

Apprenticeship Growth Strategy 2018-2020



July 2018

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Foreword

High quality apprenticeships are an essential component of economic success, raising skills levels to meet employer needs to drive productivity and prosperity in our economy while creating a sustainable workforce.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy is creating a new stimulus for apprenticeship places in both the public and private sectors, with forward thinking employers being keen to realise its benefits.

I am delighted to present the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Apprenticeship Growth Strategy, which sets out our plans to deliver more than 42,680 apprenticeship starts across Swindon and Wiltshire by 2020.

Our goal is for an apprenticeship to be recognised as a real alternative to university and a prestigious pathway to a successful career and for these opportunities to be available across all sectors of the economy. This will support our aim for all apprentices to get the very best career opportunities through high quality education and training.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Burnside' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amanda Burnside

Skills Lead, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board

Executive summary

Apprenticeship growth is a key priority both nationally and locally. The Government is committed to delivering three million apprenticeships by 2020 in order to raise the level of skills available in the economy and has introduced a package of reforms that puts employers in the driving seat to design and deliver apprenticeships.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) has set annual growth targets that are proportional to the national ambition, targeting 42,680 apprenticeship starts across Swindon and Wiltshire by 2020.

This strategy for the period 2018-2020 builds on the Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan and Swindon Apprenticeship Growth Plan and other SWLEP initiatives, in particular [Higher Futures](#) and the SWLEP [Growth Hub](#) that aim to meet the higher skills needs of employers; and the [Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Adviser Network](#) that aims to improve employer engagement in schools providing young people with experience and knowledge of the world of work.

The strategy has three objectives:

1. Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships.
2. Increase the number of SWLEP businesses employing an apprentice.
3. Support employers and providers to work effectively together to double the uptake of Higher and Degree apprenticeships between 2015/2016 and 2019/2020 academic years.

Current data has been analysed and shows strong year on year growth in apprenticeship starts until 2016, followed by small reduction in the 2016/17 academic year due to apprenticeship reforms, reflected by a national slow-down in apprenticeship starts. Apprenticeship starts at the advanced and higher levels have continued to rise, but intermediate level starts dipped in the last academic year. Apprenticeship success rates are better than the national average across Wiltshire and Swindon at all levels, with the exception of intermediate level success rates in Swindon.

Apprenticeship starts in Swindon and Wiltshire are dominated by the following three sectors:

- Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies
- Health, Public Services and Care
- Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

An analysis of the spread of apprenticeships across the geography shows a wide variation in the number of starts per parliamentary constituency, with the Devizes constituency having three times more starts in 2016-17 than the Chippenham constituency.

1 Introduction

Apprenticeship growth is a key priority both nationally and locally. Despite the skills shortages reported by employers, investment by UK employers in training is low compared to international competitors and there has been a rapid decline over the last 20 years¹. The Government is committed to delivering three million apprenticeships by 2020 in order to raise the level of skills available in the economy and as such has introduced a package of reforms that will put employers in the driving seat of designing and delivering apprenticeships.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) has set targets of annual growth that are proportional to the national ambition as follows:

- Swindon Borough Council -11,180 apprenticeship starts, at all levels between 2015 and 2020.
- Wiltshire Council - 31,500 apprenticeship starts, at all levels between 2015 and 2020.

This SWLEP Apprenticeship Growth Strategy sets out our approach to enabling apprenticeship growth across the area, the policy context, key challenges and opportunities and why we need an Apprenticeship Growth Strategy. The strategy for the period 2018-2020 will outline the ambitions for learning and skills development amongst the post 16 adult workforce, bringing together and building upon the Wiltshire Apprenticeship Action Plan and Swindon Apprenticeship Growth Plan, and adding value to other SWLEP initiatives: [Higher Futures](#) and the SWLEP [Growth Hub](#) that aim to meet the higher skills needs of employers; and the [Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Adviser Network](#) that aims to improve employer engagement in schools providing young people with experience and knowledge of the world of work.

We will set out plans to maximise opportunities and address challenges; putting in place the governance structure to monitor the effectiveness of actions taken.

1.1 Why do we need a strategy?

Locally, regionally and nationally apprenticeships have been increasing as skills and qualification needs are rising. There are significant opportunities to meet these needs through the provision of apprenticeships in all sectors, but especially in the SWLEP growth sectors, namely:

- Advanced engineering and high value manufacturing
- Health and life sciences
- Financial and professional services
- Digital and information and communications technology
- Land-based industries.

¹ Alison Wolf, Social Market Foundation (July 2015) Fixing a broken training system: the case for an apprenticeship levy

However, there continues to be a lack of knowledge around the scope and range of apprenticeships amongst potential learners and parents. There is also confusion amongst employers on their role within the apprenticeship arena, a lack of school involvement and uncertainty amongst training providers due to recent apprenticeship reforms, set out later in this strategy. There are many stakeholders involved in apprenticeships who currently work independently and who are therefore missing opportunities for collaboration to maximise impact. Working with employers, the apprenticeship providers and other SWLEP and government initiatives, there is an opportunity to deliver new apprenticeship routes to develop the higher-level skills to secure Swindon and Wiltshire's continued growth. This will complement our ambitions to secure more higher education provision through the emerging HE strategy in the SWLEP area.

This strategy aims to bring about growth by incentivising, facilitating and enabling all parties to collaborate in a meaningful way that will raise awareness and improve knowledge of apprenticeships and by celebrating the benefits that apprenticeships present.

Vulnerable young people, including care leavers and those with special educational needs and disabilities, have traditionally struggled to access the labour market, and this strategy recognises that apprenticeships can afford greater equality of opportunity to support these groups into work.

1.2 Policy Context

1.2.1 National Context

Significant changes to the learning landscape were ushered in by the [Apprenticeship Vision for 2020](#); the national [Post 16 Skills Plan](#) including the development of Technical levels; the new flexible Adult Education Budget; a White Paper setting out the government's plans to reform the higher education and research system; the national [Industrial Strategy](#) and [Careers strategy](#) with guidance for schools and [Social Mobility](#) strategy published in 2017. There is also a public sector target to employ an average of at least 2.3% of staff as new apprentice starts over the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2021. These policy changes provide us with new and exciting opportunities to shape an efficient and effective skills system to meet the SWLEP employer needs.

These policies have set out the Government's ambitious plans for three million more apprenticeships by 2020 and the creation of a simplified Post 16 education and technical training offer. The challenge is not just to secure an increase in the volume of apprenticeships, but that they are truly employer-led. The goal is for them to be seen as a prestigious path to successful careers in all sectors of the economy and at every level, ensuring they are accessible to all to support social mobility. Priority groups such as young people leaving local authority care, economically disadvantaged, and those with special educational needs and disabilities in particular stand to gain from apprenticeships as a path to gaining higher qualifications.

Recent apprenticeship reforms mean that employers, rather than awarding organisations are developing the apprenticeship standards for their sector.

In April 2017, the apprenticeship levy was introduced and requires employers with an annual payroll of more than £3 million to pay a 0.5% Apprenticeship Levy. This is aimed at significantly increasing the demand from employers by ring-fencing this funding for apprenticeship training only. This change has greatly altered the role of levy-paying employers and training providers. Not only are larger employers now reviewing their Recruitment and Workforce Development strategies, to include upskilling their existing workforce through apprenticeships, they are being required to resource and implement commissioning and provider selection.

1.2.2 Local Context

SWLEP has identified four themes in its Skills Plan under which actions will be progressed to achieve this objective.

