



Degree Apprenticeships Motivations Research

Report by
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List of Abbreviations

DADF	Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund
DAMR	Degree Apprenticeship Motivations Research
DfE	Department for Education
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
SOC	Standard Occupational Classification
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics
UUK	Universities UK
UVAC	Universities Vocational Awards Council

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Executive summary

Degree apprenticeships are now in their fourth year of operation and combine degree level education with employment and on the job training to encourage specific workforce development related to sector and career needs. Understanding the motivations of the current degree apprentices in opting for this approach to education is key to developing the offer. The Office for Students (OfS) commissioned Wavehill in 2018 to undertake research with degree apprentices to identify their motivations for opting to pursue a degree apprenticeship.

The results from a survey of 269 current degree apprentices were analysed and are presented in the report below. Several key findings emerged from the survey results which have an important bearing on future policy and opportunities to refine the offer of degree apprenticeships.

The top motivating factor for both Level 6 (90 percent) and Level 7 (92 percent) respondents was getting a degree alongside earning a salary. This likely reflects not only the value for money of the degree apprenticeships but also the traditional Higher Education (HE) context which is becoming more expensive for the participant and generating greater student debt. That cost is a significant factor reiterated by other results. Eighty-two percent of those at Level 6 and 71 percent of those at Level 7 suggest that cost was a very or somewhat important reason for them choosing to participate in a degree apprenticeship. This is useful to inform the approach taken in promoting degree apprenticeships and a big pull factor is the ability to earn whilst you learn and complete the course with no student debt. However, further research into the specifics of cost implications as a motivating factor for degree apprentices is necessary to better understand the consequences of these findings.

In the UK, there is a culture which promotes traditional degree attainment through university as a normal and accepted ambition and approach for young people. Evidence suggests this can apply pressure on young people to attend university – a situation compounded by information failure and lack of awareness of other options.¹ A 2017 Which? survey found one-third of young people are not informed about apprenticeships, yet 94 percent are informed about university.² Potential stigma against alternative forms of HE, such as degree apprenticeships, could stem from this lack of awareness and the view in society surrounding attendance at university as a means of completing traditional HE. It is therefore imperative to learn why degree apprentices opt for this route and whether they have faced any cultural or perception related barriers in order to shape policy that helps reduce this perceived stigmatisation.

Approximately 38 percent of Level 6 respondents would have opted to do a traditional degree had they not chosen to do a degree apprenticeship – demonstrating they are seen as an

¹ School Leavers Feel Pushed Down University Route, AAT News, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.aat.org.uk/aat-news/school-leavers-feel-pushed-down-university-route>

² Which? survey reveals gap in understanding about apprenticeships compared to university, FE News, 13th December 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.fenews.co.uk/press-releases/15605-which-survey-reveals-gap-in-understanding-about-apprenticeships-compared-to-university>.

alternative to traditional HE degrees by many. This is an encouraging finding showing that learners are evaluating the options they have. Sixty-two percent of Level 6 and 67 percent of Level 7 respondents stated that they decided for themselves that degree apprenticeships would be a good fit for them. These findings indicate that degree apprentices are independent decision-makers and while they may consider the views of friends, family and employers they ultimately take responsibility for their own choices.

The survey also found that 25 percent of the sample would not have pursued any other form of qualification or training if it had not been for the degree apprenticeship offer. This is a strong endorsement of degree apprenticeships and suggests they are serving a previously unmet need. More than one in ten survey respondents who would otherwise not have engaged in HE are undertaking a degree apprenticeship yet hold no other HE qualification. Degree apprenticeships are therefore providing training and higher-level qualifications to individuals who would not have otherwise engaged in more traditional routes to HE.

Although working with a small sample, survey results reveal that half of the respondents on a Level 7 degree apprenticeship who would not have considered any other qualification format or training had been employed by their current company for over 10 years. Degree apprenticeships benefit both the company and individual and there is a need to ensure that younger people – both those who stand to gain from learning immediately useable skills and can see degree apprenticeships possibly as a part of a recruitment package and those who have been with companies longer and are upskilling to help improve productivity – are supported. How degree apprenticeships should be supporting these different situations so they are not at the expense of each other is an important policy consideration to help maximise the added value to the economy and workforce.

Perceptions of outcomes of degree apprenticeships among participants is another insight into motivation. Ninety percent of Level 6 and 78 percent of Level 7 respondents tend to agree or strongly agree that a degree apprenticeship will help them advance more quickly in their career than if they had completed a traditional degree. Ninety-four percent of Level 6 and 72 percent of Level 7 respondents think their degree apprenticeships will aid them in the roles they expect to occupy in their career. The value of vocationally oriented degree apprenticeships can therefore be considered another motivation for many learners.

Age is a key variable for degree apprentices surveyed and has an impact on many areas including level of study. Level 7 respondents tended to be older and were more likely to have different motivations behind attaining a degree apprenticeship, such as retraining to keep pace with the general labour market skill level. Level 6 learners tended to be younger, often recently joining the labour market and typically described the degree apprenticeship as a way to kick start their careers.

Other motivations for completing a degree apprenticeship vary between Level 6 and Level 7 respondents, providing an important consideration for policy and promotion. Not only do Level 6 respondents have different educational and employment backgrounds to Level 7, they also have different drivers. Aspirations for self-employment are higher among Level 6 respondents while qualitative answers reveal that career progression is a driving factor for some Level 7 participants.

One final key finding that emerged from the survey is the essential role employers play in not only supporting delivery of the degree apprenticeships, but also in raising awareness and promoting the credibility of the degree apprenticeship route. This is particularly so among the Level 7 respondents where the employer is pivotal in not only providing information on degree apprenticeships but also advice and support. Conversely, Level 6 respondents tended to turn to their friends and family for advice and support. This reinforces the assumption that workforce development and retraining are important motivators among Level 7 respondents where Level 6 apprentices view it as a way into employment. Employers have a pivotal role to play in promoting as well as delivering degree apprenticeships for Level 7 participants and must be able to offer the necessary information and guidance to individuals considering degree apprenticeships.

These findings are particularly important for raising awareness of the degree apprenticeship offer and motivating potential apprentices to consider them as an option, or indeed as an alternative to the traditional university route. With 31 percent of Level 6 respondents coming to degree apprenticeships directly from schools, sixth form colleges and other education routes there must be information and guidance on degree apprenticeships here as well. This will help to ensure learners understand the available options so maximising the potential of degree apprenticeships. Expanding the number of employers who support degree apprenticeships is also important to not only the supply of degree apprenticeships, but also to ensure this source of information is able to adequately promote degree apprenticeships among potential learners.

While the results of this survey provide a number of insights into motivations behind degree apprenticeships, further research is required to provide more detail on some of these elements and create a more comprehensive understanding of influences on motivation. Some of the areas to consider exploring through further research include:

- The influence of cost on motivation through the extent to which degree apprentices would be prepared to contribute;
- Motivations of businesses for engaging with degree apprenticeship programmes;
- More detailed examination of the degree apprentices who are retraining and hold prior HE qualifications to understand their motivation;
- The effect previous employment has on motivations and perceptions of the impact of degree apprenticeships;
- Understanding the relationship between occupation, level of degree apprenticeship study and availability of degree apprenticeships for higher level occupations.

1 The research

1.1 Degree apprenticeships

Degree apprenticeships were introduced in 2015 as part of a package of reforms to the apprenticeships system in England. Apprenticeships are seen as a key mechanism for government to fix evidenced productivity gaps by encouraging employer investment in training and opening opportunities for skills development in key industrial areas. The reforms set out to put employers in control of designing the training they required to ensure an appropriately skilled workforce, and degree apprenticeships were added to the mix of training products.

Degree apprenticeships combine full-time paid work and part-time university study to offer candidates the opportunity to gain a full Bachelor's or Master's degree (Level 6 or 7) while partaking in practical, on-the-job training. Degree apprenticeships are created by partnerships between employers and universities or colleges and learners are employed for a minimum of 30 hours per week. The course of study will typically last between one and six years, depending on Level and sector. The design of the qualification is intended to ensure that learning fits flexibly around that work commitment through block release, distance, or blended learning.

Originally intended as a tool for economic growth, Government now sees degree apprenticeships as an important tool for enhancing social mobility. There is a healthy choice of training providers offering this new product and good geographical coverage. Over 100 of the 356 institutions and providers of HE registered with the OfS in England, as of June 2019, provide degree apprenticeships.³

Government has actively encouraged the participation of HE institutions through a £10m Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund (DADF) set up in 2016. A contribution of £9.4m of this was delivered by the HE Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and details of spend and an evaluation of the fund are available on the OfS website.⁴ The purpose of the fund was to rapidly create choice for employers at this new, higher end of the market in time for the introduction of the apprenticeship levy in April 2017. There are 66 degree apprenticeships available for delivery at the time of writing. The approval of new products or occupational 'standards' is a responsibility of the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education. It takes on average, eight months to bring a new standard to market and there are currently a total of 24 degree apprenticeships in development.

³ From the Education and Skills Funding Agency's Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers

⁴ Evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeship Development Fund, Prepared for the Office for Students by Warwick Economics and Development, March 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/7cd79cd8-536f-49e5-a55f-ebd83b344b16/dadfevaluation.pdf>

1.2 Challenges

Providing a range of education opportunities to learners of different ages across disciplines so they may choose the route that most suits them is important to ensuring equality of opportunity across all educational Levels so that education can provide the greatest benefit for society and the economy. Ensuring a wide range of provision is made available is core to OfS objectives, and this research stands to increase understanding of the appeal of degree apprenticeships and factors that influence the choices made by those who opt to complete them. Evidence for the motivations behind degree apprenticeship participants provides context to shaping policy that in turn underpins the programmes and the format of this provision. Awareness of degree apprenticeships, however, is a key pre-requisite to choice and there is some evidence that this is having an impact on the take-up of degree apprenticeships.

