>4</sup> NAS website, [Apprentices Q&As](#)

<sup>5</sup> Sector Skills Councils are employer-led organisations that determine the skills required within their vocational area, e.g. design apprenticeship frameworks. They are intended to involve employers in skills policy and operate on a UK-wide basis. For more information see UKCES website on [Sector Skills Councils](#)

## **1.2 Minimum wage and employee rights for apprentices**

Apprentices aged 16-18 are entitled to the 'apprentice minimum wage' of £2.73 an hour.<sup>6</sup>

Apprentices aged 19 and over are also entitled to the apprentice minimum wage in the first 12 months of their apprenticeship. After the first 12 months of their apprenticeship, people aged 19 and over are entitled to the National Minimum Wage.<sup>7</sup> National Minimum Wage rates are age dependent and rise from £5.13 an hour for 18 to 20 year olds to £6.50 an hour for people aged 21 and over.<sup>8</sup>

As apprentices are employees they are entitled to the same employment rights as other employees. This includes holiday entitlement and maternity leave.<sup>9</sup>

## **1.3 Apprenticeship training agencies**

Apprenticeship Training Agencies (ATAs) are organisations directly employing apprentices. The business hosting the apprentice operates as the apprentice's day-to-day workplace and manager. The ATA coordinates the apprentice's training and pays associated training costs. The host employer pays the ATA a fee based on the apprentice's wage and training costs.<sup>10</sup>

ATAs provide an incentive for businesses to take on apprentices because they will deal with any additional administration associated with hiring or employing an apprentice. The apprentices will require no more administration than a normal employee, and ATAs will also take on responsibility for National Insurance and tax administration and in some cases performance management, reducing the administrative burden further.

ATAs are able to offer flexible assistance to businesses. If a business wants just part of the administration associated with taking on an apprentice dealt with by an ATA (for example, recruitment), then ATAs can offer this.

ATAs were first introduced in 2009 and are listed by region on the [NAS website](#).

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<sup>6</sup> Low Pay Commission, *National Minimum Wage Report 2014*

<sup>7</sup> Written Ministerial Statement, "National Minimum Wage", 21 June 2010

<sup>8</sup> Gov.uk, *National Minimum Wage rates*

<sup>9</sup> NAS website, *Apprentices Q&A*

<sup>10</sup> National Apprenticeships Service (NAS), *Apprenticeship training agencies*, November 2014

## 2 Apprenticeship polices announced since May 2010

A range of apprenticeship related policies have been introduced since the Government came to power. Some intend to encourage more people into apprenticeships, some to encourage more businesses to offer apprenticeships and some to raise apprenticeship standards.

### 2.1 Higher Apprenticeships

The Government's Skills Strategy published in November 2010 committed to improve apprenticeship standards:<sup>11</sup>

We will not only increase numbers, but we will also improve the programme. As an advanced economy needs advanced skills, we will reshape Apprenticeships so that technician level – Level 3 – becomes the level to which learners and employers aspire. To widen access, there will be clear progression routes from Level 3 Apprenticeships to higher level skills, including Level 4 Apprenticeships or higher education.

The delivery of this commitment involved the establishment of the Higher Apprenticeship Fund (HAF). The HAF aimed to develop a range of higher level apprenticeships, and fund 20,000 apprentices by 2015. The fund totalling £25 million was awarded to 29 higher apprenticeship projects, in sectors including accountancy, engineering and law.<sup>12</sup>

An extra £40 million to deliver an additional 20,000 higher apprenticeship starts in the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years was announced in the Autumn Statement 2013.<sup>13</sup>

### 2.2 Education Act 2011

The *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009* (ASCLA) resulted in a wide range of changes covering apprenticeships, skills and education provision. ASCLA introduced a duty to provide an apprenticeship place to all qualified young people aged 16-19 who did not have one and wanted one. This was due to commence in 2013. But The *Education Act 2011* removed this duty.

Instead The *Education Act 2011* placed a new duty on the Government to fund apprenticeships for young people who have already secured a place. This new "apprenticeship offer" came into effect in 2013 and applies to England only.<sup>14</sup>

The 2011 Act also created a new duty on the government to "make reasonable efforts to ensure employers participate in Apprenticeship training."

