



# Further Education and Skills in England October 2017: Quality and methodology information



## About this document

This document provides a range of information on the quality of the further education and skills participation and outcomes data, and the methodology used to produce it. It is based on the Office for National Statistics' guidelines for measuring statistical quality.

It provides an overview of the data used in the production of the further education and skills statistical first releases (SFRs), along with information on data issues, data definitions, publication cycle and supplementary data produced.

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# 1. Introduction

This quality and methodology document provides an overview of the further education and skills participation and outcomes data used in the production of the further education and skills statistical first releases. It provides information on the methodology used to calculate pupil attainment, as well as information on the data sources, data issues and data definitions.

This document is based on the Office for National Statistics' [guidelines for measuring statistical quality](#).

## Changes included in this SFR

This SFR includes provisional figures for the full academic year 2016/17 based on information that has been reported to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) by further education colleges and providers in September 2017. The data will change as further data returns relating to the period are received later in the year.

The UK wide apprenticeship levy came into force on 6 April 2017 requiring all UK public and private sector employers with an annual bill of £3 million to invest in apprenticeship training. Since May 2017, funding arrangements for apprenticeships changed to give employers greater control over funding for apprenticeship training. We have included data reported so far on the apprenticeship levy supported starts in this SFR.

From 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in Full Level 2 and Full Level 3 figures in this SFR are no longer included following changes to funding rules on vocational qualifications, see section 3.

Ofqual vocational qualification data shown in Table 17 of this release have also been updated following a new methodology being used by Ofqual.

## 2. Scope

Should we need to make an unplanned revision to the statistics contained in this release, we will follow the procedures outlined in the revisions policy for the Statistical First Release. This includes action to understand the impact that any revisions will have, as well as ensuring that they are clearly communicated to the reader. The revisions policy can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfr-compliance-with-official-statistics-code-of-practice>

Information from the different further education learning options have been drawn together to give a coherent and comprehensive picture of the participation and achievement of young people and adults. These include:

- Further education organisations
- Sixth form colleges
- Local authorities
- Independent training organisations

These organisations deliver a wide variety of government programmes, including:

- Education and training
- Apprenticeships
- Workplace learning
- Community learning
- Traineeships

The SFR covers adults (19+)<sup>1</sup> and does not contain information regarding:

- **Delivery in school sixth forms**, including state-funded and independent schools. Provisional figures taken from the Department for Education (DfE) [Participation in education, training and](#)

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<sup>1</sup> The publication also includes data on all age Apprentices, all age Traineeships (16-24) and Offender Learners (18+).

[employment by 16 – 18 year olds in England Statistical First Release](#) show there were 531,900 16-18 year old students studying in School Sixth Forms, based on a snapshot of participation as recorded on the January 2017 school census.

- **Higher education in higher education institutions.** The publication [Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Providers in the United Kingdom for the Academic Year](#), published on 12 January 2017 by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), shows that the total number of HE enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions stood at 2,280,830 in 2015/16.
- **Privately-funded training at FE organisations and independent training organisations.** There is no single coherent source that provides a measure of privately-funded training. However, in Table 17 of the SFR we do show the total number of vocational qualifications awarded in the UK. This includes both public and privately-funded qualifications and gives some sense of scale of total vocationally-related activity in the sector.

### 3. Data sources and methodology information

The key data used to produce the SFR are Individualised Learner Record (ILR) collections that are returned to the ESFA by further education colleges and providers and Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP) data returned by employers. A Single ILR collection (SILR) was introduced in 2011/12 to replace the multiple ILR collection types that were collected in previous years. There are no longer separate collections for different funding streams and providers return all information on all of their learners in a single file. The following ILR collections have been used to update the release:

Year	Data Source
2015/16	SILR (R14)
	EOP1 (E14)
	EOP2 (E14)
2016/17	SILR (R13)
	EOP (R13)

Data for 2016/17 is provisional. The data sources for previous academic years are final collections and include information on provision for the full academic year. There are no EOP starts in the 2016/17 academic year.

A statement of the administrative sources used within this SFR is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfr-compliance-with-official-statistics-code-of-practice>

Vocational qualification in table 17 of this release is obtained from OFQUAL's datasource. Their latest publication and background notes on the data sources are published here:

[Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: April to June 2017 - GOV.UK](#)

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) is another data source used for the SFR (Tables 15 and 16). The latest provisional LFS data used in this release relates to Quarter 4 (October – December) 2016. Data on the highest level of qualification was revised following a reweighting of the LFS that affects figures from 2001 onwards.

## ILR background information

The ESFA publish a large range of information relating to the ILR, which includes technical documents that define the ILR data that publicly funded providers must collect and return including ILR data returns calendar.

This also includes information to help further education providers collect, return and check the quality of ILR and other learner data.

All information and documents are published on GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ils>.

This includes

- ILR specification documents
- ILR structure and data types
- Validation rules and error handling
- Quality assurance
- Summary of collection changes
- Reference data
- Data collection timetables
- Freeze schedules
- Data sharing agreements
- Information on supplementary data collection

## ILR coverage

ILR data is submitted by providers if in receipt of funding through one or more of the following funding models:

- 16-19 ESFA
- Adult skills
- Apprenticeships
- Community learning
- European Social Funding (ESF)
- Other ESFA funding

All providers must send records for learners financed by advanced learner loans.