Despite the investment in the degree apprenticeship agenda that has been made by central government and other stakeholders, there is evidence to suggest that the take-up rates for this new format of provision were lower than expected, though there has been increasing take-up and provision.⁵ While some of the factors which explain this time lag are of an institutional or organisational nature and reside with HE institutions, employers, and other stakeholders, there is evidence to suggest that the knowledge and awareness of degree apprenticeships as a route to HE qualifications is relatively low among potential learners themselves. For example, one recent piece of research by Which? suggested that only one-third of 16 to 24-year olds felt they were informed about apprenticeships (including those at Levels 2-5, as well as degree apprenticeships at Levels 6-7), compared to 94 percent who felt that they were informed about university.⁶

The same research also revealed that of the 1,000 surveyed many young people from higher socio-economic backgrounds (61 percent) and just over half of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (56 percent) said they did not consider apprenticeships as an option at all. Nearly half of respondents in the Which? Survey (47 percent) said they did not think they could get apprenticeships in the industry they wanted to go into, although more than eight out of 10 (84 percent) agreed apprenticeships were a good way to learn skills and get work experience without taking on debt such as student loans.

While some work has been carried out on the supply side, through schemes like DADF, to increase the number of places and opportunities available, additional research is needed to build some evidence on the demand side factors that affect degree apprenticeships.

⁵ Degree Apprenticeships: Realising Opportunities, Universities UK, March 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/degree-apprenticeships-realising-opportunities.pdf>

⁶ Which? survey reveals gap in understanding about apprenticeships compared to university, FE News, 13th December 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.fenews.co.uk/press-releases/15605-which-survey-reveals-gap-in-understanding-about-apprenticeships-compared-to-university>.

1.3 Understanding the demand side

There is emerging evidence from institutions funded via DADF and other stakeholders including the Universities Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) and Universities UK (UUK) that degree apprenticeships provide clear benefits to learners but are not coming through strongly in public discourse. These benefits are:

- The provision of greater choice for a wide range of learners to access and progress through HE;
- A solution to the reduction in part-time and mature learners accessing HE;
- Creating a route to professional occupations that offers value for money in terms of achieving a degree and positive employment outcome without student debt;

To better understand the demand side dynamics, the OfS looked at the profile of 1,750 students starting degree apprenticeships in 2016-17, and found that:

- The greatest density of degree apprenticeships were in the North West and North East of England, with the lowest proportion in London;
- More men took them up than women, though there was a higher proportion of women on degree apprenticeships than on similar HE courses in the same subjects, improving the representation of women compared to traditional HE courses;
- There were lower proportions from minority ethnic groups, compared with entrants on similar HE courses;
- There was roughly an equal number of young and mature entrants;
- Young students (under 21) were more likely to go into science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) apprenticeships; and
- A third of degree apprenticeship students came from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which was slightly higher than the proportion entering similar full-time HE courses.⁷

However, systematic data on the attitudes, including motivations and perceptions, of learners in degree apprenticeships is, to date, sparse and gives little insight as to whether (a) the benefits of degree apprenticeships are reflected in the career choices that they are making and (b) the social mobility agenda is finding resonance among target groups.

⁷ Analysis of Degree Apprenticeships, Office for Students, October 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/7758c270-8143-4be9-bac3-e7dc08f1b527/apprenticeships-summary.pdf>

Research conducted for the Department for Education (DfE) on the trajectories of higher level Apprentices (Levels 4 and 5) showed that learners tended to be coming into apprenticeships at those Levels either straight from school or through their current employer and that there has been a greater (proportional) take-up of those apprenticeships among those from low income backgrounds and living in deprived areas.⁸ The same study found that apprentices, like Further Education (FE) learners, were generally positive about the effect of their learning and qualification upon their earning potential. Eighty percent of Higher Level apprentices surveyed thought that the qualification increased their chances of going on to do further training, compared to 66 percent of traditional FE learners.

Given the fragmentary indications discussed above, the OfS commissioned work to explore the reasons why degree apprenticeships are the chosen option for some learners. In examining the demand side, the research looked to expose some of the difficult choices apprentices have to make, the effect of pressure from friends or family, the importance of the degree in helping them make up their mind, and to contextualise other important factors such as debt.

1.4 The study

In order to achieve these aims, a survey of new and continuing learners in degree apprenticeship programmes in HE institutions across England was proposed. The questionnaire was designed in conjunction with the OfS and other stakeholders who had participated in the DADF, including UVAC, UUK, and employers who had participated in Trailblazer groups.⁹

1.4.1 Survey mode and dissemination

The dissemination strategy for this research survey followed the general approach that has been adopted by the National Student Survey (NSS), which involves engaging with HE providers to reach their learner population with a survey invitation and to help drive them towards online completion. Thus, the questionnaire was built as an online survey, which lent itself to the closed-ended questions (where the respondent has a fixed set of options) and quantitative responses.

⁸ Learners and Apprentices Survey 2018, Alex Thornton, Charlotte Witsø, Rebecca Menys, Sarah Hingley, and Patrick Alexander, Department for Education, November 2018. Accessed at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/757506/Learners_and_Apprentices_Survey_2018_-_Main_Report.pdf

⁹ Trailblazers are groups of employers that come together as the creators and early adopters of new apprenticeship standards. Focused on the specific knowledge, skills and behaviours for their sector, they work together, supported and guided by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, to develop new programmes of learning.

Prior to the dissemination of live survey links, the assistance of DADF representatives was enlisted to assist with publicising and disseminating the survey. Of the 52 DADF representatives contacted by OfS on behalf of the survey management team, 24 agreed to participate in the survey effort.

The engagement protocol anticipated that the survey would be ready for dissemination approximately two weeks after HE providers had been contacted and their agreement to participate had been secured. A six week window for survey dissemination was built into the design, permitting institutions to select the date for rollout that best fitted with their individual priorities.¹⁰

Unanticipated delays to the survey led to a much narrower dissemination and completion window than had been planned. As a consequence, some of those institutions that had agreed to participate in the research were unable to send out the survey invitation to their learners. Ultimately, 269 valid learner responses were received from 12 institutions.

1.4.2 Methodological considerations

There are several limitations with the survey approach and associated results. While these by no means invalidate the research, they should be considered alongside any conclusions.

Firstly, the survey sample was small compared to the population of degree apprentices with 269 valid responses compared to a population of approximately 10,000 Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships in 2017/18 academic year, of which many are degree apprenticeships.¹¹ While the results give a good indication into the motivations of degree apprentices they are an indication and may not represent the views of the population.

This limitation is furthered by the methodology used to build the sample frame for the survey. By using the self-selecting institutions from DADF, the results are harder to generalise across all institutions offering degree apprenticeships and a randomised approach would generate more robust results. In the interest of feasibility, the study used self-selecting groups, but the eventual 12 institutions who responded, compared to over 100 in total who offer degree apprenticeships, has a potential impact on the results, especially in areas such as course and subject of study which may vary between institutions. Both these factors may therefore misrepresent the larger population of degree apprentices.

¹⁰ Many institutions were already engaged in surveys of or other research about their learners and were grateful for the flexibility that the survey management team could afford them in the initial contact. For instance, one institution reported that it had calculated that its learners were surveyed on average 26 times per year. Several institutions have established internal survey planning committees in order to try and simplify and rationalise their survey timetables.

¹¹ Degree Apprenticeships: A Viable Alternative?, Insight 2, Office for Students, March 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/c791216f-a1f1-4196-83c4-1449dbd013f0/insight-2-degree-apprenticeships.pdf>

The survey did not capture the perceptions of students who considered, but chose not to undertake a degree apprenticeship and so has no counterfactual¹² to balance those who did opt for a degree apprenticeship with those who did not. Understanding why those who considered a degree apprenticeship but then opted to not undertake it would provide valuable insight into the motivations against degree apprenticeships and why they met the requirements of some individuals but not others. The current findings are therefore one-sided and this may influence the results as respondents may have different circumstances and characteristics to those who opted not to complete a degree apprenticeship. Further research to investigate the counterfactual position of those who considered, but ultimately opted to not complete a degree apprenticeship would help inform this research.

Finally, the survey produces various findings on the motivations of degree apprentices though in many cases asks as many questions as it answers. Some of the conclusions that could be drawn require further research and evidence to confirm and in other cases the findings open up new areas that are worth exploring. For instance, cost is clearly an important factor. However, the survey does not provide any value or detail on the implications of cost in motivating respondents to choose a degree apprenticeship. These answers therefore should be treated as part of a wider evidence base for motivations behind degree apprenticeships.

¹² The alternative to the intervention or activity, i.e. If the learner had not opted to complete a degree apprenticeship, then why did they not. This provides a comparison which allows isolation of the cause.

