



## APPENDICES

## Supplementary Research: Opinions on the Employer Apprenticeship Account

In undertaking the research to "take the temperature" of the local apprenticeship market, the issue of administration, compliance and the Apprenticeship Service (employer account) surfaced as issues impacting participation on the programme.

GMLPF endeavoured to examine further the issues surrounding employers' use of the Apprenticeship Service. This involved walking through the system with a small number of providers.

Firstly, it should be clarified that all the providers engaged in this part of the research felt that employers having their own Apprenticeship Service (AS) account was positive and a force for good. Providers spoke of the AS driving employers to take more responsibility for the programme and supporting the validity of the apprenticeship by confirming they were legitimate businesses, paying employees a recognised minimum rate of pay etc.

The operation to date has also had a positive impact in that the AS has helped reinforce employer-provider relationships, a better understanding of the business by employers, and greater collaboration.

However, several issues or operational pinch points emerged, all relating to the AS, some more pertinent to levy paying employers and others to smaller employers (SMEs).

### **Levy paying employers:**

Levy payers are typically more aware, organised and able to operate the AS. Usually, this is because of their size, with many having dedicated personnel who are responsible for the employer's AS administration. These are often HR, L&D or financial roles and, as such, are sufficiently skilled to operate the system, meaning apprenticeship providers are not required to provide as much support or be as involved.

The key challenge for the apprenticeship programme and providers with levy-paying employers is when an apprentice changes employers and wishes to continue studying their apprenticeship.

Typical challenges include:


- A time lag for employers to update their AS: There can be delays in updating learner status, causing knock-on issues for the provider and the apprentice with their new employer AS process. During this delay, an apprentice can remain unsupported, which inevitably has a material impact on the apprentice's learner journey and commitment to the programme.

In addition,

- The lack of provider involvement in the AS process can result in administrative discrepancies where the provider and the employer enter or have different leave end dates, causing irregularities. The lack of consistency between what the employer inputs to AS and the data the provider provides elsewhere can cause unnecessary administrative issues.
- Employers can only give access to one training provider at any one time, meaning that it can be challenging to support transfers.

### **Non-Levy Paying Employers:**

Non-Levy payers are typically SMEs. Locally and traditionally, many employers involved in apprenticeships have been micro-businesses with less than ten staff, or slightly larger.



As a result, SME employers do not typically have dedicated personnel who can administrate their AS account. Employers often foster the expectation that the provider will provide training and practical support. Where providers have larger numbers of employers who are SMEs and who recruit or upskill employees, this can mean that a sizeable amount of their administration or sales resource is taken up doing this, for which they are not funded.

SMEs rely heavily on providers to assist with:

- Setting up their AS Account
- Adding apprentices
- Administration of ALN
- Adding vacancies
- Administration of Government incentive payments

Training providers respond well to this need and have come to expect to be required to support SMEs with their AS accounts. In many cases, providers have prepared written instructions and guidance notes for employers to help them set up accounts and administer vacancies and new starts.

However, the key challenges or pinch-points in terms of non-levy paying employers include:

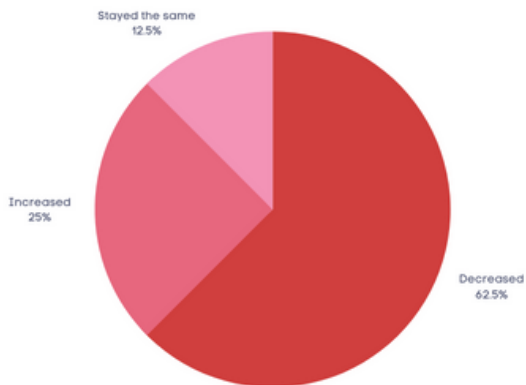
- SME employers who are naïve about apprenticeships inevitably have not set up an AS account. For growth in sectors dominated by SMEs, significant levels of support are needed. Whilst there is information available such as step-by-step guides, there is going to be a resource required to enable more SMEs to access the AS
- SME employers often lack digital skills, awareness of broader and related systems such as Government Gateway, and the administration time to get involved. A review of how this could be simplified would be beneficial, alongside support provided by organisations such as the Growth Hub, Chambers etc to support employers in using the system.
- SME employers often lack awareness of key information such as their PAYE Reference numbers etc. It is simply another administrative task that can act, in some instances, as a barrier to engagement or delay activity. It would be helpful if other government sites, such as the Gateway, could automatically share prepopulated information with the AS system.
- As with larger, levy-paying employers, significant issues can emerge when an apprentice leaves employment. The employer cannot often confidently close a learner down on the AS system and may require provider support (even though that provider may no longer support the learner). This has a knock-on effect on the new employer and provider, also creating delays.
- Employers are repeatedly asked by providers what allocation of their funding they have accessed, and this is challenging in the extreme for SME employers
- Conflicting start and leave dates entered by SME employers and providers in the AS system can prove extremely time-consuming and burdensome to providers who inevitably drive the resolution. Again, automatic, cross-system checks would help remove these discrepancies.
- Repeat problems emerge for providers with ‘grammar rejections’ for vacancies, whilst they report inconsistency in the rules applied by AS personnel in this matter. Some relaxation on this would reduce delays and speed up the vacancy-posting process.
- Providers consistently asked for better-written step-by-step guidance from Government for employers on the use of the AS system