For the ESF 2014 to 2020 programme, providers must return all records for all learners who have received ESF funding as part of the current programme. This includes records for learners who completed their learning aims in the 2015 to 2016 teaching year.

FE colleges must also send details of all learners who are not in receipt of public funding from the ESFA (apart from learners subcontracted in from a school or higher education institution).

Training organisations are asked to send details of apprenticeships that are not funded by the ESFA where they are delivered within the terms of an ESFA contract. In all other cases, this data can be sent on a voluntary basis.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) who receive funding from ESFA should return data about these learners in their Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student record. For higher and degree level apprenticeships, HEIs must send an ILR return for all apprenticeship standards and for 16-18 apprenticeship frameworks.

An individual learner may, during the course of one teaching year, benefit from more than one type of funding. A single learner record should be returned for this learner detailing all of the learning aims that they are undertaking.

## Labour Force Survey

Labour Force Survey (LFS) data are used to measure the highest qualification levels of the working age population in England, where Level 2 equates to achievement of 5 or more GCSEs at grades A\*-C or equivalent qualifications, Level 3 equates to achievement of 2 or more A-levels or equivalent qualifications, and Level 4 and above to higher education and degree level qualifications. See <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/compare-different-qualification-levels> for more information.

Data on the highest level of qualification was revised in late 2015 following a reweighting of the LFS that affects figures from 2001 onwards.

In March 2017 estimates previously published for 2012 to 2014 have been revised following a reweighting of the LFS covering 2012 to 2015. More information is available in the following:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/im-pactof2014midyearestimatesofpopulationoncurrentlabourforcesurveyaggregates>

The 'Level of highest qualification held by adults' statistics are produced using data on the highest qualification held by individuals from the LFS in each year. The LFS is conducted by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the estimates provided are the best measure of attainment within the population at Quarter 4 (October – December) each calendar year. Further details of how this information is used to calculate the estimates can be found at: [Statistics - Statistical First Release - SFR Methodology](#).

## 24+ Advanced learning loans and 19+ advanced learner loans

**In 2015/16, advanced learning loans were available for learners aged 24 or older studying Full level 3 and Level 4 qualifications. In 2016/17, these loans were extended to learners aged 19 or older on the first day of their course and studying at Levels 3 to 6. They are now known as advanced learner loans from 2016/17.**

The number of learners with an advanced loan reported through the ILR differ from data showing loan applications (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/further-education>) and loans paid (<http://www.slc.co.uk/official-statistics/financial-support-awarded/england-further-education.aspx>).

Loan application information is released monthly and relates to applications received for FE provision funded through advanced loans. The data used to produce the publication are sourced from the Student Loans Company (SLC) application database. The data refer to received applications, including those not yet processed, and will therefore be different than actual number of learners participating on a course with an advanced loan.

The latest SLC advanced learner loans paid in England data were released on 6 July 2017. These data refer to all payments made to FE providers on behalf of loans-funded learners during the 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 academic years, and numbers of learners will be lower than the ILR numbers. Only payments made between August 2013 and April 2017 are captured, whilst the ILR captures learners on a course with an Advanced Learner Loan that started during this period, including some where the first scheduled payment date is beyond the end of April 2017.

## Qualification Achievement Rates

Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs), previously referred to as success rates, are calculated for individual qualifications. They show how many learners that started a qualification went on to successfully complete it. Achievement rates are typically calculated at a qualification level, but can be aggregated across different types of course, or for particular colleges or providers.

Prior to 2013/14 QARs were calculated using different methodologies for each of the different strands of further education provision. Employer-based provision (apprenticeships and workplace learning (WPL)) used a primary *Overall* achievement rate measure (based on the later of the actual and planned end dates) and a secondary *Timely* measure (based on the planned end date). However, Education and Training (E & T) provision had a different measure that was based upon the learning planned end date.

In the 2013/14 academic year the methodologies were aligned to give a consistent method of calculation across all provision areas, following changes to government-funded learning provision. E & T provision has adopted the Overall and Timely measures as used in apprenticeships and WPL. The Overall measure will be the principal measure and the one reported in this SFR, and will be used to assess the quality of provision against the minimum standards that are expected for funded training. The Timely measure will also be produced as a supporting measure.

The change in E & T methodology causes a break in the time series for these statistics and means that the qualification achievement rates for 2013/14 onwards cannot be directly compared with those from the previous years. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-qualification-success-rates-rationale-for-2013-to-2014> for more details of the changes. In 2014/15 the E & T and WPL achievement rates were combined into a single measure for E & T.

In 2014/15 there was a problem with the Qualification Management Application (QMA) of an awarding organisation that meant further education providers may have been unable to record results or obtain certificates during the period April to July 2015. In the majority of cases certificates were issued in time, although there is a risk that some results were missing or recorded in error.

Apprenticeship providers responded to this issue in different ways depending on their delivery models and the individual needs of learners and it may have resulted in a higher or lower QAR for different frameworks. For this reason there is the potential for some variation in the achievement rates between providers for specific frameworks but the data indicate that the impact on the overall rates presented here will be negligible.