These are:

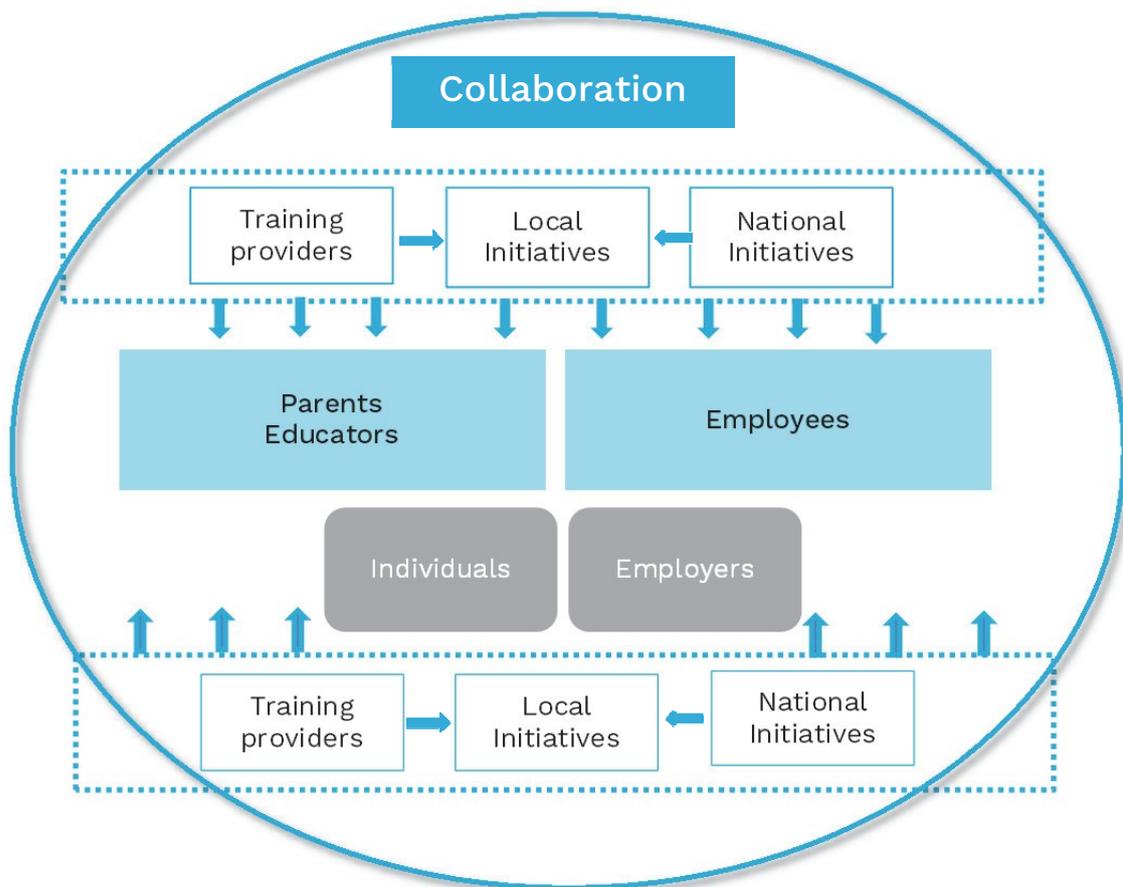
- Improve the skills system. Making the education and skills system more effective and responsive to the needs of employers and learners.
- Skills for growth. Helping businesses develop skilled workforces that will support long term sustained growth and improved productivity within the local economy.
- Skills for inclusion. Supporting the development of an inclusive economy, helping people to overcome barriers to employment, to enter and stay in the workforce.
- Maximise the impact of skills. Delivering the wider priorities within the Strategic Economic Plan i.e. as an enabler to achieve other SEP priorities.

Skills for Growth priority actions, specifically aim to ‘embed apprenticeships as an established route to employment and maximise the opportunities to grow higher and degree apprenticeships’; through the Higher Futures programme and increased Higher education opportunities to be set out in the emerging Higher Education strategy together with the aspiration to develop an institute of technology.

Skills for Inclusion priority actions specifically aim to ‘realise the potential of residents with barriers to employment, including young people and older workers and develop innovative approaches to providing support’.

1.3 Benefits of introducing a strategy

Our strategy will coordinate activity across the SWLEP area, allow us to agree outcomes and ensure the SWLEP, the two local authorities and stakeholders work cohesively towards the common goal of increasing apprenticeships. Stakeholders such as employers, colleges and training providers invest in apprenticeship growth but all tend to work independently. Through our apprenticeship growth campaign, we will provide clear pathways and information to enable employers, individuals and parents to utilise apprenticeships more readily.



2 Our strategy

What are apprenticeships?

Apprenticeships are an exciting, valuable route for anyone over 16, whatever their aspirations. They are not restricted to new entrants to the workplace or for new appointments. Apprenticeships offer learners the opportunity to achieve a qualification that employers recognise and value – all while earning a wage - and are an effective vehicle for employers to address their skills gap across the SWLEP area.

Apprentices are trained primarily in work, and are supported by a training provider. There are currently four levels of apprenticeship available:

Name	Level	Equivalent educational level
Intermediate	2	5 GCSE passes
Advanced	3	2 A level passes
Higher	4 and 5	Foundation degree and above
Degree	6 and 7	Bachelor's or Master's degree

Qualifications generally take between one and six years to complete. 20% of paid time will be spent training off-the-job, developing skills and furthering knowledge.

2.1 Our objectives

The strategy has three priority objectives that recognise the challenges and the complexity of the landscape and are mirrored in the Wiltshire Action Plan and the Swindon Growth Plan, notwithstanding that each local authority area plan also responds to local priorities. The objectives recognise the main supply and demand agents (individuals and employers) and acknowledge that higher and degree apprenticeships provide a real opportunity for SWLEP to develop local skills to meet the skills needs of businesses now and in the future.

- Objective 1: Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships.
- Objective 2: Increase the number of SWLEP businesses employing an apprentice.
- Objective 3: Support employers and providers to work effectively together to double the uptake of Higher and Degree apprenticeships between 2015/2016 and 2019/2020 academic years.

In order to achieve our objectives, we have identified the following broad action areas:

- Data and research
- Marketing and promotion
- Partnership working
- Advice and guidance
- Standards development.

The action plan setting out how this will be achieved is at Appendix 1.

2.2 Our targets

The 2020 target has been broken down into an annual target as set out in the table below. To date this target has been achieved year on year.

Apprenticeship targets for Swindon and Wiltshire up to 2020

Academic Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Target starts for Wiltshire	5,600	5,950	6,300	6,650	7,000
Target starts for Swindon	1,868	2,036	2,220	2,419	2,637
Total target starts for SWLEP	7,468	7,986	8,520	9,069	9,637

2.3 Our Approach

Our strategy seeks to address the challenges, provide information, improve awareness of benefits and opportunities, celebrate the breadth and diversity of apprenticeships and so increase apprenticeship growth across all age groups and vulnerabilities, sectors and employers regardless of size.

The activities that we will implement to deliver the priority objectives will be reviewed and updated to be responsive to changing local need, national and local policy and strategic changes. We will draw on the best practice guide for Local Enterprise Partnerships: Implementing Local Approaches to Supporting Employer Engagement with Apprenticeships (The Learning and Work Institute 2017) which advises:

‘The research suggested that there is no single type of activity which is most effective. What is critical is how that activity is delivered. With that in mind, this framework provides a blueprint for developing interventions, which can be applied flexibly to different kinds of activities and across the diverse contexts in which LEPs are operating.

The elements of the framework are summarised in Figure 1 and discussed in more detail below.