## APPENDIX 2

### Graphs & quotes

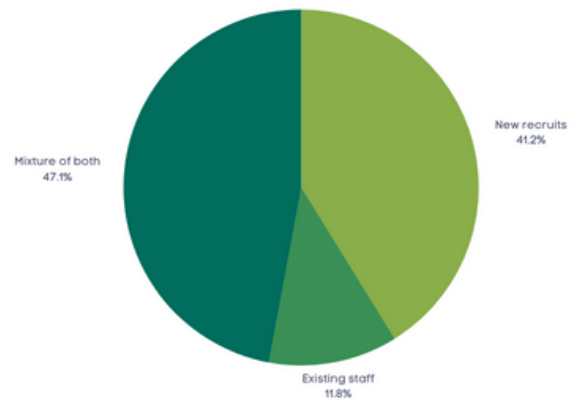
GRAPH 1

When compared with figures for this time last year, has the overall number of your apprentices in learning decreased, increased or stayed the same?



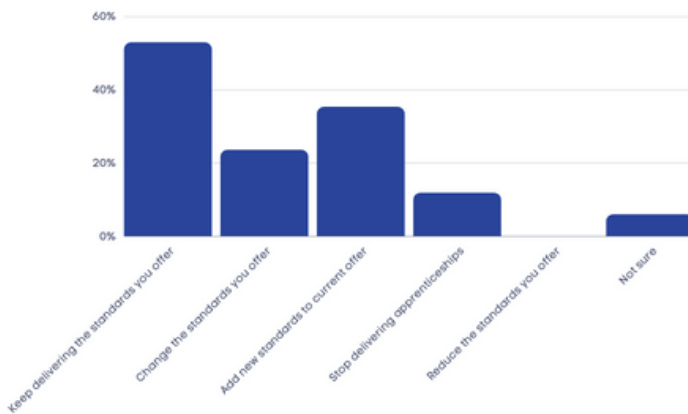
GRAPH 2

Are your apprenticeship starts mainly new recruits that you support employers to source, employers' existing staff members or a mixture of both?



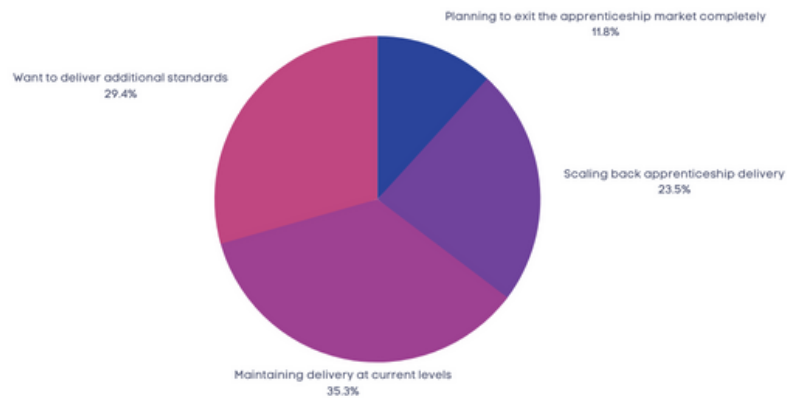
GRAPH 3

Thinking about your apprenticeship offer, do you plan to:



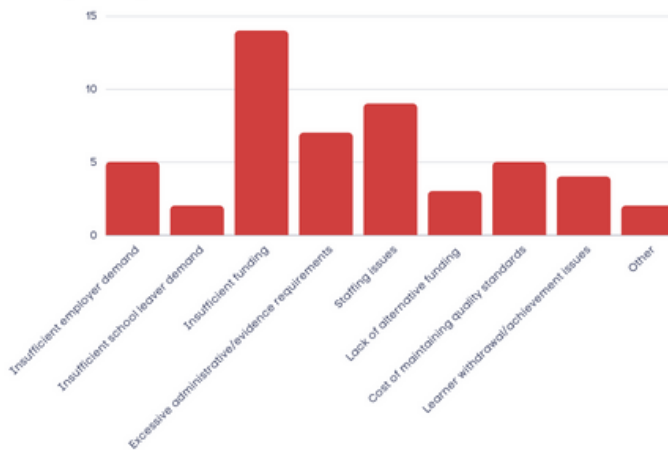
GRAPH 4

Which of the following phrases best explains your apprenticeship delivery status?