There is no evidence of an impact on overall education and training achievement rates. The affected cohort for the duration of the QMA issues represents less than 4% of the total aims in scope for the 2014/15 E&T achievement rate calculations, and only a small fraction of these will have experienced problems.

## New QARs methodology in 2015/16

The 2015/16 QARs have been calculated using a new methodology.

### Rationale

Provider level and national QAR aim to show a fair and transparent view of the achievement rates of FE providers. Therefore to mitigate the substantial negative impact on some providers and on the national rate, the ESFA has removed all late reported data for years prior to 2014/15 from the data used to calculate the 2015/16 QAR. This includes mainly data recording historical withdrawals but also a small number of late reported achievements. This has been done across the board for all providers for consistency and transparency. It improves the rates for the providers most affected, as we would expect, and results in a small increase for other providers as well as in the national rate.

Removing the extra years has also had a very slight negative impact for 6 providers – the biggest impact being a 0.45% decline. This is because the data we removed had some late reported achievers.

This is a one off mitigation that we will not need to implement in future years. See 'impact assessment' for further analysis.

### The new methodology

The ESFA reviewed the QAR and minimum standards methodology and thresholds following their publication for 2013/14. This analysis identified that approximately 10 per cent of apprenticeship providers were receiving an artificially high QAR rate for apprenticeships because of three recording practices in the methodology. With just a few of those gaining a significant advantage of more than 20 per cent in their overall QAR whereas other providers were able to avoid falling below the minimum standard threshold, which was 55 per cent at the time.

The three recording practices that were identified and closed, using published rule changes, are:

1. Inappropriate use of the planned break exclusion rule. QAR rules exclude frameworks reported using the planned break completion status. Providers were trusted to use the planned break withdrawal reason correctly and that those frameworks would only be reported in QAR when they returned. However, if a provider never reported a learner as returning and did not update the completion status to inform the ESFA they had withdrawn – then those frameworks were never counted in their QAR. Some providers reported nearly all withdrawals as planned breaks and therefore received a significantly higher QAR.
2. Frameworks with a Continuing status in R14 (the final data return in an academic year) were not returned as continuing on that framework in the next academic year. No further funding was claimed but those learners appeared to be continuing forever and were never reported in QAR.
3. Non-reporting of actual end dates for leavers in a previous academic year. Late reported leavers from previous academic years were counted but only in the historical comparison values – they were never used to calculate the latest published QAR for a provider. The definition of the hybrid end year was changed to include the reporting year if this was later than the planned or actual end date.



This led to some providers having a negative impact on their 2015/16 QAR after they updated their ILR records, in response to the rule changes, and reported withdrawals for several previous years in their 2015/16 data. The cumulative negative impact of reporting withdrawals in one year which has taken place over a period of time, was significant for some providers. This is because they did not realise there would be such an impact under this rule change if they tried to update records prior to 2014/15 to deal with the first two new rules.

The ESFA informed the sector in the 2014/15 QAR business rules that a set of new rules would be applied from 2015/16 onwards. For more information, please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfa-qualification-achievement-rate-2015-to-2016-formerly-qsr>.

### 15 June 2017 QAR update

The 2015/16 QAR figures in Tables 14.1 and 14.2 originally published in 16 February 2017 SFR have been refreshed in the revision to the March 2017 SFR.

This coincides with the publication of the National Achievement Rate Tables (NARTs) on 15 June 2017 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-national-success-rates-tables>), and aligns with a corrected methodology used to calculate provider achievement rates.

### Impact analysis of new methodology

To further assess the impact of the new 2015/16 QAR methodology, QARs have been calculated for the academic years 2013/14, 2014/15, and 2015/16 using the new approach, and compared to the QARs reported in the previous two years based on the previous methodology. Table 1 shows this comparison.

In table 1, the greatest impact of the new methodology can be seen for apprenticeships. There was a decrease of 4.7 percentage points between 2014/15 and 2015/16 after implementing the new 2015/16 methodology for the 2015/16 figures.

If we compare apprenticeship QARs in 2014/15 using both methodologies, we can see that when applying the new 2015/16 methodology on the 2014/15 data the QAR would have been 67.5 per cent, whereas for the previous, published figure was 71.7 per cent, a difference of 4.2 percentage points.

The impact is less pronounced on Education and training provision.

**Table 1: QARs calculated for the new 2015/16 methodology compared to previously published figures**  
England, 2013/14 to 2015/16

Provision Type	Year	Old methodology (not 2015/16)	New methodology (all years)	Percentage point (ppt) difference
Apprenticeships	2013/14	68.9%	67.9%	-1 ppts
Apprenticeships	2014/15	71.7%	67.5%	-4.2 ppts
Apprenticeships	2015/16	67.0%	67.0%	n/a
<hr/>				
Education & Training	2013/14	87.6%	86.8%	-0.8 ppts
Education & Training	2014/15	87.0%	86.4%	-0.6 ppts
Education & Training	2015/16	85.9%	85.9%	n/a

### Employer Ownership Pilot collection

The Employer Ownership Pilot (EOP) 2014/15 collection was affected by the move to an improved collection system between provisional and final return dates. While this move has put future collections on a better footing, issues resulting from the transfer remain. Rather than extend the considerable work with providers to reconcile remaining differences between returns we have decided to continue to use the provisional data at this stage. The provisional data are almost complete and have passed full quality assurance.