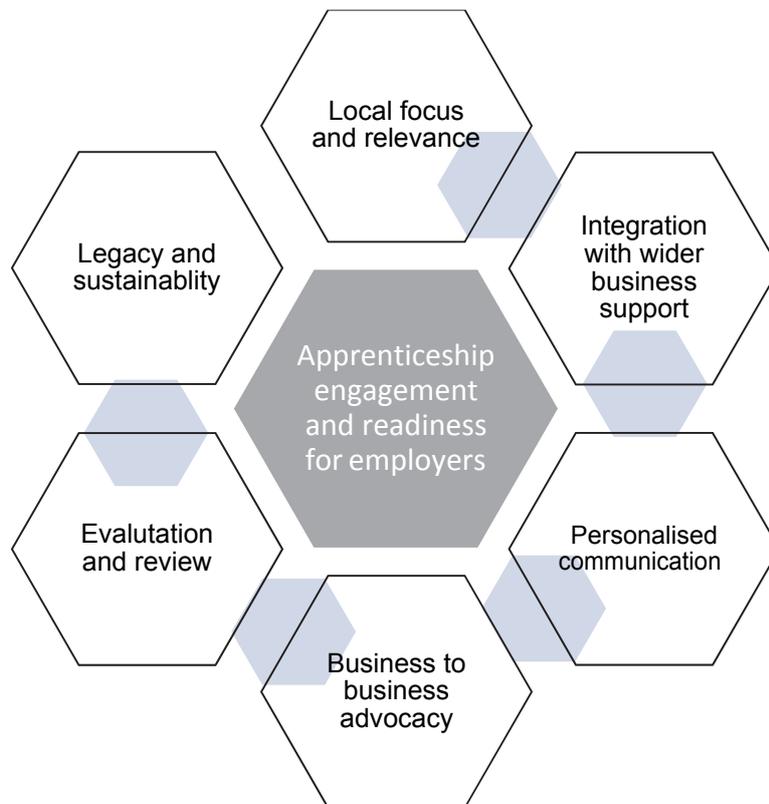


Figure 1. Good practice framework for local approaches when supporting employers to effectively engage with apprenticeships

2.4 Responsibilities

Primary responsibility for delivery of the SWLEP Apprenticeship Growth Strategy will lie with the SWLEP Skills and Talent sub group, supported by the two local authorities' Skills and Employment teams, training providers, employers and other local partners. This will ensure that SWLEP remains a strategic body, holding partners to account for their delivery of priority actions including influencing training providers to deliver appropriate apprenticeships to meet the business skills need identified in the [SWLEP Strategic economic plan](#) and through other research as relevant.

The delivery of apprenticeships is through colleges, training providers and employer providers, many of them national, therefore much of the work done will be to collaborate on growth campaigns and initiatives to ensure maximum impact on raising awareness and highlighting the benefits of apprenticeships to learners and employers.

In Swindon the top five training providers, in volume, deliver 32% of the apprenticeship starts and in Wiltshire the top five deliver 62%, of which 42% is delivered by the British Army. To maximise the impact of this growth strategy it will be important to collaborate with these and other providers to satisfy employer requirements and on promotional campaigns.

The Employment and Skills teams in each local authority are responsible for the delivery of local plans and targets that underpin this strategy. They will undertake to give a steer to current and future activities to ensure that local stakeholder needs are met.

Progress against planned outcomes will be monitored and challenged by the SWLEP Skills and Talent sub group. The Strategy will be reviewed annually to take into account any changes in government policy, funding or access to resources to deliver.

2.5 Resources available to deliver the strategy

Apprenticeship training

The main funding is through employers (levy payers) or training providers (funded by the government) for non-levy papers. Non-levy paying employers have to make a contribution of 10% of the training costs in most cases. All employers have to pay the salary costs of the apprentice.

Promotion of apprenticeships

The government funds a number of national campaigns. Training providers also fund a range of promotional activities to encourage the take up of their apprenticeship programmes.

Schools/colleges

Nationally commissioned programmes will add resources such as:

- The Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) for schools programme which has the remit to raise the profile of apprenticeships in all secondary schools to students, teachers and parents with an aspiration to fully engage with 39 schools across the area
- The Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Adviser Network that matches Employer Advisers to schools to support their Employer Engagement Strategies to give young people experience of the world of work.

Local Enterprise Partnership

All LEPs have been allocated £5,000 per financial year by the Department for Education to promote apprenticeships.

To add value, funding of £20,000 has been allocated by the Skills and Talent group of SWLEP for an awareness campaign in 2018. The main focus is to benchmark current awareness levels and raise awareness of the benefits of apprenticeships amongst target groups.

National apprenticeship week takes place in March each year. We will promote this through our network, coordinate local activity and showcase apprentices working across Swindon and Wiltshire Local Authorities.

Coordination

The Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Partnership of training providers provides information about local provision.

The Skills and Employment teams in each Local Authority will commit some resource to achieving the SWLEP strategy and to supporting and facilitating others to collaborate to achieve the ambitious apprenticeship growth strategies.

3 Where are we now?

3.1 Key challenges and opportunities

The reforms have afforded a mix of challenges and opportunities for three distinct groups.

Individuals

- Evidence shows that apprentices are highly employable: 97% of apprentices say their apprenticeship has improved their ability to do their job, and 92% of in-work apprentices said their apprenticeship has had a positive impact on their job and career.²
- Young people, adults in the workforce, educators, including schools, and parents lack awareness and information about the potential of this new work-based professional and technical route to higher level skills. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships are new and few parents or educators will have had personal experience of apprenticeships. More information is needed to improve awareness of the pathways that are available and that apprenticeships have changed.
- The recent guidance to schools which requires them to provide access to students by all training providers will open up opportunities for engagement which were previously not available.
- Staff of levy paying employers are looking at opportunities to use the levy to upskill their current workforce, opening up new routes to achieving qualifications for some of their workforce.
- There are many misconceptions and myths about apprenticeships that unless better informed will prevent many from taking up apprenticeship opportunities.

For example, some myths are:

- Apprenticeships are only available for 16-18 year olds
- You can't be an apprentice if you are already in work
- Apprenticeships are for those that can't go to university
- Apprenticeships are only for people who will do trades, e.g. construction, hair dressing
- Apprenticeships are badly paid and 'proper' jobs pay more
- All apprentices should have 'Apprentice' in their job title.

² [Amazing Apprenticeships](#)

Employers

Apprenticeships deliver important benefits to employers: 82% of surveyed employers said they were satisfied with the programme and 70% reported that apprenticeships improved the quality of their product or service.³ The cost of apprenticeship training pays for itself within one or two years of completion, through the increased productivity of the former apprentice.⁴

Whilst employers have been using apprenticeships for some time, this local strategy will provide a step change to achieve our local targets and maximise the benefits of the apprenticeship reforms.

- Employer-led standards will meet the skills needs of employers and replace the more general current frameworks, but many are still being developed.
- 20% off-the-job training requirement may cause capacity issues where apprentices are filling full time roles and their work is not easily back-filled or covered.
- Larger employers (particularly public sector) may have to use full procurement processes to appoint training providers. This is time consuming for both the employer and training providers.
- Many smaller and micro businesses (non-levy payers) are not aware they can use apprenticeships to up-skill their workforce and, even if they do, having to pay 10% of the training costs (for most) may also be a barrier to taking up apprenticeships. Some providers have raised concerns that they believe there is not enough funding in the non-levy pot to meet demand.
- There is still some confusion with the delivery model which may need to be raised with the ESFA for clarity as this is a national issue.
- Levy payers are now starting to use apprenticeships as a tool to up-skill their current workforce offering more opportunities for those aged 19+ who are already in a job and require up-skilling. For some employers, this has meant taking a step back to review and update their workforce development strategies to make the most of the apprenticeship opportunities. However, some larger employers are treating the levy as a tax and are struggling to understand the benefits of recruiting an apprentice, in particular the 20% off the job training aspect and concerns over the impact on productivity. In other cases, we have employers who are struggling to recruit for the new apprenticeship vacancies they have on offer, particularly level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships.

³ Apprenticeship Evaluation: survey of employers (2014)

⁴ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32306/12-814-employer-investment-in-apprenticeships-fifth-net-benefits-study.pdf

- Some sectors, such as engineering, are much more familiar with the apprenticeship route and are therefore much further ahead in providing apprenticeships at all levels than other sectors.
- Working with employers is a route to reach older learners and parents who are in their workforce.
- SMEs make up a large proportion of local employers but struggle to make time to engage with the apprenticeship agenda.

Training Providers

- Many employers want Higher and Degree apprenticeships. These require the involvement of universities who are new to apprenticeships. The government is incentivising Higher Education Institutions to develop degree apprenticeships that require collaboration between training providers (funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency) and employers. Degree Apprenticeship development has been slow but demand from employers is now evident through growth trends.
- Many employers are preferring higher level apprenticeships. Both Swindon and Wiltshire have seen a drop in Intermediate level and a rise in Advanced level to meet their business needs. The employer-led standards can also be more job-specific. Both the level and the job-specific training are making new demands on providers who may not have trainers with specific, up to date and higher-level work skills and knowledge.
- The apprenticeship provider role has also changed from 'selling' free training to offering apprenticeship services to meet the needs of the levy paying employers. For some this has been a smooth transition but not for all. Coupled with this, there has been considerable uncertainty over funding for non-levy paying employers.