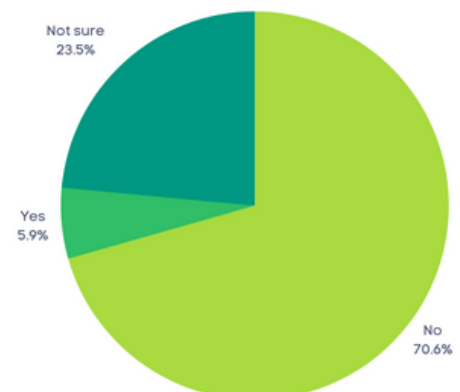
GRAPH 5

What do you think are the primary issues affecting apprenticeship delivery in LCR (choose 3)?



GRAPH 6

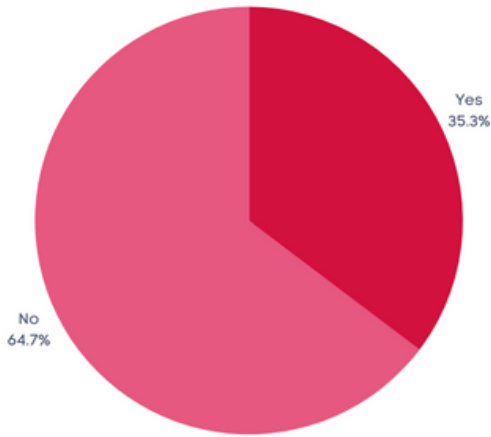
Are LCR employers sufficiently aware of apprenticeships and how they work?





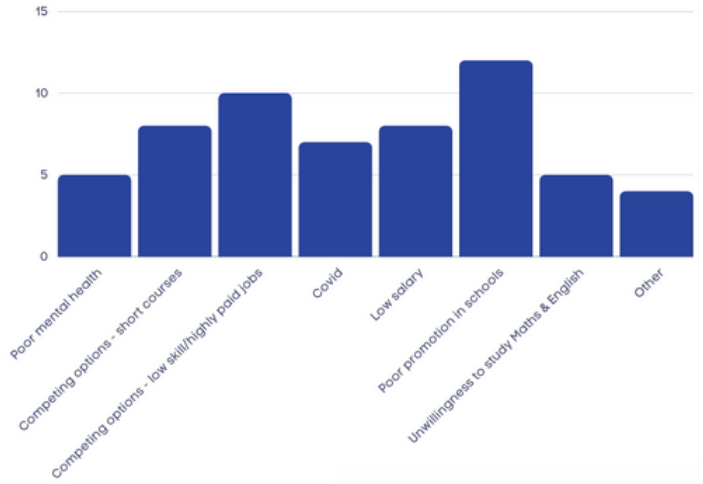
GRAPH 7

Are LCR school leavers sufficiently aware of apprenticeships?



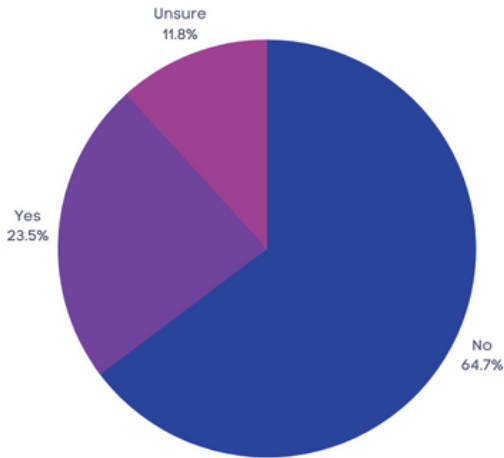
GRAPH 8

Over the last 5 years, the number of 16 to 19 year old starts have markedly declined. What are the main reasons for this?