The overall impact on the main FE tables will be negligible because EOP is very small in relation to the ILR collection, the main data source for this SFR. In 2014/15, just 1,500 apprenticeship starts of the 499,900 in total were EOP. The following tables include provisional 2014/15 EOP figures.

There are no EOP starts in the 2016/17 academic year.

## New Full level 2 and Full level 3 methodology in 2016/17

The 2016/17 Full level 2 and Full level 3 figures have been calculated using a new methodology.

### Rationale

In 2016/17 the number of qualifications classed as Full level 2 and Full level 3 have been reclassified by the ESFA for the 19-23 entitlement, and to align with the 16-19 offer and recommendations in the [Wolf Review of Vocational Qualifications](#).

Therefore the number of learning aims (qualifications) designated as 'full' for this SFR has decreased, as the Department continues to rationalise and streamline the qualifications offer. This SFR therefore now aligns more closely with the 16 to 19 Performance Tables in terms of the qualifications included.

### The new methodology

The methodology change has involved a number of Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications no longer being classed as Full level 2 or Full level 3 for funding purposes. This has affected the figures presented and led to a large fall compared to what the numbers would have been under the previous methodology as applied in 2015/16.

As a result, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in the Full level 2 and Full level 3 figures in this SFR are no longer included following changes to funding rules on funding vocational qualifications. In effect these learners have been 'reclassified' from Full level 2 and Full level 3 to Level 2 and Level 3, respectively, following changes made by the ESFA to the qualification reference data used to calculate the Full level 2 and Full level 3 measures in this SFR.

This methodology change affects the overall FE and Skills participation figures (Table 18), the Education and training participation figures (Table 20) and the offender learning participation (Table 25).

### Impact assessment of 2016/17 Full level 2 methodology

As noted above, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in Full level 2, have been reclassified in the SFR tables show below:

*Table 18: Adult (19+) FE and Skills Participation by Level (2016/17 – Reported to Date) and Table 20: Adult (19+) Education and Training Participation by Level (2016/17 – Reported to Date):* Between August 2016 and July 2017, 182,600 learners have been reclassified to level 2 in both tables.

*Table 25: Adult (18+) FE and Skills - Offender Learning Participation by Level (2016/17 – Reported to Date):* Between August 2016 and July 2017, 11,200 learners have been reclassified to level 2.

### Impact assessment of 2016/17 Full level 3 methodology

As noted above, from 2016/17 some people who would have previously been included in Full level 3, have been reclassified in the SFR tables show below:

*Table 18: Adult (19+) FE and Skills Participation by Level (2016/17 – Reported to Date) and Table 20: Adult (19+) Education and Training Participation by Level (2016/17 – Reported to Date):* Between August 2016 and July 2017, 3,100 learners have been reclassified to level 3 in both tables.

Note: no offender learners are affected by the FL3 reclassification.



## Vocational qualification achievements

Data for vocational qualification achievements in table 17 of this SFR are obtained from Ofqual.

On 1 October 2015, Ofqual withdrew the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) requirements. This means that from that date, the QCF type has ceased to exist. However, for administrative reasons, awarding organisations could still use the QCF type on the system for new qualifications when no other type was appropriate, until a new system was introduced in summer 2016. More information is available in the following:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/vocational-and-other-qualifications-quarterly-april-to-june-2016>:

Following the withdrawal of QCF, Ofqual have revised the 'qualification type' to reflect the most up to date information recorded for the most recent quarter as well as historical data going back five years. [Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: April to June 2017 - GOV.UK](#)

In our October 2017 SFR, we have revised table 17 to include revised data from Ofqual for each qualification type going back to 2012. Please see table 2 below for analysis on the changes in the figures for each qualification type since our July 2017 SFR for the full academic year data. Please note, the figures in the October 2017 SFR will not match against the figures in the Ofqual's quarterly publication due to coverage differences. Data in our SFR table 17.2 has data for England only from April 2012 onwards. Table 17.1 has coverage for the UK from October 2006 to March 2012 as per the old methodology. The data for table 17.2 in our October SFR is based on snapshot of Ofqual's data as of 21 August 2017.

**Table 2: Differences in figures for 'qualification types' compared to July 17 SFR due to revisions to Ofqual's data and coverage.**

**October SFR table 17: Vocational Qualification Achievements in England by Qualification Type, 2006 (October) to 2017 (June)**

Academic year	National Vocational Qualification	Occupational Qualification	Qualifications and Credit Framework Qualification	Vocationally Related Qualification	Other Vocational Qualifications	Total
2012/13	26,200	15,300	5,688,900	419,200	2,194,600	<b>9,196,200</b>
2013/14	8,000	24,200	5,364,200	249,700	2,194,100	<b>8,680,700</b>
2014/15	4,000	28,500	4,874,500	159,500	2,417,600	<b>8,326,100</b>
2015/16	2,500	31,500	4,505,800	165,600	1,980,500	<b>7,443,500</b>
<b>Differences in each qualification type from the July 2017 SFR*</b>						

Academic year	National Vocational Qualification	Occupational Qualification	Qualifications and Credit Framework Qualification	Vocationally Related Qualification	Other Vocational Qualifications	Total
2012/13	-2,500	14,700	-546,900	71,000	-388,400	<b>-852,000</b>
2013/14	200	24,100	-520,100	70,000	-414,700	<b>-840,500</b>
2014/15	1,300	28,500	-598,500	112,400	-385,600	<b>-842,000</b>
2015/16	800	31,400	-563,900	106,400	-332,300	<b>-757,600</b>

\* differences are due to revisions to Ofqual data and coverage. July SFR included data for the UK and October SFR includes data for England only

## 4. Key definitions

**Further Education (FE and Skills)** includes: learners who are studying a course in a FE College, training provider or within their local community; and employees undertaking an apprenticeship or other qualification in the workplace.