### 2.3 Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16 to 24 year olds (AGE 16-24)

The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers of 16 to 24 year olds (AGE 16-24) pays £1,500 to small businesses hiring a young apprentice if the firm has not hired an apprentice before. AGE 16-24 aims to encourage more small businesses to hire apprentices, encourage more young people into apprenticeships and raise the skill level of apprentices.<sup>15</sup> The scheme, announced in November 2011,<sup>16</sup> began in February 2012.<sup>17</sup> The eligibility criteria are as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> BIS, *Skills for Sustainable Growth: Strategy Document*, November 2010, page 7

<sup>12</sup> BIS, *Press release: Apprenticeship starts almost double in two years*, January 2013

<sup>13</sup> HM Treasury, *Autumn Statement 2013*, December 2013

<sup>14</sup> *Education Act 2011*, Part 7, Section 37, [explanatory notes](#)

<sup>15</sup> NAS, *AGE 16-24*, November 2014, website

<sup>16</sup> BIS, *Press release: Apprenticeships: Cable guarantees quality, slashes red tape and delivers cash boost for firms*, 16 November 2011

- The apprentice must be 16-24 years old when hired.
- The firm must have 50 employees or fewer when they take on the apprentice.
- For a business to be eligible for payment, the employer must not have taken on an apprentice in the last 12 months. An employer can claim up to 5 grants.

Before January 2015, up to 10 grants could be claimed by employers with 1,000 or fewer employees.

### **Payment**

Employers will be paid £1,500 if they take on an apprentice and fulfil the above eligibility criteria. The full amount will be paid after the 13 week stage of the apprentice's appointment, with the expectation that the apprentice will progress to complete their apprenticeship.<sup>18</sup>

95,200 AGE 16 to 24 payments were made between February 2012 and July 2014. The scheme was initially intended to encourage 20,000 new apprentices, funded from money already allocated to apprenticeships.

## **2.4 Minimum standards for apprenticeships**

The *Statement on Apprenticeship Quality*, published in May 2012, summarises the aspects of apprenticeships subject to minimum standards:<sup>19</sup>

### **A minimum length of 12 months**

The minimum apprenticeship length is 12 months. Some apprentices aged over 19 are able to complete an apprenticeship in a shorter time period, if they demonstrate prior attainment of certain relevant qualifications. In these cases, the minimum length is six months.<sup>20</sup>

### **280 hours guided learning**

Apprentices must spend at least 280 hours in 'guided learning' in their first year. 100 hours or 30% (whichever is greater) of all guided learning must be delivered off-the-job. Clear and verifiable evidence must be provided of all learning undertaken.<sup>21</sup>

### **Employed for 30 hours a week**

Apprentices must be employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week, including time training away from the workplace. If an apprentice's personal circumstances or if the nature of employment in a given sector make it impossible to work these hours, then an absolute minimum of 16 hours a week must be worked. In these exceptional cases, the total duration of the apprenticeship is extended accordingly.<sup>22</sup>

### **Training to level 2 in Maths and English**

Apprenticeships must offer training to Level 2 in Functional Skills or English and Maths, if the apprentice does not already have these or equivalent qualifications.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> BIS, [Press release: PM: We'll make apprenticeships a gold standard option for ambitious young people](#), 7 February 2012

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> NAS, [Statement on Apprenticeship Quality](#), May 31 2012

<sup>20</sup> BIS, [Press release: Tough standards released by Skills Minister to drive up quality](#), 1 April 2012

<sup>21</sup> NAS, [Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England](#), January 2011, pp 9

<sup>22</sup> SFA, [Funding rules for 2014/15](#), May 2014, pp 37

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pp 27

### **Safeguards and quality issues**

The Government introduced safeguards, designed to strengthen the monitoring and reporting process for apprenticeship training providers and employers. An 'enquiry panel' was established in the NAS to manage poor quality providers. The panel reports directly to the relevant Minister and has powers to impose sanctions on sub-standard training providers.<sup>24</sup>

The NAS published the *Apprenticeship Quality Action Plan* detailing how apprenticeship quality issues have been and are intended to be addressed in the future. The document outlines how the NAS will escalate concerns over the quality of specific apprenticeships and the way in which relevant bodies will intervene to improve individual apprenticeships.<sup>25</sup>

### **Apprenticeship Agreements**

Apprentices must sign an Apprenticeship Agreement with their employer before the apprenticeship begins. This is a contract stipulating the framework being followed and the skill, trade or occupation the apprentice is working in. It is not a legally binding contract of employment, but without it an apprenticeship completion certificate cannot be issued.

### **Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)**

The *Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England (SASE)* sets out minimum academic requirements that all frameworks must meet.<sup>26</sup> This is a technical document written principally to guide organisations designing frameworks. It stipulates minimum qualification levels required of successful apprentices under the vocational, technical and key skills elements of the apprenticeship. It also specifies standards of attainment expected of successful apprentices, including 'team working' and 'effective presentation'.