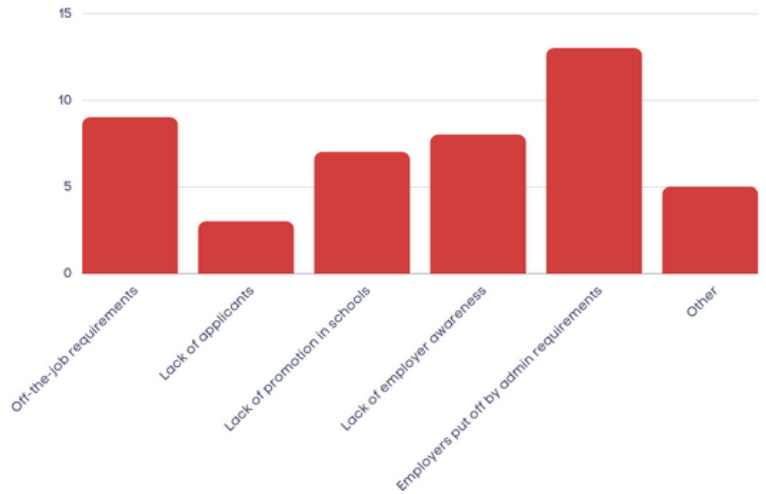
GRAPH 9

Existing staff in companies are a market for apprenticeships. Do you think they are sufficiently aware of this training option?



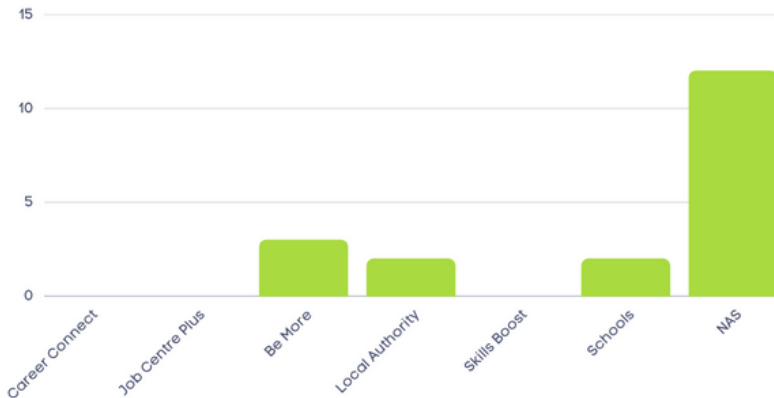
GRAPH 10

Which of the following are barriers to recruitment in your opinion?



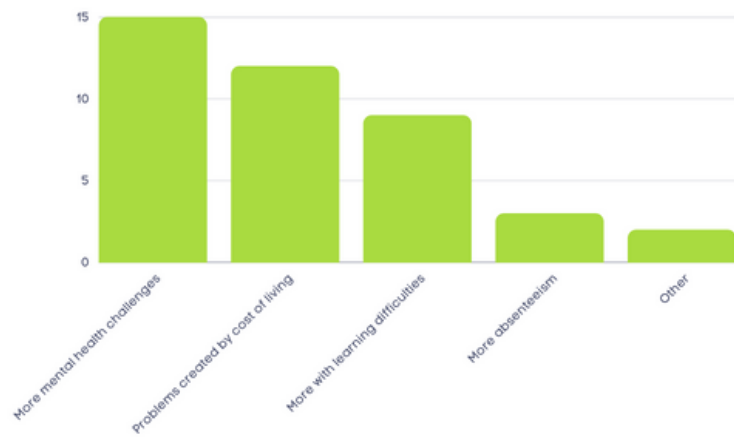
GRAPH 11

Collaborating with others: Which of the following agencies effectively assist you to promote apprenticeship opportunities and achieve starts?



GRAPH 12

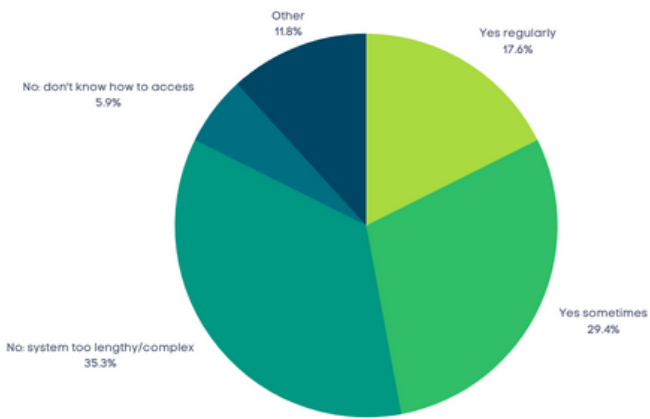
Are learner needs changing? How?