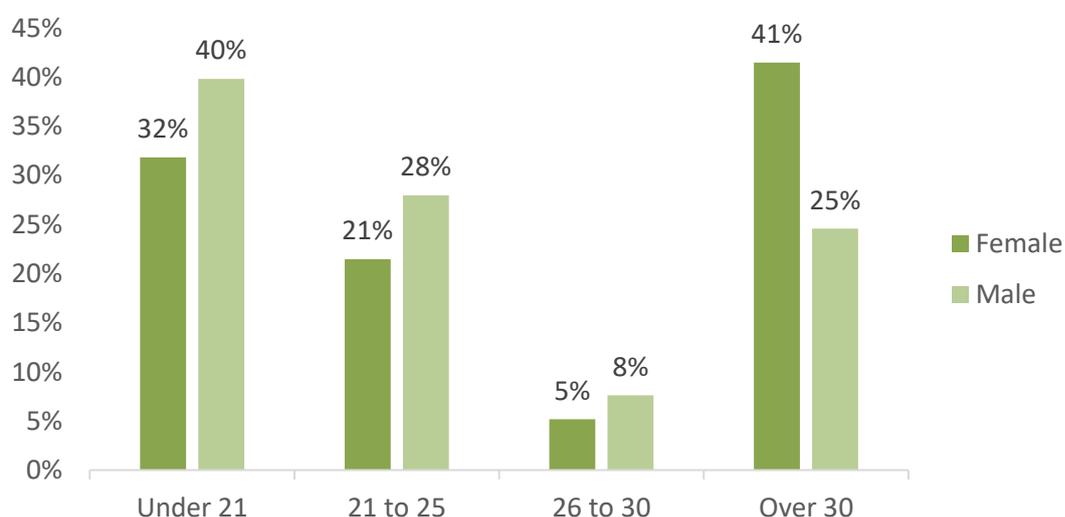
2 Profile of DAMR survey respondents

This section presents a detailed picture of the profiles and backgrounds of those who responded to the DAMR survey. Throughout, comparisons are made between Level of learning (Level 6 or Level 7), cohort (year of entry into programme), and field of study.

2.1 Age and gender

The age and gender profile of the DAMR survey sample is shown in Figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: Age and gender profile of the DAMR survey sample

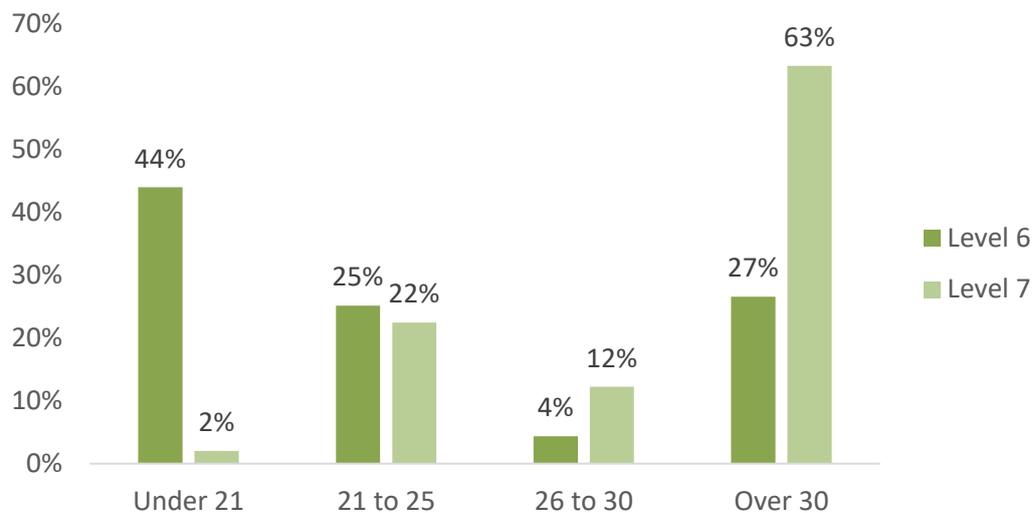


Base: all respondents n=269

Overall, 50 percent of the respondents to the survey were female (135/269) and 44 percent were male (118/269). Two survey respondents self-identify as non-binary (other) and 14 declined to provide a gender identity. The cross-tabulation of gender with age suggested that younger learners were more likely to be male, while those over 30 years old were more likely to be female.

The age profile of the survey sample is shown again in Figure 2.2 below, this time broken down by Level of study.

Figure 2.2: Age of DAMR survey respondents, by Level of study

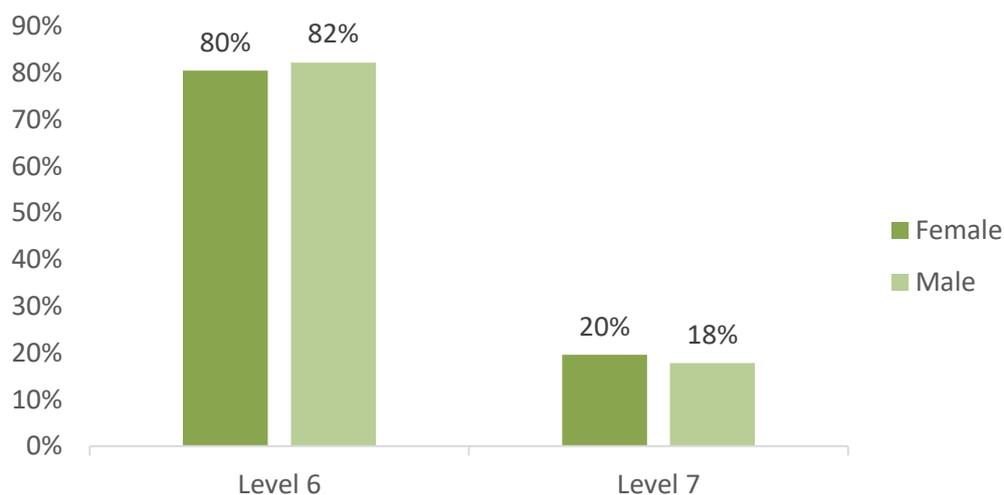


Base: all respondents n=256

The data show a quite clear difference in the profile of those in Level 6 and Level 7 courses. At Level 6, just over two thirds of the sample (69 percent, 143/207) were aged 25 or below, while at Level 7 the majority (63 percent, 31/49) were aged over 30 years old.

This gender profile was further investigated by cross-tabulating gender and Level of study, shown in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Gender of survey sample, cross-tabulated with Level of study



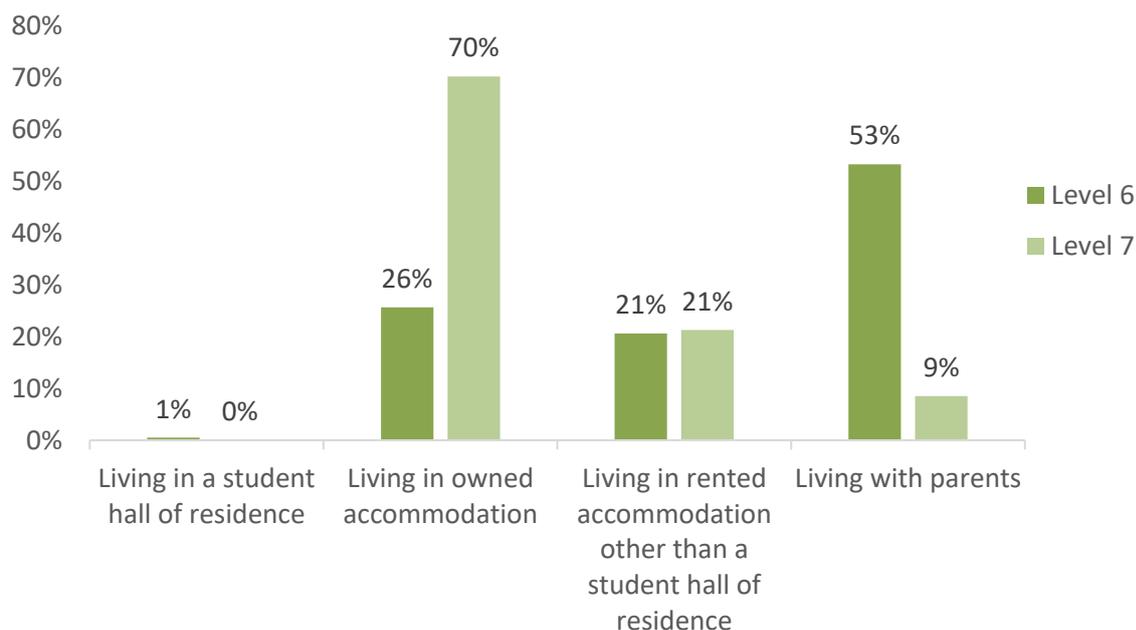
Base: all respondents, n=251

Collectively this data shows that the older profile of female learners compared to males was not an artefact of the Level of study but reflective of other dynamics. This will be further explored in Section 3 of this report.

2.2 Living situation

The living situation of respondents also showed some differences across the Level of the programme of study, as shown in Figure 2.4. This is a reflection of the different age profile between the two group Levels. Cross tabulating by age showed that 98 percent (109/111) of those living with parents were under 25 compared to approximately 69 percent (94/136) of those living in owned or rented accommodation other than student hall of residence.

Figure 2.4: Current living situation of survey respondents¹³



Base: all respondents n=256

The primary living situation of those in Level 6 degree apprenticeship programmes was living with parents (53 percent, 106/199), while Level 7 learners were much more likely to be living in owned accommodation (70 percent, 33/47).

¹³ Note: 'Living with relative or friends and not paying rent' was offered as a response choice but was not selected and is thus omitted for clarity. 'Other' has also been omitted.