**Apprenticeships** are paid jobs that incorporate on- and off-the-job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications. As an employee, apprentices earn as they learn and gain practical skills in the workplace.

### Apprenticeships measures

#### Measures of apprenticeships

Two measures of apprenticeships are presented to give a clearer view of the changes and trends in apprenticeships in England:

- Participation refers to the number of people who are undertaking an apprenticeship in a given time period. This measure is helpful for quantifying the number of people on an apprenticeship programme throughout the academic year. An apprentice studying towards more than one apprenticeship at the same level is counted once.
- Starts refer to the number of programmes that begin in a given time period. This measure is helpful in determining the take-up of programmes. An apprentice is counted for each apprenticeship they start.

The apprenticeship programme has expanded since 2010/11 as a result of increased government investment in adult apprenticeships. More recently apprenticeship policy has focused on raising standards, improving the quality and introducing minimum durations of apprenticeships. This means some learners find it more difficult or take longer to complete their apprenticeship.

24+ Advanced learner loans were introduced in August 2013, and withdrawn for apprenticeships in March 2014. This appears to have affected learner numbers on Level 3 and above courses and apprenticeships for ages 24 and over in 2013/14. This should be noted when comparing the 2014/15 volumes with 2013/14.

### Planned length of stay

Minimum durations have been in place for framework-based apprenticeships since August 2012. For learners aged 16 to 18, apprenticeships must last at least 12 months, but for learners aged 19 and over there is more flexibility, as some adults have prior learning / attainment and can complete more quickly (for example if the training provider can evidence prior learning the minimum duration is reduced to 6 months). For new apprenticeship standards the minimum duration is 12 months, with no exceptions.

The methodology to calculate planned length of stay has been slightly revised for 2015/16. We now include those learners whose start date is the same as their planned end date. In 2014/15 this would have meant 100 learners included in the total for '12 months or more' would have been included in total for 'fewer than 12 months'.

As this methodology change does not affect many learners (i.e. 100 in 2014/15), figures for previous years have not been revised.

## 5. Glossary of key terms

**Further education and skills** includes: learners who are studying a course in a FE College, training provider or within their local community; and employees undertaking an apprenticeship or other qualification in the workplace.

**Apprenticeships** are paid jobs that incorporate on- and off-the-job training leading to nationally recognised qualifications. As an employee, apprentices earn as they learn and gain practical skills in the workplace. An apprenticeship framework typically contains the following separately certified elements:

A knowledge-based element (the theoretical knowledge underpinning a job in a certain occupation and industry, typically certified via a technical certificate).

A competence-based element (the ability to discharge the functions of a certain occupation, typically certified via work-based assessed national vocational qualifications – NVQs).

Transferable skills (English and maths) – key skills / functional skills.

A module on employment rights and responsibilities.

Personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS): independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-management, effective participation.

See <https://www.gov.uk/topic/further-education-skills/apprenticeships> for further information.

The government has introduced reforms to apprenticeships, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-richard-review-next-steps>). As part of these reforms, in future all apprenticeship standards will be designed by employers. For a full list of the standards and assessment plans designed and approved so far, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-standards>

**Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE 16 to 24) scheme** provides apprenticeship grants with a value of £1,500 to employers with up to 1,000 employees to encourage employers to take on new apprentices aged 16 to 24. Eligible employers must not have taken on an apprentice in the previous 12 months. Subject to budget availability and the employer's commitment to support the apprentice to the end of their programme, any one employer can claim support for up to ten apprentices. AGE 16 to 24 has been extended to the 2015-16 financial year. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-grant-for-employers-of-16-to-24-year-olds>

On the **Access to Apprenticeships pathway**, participants use elements of an apprenticeship framework to brush up skills and workplace experience, with the aim of securing a paid apprenticeship with an employer as quickly as possible, up to a maximum of six months. Participants are not categorised or counted as an 'apprentice' until they become employed. This pathway was announced in May 2011 and closed to new starts end of December 2013.

**Employer Ownership Pilot** offers all employers in England direct access to up to £340 million of public investment over the period of the pilot (up to 2015/16) to design and deliver their own training solutions.

See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-ownership-of-skills-pilot>

**Education and training** covers further education learning delivered mainly in a classroom, workshop, or through distance or e-learning. See: [Data Dictionary - Business Definitions - Learner Responsive Business Definition](#)

**Workplace learning** covers a broad range of training including basic skills, Level 2, Level 3 and higher-level skills. Training is mainly delivered through the workplace (but excludes Apprenticeships). Between 2008/09 and 2010/11 this included Train to Gain programme, Employability Skills Pilot and other programmes such as Programmes for the Unemployed. From 2011/12 it includes all training mainly delivered through the workplace (excluding apprenticeships).