Further detailed information on the minimum contractual and operational standards required of apprenticeships can be found in the SFA Funding rules for 2014 to 2015.<sup>27</sup>

## **2.5 The Richard Review of Apprenticeships in England**

A review into the future of apprenticeships by Doug Richard, CEO and Founder of School for Startups, was published in November 2012.<sup>28</sup> The review examined how apprenticeships meet the needs of the economy, deliver quality training, and how to maximise the impact of government investment in apprenticeships. The review made the recommendations below:

- Apprenticeships should be targeted at people new to a job requiring substantial training.
- All apprentices should achieve Level 2 in English and maths before completion.
- There should be one qualification for each apprenticeship occupation. The focus should be on outcomes, setting out what apprentices should know and be able to do at the end of an apprenticeship. Employers should be invited to design and develop apprenticeship qualifications for their sector, through Government contests for the best qualification.

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<sup>24</sup> BIS, *Press release: Tough standards released by Skills Minister to drive up quality*, 1 April 2012

<sup>25</sup> NAS, *Apprenticeship Quality Action Plan*, April 2012

<sup>26</sup> NAS, *Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for England*, February 2015

<sup>27</sup> SFA, *Funding rules for 2014 to 2015*, November 2013

<sup>28</sup> Doug Richard, *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*, November 2012

- Testing should take place at the end of an apprenticeship with employer involvement. Assessors should be entirely independent with no incentives related to the outcome.
- Apprenticeships should be achievable via many paths and approaches. Unnecessary prescription and regulation should be removed to encourage diversity and innovation.
- The Government has a role in promoting good quality delivery, by making some off-site learning and a minimum duration for apprenticeships mandatory.
- The Government should contribute to the cost of apprenticeships, but funding should be routed via employers. Payments should be partly linked to apprentices passing the test.
- Relevant data should be made open and accessible to employers and learners.
- The Government must boost awareness of the new apprenticeship model, for example through an ‘apprenticeship milk round’. More effort should be made in informing young people’s understanding of high quality apprenticeships.

## 2.6 New Apprenticeship Standards and Funding

Employer-led apprenticeship standards are being developed through employer groups to become more responsive to employer needs. Some new standards have been in use since September 2014<sup>29</sup>, with further standards coming into use in the 2015/16 academic year.<sup>30</sup>

In line with recommendations from the Richard Review to give employers greater control over spending on training delivery, the government will route apprenticeship funding through employers rather than paying training providers directly. The 2015 Budget announced employers will be given funding control through a digital Apprenticeship Voucher, which will be trialled before full implementation in 2017.<sup>31</sup> Previously consideration had been given to funding for training being routed via employers, either through a PAYE system or an apprenticeship credit model.

The simplified funding model trialled in 2014/15 and 2015/16 involves:

- For every £1 spent by an employer on training the Government will contribute £2 up to a maximum cap.
- There are five caps, as outlined in the table below, which depend on the apprenticeship being undertaken.
- Additionally, three incentive payments are available to employers for recruiting 16-18 year olds, for small businesses and on the successful completion of the apprenticeship.
- The Government will fully fund qualifications in Maths and English up to Level 2.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Skills Funding Agency, [Apprenticeship Standards](#), 12 November 2014

<sup>30</sup> BIS, [Vince Cable celebrates two million apprenticeships](#), 9 December 2014

<sup>31</sup> HM Treasury, [Budget 2015](#), 18 March 2015

<sup>32</sup> Further information is available from Gov.uk, [Future of apprenticeships in England: guidance for trailblazers](#)



## New Apprenticeship Funding Model

	Cap 1	Cap 2	Cap 3	Cap 4	Cap 5
Core Government Contribution (CGC) Cap*	£2,000	£3,000	£6,000	£8,000	£18,000
<b>Additional incentive payments</b>					
Recruiting a 16-18 year old	£600	£900	£1,800	£2,400	£5,400
For a small business (<50)	£500	£500	£900	£1,200	£2,700
For successful completion	£500	£500	£900	£1,200	£2,700
<b>Maximum total Government contribution</b>	<b>£3,600</b>	<b>£4,900</b>	<b>£9,600</b>	<b>£12,800</b>	<b>£28,800</b>

\* £2 for every £1 from employer

Source: Gov.uk, *Future of apprenticeships in England: guidance for trailblazers*, October 2014