2.3 Cohort and field of study

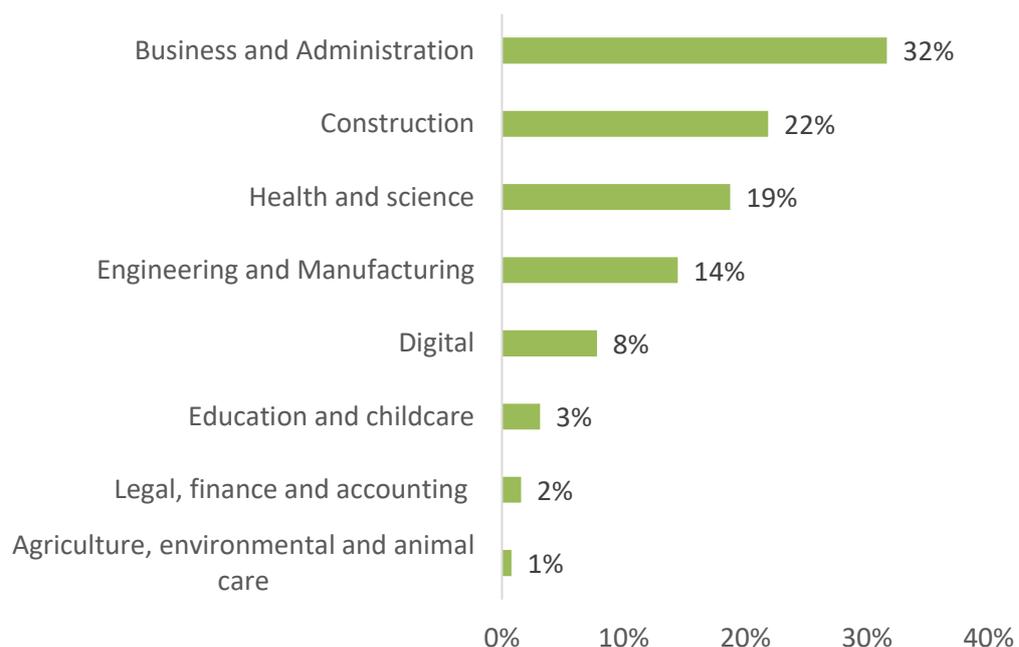
The number of years a respondent had been completing a degree apprenticeship, indicating the cohort of the survey sample, is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Cohort (years in programme) of the DAMR survey sample

Number of years in programme	N	%
Less than one year	185	72%
Between one and two years	49	19%
Between two and three years	9	3%
More than three years	15	6%
Total	258	100%

Almost three-quarters of the sample (72 percent, 185/258) were new entrants into their degree apprenticeship programme, having completed less than one year of study. The sector of the programme of study is given in Figure 2.5.

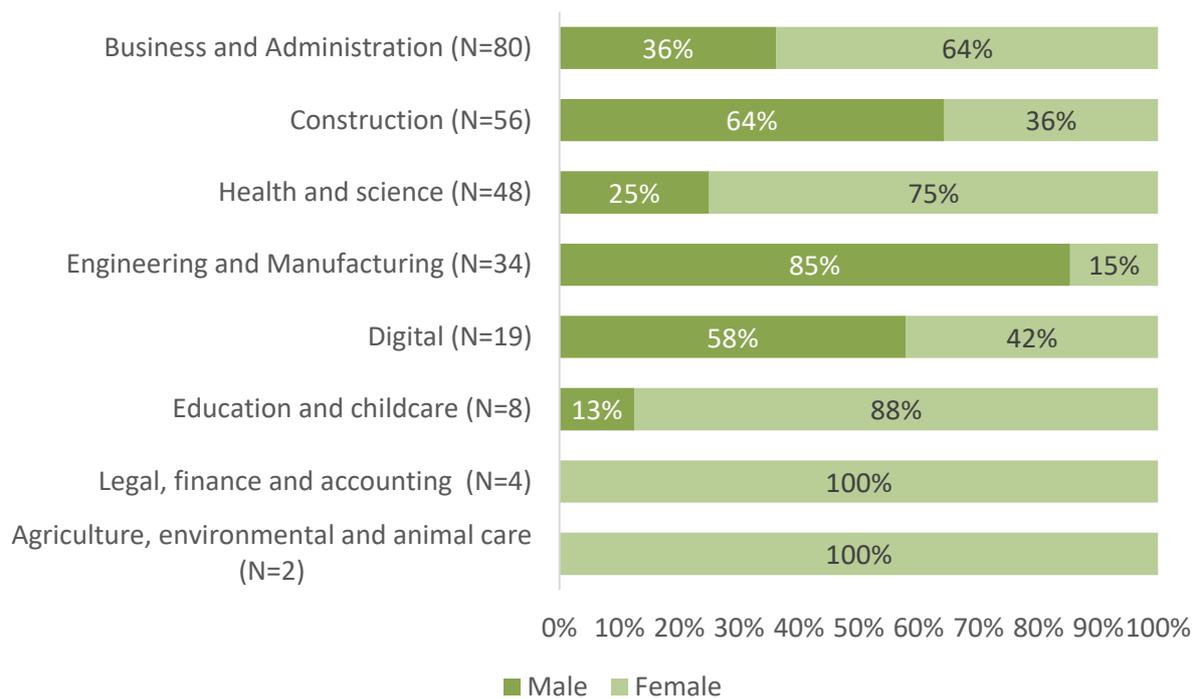
Figure 2.5: Sector of study (coded from degree programme)



Base: all respondents n= 258

The figures show that almost one-third of the sample (32 percent, 81/258) were in degree programmes that fell broadly into the Business and Administration sector, while Construction accounted for just over one-fifth of the sample (22 percent, 56/258).

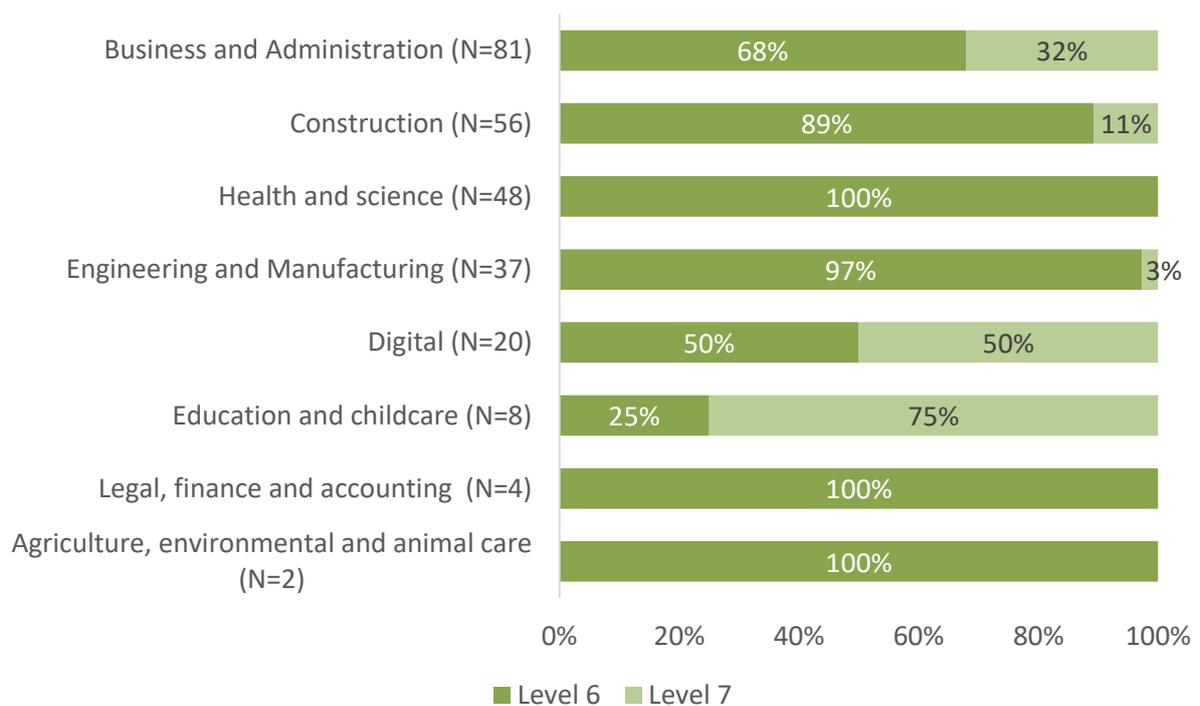
Figure 2.6: Sector of study by gender



Base: all respondents n=251

Breaking the sectors down by gender revealed that 64 percent (51/80) of those in degree programmes within Business and Administration were female, while the opposite is true for Construction where 64 percent (36/56) were male (figure 2.6).

Figure 2.7: Sector of study by Level



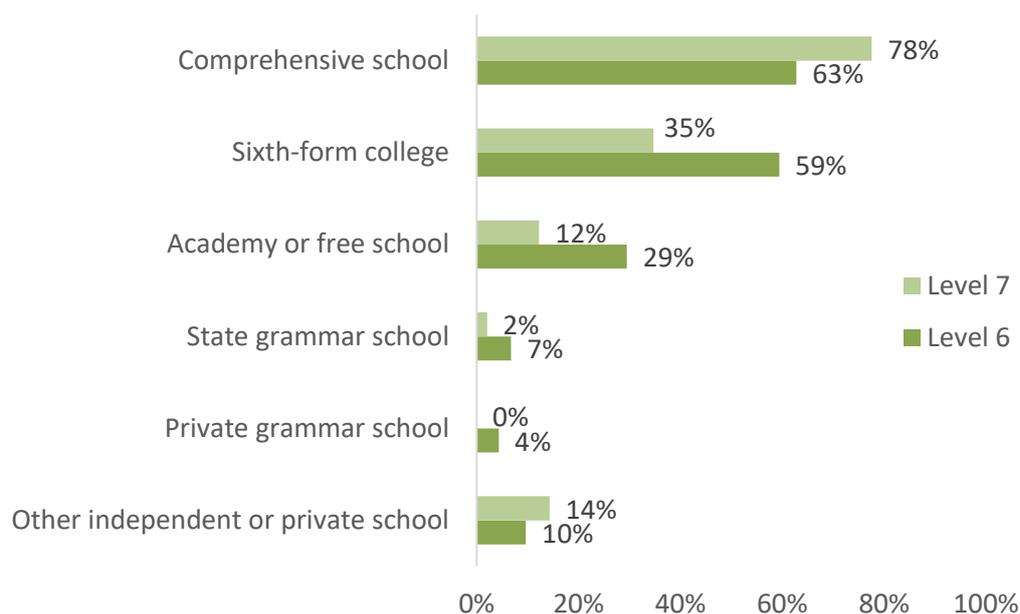
Base: all respondents n=256

Figure 2.7 shows Health & Science, Legal, Finance and Accounting and Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care sector degree programmes were exclusively Level 6 while 97 percent (36/37) of Engineering & Manufacturing and 89 percent (50/56) of Construction participants were Level 6.