**English and maths** qualifications (previously Skills for Life) are designed to give people the reading, writing, maths and communication skills they need in everyday life, to operate effectively in work and to help them succeed on other training courses. See: [Skills Funding Agency - Providers - Our programmes - Basic Skills - Basic Skills](#)

**Offender learning** aims to ensure offenders have the skills that will enable them to gain worthwhile, sustainable employment and in-so-doing reduce the likelihood of re-offending. The Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS) funds a wide range of learning aims for adults (aged 18 and over) in custody in prisons in England, including awards and units, with a focus on addressing English and maths at the start of a sentence and vocational skills in the run-up to release.

The offenders reported in the this SFR were funded via the OLASS budget in August and September 2016, but responsibility transferred to the Ministry of Justice from 1 October 2016 following a machinery of government change. However, data for the first three quarters of 2016/17 is still reported here.

**Community learning** funds a wide range of non-formal courses, from personal development through to older people's learning, IT courses, employability skills, family learning and activities to promote civic engagement and community development. Courses may be offered by local authorities, colleges, and voluntary and community groups, and include activity targeted at deprived areas and disadvantaged groups. See: <http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-learning-government-funding>

**Advanced learner loans** In academic years 2013/14 and 2015/16 loans were available for eligible learners, aged 24 and above studying full Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications, to help meet up-front course costs. An extension to advanced learner loans from 2016/17 was announced in November 2015: any learner aged 19 or older on the first day of their course and studying at Levels 3 to 6 can apply for a loan to help fund the fees / course costs. Those aged 19-23 still retain an entitlement to full funding of their first full level 3 qualification. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-24-advanced-learning-loans>.

The number of learners with a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan reported through the ILR differ from data showing loan applications and loans paid.

**Full level 2** is equivalent to an NVQ at Level 2, or 5 GCSEs. The widths of all of a learner's Level 2 aims are summed to establish whether a learner is taking a Full level 2 programme. **Full level 3** is equivalent to an NVQ at Level 3, or 2 A-Levels. The widths of all a learner's Level 3 aims are summed to establish whether a learner is taking a Full level 3 programme. Please see section 3 on the reclassification of some Full level 2 and Full level 3 qualifications in 2016/17.

**Traineeships** were introduced in the 2013/14 academic year to provide young people with essential work preparation, English, maths and work experience to secure an apprenticeship or other work.

**Academic year** runs from 1 August to 31 July (except LFS figures in tables 15 and 16, which are calendar year, and Ofqual figures in table 17 which run from 1 October to 30 September).

**BAME** – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group

## 6. Issues with using in-year data

It is important to provide the earliest picture of further education performance once it becomes available so that users may assess the impact of government-funded provision and hold the system to account. However, in-year data are taken from an operational information system that is designed to support the funding of providers and there are some important limitations users should take into consideration.

In-year information is subject to data lags when providers submit information after the period it related to. This information is subsequently attributed to the correct time period. Data are subject to data lag until the final returns for the academic year are made by providers, after the end of the academic year. Final data for each academic year (August to July) are published in the following November. The size of revision to individual estimates that arise from data lag can vary greatly. They tend to be around 2 to 3 per cent but have been as much as 20 per cent. Revisions are typically upward though it should be noted that on occasions small downward revisions are possible.

Data lag from one year to the next is not predictable as provider behaviour changes over time and there is no source of information that would enable a robust estimate of completeness of data that have been returned. We generally recommend using final data for the last complete academic year for analysis of changes over time.

We carry out a quality assessment of the volume of providers that have made their returns. If we consider estimates to be particularly weak, due to data lag or any other factor, we may defer publication of those

estimates. In recent years we have encouraged more timely reporting of data ahead of the final return. This is set out in our quality statement, which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sfr-compliance-with-official-statistics-code-of-practice>

Provisional figures for the 2016/17 academic year (August 2016 to July 2017) are based on information that has been reported to the ESFA in August 2017 by further education colleges and providers. The data provide an early view of performance and will change as further data returns are received. Since providers report some of their data for this period later in the year, the data are subject to change (in either direction) until final data is received. At this point in the year, 2016/17 figures are referred to as reported so far or reported to date to reflect this.

It is not possible to determine how complete or incomplete the information returned so far is, therefore care should be taken when comparing data reported so far in 2016/17 to the equivalent reporting period in 2015/16. This is particularly the case as provider reporting behaviour may change year to year. More accurate comparisons can be made once final returns for the academic year are made (data returned in October 2017, due to be published in November 2017).

## 7. Issues with comparing data across academic years

In the 2011/12 academic year, a Single ILR (SILR) data collection system was introduced. This replaced the multiple separate data collections used in previous years and led to small technical changes in the way learners from more than one funding stream are counted.

Overall, the new collection system led to a removal of duplicate learners and a reduction in total learner participation of approximately 2 per cent. However, apprenticeship participation figures were more significantly affected due to a change in the way learners participating on more than one apprenticeship programme were counted. This has led to a removal of duplicate learners and a reduction in overall apprenticeship learners of approximately 5 per cent; therefore participation figures for 2011/12 onwards are not comparable to earlier years.