## 2.7 Other apprenticeship related policies

### **Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot**

The Employer Ownership of Skills pilot is a fund awarded to businesses in England engaged in designing and delivering their own training solutions. The fund totals £340 million spent over four years. The pilot has been split into two rounds with many of the successful bids featuring provision for apprenticeships.<sup>33</sup>

### **Traineeships**

Traineeships provide education, training and work experience to young people to help them get an apprenticeship or other job. Traineeships were introduced in August 2013 for people aged under 24. Traineeships are suitable for people who are unemployed and have little work experience but can be prepared for employment or an apprenticeship within six months. Traineeships last between six weeks and six months.<sup>34</sup>

In the 2013/14 academic year 10,500 people started a traineeship, of whom 7,000 were aged under 19.<sup>35</sup>

### **Advanced Learning loans for apprentices**

Advanced Learning loans affected apprentices aged 24 and over, studying at Level 3 and above. Employers contributed up to half of the training costs, and apprentices were expected to contribute the remainder through Advanced Learning loans. This was the first time apprentices were expected to contribute towards the costs of their learning.

Advanced Learning loans for apprentices ran from April 2013 but ended after low take up; 795 were made between April 2013 and January 2014.<sup>36</sup> Funding was made available for affected learners from the Adult Skills Budget and those who have taken out loans will not be required to repay them.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> UKCES, *Employer Ownership of Skills – Pilot*, 2 April 2014

<sup>34</sup> NAS, *What are Traineeships?*, June 2014

<sup>35</sup> Skills Funding Agency, *Statistical First Release*, November 2014

<sup>36</sup> BIS, *24+ Advanced Learning Loans: Application Information*, 27 February 2014

<sup>37</sup> BIS, *Skills Funding Statement 2013-16*, February 2014

### **Access to apprenticeships**

The Access to Apprenticeships 'pathway' closed to new starts in January 2014.<sup>38</sup> The pathway, announced in May 2011, aimed to prepare 16 to 24 year olds requiring extra support for an apprenticeship.<sup>39</sup> People on the Access to Apprenticeship pathway were not employed and not counted as apprentices.

The pathway involved unpaid work experience focusing on specific elements of an apprenticeship framework, for up to six months. The expectation was that people on the pathway would begin a full apprenticeship before the end of six months. To be eligible, individuals were assessed as able to participate in a full apprenticeship to at least Intermediate Level. They also needed to be either eligible for Additional Learning Support, or not in education, employment or training (NEET) for the whole of the preceding 13 weeks.

There were 14,400 starts on the Access to Apprenticeships pathway between 2011/12 and 2013/14, of which 5,500 converted to a full apprenticeship.<sup>40</sup>

## **3 Apprenticeship forecasts, budget and targets**

The Coalition Agreement stated:<sup>41</sup>

We will seek ways to support the creation of apprenticeships, internships, work pairings, and college and workplace training places as part of our wider programme to get Britain working.

### **3.1 Apprenticeship starts target**

Over the first financial year of the current Parliament, the Government targeted 50,000 more apprenticeship starts by people aged 19 and over compared to the previous financial year, a total of 203,000 adult apprenticeship starts. There were 256,000 adult apprenticeship starts during the period, 53,000 more than the Government's target.

In August 2014 the Queen's Speech<sup>42</sup> set a target to "increase the total number of apprenticeship places by two million by the end of the Parliament." The Business Secretary Vince Cable announced in December 2014 that this target had been reached in August earlier that year.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Skills Funding Agency, *Funding Rules 2013/14*, November 2013

<sup>39</sup> NAS, *Access to Apprenticeships*, August 2012,

<sup>40</sup> BIS, *Further education and skills: statistical first release*, 26 November 2014

<sup>41</sup> *Coalition Government Agreement*, May 2010, page 31

<sup>42</sup> Prime Minister's Office, *The Queen's Speech 2014*, 4 June 2014

<sup>43</sup> BIS, *Vince Cable celebrates two million apprenticeships*, 9 December 2014

### 3.2 Apprenticeship participation

The Government has publishes data and illustrative forecasts of the number of people undertaking apprenticeships. Note that the table shows the total number of people doing apprenticeships, not the number of apprenticeship starts.