2.4 Educational background

Respondents were asked to identify the types of schools that they had attended. The data are displayed, cross-tabulated with Level of study, in Figure 2.8.

Figure 2.8: Types of schools attended, cross-tabulated with Level of study



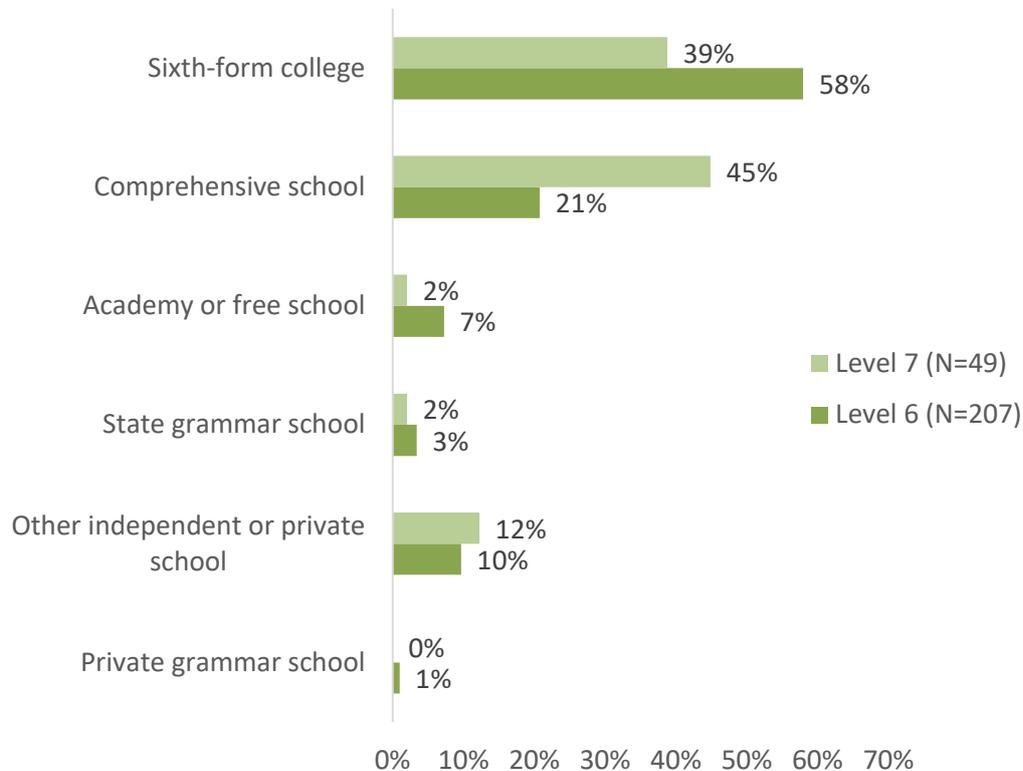
Base: all respondents n=269 (note that percentages may sum to more than 100 percent as this was a multiple response item)

Those who had attended comprehensive schools were broadly reflective of the national figures. Attendance at independent or private schools was higher in the survey (11 percent, 27/256) than in the traditional HE (10 percent), although this difference is within the statistical margin of error and should not be regarded as significant.¹⁴

¹⁴ Percentage of UK domiciled, young, full-time first degree entrants from state schools, HESA, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/07-02-2019/widening-participation-summary>

The questionnaire also asked survey respondents to report which was the last type of school that they attended (thus only one response allowed) and this information is displayed in Figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9: Last school attended, cross-tabulated by Level



Base: all respondents n=256

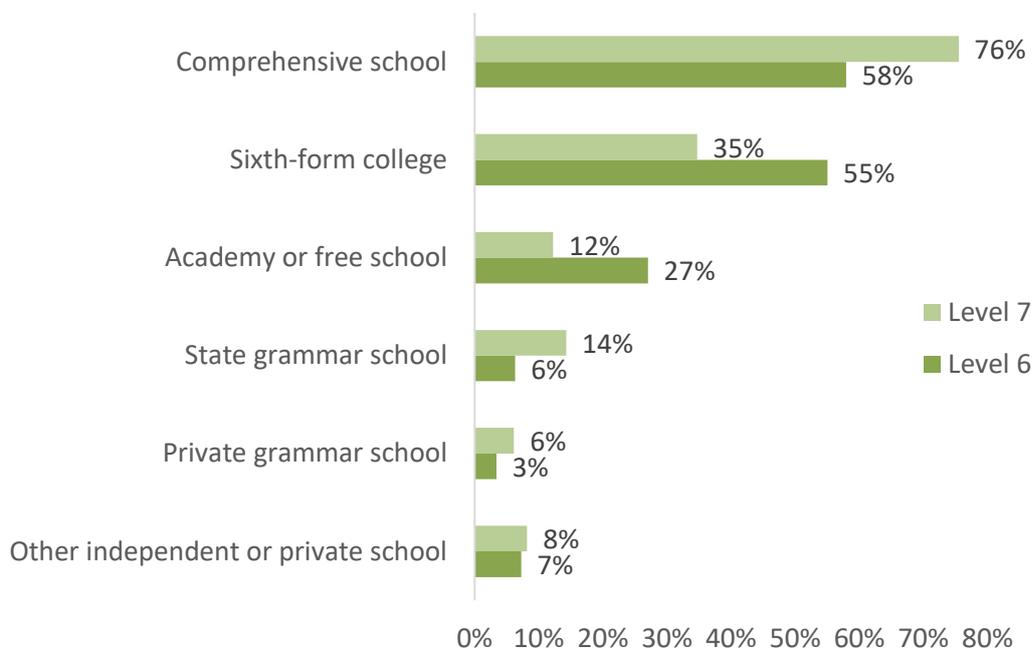
The data showed that in many cases the last schooling degree apprentices received was sixth form college (55 percent, 141/256). Cross tabulating with those who attended sixth form and a HE institution before their degree apprenticeship revealed 47 percent (66/141) progressed to a degree apprenticeship through HE (see Section 3.1.1 below). The remaining 53 percent went directly from sixth form to degree apprenticeships.

There was a clear disparity between those in Level 6 and Level 7 degree apprenticeship programmes. At Level 6, 58 percent (120/207) of respondents had last attended a sixth form college before going into a degree apprenticeship programme. At Level 7, this was less common (39 percent, 19/49) than from comprehensive schools (45 percent, 22/49). Even accounting for the disproportion in response numbers between the two Levels, this reveals a different pattern of educational background. This could be due to the age differences between the cohorts and the potential changes in approach and patterns of education over time, though the survey findings do not go this far. Further reasons and understanding of the routes into degree apprenticeships will be explored in Section 3 below.

2.5 Family and friends

The survey also asked respondents which types of schools most of their friends had attended (Figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10: Types of schools attended by most friends



Base: all respondents n=256

While the principal educational profile of friends reflected that of the respondents themselves (see Figure 2.9 above), there is a marginal tilt among Level 7 respondents towards having friends who had attended grammar school (either state or private). This, in turn, could be a reflection of social mobility through employment prior to the commencement of the degree apprenticeship, though further investigation would be needed to confirm this association.

When asked if anyone in their immediate family had completed a traditional degree, 53 percent (109/199) of those at Level 6 and 65 percent (32/50) of those at Level 7 indicated that they had. In addition, one respondent at both Level 6 and Level 7 stated that they had an immediate family member who had completed a degree apprenticeship. Eighteen percent (37/199) of those at Level 6 and 10 percent (5/49) of those at Level 7 stated that they had an immediate family member who had started, but not completed, a traditional degree.

3 Routes into degree apprenticeships

In this section, engagement routes with degree apprenticeships are examined, looking at prior educational and professional experience and attainment, information channels about degree apprenticeships, and the choice mechanisms for engagement with learning through a degree apprenticeship programme of study.

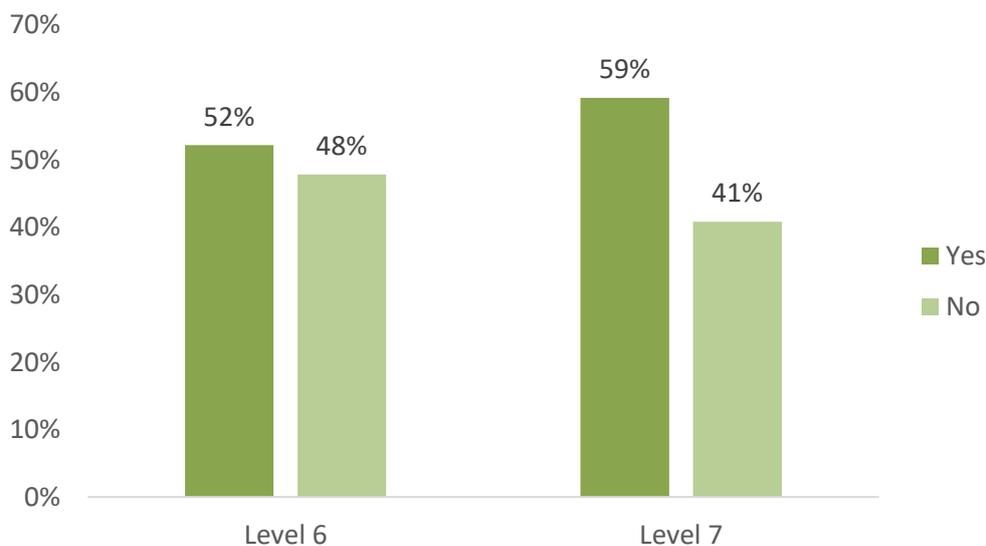
3.1 Educational and professional background

In this section, the routes to degree apprenticeships are explored, with a particular focus on prior educational and professional backgrounds and qualifications.