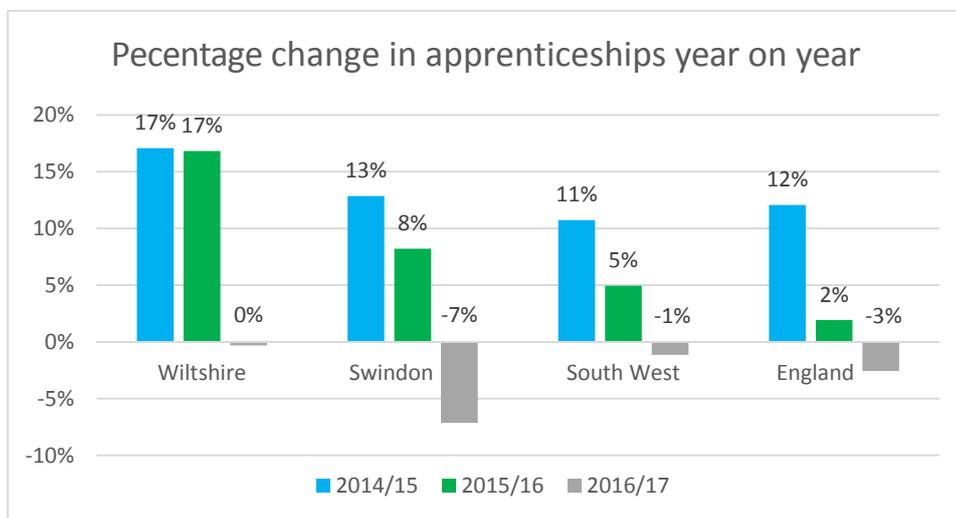
3.2 Apprenticeship data

Due to the apprenticeship reforms, larger employers are now reviewing their Recruitment and Workforce Development strategies and being required to resource and implement commissioning and provider selection. As a result, apprenticeship starts reduced in Swindon, the Southwest and in England in 2016-17 due to employers adjusting to these new rules as can be seen in the table and chart overleaf.

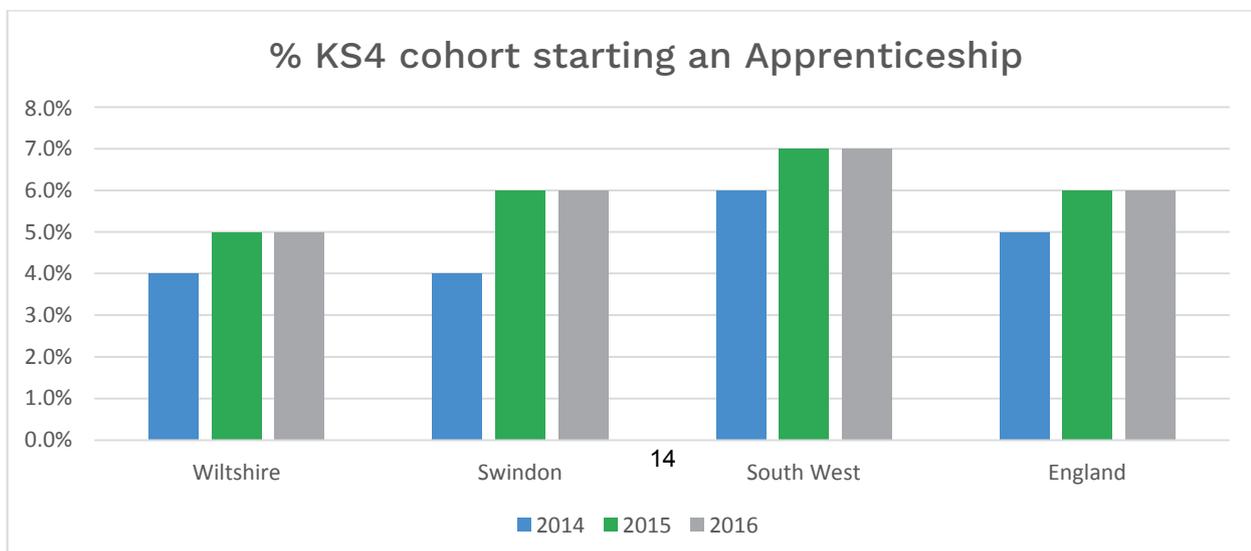
Trend in apprenticeship starts 2013/14 – 2016/17

Volume of Apprenticeship Starts				
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Wiltshire	4,470	5,390	6,480	6,460
Swindon	1,560	1,790	1,950	1,820
Southwest	45,960	51,480	54,160	53,340
England	434,600	494,200	503,900	485,500

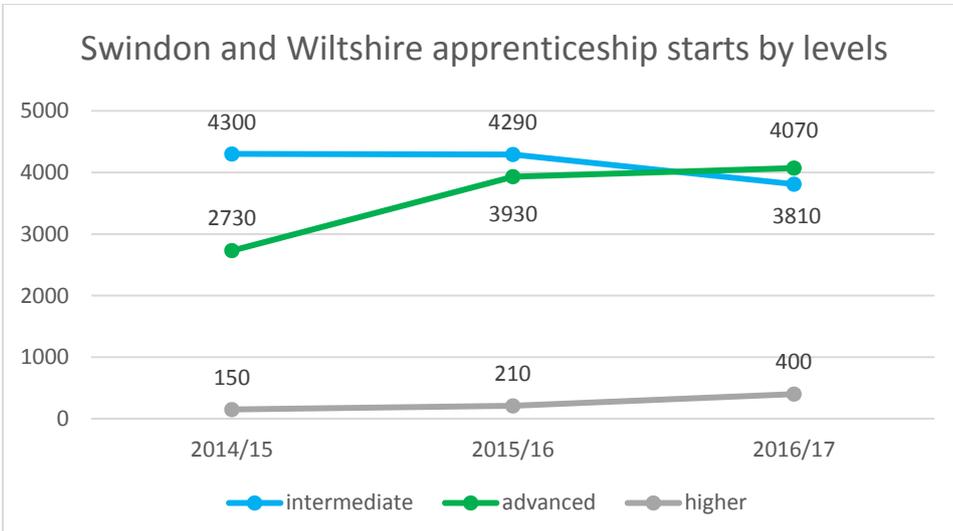
In spite of the drop in 2016-17 the chart below shows we are still achieving our annual targets. However, to manage the risk of continued slow-down and to meet our 2020 target, a step change in the awareness and promotion of apprenticeships is now needed.



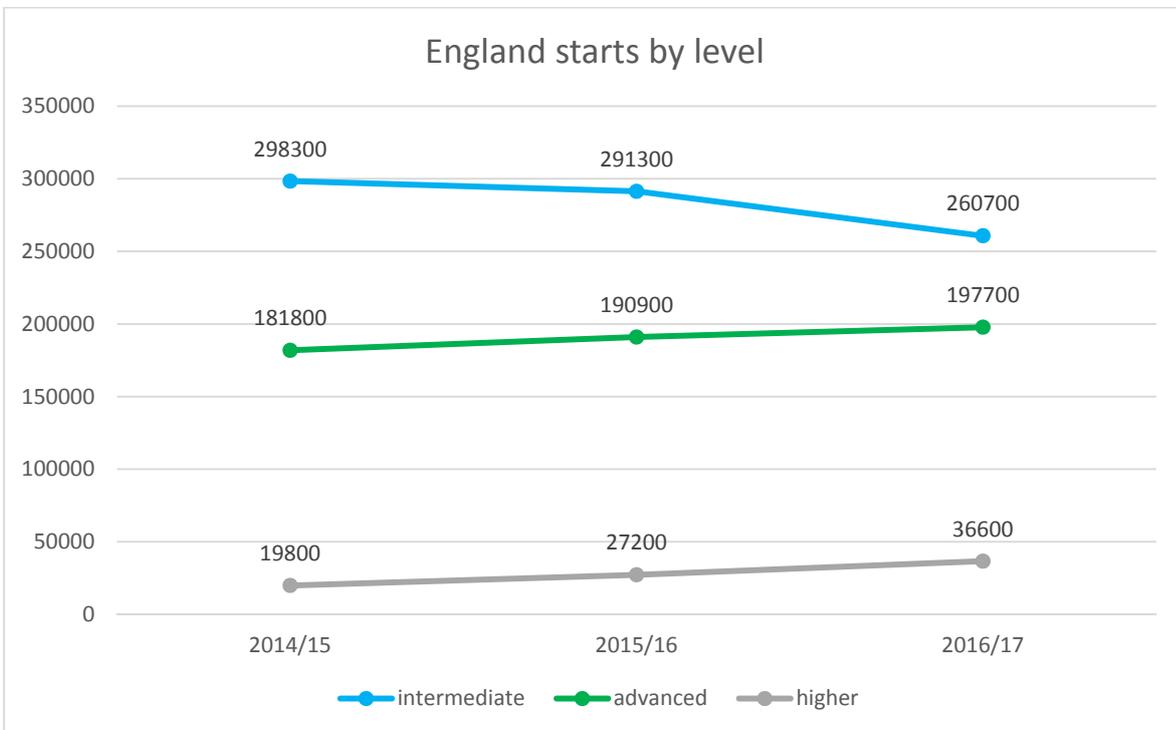
The chart below shows the percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4 that have entered an Apprenticeship. In 2016 this represents 252 (5.0%) pupils in Wiltshire and 126 (6%) pupils in Swindon which is slightly below the South West percentage of 7% but comparable to the national average of 6%.