A paper is available on our website to explain the SILR and the small effects it has on the SFR at:

[Reduction of Duplication in FE and Skills Learner Volumes](#)

[http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C05DCDD5-67EE-4AD0-88B9-BEBC8F7F3300/0/SILR\\_Effects\\_SFR\\_Learners\\_June12.pdf](http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/C05DCDD5-67EE-4AD0-88B9-BEBC8F7F3300/0/SILR_Effects_SFR_Learners_June12.pdf).

Further information on the SILR is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ilr-specification-validation-rules-and-appendices-2013-to-2014>

## 8. Publication cycle across the year

Further information on future editions of the SFR can be found on the most recent collection website at:

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

The table below shows the annual publication cycle and information regarding the in-year data and final data included for each release.

Release	Data Included
January 2017	- FE and skills data reported so far for the first quarter of 2016/17
February 2017	- Education and training and Apprenticeship achievement rates for 2015/16
	- FE and skills data reported so far for the first two quarters of 2016/17

	- <b>Final</b> data for 2015 and provisional data for 2016 on the level of highest qualification held for adults in the population.
<b>July 2017</b>	- FE and skills data reported so far for the first three quarters of 2016/17
<b>October 2017</b>	- FE and skills data reported so far for the full 2016/17 academic year
<b>November 2017</b>	- <b>Final</b> FE and skills data for the full 2016/17 academic year
	- Education and training and Apprenticeship achievement rates for 2016/17
	- FE and skills data reported so far for the first quarter of 2017/18

The SFR is an evolving product and we welcome feedback. If you have comments or feedback on the SFR, please contact: [Dave.Bartholomew@education.gov.uk](mailto:Dave.Bartholomew@education.gov.uk)

If you have a statistical question around the content or presentation of National Statistics in the release, please contact: [Dave.Bartholomew@education.gov.uk](mailto:Dave.Bartholomew@education.gov.uk)

## 9. Supplementary tables

Supplementary tables relating to this SFR can be found on GOV.UK. The tables are published as part of the [FE Data Library](#) and include breakdowns by age, gender, ethnicity, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, region, local authority, parliamentary constituency, sector subject area and funding stream.

Local authority reports are published on GOV.UK. Local authority districts are shown based on the postcodes of delivery locations and on the home postcodes of learners. The reports cover 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16: enrolments, participation and provider level. The reports can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-local-authority-tables>

Further breakdowns of the Qualification Achievement Rates (QARs) can be found in the National Achievement Rates Tables (NARTs), which can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-national-success-rates-tables>

## 10. General footnotes relevant to all tables

In the SFR main tables, headline volumes are reported rounded to the nearest 100.

In the supplementary tables volumes are rounded to the nearest 10. The exception to this is 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.

'-' indicates a headline volume with below 50 in the SFR main tables and below 5 in the supplementary tables.

'\*\*' indicates a percentage of less than 0.5%.

For definitions of variables used in the tables please see the data dictionary:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140107201041/http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/datadictionary/>

Except for Tables 7.1, 7.2, 13, 22.1 and 22.2, age is reported as at 31 August of the academic year for all provision.



In tables reporting full-year numbers, full-year numbers are a count of the number of learners that participated/achieved at any point during the year. Learners undertaking/achieving more than one course will appear only once in the 'total learners' category for each data collection. All learners undertaking/achieving a Full level 2 or Full level 3 qualification will also appear in the Level 2 or Level 3 category, respectively.

The data source for all tables is the ILR, except where stated. Further breakdowns of the data are available at the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fe-data-library>

#### Tables 5 and 6 – Demographics

Learners undertaking courses at more than one level will be counted once for each applicable level, but once only in the total.

Age, gender, learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ethnicity are based upon self-declaration by the learner.

#### Tables 2, 6, 7, 14.2, 21 and 22 – Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship starts and achievements include all funded and unfunded learners reported on the ILR.

Apprenticeship achievement rates are based on the number of learners who meet all of the requirements of their apprenticeship framework, divided by the number of learners who have left training or successfully completed their training in the academic year.

For apprenticeship starts and achievements, age is calculated based on age at start of the programme rather than based on 31 August.

In Table 7.1 full-year numbers are a count of the number of starts at any point during the year. Learners starting more than one apprenticeship will appear more than once.

In Table 7.2 full-year numbers are a count of the number of framework achievements at any point during the year. Learners achieving more than one framework will appear more than once.

Programme-led apprenticeships recorded in ILR returns are included in the above figures.

In order to be counted as a successful achievement, all elements of the framework must have been achieved.

Quarter 1 is 1 August to 31 October; Quarter 2 is 1 November to 31 January; Quarter 3 is 1 February to 30 April; Quarter 4 is 1 May to 31 July.

#### Table 8 – Workplace learning

In Table 8.1 full-year numbers are a count of the number of starts at any point during the year. Learners starting more than one course will appear more than once.

In Table 8.2 full-year numbers are a count of the number of achievements at any point during the year. Learners achieving more than one course will appear more than once.

Quarter 1 is 1 August to 31 October; Quarter 2 is 1 November to 31 January; Quarter 3 is 1 February to 30 April; Quarter 4 is 1 May to 31 July.