3.1.1 Further and higher education

Just over half the learners at both Levels who responded to the survey had previously attended an FE college, as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: Attendance at FE college prior to degree apprenticeship



Base: all respondents n=256

There was little difference in the proportion of respondents at Level 6 and Level 7 that attended FE college. Of those stating that they had attended an FE college previously, 90 percent of those at Level 6 (97/108) and all of those at Level 7 (29/29) indicated that they had received a formal qualification from that course of study.

The data shows that 43 percent (111/256) of the sample attended an HE institution prior to their degree apprenticeship (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Attendance at an HE institution prior to degree apprenticeship

	Yes		No	
	Freq	Percent	Freq	Percent
Level 6	67	33%	138	67%
Level 7	44	90%	5	10%
N/A	0		2	100%
Total	111	43%	145	57%

When asked if they had obtained a qualification from that HE institution, 61 percent (41/67) of those at Level 6 and 98 percent of those at Level 7 (43/44) indicated that they had done so. The Level 7 data are not surprising, since they conform with the career trajectory of school to HE (Level 6: Bachelor’s) to employment to degree apprenticeship (Level 7: Master’s). There was a prevalence of prior HE attendance and qualifications among Level 6 respondents with findings suggesting that up to a fifth (41/205) of those in degree apprenticeships at Level 6 may have obtained a previous qualification from an HE institution. However, this is not dissimilar to the proportion of undergraduates going into traditional degrees where 18.5 percent have already achieved a higher level qualification.¹⁵ Although the survey collected no information on what the HE qualification may have been, it does raise the possibility that degree apprenticeships may be seen as a means to retrain and upskill with more focus towards their sector as well being seen as an alternative to a traditional HE qualification.

Further investigation into exploring routes into degree apprenticeships would provide useful evidence to complement the research captured in this study. Understanding which subjects degree apprentices hold other HE qualifications in and how long ago they may have attained this qualification is an important context. Greater insight into the extent to which degree apprenticeships are being used for retraining because learners hold different qualifications to those of their sector could be appreciated with this further research. While not possible to confirm with the information from this survey it may be that learners who hold degrees have the “wrong” degrees for their career or sector but faced with significant debt had no appetite for another traditional degree. The degree apprenticeship route may have proved attractive by offering the possibility of learning and earning at the same time.

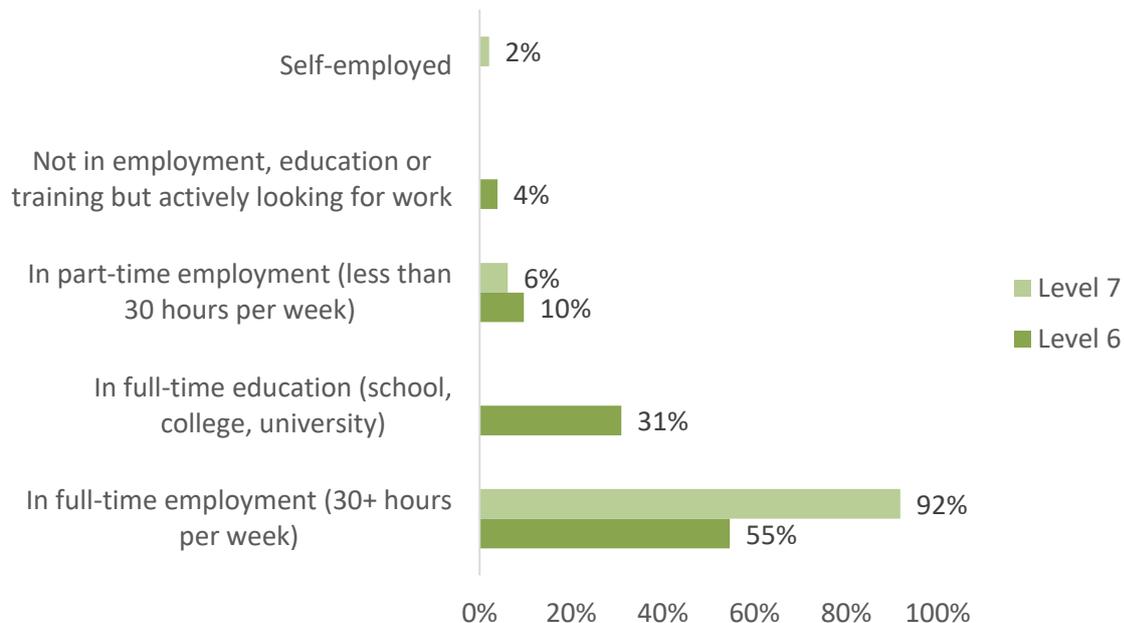
Findings below suggest that provision of sector relevant experience is key to the choice for those who undertake degree apprenticeships. Taken alongside the finding that some degree apprentices have already attained HE qualifications suggests that retraining is an incentive on some level to learners opting for degree apprenticeships.

¹⁵ HE Qualifications Obtained by Level of Qualification, HESA, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications>

3.1.2 Previous employment

The situation of learners immediately prior to starting their degree apprenticeship was probed in a closed-ended question in order to position the degree apprenticeship in the career progression route of the respondents (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Situation of respondents immediately before starting degree apprenticeship¹⁶



Base: all respondents n=256

These data clearly showed differences between progression routes at Level 6 and Level 7. At Level 7, all respondents were in employment of some sort, predominantly (92 percent, 45/49) in full-time employment. At Level 6, however, over a third of the sample had come into the degree apprenticeship either from full-time education (31 percent, 64/207) or from being active in the labour market but not currently working (4 percent, 8/207). This is different to traditional HE where 87 percent enter for their first degrees from full-time education.¹⁷

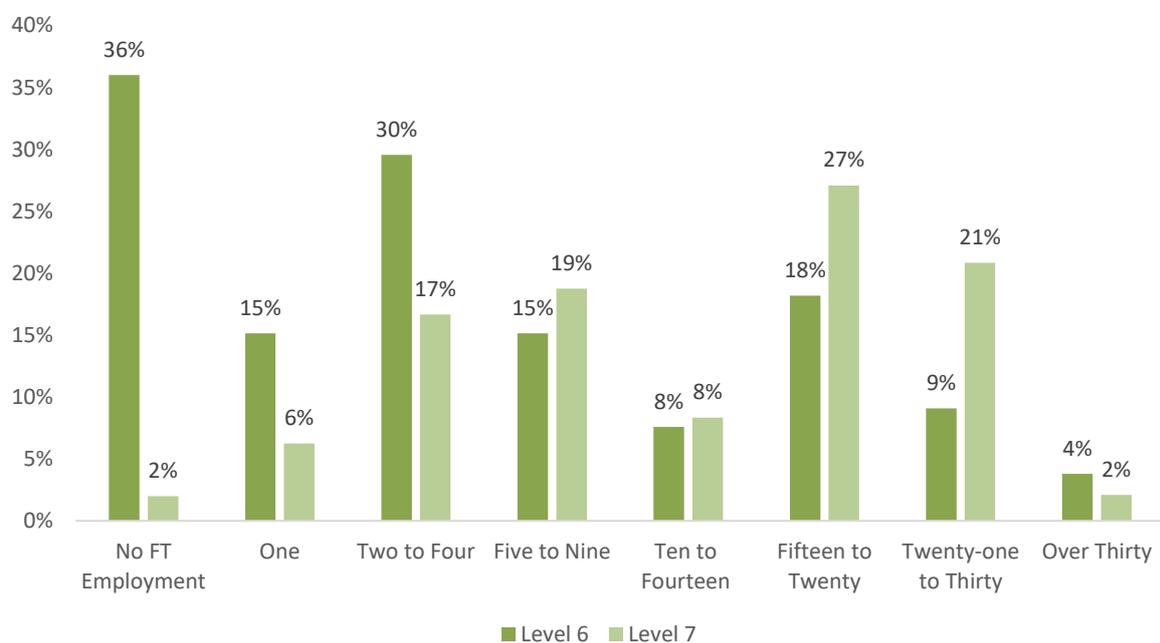
¹⁶ Note: Two categories ('Other' and 'Neither in Employment, Education or Training and not actively looking for work') have been excluded for sake of clarity as there was only one respondent in each category.

¹⁷ HE Qualifications Obtained by Level of Qualification, HESA, 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/11-01-2018/sfr247-higher-education-student-statistics/qualifications>

For those who had given their pre-degree apprenticeship status as something other than employed, they were subsequently asked if they had ever held full-time employment. Of the respondents at Level 6 who were offered this question, 21 percent (20/94) indicated that they had and the rest (79 percent, 74/94) said that they had never held full-time employment. Thus, at Level 6, over a third (36 percent, 74/207) of those entering degree apprenticeships have never held full-time employment compared to only one respondent at Level 7.

The number of years that respondents have spent in full-time employment is shown in Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.3: Number of years in full-time employment prior to starting degree apprenticeship



Base: all respondents n=256

Again, the differences between progression routes between Level 6 and Level 7 is apparent. Combining Figure 3.3 with the data from Figure 3.2, around two-thirds (66 percent, 136/207) of Level 6 learners had either never been in employment or had been employed for less than five years. In contrast, 76 percent (37/49) of Level 7 learners had been in full-time employment for five years or more.