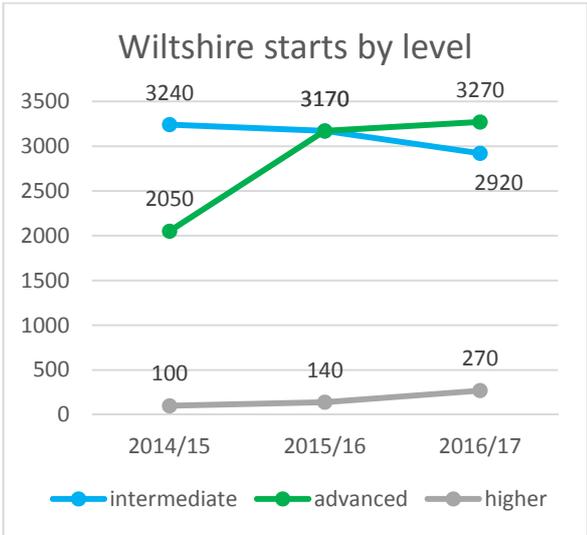
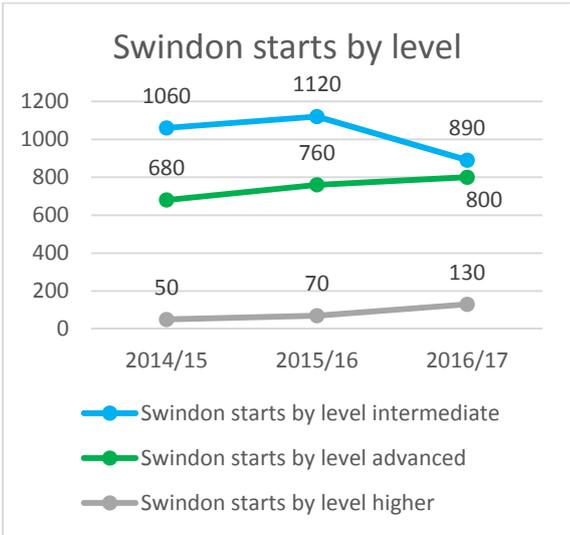


Higher and Degree apprenticeships are starting to deliver the higher skills that are now essential for economic growth, for example Software Developer, Dental Technician, Solicitor and Accountant. As shown in the charts below and overleaf, they are increasing annually with Swindon and Wiltshire growing by 260% between 2014-15 and 2016-17 with an increase in higher level starts year on year.

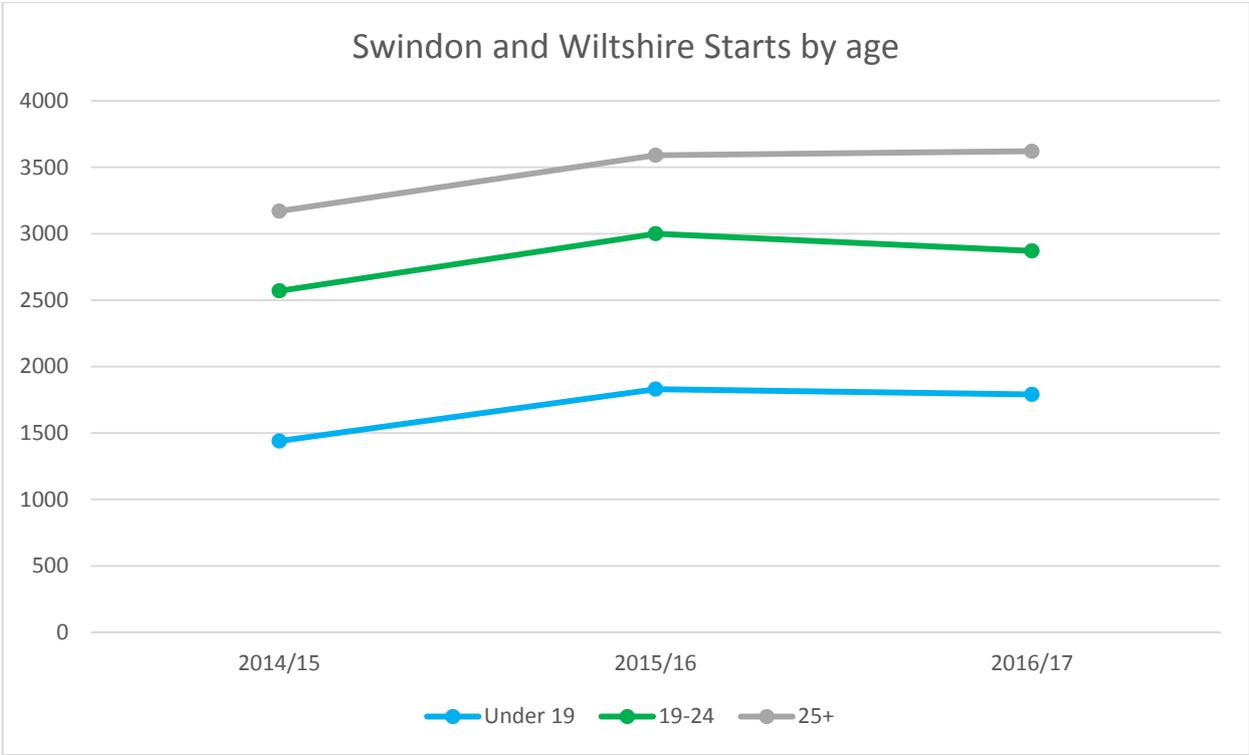


This is reflected separately in England, Swindon and in Wiltshire with Advanced starts outstripping Intermediate starts in Wiltshire.