#### Number of funded apprentices by age

Academic years (1 August - 31 July) - England

Age of apprentice	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15*
16-18	186,000	203,000	190,000	181,000	186,000	240,000
19+	305,000	463,000	617,000	687,000	666,000	681,000
All ages	491,000	666,000	807,000	869,000	852,000	921,000

Sources: BIS, *Letter to institutions delivering 16-19 education and training from Peter Mucklow*, March 2013

BIS, *Statistical First Release, DS/SFR20*, November 2014, p 26

BIS, *Skills funding statement 2012-15*, December 2012, p 17

Notes: \* indicates illustrative forecasts

- these figures are not available

Rounded to nearest 1,000

The table shows the large increase in the number of apprenticeships over the course of this Parliament, from just under 500,000 in 2009/10 to over 850,000 in 2013/14.

### 3.3 Budget for apprenticeships

The table below shows the budget for apprenticeships.

#### Apprenticeships budget

£ millions - Financial years (1 April - 31 March) - England

Age of apprentice	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14*	2014/15*	2015/16*
16-18 (DfE)	688	751	764	679	728	-	-
19+ (BIS)	384	451	625	756	759	810	770
Total apprenticeships budget	1,072	1,202	1,389	1,435	1,487	-	-

Sources: SFA, *Annual report and accounts 2013/14*, June 2014, p 74

Young People's Learning Agency, *Funding statement*, December 2011, p 5

BIS, *Skills funding statement 2013-16*, February 2014, p 26

Education Funding Agency, *funding allocation letter from Peter Mucklow*, March 2013

SFA, *Allocations for the Funding Year 2015 to 2016*, 26 February 2015

Notes: \* Minimum expected budgets for apprenticeships

2012/13 figure includes £32 million for AGE 16-24

2013/14 figure includes £42 million available as FE loans and £13 million for AGE 16-24

Includes money allocated to the Employer Ownership Pilot and traineeships

"-" figures not yet available

2014/15 includes an extra £40 million for Higher Apprenticeships

The BIS apprenticeship budget is intended to increase between 2012/13 and 2014/15, despite the total adult skills budget, including apprenticeship, falling from £2.7 billion to £2.3 billion over the same period.<sup>44</sup> Part of the adult apprenticeships budget has been allocated to the Employer Ownership of Skills Pilot.

<sup>44</sup> BIS, *Skills Funding Statement 2013-16*, February 2014

## 4 Statistics

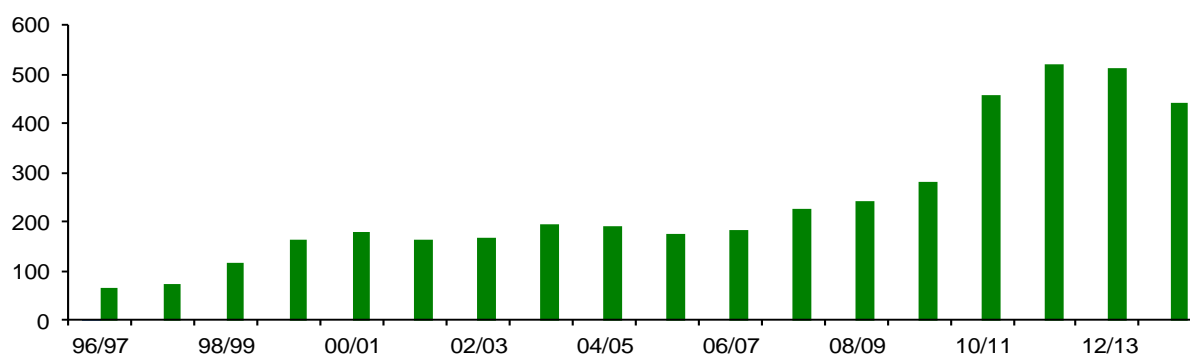
Detailed statistics are available in the Library Standard Note [Apprenticeship Statistics](#).

In the 2013/14 academic year:

- There were 440,400 apprenticeship starts, down 69,800 (13.6%) on the previous year.
- Much of the fall is due to the drop in apprentices aged 25 and over. However, a higher proportion of starts still are by apprentices aged over 25 compared to previous years.
- The majority of people starting apprenticeships chose frameworks in the service sectors, such as business administration, retail and health.
- The majority of apprenticeship starters since 2010/11 have been female.<sup>45</sup>

### Apprenticeship Starts: England

Thousands



Academic years (August 1 - July 31)

Data prior to 02/03 are not directly comparable to later years.

Data for 2011/12 onwards are not directly comparable to previous years. Small technical changes have been made leading to a reduction in overall learner numbers of approximately 2 per cent.

Source: BIS Data Service

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<sup>45</sup> BIS Data Service, [Apprenticeships](#)