However, a similar proportion of those at Level 6 (79 percent, 105/133) and those at Level 7 (88 percent, 42/48) stated that they had been working for their current employer prior to starting a degree apprenticeship. This reveals the importance of employers in promoting degree apprenticeships and the perceived benefit to both the individual and their employer.

Job roles¹⁸ in most recent previous employment, prior to starting the degree apprenticeship, are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Job role in most recent full-time employment

	Level 6*		Level 7	
Manager, director or senior official	14	11%	18	38%
Professional occupational role	26	20%	17	35%
Associate professional or technical occupational role	29	22%	7	15%
Administrative or secretarial occupational role	20	15%	5	10%
Skilled trades occupational role	8	6%	1	2%
Caring, leisure or other service occupational role	8	6%		
Sales or customer service occupational role	17	13%		
Process, plant or machine operative	3	2%		
Unskilled or manual role	8	6%		
	133	100%	48	100%

*Note: column sums to more than 100 percent because of rounding.

The top three categories in the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC9) categories accounted for 88 percent (42/48) of those engaged in Level 7 programmes. At Level 6, just under half of those holding previous employment (48 percent, 64/133) were in the lower six occupational roles. This could reflect the potential level of education required to develop skills in the different occupation areas and to move beyond them based on the assumption that fewer managers require Level 6 training as they have either achieved this already or it is no longer necessary given their experience. However, it could also indicate that there are not the available Level 7 degree apprenticeships in subjects relevant to the lower four occupational roles. Further research would be required to investigate these elements.

3.2 Engagement

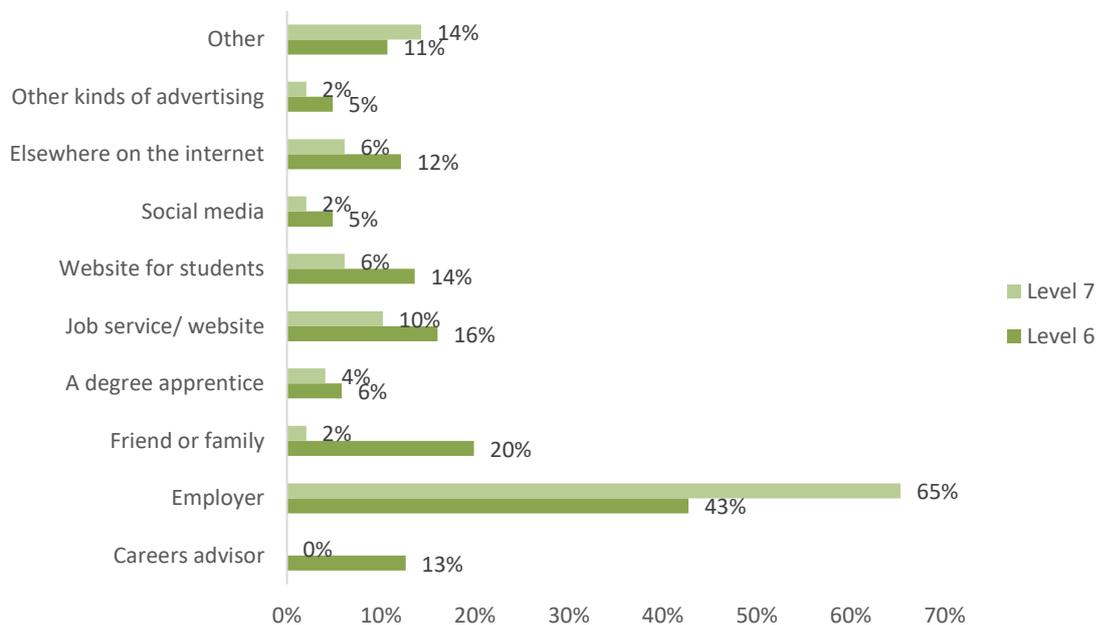
Having explored the differences in previous education and professional backgrounds of survey respondents, the routes by which they initially engaged with their degree apprenticeship programme will be explored, with a particular focus upon information and choice.

3.2.1 Information

The level of study impacted on where the learners first heard about degree apprenticeships as shown in Figure 3.4. The most common source cited, by 47 percent of the sample (120/256) was through an employer, though two-thirds of Level 7 (32/49) respondents had heard of degree apprenticeships through this route compared to 43 percent (88/207) of Level 6. Friends and family were an important source of initial engagement for one-fifth of Level 6 (41/207) respondents compared to just 2 percent at Level 7 (1/49).

¹⁸ Using the ONS SOC9 classification.

Figure 3.4: Where did you first hear about degree apprenticeships (multiple responses)?

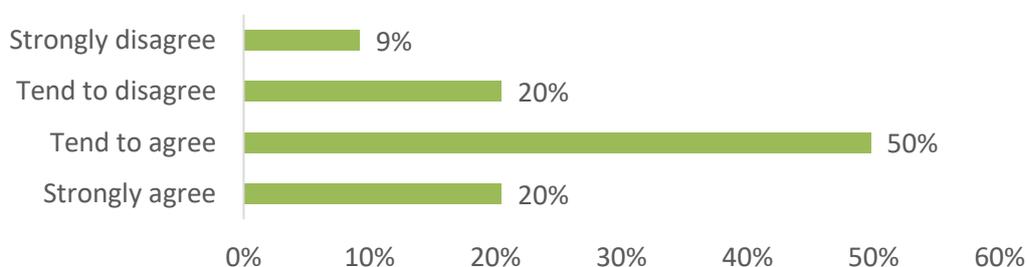


Base: all respondents n=256

When asked where they found the most relevant information about their degree apprenticeship, 35 percent (73/207) of those at Level 6 and 65 percent (31/48) of those at Level 7 identified an employer as the main source (this was a single response item). The internet was identified as the main source of information by a third of those at Level 6 (67/207) but was cited by only 4 percent of Level 7 learners (2/48). This is a good indication of where promotion for degree apprenticeships can be emphasised according to Level, with employers playing a vital part across both Levels but a greater part in Level 7.

Overall, 70 percent (175/249) of those responding to the DAMR survey agreed that they found it easy to get information about degree apprenticeships as shown in Figure 3.5 (see Appendix A for exact question wording).

Figure 3.5: Easy to get relevant information about degree apprenticeships

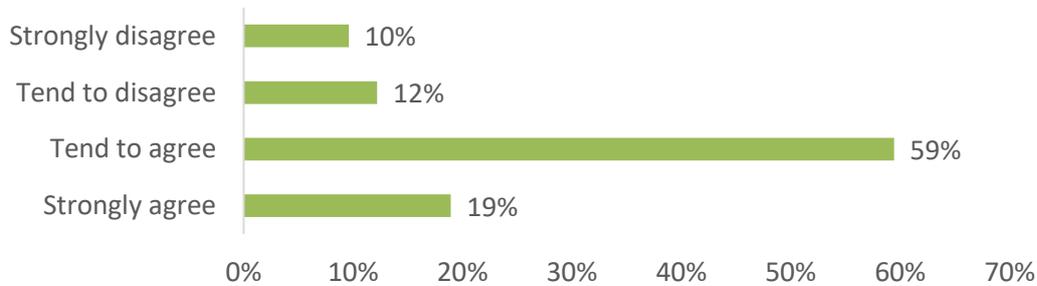


Base: all respondents n=249

An even higher proportion, 78 percent (172/243) agreed with the statement that they found it easy to get information about the degree apprenticeship that suited their

interests and needs (Figure 3.6). The information failure identified in Section 1.1 is, therefore, mostly closely related to the lack of awareness of degree apprenticeships as once they become aware of them, this information shows individuals appear satisfied with the information they are able to obtain on degree apprenticeships.

Figure 3.6: Easy to get information about degree apprenticeships to suit interests and needs



Base: all respondents n=243

3.2.2 Choice

When prompted to identify the pathways into choosing a degree apprenticeship, most survey respondents (63 percent, 162/256) said that they had decided by themselves (Table 3.3). This characteristic could reflect the experience that older (often Level 7) degree apprentices may have garnered from their careers. For some of the younger learners it may also reflect that as an emerging route to HE, degree apprentices have had to do more research and engage with an employer giving them opportunity to really assess whether this was an appropriate option. Further research, including a potential study of learners who considered degree apprenticeships but then opted for other routes, would be required to understand the extent to which young people self-determine the degree that they wish to pursue regardless of the degree they ultimately pursue.

Table 3.3: How respondents decided to pursue a degree apprenticeship

	Level 6		Level 7*	
I decided by myself that it would be a good fit for me	129	62%	33	67%
Somebody else suggested it to me, but in the end, I made the decision on my own	45	22%	4	8%
Somebody else convinced me that it would be a good fit for me	12	6%	7	14%
I thought it might be a good fit for me, but somebody else helped me make my decision	21	10%	5	10%
Total	207	100%	49	100%

*Note: column sums to less than 100 percent because of rounding.

Notably 22 percent (45/207) of those at Level 6, but only 8 percent of those at Level 7 (4/49) said that the idea of a degree apprenticeship had been suggested to them by someone else. Thus, across the sample, just over one in three attributed some sort of motivational role to others in their decision to pursue the degree apprenticeship.

The independence in motivations reflected in Table 3.3 does not rule out that these respondents to the survey talked to others about their decision to enter a degree apprenticeship. Seventy-eight percent of those at Level 6 who said that they had decided by themselves that it would be a good fit (100/129) and 82 percent of those at Level 7 (27/33) indicated that they had talked over this decision with others before making the final choice.

Who those people were is shown in Table 3.4. Again, the survey responses suggested that employers were a trusted source of advice about the final decision to pursue a degree apprenticeship, consulted by two-thirds (66 percent, 141/215) of those who spoke to someone before making up their mind. This may illustrate the linkage between employers and utilising the degree apprenticeship for workforce development. However, at Level 6, potential learners mostly consulted either friends or family (73 percent, 130/178). Few of those surveyed (8 percent, 17/215) said that they had spoken to a former or current degree apprentice about their choice. This last point could reflect the time lag since degree apprenticeships have been introduced and number of degree apprenticeship graduates in society with whom respondents would come across.