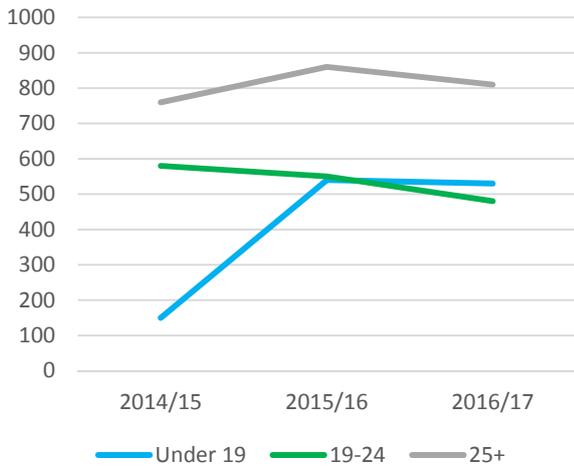




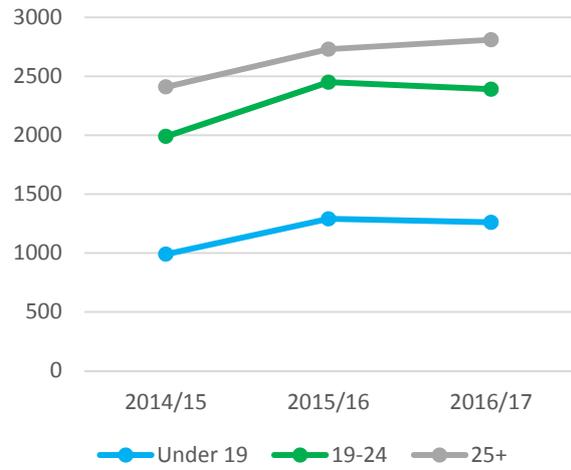
Apprenticeship starts by age in the LEP area reflect the national picture in terms of the government’s AGE incentive for 16-18 maintaining and/or softening the drop in the 16-18 year-old starts. The 25+ year old apprenticeship starts have stayed broadly the same or increased slightly with the main drop being in the 19-24 year olds. This may be down to the high-volume sectors in Health, Public Services and Care and Retail and Commercial Enterprise where the number of entrants 25+ can be greater and where professional qualifications are often mandatory.



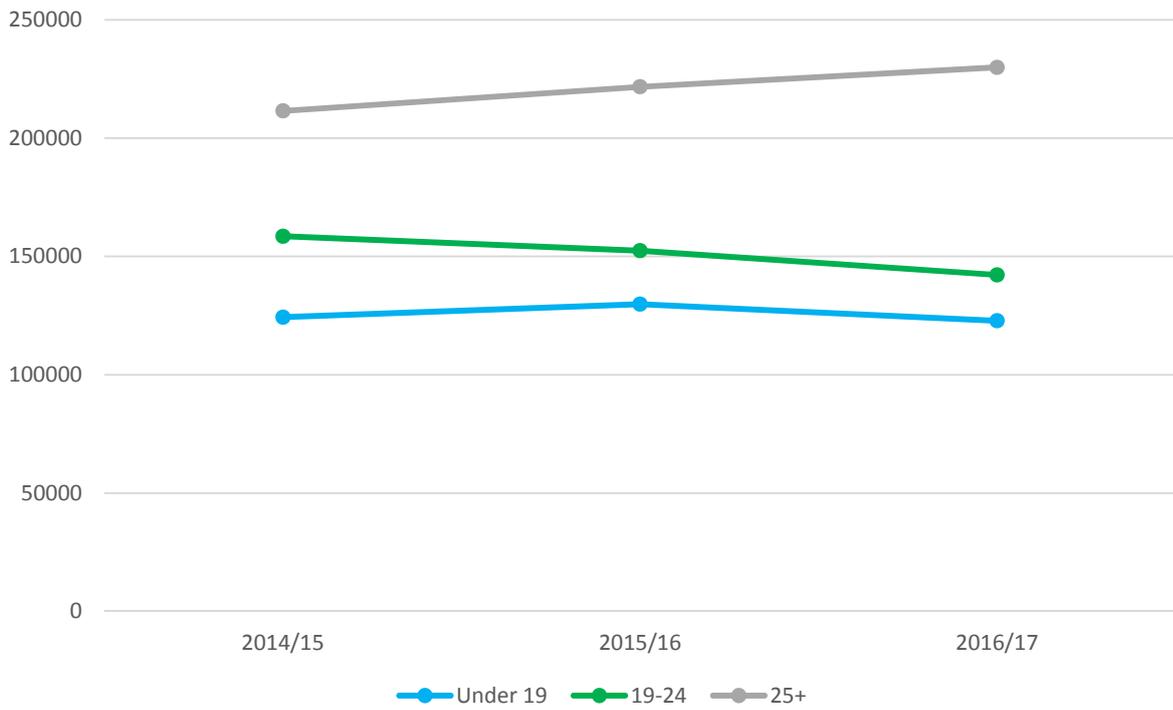
Swindon Starts by age

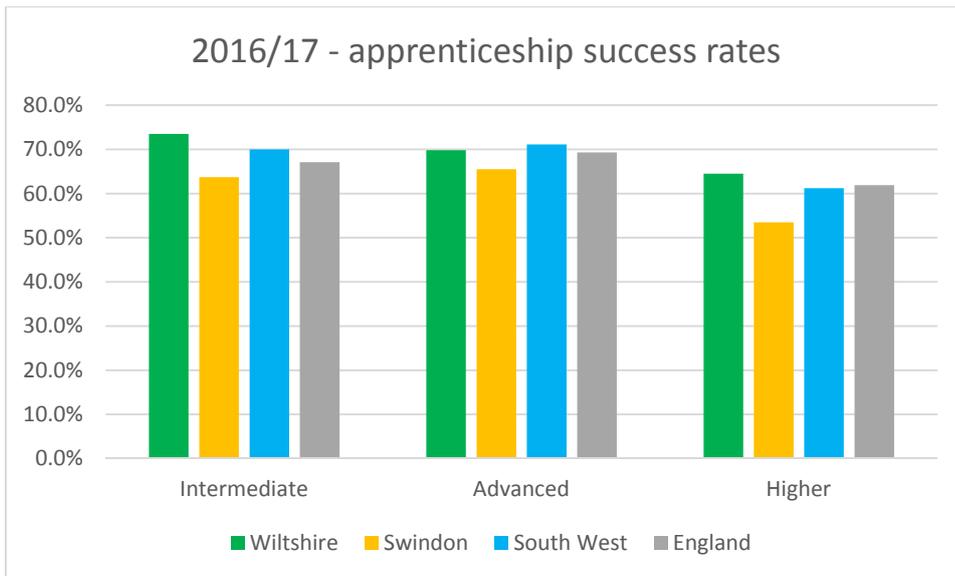


Wiltshire Starts by age



National starts by age

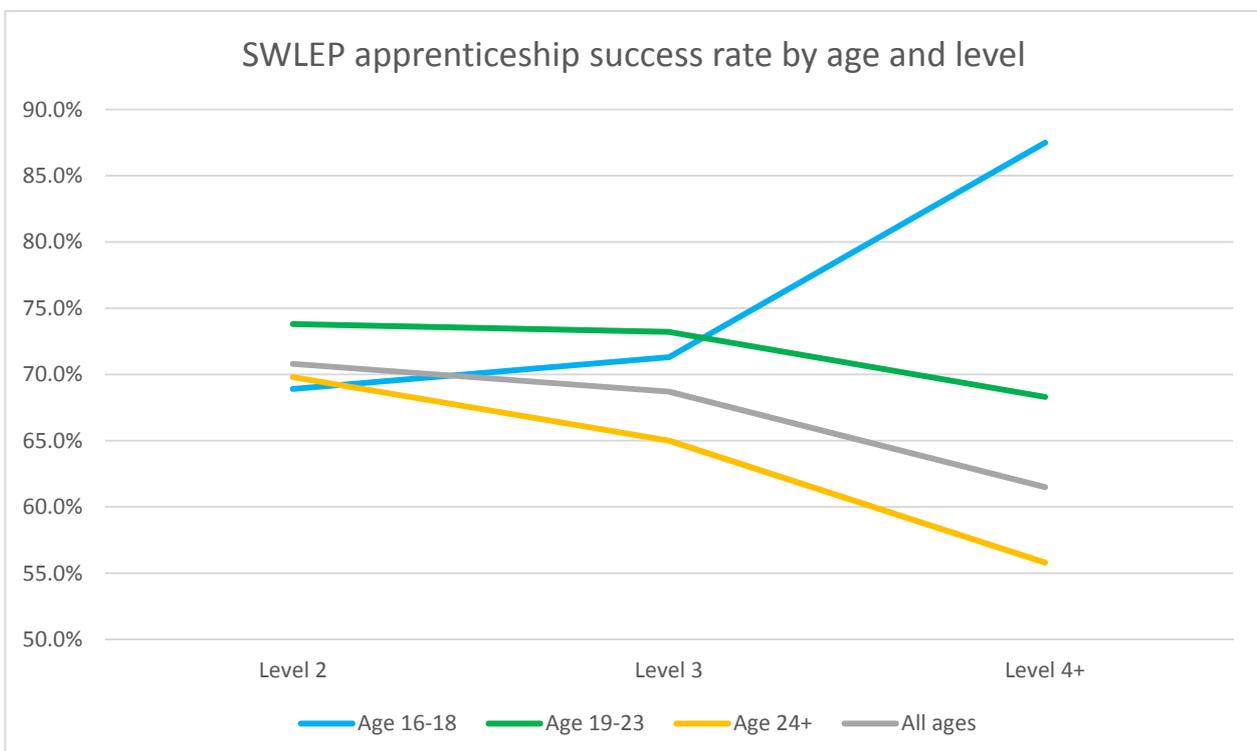




The apprenticeship success rate for 2016/2017 by level shows Wiltshire above the national average on each of the levels and Swindon slightly below.