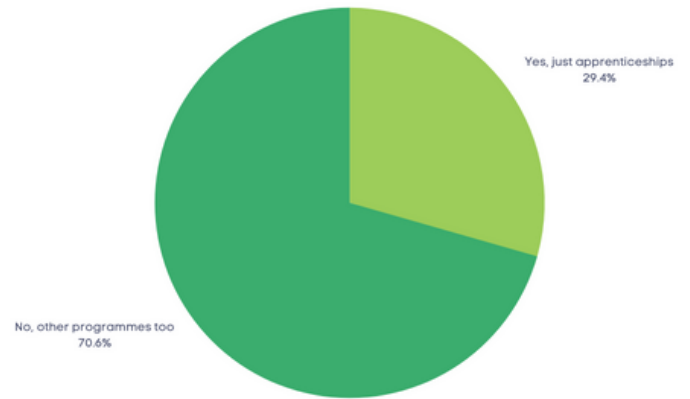
GRAPH 13

Do you access Additional Learning Needs funding?



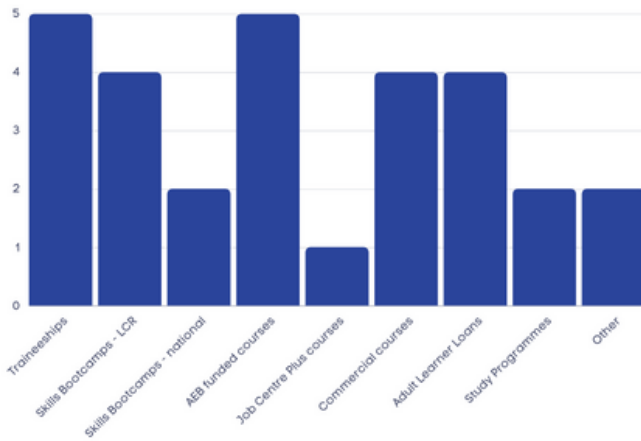
GRAPH 14

Do you only offer apprenticeships?



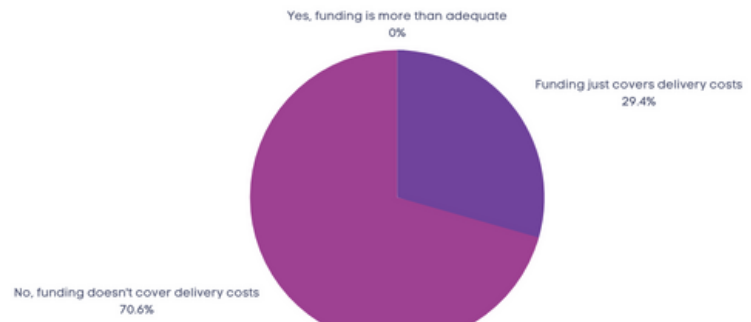
GRAPH 15

What other programmes do you offer?



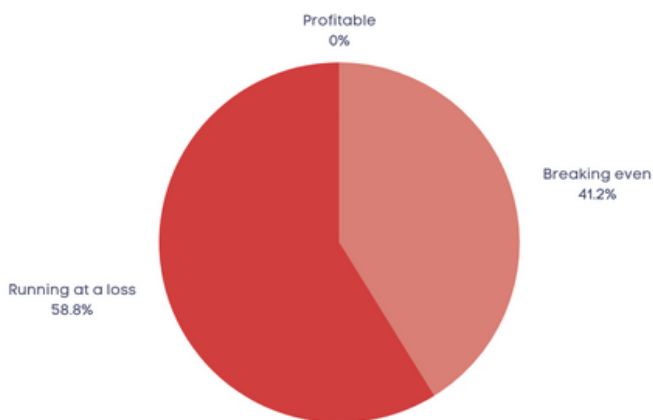
GRAPH 16

Is current funding for apprenticeships sufficient?



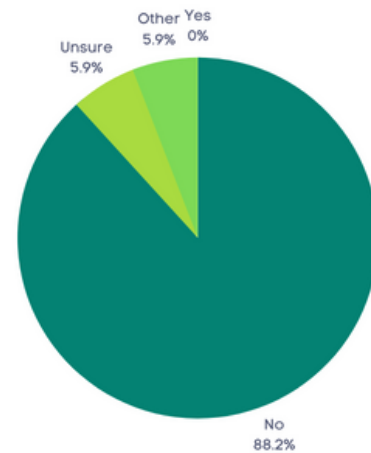
GRAPH 17

How would you describe your apprenticeship programme(s)?