#### Table 9 and 24 – Community learning

For 2008/09 to 2010/11, only community learning provision recorded in the community learning collection is included in totals except for 2009/10 where community learning provision recorded in the education and training collection for five specially designated colleges is also included.

There are a number of learners with community learning aims that are recorded in the education and training funding stream and are not included in the figures in Table 9. In 2009/10 there were 7,700

participating and 6,300 achieving learners and in 2010/11 there were 8,300 participating and 6,900 achieving learners. The only community learning provision included for Table 9 for 2010/11 is recorded in the community learning funding stream. Community learning in 2011/12 onwards is recorded in the Single ILR collection only.

#### Table 11 and 26 – Advanced learner loans (Level 3+)

Learners have been eligible to apply for an advanced learner loan since the start of the 2013/14 academic year (August 2013).

A small number of learners aged 23 at the start of the academic year but aged 24 at the start of the aim are included in the figures. This table includes 'Education and training' learners only. Apprenticeships were removed from the scope of the loans programme in March 2014, apprentices who already received a loan no longer need to repay it.

Table 1.2 reports on the actual number of achievements within the academic year without reference to those that were expected to complete. Table 14.1 reports on achievement rates which are based on the reported achievement of individual aims that were expected to complete in the academic year.

#### Table 17 – Vocational qualifications

This table covers all levels of vocational qualifications reported through Ofqual. Data are supplied by awarding organisations.

Academic year is October to September. For example, the 2006/07 academic year is 1 October 2006 to 30 September 2007. Key Skills data was not collected prior to October 2009.

'Other vocational qualifications' include basic skills, entry level, English for Speakers Other Languages (ESOL), functional skills, free-standing mathematics qualification, key skills, National Qualifications Framework and other general types.

#### Table 13 – Employer Ownership Pilot

This table covers all Employer Ownership Pilot starts.

Age is calculated based on age at start of the programme rather than based on 31 August.

## 11. Users of these statistics

This publication attracts a wide variety of users who use the statistics in various ways including:

- Department for Education (DfE) who use the statistics to report on ambitions; develop and monitor policies; and answer parliamentary questions
- ESFA who use the SFR for all statistics shared externally including press releases and for responding to requests from educational bodies, and to respond to requests for participation, achievement and success rates information from external partners and organisations
- Providers and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)
- Ofsted (for achievement rates information) and Ofqual
- Researchers
- Academics
- Media
- General public

The statistical policy statement on how we meet user needs through engagement for this SFR is available here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/348186/User\\_Engagement\\_July2014.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/348186/User_Engagement_July2014.pdf)

## 12. Related statistical publications

- There are a number of other statistical publications available that can be used to provide contextual information to this SFR. Some of those most relevant to this release are discussed below:
- [\*Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England\*](#) published on 29 June 2017 by the Department for Education. This shows that the provisional proportion of 16–18 year olds in education and training was 86.9 per cent at end 2016 – the highest rate ever recorded and an increase of 0.3 percentage points from end 2015.
- [\*Level 2 and 3 attainment by young people aged 19 in 2016\*](#) published on 30 March 2017 by the Department for Education. This shows that in 2016, 86.7 per cent of 19 year olds were qualified to Level 2 or higher in 2016. This is a decrease of 0.8 percentage points compared to 2015, but is 20.1 percentage points higher than the start of the time series in 2004.
- [\*Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Providers in the United Kingdom for the Academic Year\*](#) published on 12 January 2017 by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). This shows the total number of HE enrolments at UK higher education institutions stood at 2,280,830 in 2015/16, a increase of 1 per cent from 2014/15. In 2014/15, there were 742,730 HE qualifications obtained in the UK. Of these, 399,820 were at first degree level.
- [\*Education and Training Statistics for the United Kingdom\*](#) published on 10 November 2016 by the Department for Education. This release provides statistics relating to education and training in the UK and includes chapters relating to post-compulsory education and training and qualifications. Information includes participation of learners in further education by country of study, participation in job-related training and the highest level of qualification held by adults in the population (UK).
- [\*FE Choices\*](#) data provides four performance indicators: success rates; learner destinations (including employment rate and learning rate); learner satisfaction; and employer satisfaction. Results at National level by type of provider and by individual provider for each performance indicator are available.
- [\*Adult further education: outcome based success measures\*](#) presents experimental statistics on employment and continued education of adults finishing funded further education training between 2011 and 2014. The measures make use of administrative datasets already held by government to observe learning and employment activity in the year following completion of funded FE learning.
- [\*Further education for benefit claimants\*](#) provides information on further education activity funded by the ESFA for adult benefit claimants in England. The statistics are produced using a matched dataset of the ILR from the (former) Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS) from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The publication provides statistics on benefit spells with training, learners who were on benefits at the start of training, level of qualification studied (all and highest) and type of learning provision.

## Further education statistics for other countries in the UK

- The focus of this SFR is on government-funded further education provision in England. Similar information is available for other countries in the UK, and provides useful contextual background to these statistics.
- Statistics on further education and work-based learning in **Wales** can be found at: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning-statistics/?lang=en>
- Statistics on accredited enrolments in the **Northern Ireland** further education sector can be found at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/further-education-statistics>
- Statistics on learners in further education in **Scotland** can be found through user-defined tables on further education learners and courses: <https://stats.sfc.ac.uk/infact/>

## 13. Get in touch

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

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