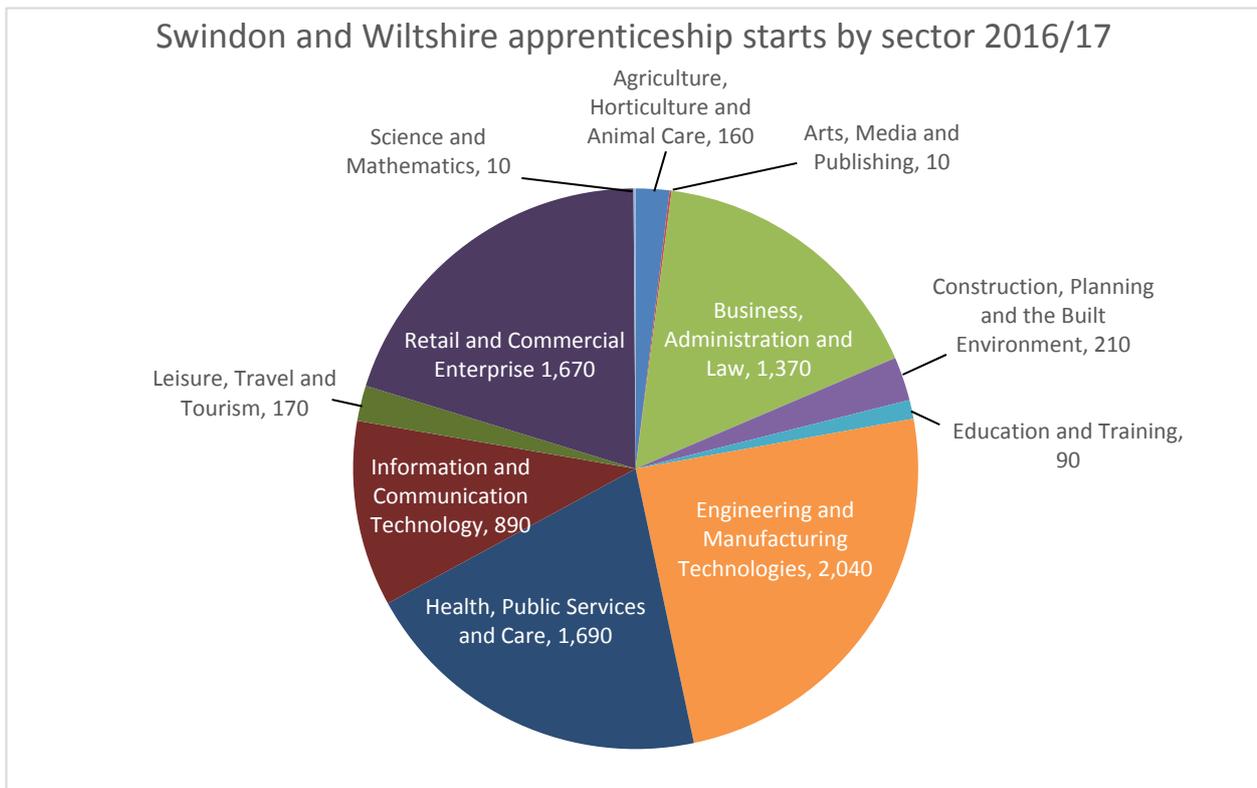
For the SWLEP the overall achievement rate is 67.7%, Wiltshire is 71.8% and Swindon is 64.1%.

Wiltshire is above the national rate and Swindon is slightly behind the national rate 67.7%.

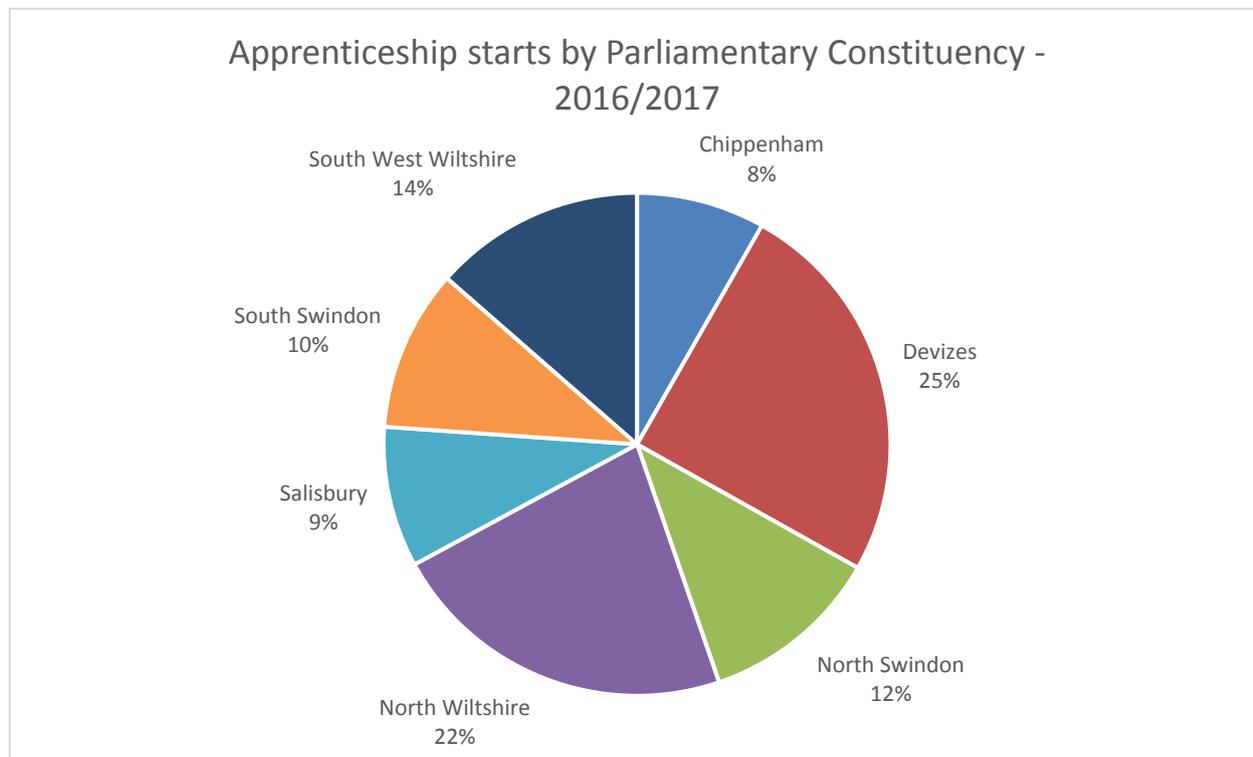


The apprenticeship reforms are starting to impact on the level and age of apprenticeship starts. The new Standards are employer-led and the data above is evidencing that already the market is becoming more demand-led with the rise in apprenticeship levels. However, there is still an issue with readiness to deliver the new higher and degree level standards. Most Higher Education Institutions are recruiting on academic year intakes rather than being demand led.

To maintain this growth, employers across all sectors will need to understand the benefits of apprenticeships to their business. Awareness raising, celebrating the success of other employers and signposting to support and information will be crucial if we are to meet our target and in doing so meet the skills and qualification needs of the SWLEP economy and in particular the growth sectors. The key sectors currently represented in apprenticeships across the SWLEP are set out in the chart overleaf.