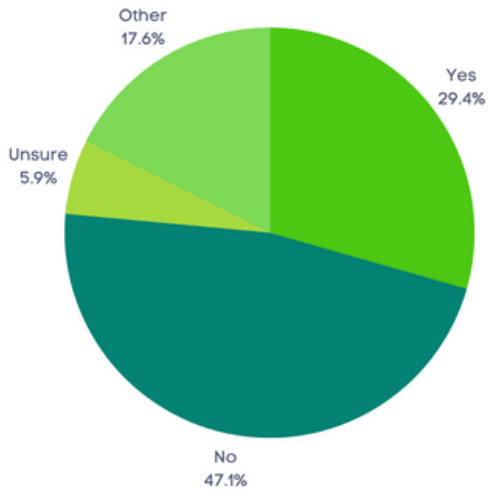
GRAPH 18

Are you satisfied with the cost of EPA?



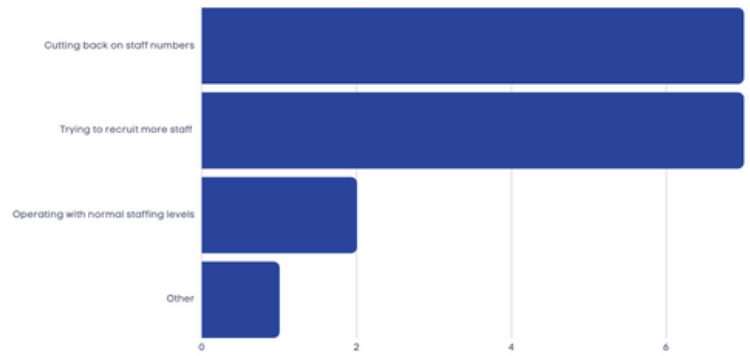
GRAPH 19

Are you satisfied with the service covered by your EPAOs?



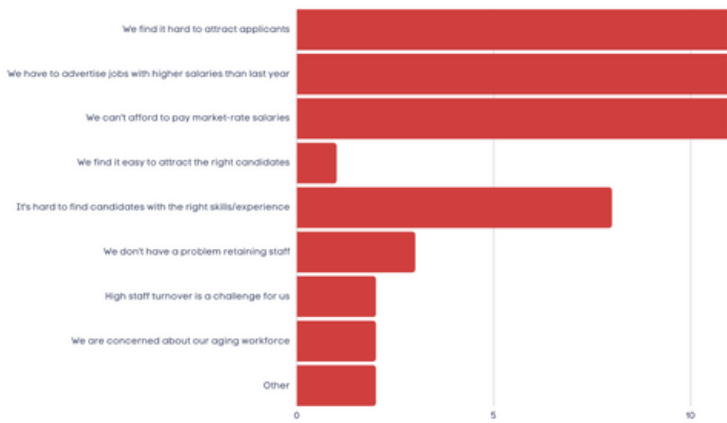
GRAPH 20

Please consider your staff levels. Would you say you are?



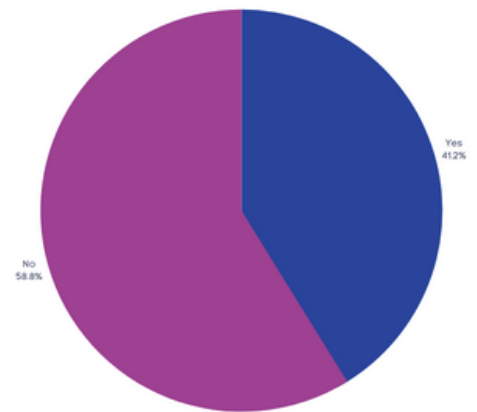
GRAPH 21

Which of the following are true about your staffing?



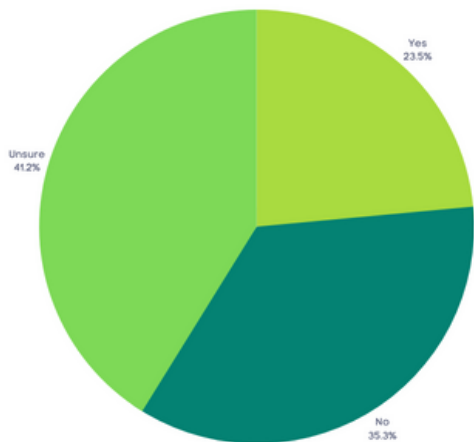
GRAPH 22

Have you expanded your range of apprenticeship provision over the last few years?