Finally, it is also interesting to map apprenticeship starts across the geographical area. The chart below shows a wide variation in the number of starts per parliamentary constituency, with the Devizes constituency having three times more starts in 2016-17 than the Chippenham constituency.



NB: 42% of Wiltshire Apprenticeship starts are attributed to those in the military and resident in Wiltshire at the start of their apprenticeship

4 Conclusion

This strategy highlights the year on year growth in apprenticeship starts in Swindon and Wiltshire since 2015 and sets out the recent reforms, while identifying challenges and opportunities for the future - particularly with a view to ensuring sustained economic growth in line with SWLEP priority sectors.

The data within the strategy sets out sectors yielding the greatest numbers of apprenticeships and sets out geographical areas with the greatest uptake. This affords the opportunity to determine key objectives and actions needed to target employers, individuals and locations with lower take up and deliver the required growth.

Current data has been analysed and shows strong year on year growth in apprenticeship starts until 2016, followed by a small reduction in the 2016/17 academic year due to apprenticeship reforms, reflected by a national slow-down in apprenticeship starts. Apprenticeship starts at the advanced and higher levels have continued to rise, but intermediate level starts dipped in the last academic year. Apprenticeship success rates are broadly better than the national average across Wiltshire and Swindon at all levels.

Apprenticeship starts in Swindon and Wiltshire are dominated by the following three sectors:

- Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies
- Health, Public Services and Care
- Retail and Commercial Enterprise.

An analysis of the spread of apprenticeships across the geography shows a wide variation in the number of starts per parliamentary constituency, with the Devizes constituency having three times more starts in 2016-17 than the Chippenham constituency.

We have commissioned an ambitious apprenticeship growth campaign with Supply Train CIC as part of this strategy which will:

- Establish a baseline of awareness of apprenticeships
- Devise information packs/guides to address the shortfall in knowledge according to the findings
- Deliver a marketing campaign
- Re-evaluate awareness to determine success of the campaign.

The action plan in Appendix 1 sets out our key activities and proposes the organisations best placed to deliver against the actions.

While the current apprenticeship landscape is very complex, it is our intention, through this strategy, to support and provide clarity for those engaged in delivering, commissioning or undertaking apprenticeships and for apprenticeships to be recognised as a high quality and prestigious career path within the Swindon and Wiltshire area.

Appendix 1: Apprenticeship growth action plan

Objective 1: Increase the number of people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships.

Target: Achieve the following apprenticeship starts up to 2020 (our share of the national 3 million starts target):

- **2017/18: Wiltshire 6300; Swindon 2220; SWLEP 8520**
- **2018/19: Wiltshire 6650; Swindon 2419; SWLEP 9069**
- **2019/20: Wiltshire 7000; Swindon 2637; SWLEP 9637**

Objective 2: Increase the number of SWLEP businesses employing an apprentice.

Target for new employers taking on apprentices to be set once monitoring information is available via Blue Sheep data (action 1.1).

Objective 3: Support employers and providers to work effectively together to double the uptake of Higher and Degree apprenticeships between 2016 and 2020.

Target: Double the number of higher and degree apprenticeships from 210 in 2015/16 to 420 in 2019/20.

1. Data and research

Action	Who	By when
1.1 Establish which employers currently have apprentices in the SWLEP area by purchasing Blue Sheep data	LAs & LEP	August 2018
1.2 Survey of business skills needs and barriers	Buckman Associates	March 2018 (Completed)
1.3 Analyse sector take-up of apprenticeships and identify gaps compared with known skills needs	LAs/ LEP/ESFA	August 2018
1.4 Develop a degree apprenticeship provision heat map and identify potential areas for growth	HF	September 2018
1.5 Map end-to-end apprenticeship journey for local employers which highlights support available at each stage	Supply Train CIC on behalf of SWLEP	April 2018
1.6 Schools and colleges to survey young people to gauge their understanding and awareness of apprenticeship opportunities to help them identify specific actions arising from this in their Careers and Employability Plans	Schools/Colleges with support from ASK and LAs	June 2018
1.7 Establish baseline awareness of apprenticeships amongst employers via a survey, to be repeated after campaign is delivered. This will focus on all apprenticeships including higher and degree apprenticeships.	Supply Train CIC on behalf of SWLEP	April 2018 and Dec 2018
1.8 Analyse data to identify schools and colleges with good progression into apprenticeships who can act as champions, so that schools can identify actions to increase apprenticeship take up in their Careers and Employability Plans.	Schools and Colleges	August 2018

2. Marketing and promotion

Action	Who	By when
2.1 Devise and deliver a campaign to target employers who don't currently have apprentices using the findings from 1.1. Key messages to include the ability to upskill current staff via apprenticeships. Develop locally branded materials to inspire confidence. Present diverse apprenticeship experiences to challenge misconceptions and highlight the breadth of opportunity.	Supply Train CIC on behalf of SWLEP	July 2018
2.2 Embed apprenticeship promotion into outreach and communications on business growth via the Growth Hub, The Enterprise Network and SWLEP events (e.g. annual conference)	SWLEP	On-going. Review Dec 2018
2.3 Increase HEI presence in the SWLEP area to deliver and promote degree apprenticeships, linked to SWLEP HE Strategy and the Growth Hub	HF and others as identified in HE Strategy	September 2018
2.4 Promote higher and degree apprenticeships through the widening participation programmes operating in Wiltshire and Swindon	Study Higher & Wessex Inspiration Network	On-going. Review Dec 2018
2.5 Promote and coordinate activity during National Apprenticeship Week	LA's, Training Providers, Supply Train CIC	Annually

3. Partnership working

Action	Who	By when
3.1 Employer intermediaries and sector specific bodies to identify plans to ensure credibility and reach for SMEs in particular and ensure robust referral and signposting routes	intermediaries	To be agreed in consultation with Swindon SEB and Wiltshire EESB
3.2 Develop the network of employer apprenticeship ambassadors and encourage them as business to business champions, utilising existing national and regional apprenticeship ambassador networks	ESFA	To be agreed in conjunction with South West Apprenticeships Ambassador Network
3.3 Identify opportunities for collaborative approaches to the development, delivery and promotion of apprenticeships across the area. Develop a network of employers who are willing to promote their apprentices as case studies and for them to speak at events	Training Providers	To be agreed through GWP and Apprenticeship providers
3.4 Ensure effective referral pathways into European Social Fund programmes from both local authorities and other stakeholders for those young people and adults who need additional support prior to accessing an apprenticeship	LAs	On-going review June 2018
3.5 Work with partner employers to educate their staff who can be learners of all ages and parents about the benefits of apprenticeships	Employers	To be agreed with Inspire, FSB and other employer support organisations
3.6 Training providers to develop the skills and partnerships required to deliver new apprenticeships, drawing on national resources such as AELP, AoC, UVAC etc.	Training Providers	On-going review Dec 2018

4. Advice and guidance

	Action	Who	By when
4.1	Provide personalised support and advice to businesses on apprenticeships and upskilling the workforce via the Growth Hub	HF	On-going. Review Dec 2018
4.2	Schools and colleges to raise awareness of the value of apprenticeships to students, teaching staff, governors and parents in partnership with ASK , the Careers and Enterprise Company and other key stakeholders.	Schools and colleges	On-going. Review Dec 2018
4.3	Provide best practice information about the 20% off the job training requirements so that employers appreciate what is possible	Employers	June 2018
4.4	Communicate changes in policy and funding for apprenticeships to employers	HF	On-going
4.5	Develop clear pathways into Apprenticeships for vulnerable young people, including Care Leavers and SEND. LAs to champion approaches to increase opportunities for vulnerable young people.	LAs	On-going

5. Standards development

	Action	Who	By when
5.1	Employers to get involved in developing new standards where there are currently gaps, where appropriate with support from Higher Futures	Employers	On-going
5.2	HEIs to get involved in developing standards for higher level apprenticeships	Higher Education Institutions	On-going

For general queries, contact Sally Burnett, SWLEP Skills lead on
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If you are an employer and would like support on recruiting an Apprentice,
please contact Higher Futures <https://swlep.co.uk/higherfutures>