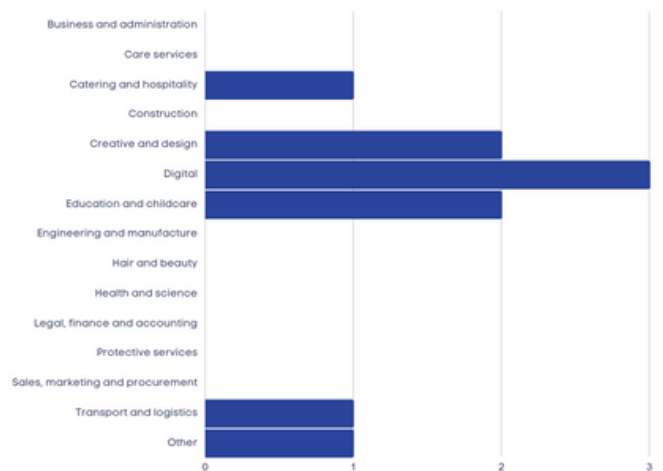
GRAPH 23

Do you plan to expand your apprenticeship provision in the future?



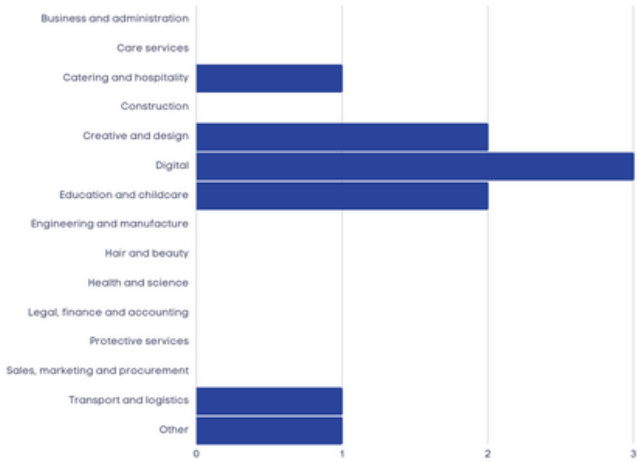
GRAPH 24

If you plan to expand apprenticeships, which sectors are you considering?



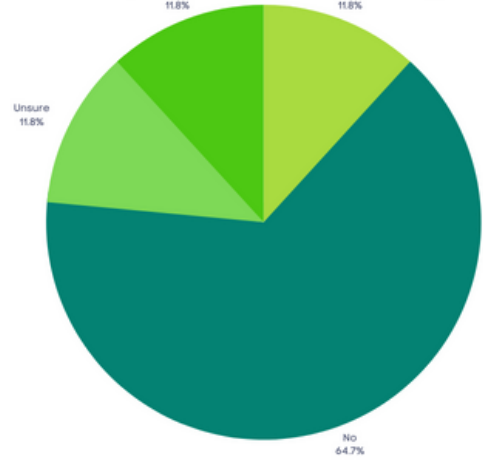
**GRAPH 25**

If you plan to expand apprenticeships, which sectors are you considering?



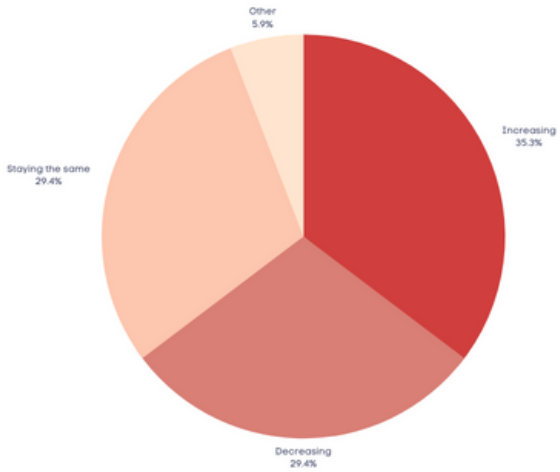
**GRAPH 26**

Do you think it is possible to deliver a good quality of education (and meet the requirements of the EIF) on the funding you receive to deliver apprenticeships?



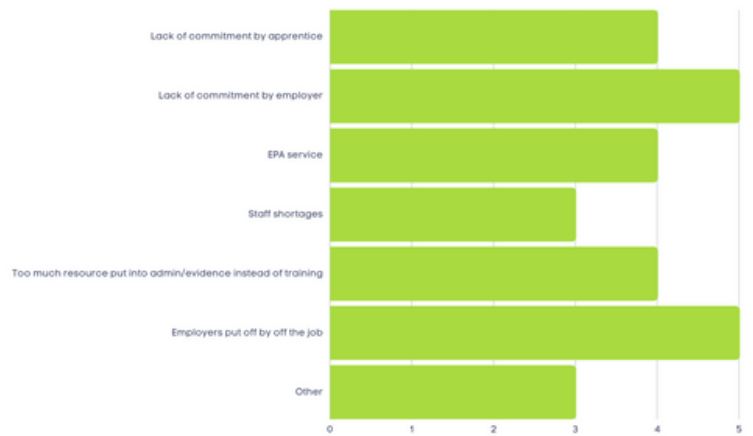
**GRAPH 27**

Are your apprenticeship achievement levels increasing or decreasing?



**GRAPH 28**

If apprenticeship achievement levels are decreasing, why is this?





FUNDING

“ The apprenticeship programme doesn't wash its face ”

FUNDING

“ We rely on other funding streams to support the business. We could not deliver apprenticeships as a stand-alone. ”

FUNDING

“ We have been operational since 1986 but if we are not bailed out by our parent company we will go under! ”

FUNDING

“ £3000 for adult care! EPA costs/registration come to £750. How are we supposed to offer quality training on that? ”

FUNDING

“ We can not afford to use products of high standard within qualifications. Funding from other programmes covers the costs of delivery ”

FUNDING

“ Functional skills are financially not worth delivering. The invigilation alone is expensive. Taking the English qualification, for example, there are three components, equating to just £157 income each. This has to cover registration, certification fees, initial & diagnostic assessment, teaching and any resits. We are considering whether we only let those who have already got functional skills equivalent qualifications on to our apprenticeships. This would save us at least £100,000 in wages each year. ”

FUNDING

“ We only offer apprenticeships now because our very large employers want to make use of their levy, but this has to be bolstered by other provision. ”

FUNDING

“ We are considering not offering apprenticeships to anyone who doesn't already have functional skills. ”

FUNDING

“ One very large employer has chosen to do commercial work rather than apprenticeships as they have worked out it is cheaper to pay us directly than release staff for off the job training, and have to commit to a minimum of 12 months learning. ”

FUNDING

“ EPA costs are extortionate for the amount of time spent on them and the organisation that we have to do. ”

FUNDING

“ We are not currently encouraged to develop new standards even though we are active in several trailblazer groups. The focus is on revising the existing standards and trying to retain adequate levels of funding. ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ Inclusion of English and maths in apprenticeships disadvantages ESOL applicants as there is no alternative for them. Many are excluded from apprenticeships due to the functional skills requirements ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ We are finding that the inspection framework and the deep dive inspection methodology is not fit for the purpose of inspecting apprenticeship provision in ITPs and GTAs. Consequently, we are reducing the riskiest areas of our provision, which ironically are in the areas we seek to be most innovative in providing solutions, especially for SMEs where the region's FE provision is not meeting their needs due to low numbers or niche skills. ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ Additional learner needs funding is too complex & has a constant threat of repayment if you don't get it quite right. The guidance is too ambiguous & it's expensive to administer. ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ We have Ofsted, the accountability framework, Matrix, published employer and learner reviews, audit inspections, financial health monitoring. To keep in line with these metrics, we sometimes need to withhold early leavers from the ILR and end up not claiming anything for them so that it doesn't affect our figures. ”

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES 2023

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ Our SMEs were happy for us to manage everything for them. Now they have to use TAS, it delays us getting learners on and receiving funding. Employers think it is us giving them more work, and it has created tensions. ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ Transfers are a nightmare if employers don't stop TAS for their apprentice who moves to another employer. From the employer's perspective, though, there is no incentive to fulfil the administration requirements. ”

ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ EPA can have a negative impact on success rates due to the delay in assessment timelines and certification. Learners feel too much under pressure as they have not built up a rapport with their assessor. ”

#### ADMIN & COMPLIANCE

“ Apprenticeships are not financially viable and are too fraught with external scrutiny. You live in fear that ESFA is going to come in and take all the funding back. Evidencing and auditing are too burdensome and costly. We spend more on admin and compliance than on actual training. ”

#### RETENTION & ACHIEVEMENT

“ Apprenticeship wages are set far too low. This encourages apprentices to give up low pay with training for better pay with flexible hours. ”

#### RETENTION & ACHIEVEMENT

“ Apprentices and employers are simply more interested in the qualification gained than the standard and EPA ”

#### RETENTION & ACHIEVEMENT

“ It is time to free technical apprenticeships (especially) from their association with paying minimum hourly rates. ”

#### RETENTION & ACHIEVEMENT

“ For employers, when it comes to the EPA, it is easier to have had all the training but not bother with the piece of paper at the end. ”

#### STAFFING

“ We may be forced to scale back delivery if staff shortages (tutors & assessors) can't be resolved as there won't be anyone to deliver the training. ”

FINANCIAL

“£3000 for adult care! EPA costs/registration come to £750. How are we supposed to offer quality training on that?”

PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES 2023

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PROVIDER PERSPECTIVES 2023