Table 3.4: Consulted before making the final decision to enter degree apprenticeship

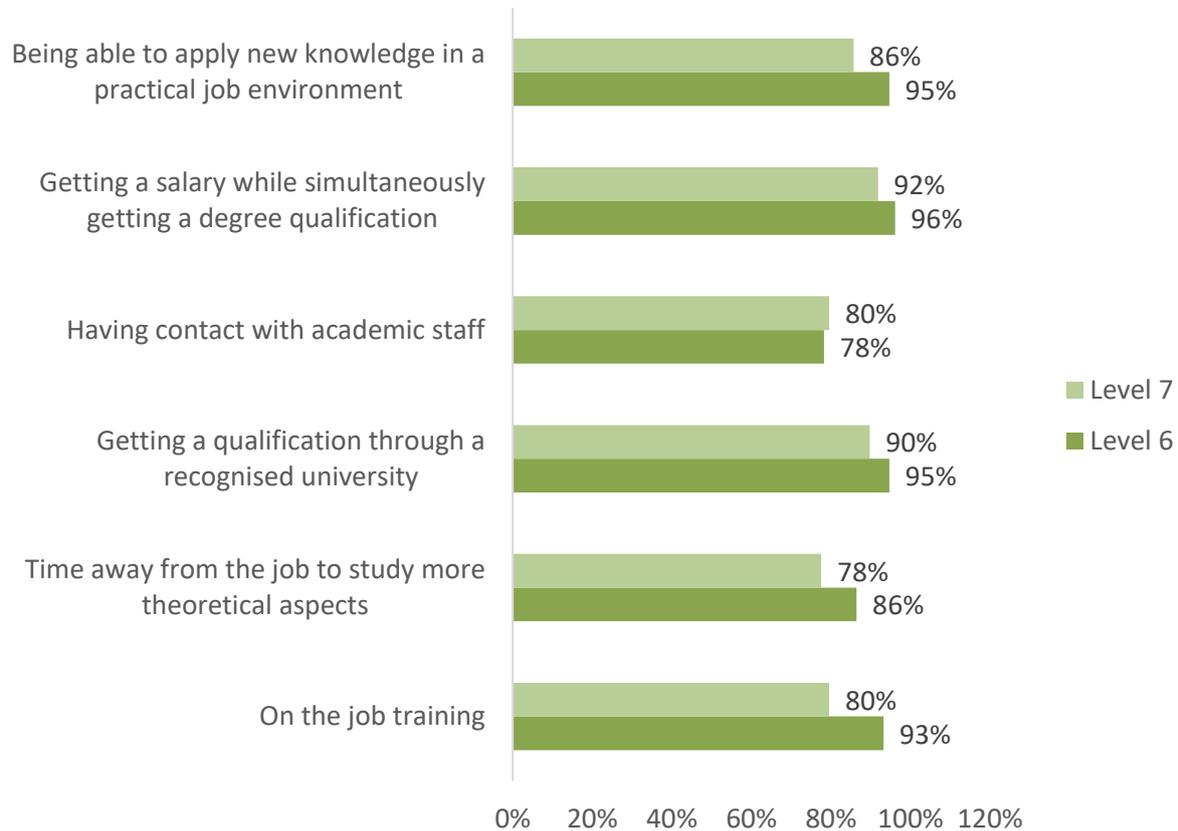
	Level 6*		Level 7*	
An employer or someone in my workplace	108	61%	33	77%
A friend or a family member	130	73%	25	58%
A careers advisor	19	11%	0	0%
Someone already studying for, or who has completed, a degree apprenticeship	16	9%	1	2%
Other	8	4%	2	5%

*Note: columns sum to more than 100 percent as multiple responses allowed

3.2.3 Motivations

When asked to rate the importance of a set of factors relevant to them in deciding to opt for a degree apprenticeship, almost all of the factors rated very highly in the decision (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7: Importance of features of degree apprenticeships in making decision



Base: all respondents n=256

The high degree of importance attached by respondents to all of these factors suggests that the overall character of the degree apprenticeship, blending employment and education, is highly valued by those seeking to obtain the qualification. As highlighted above, that degree apprentices have to commit to this joint working and learning may show a determination and careful consideration of the outcomes.

This is reinforced by the findings in Table 3.5 below, in which the alternatives to the degree apprenticeship that they are currently pursuing are shown, as identified by survey respondents.

Table 3.5: Likely situation if had not decided to study for degree apprenticeship

	Level 6		Level 7	
I would probably have opted to do another kind of apprenticeship	20	10%	2	4%
I would probably have opted to study for a traditional degree at university	79	38%	12	24%
I would not have opted to do any kind of qualifications or training	47	23%	16	33%
I would probably have opted to look at other non-university forms of training schemes	34	16%	13	27%
I would probably have opted to get qualifications through a further education college	16	8%	1	2%
Other	11	5%	5	10%
Total	207	100%	49	100%

Around a quarter of the total sample (25 percent, 63/256) said that they would not have pursued any kind of qualification or training, indicating that degree apprenticeships are an important avenue to higher level qualifications that are reaching people who might not otherwise engage in skills acquisition through formal training. Notably, that figure was proportionately higher (33 percent, 16/49) for those engaged in Level 7 degree apprenticeships. Discounting those who already had a HE qualification, revealed 12 percent (30/256) had been motivated to complete a degree apprenticeship where they would not have pursued any other form of qualification or training. Without degree apprenticeships these individuals may never have attained a HE qualification.

Fifty percent (8/16) of those Level 7 respondents who would not have considered any other kind of qualification or training had been employed at their company for 10 years or more. This indicates that degree apprenticeships offer an alternative approach for employees to undertake HE and develop new skills. It could also suggest that degree apprenticeships are being used by employers to reward staff and increase skill level or improve productivity. However, a further 12.5 percent (2/16) were not employed at the company before starting the degree apprenticeship which could suggest they are being used by employers to attract new staff as part of a recruitment package. More investigation into the individual motivations for participating in degree apprenticeships from existing and new employees would be necessary to explore this further and confirm any hypotheses.

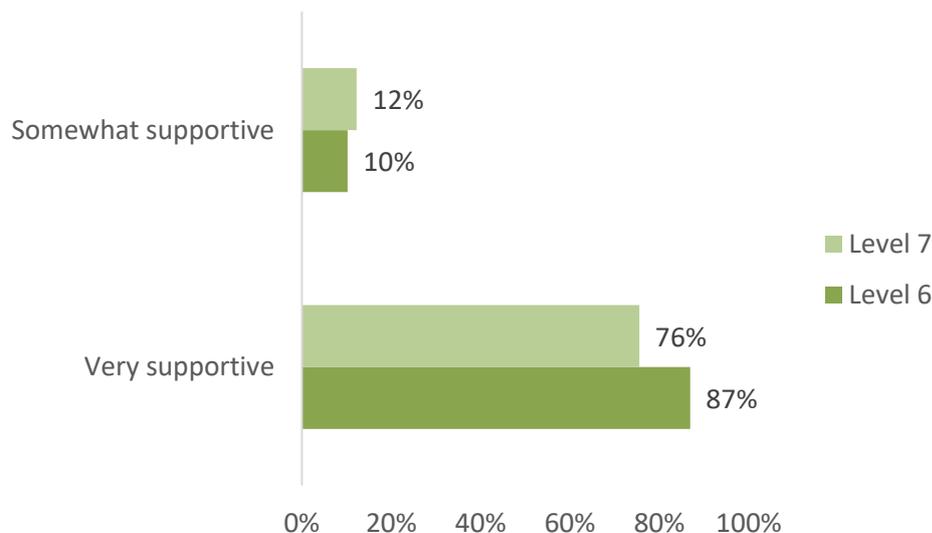
The results also suggest that degree apprenticeships are providing an alternative to a traditional HE degree for some 38 percent of Level 6 respondents (79/207). These respondents may have pursued a traditional HE degree had they not found a degree apprenticeship reinforcing the suggestion that degree apprenticeships are meeting a demand. The majority of respondents (82 percent, 129/158) indicated that any traditional HE qualification that they would have pursued would have been in the same subject or sector.

3.2.4 Support

When looking at the matter of engagement with the degree apprenticeship agenda, it was important to understand to what extent participants in the survey felt that they had received support from those around them.

The data revealed that there was a high level of support given to those who had opted for the degree apprenticeship route by their family (Figure 3.8).

Figure 3.8: Level of support from immediate family of choice of degree apprenticeship route



Base: all respondents n=257

Approximately 87 percent of those at Level 6 (179/206) said that their immediate family was supportive of their decision, with another 10 percent (21/206) stating that their family was somewhat supportive. The survey results for this question were slightly lower for Level 7 learners, with three-quarters (76 percent, 37/49) suggesting that their immediate family was fully supportive. Qualitative comments were gathered from those who responded that their immediate family was only a little or not at all supportive, and they provide some insight into the challenges for some learners in undertaking a degree apprenticeship. For one Level 6 learner, the lack of perceived support from family was linked to the expectations of others in their social environment:

'Of everyone they knew, all their children were going to university to do a traditional degree.'

This reveals some perception of inferiority or stigma with the degree apprenticeship compared to a traditional HE degree. While those surveyed may have overcome this perception and considered the apprenticeship degree on its merits, the survey does not reveal the perceptions held by those who have not chosen to do a degree apprenticeship. This remark indicates that degree apprenticeships may be seen as substandard by some in UK society. If this is a common perception, then lack of awareness of degree apprenticeships may be a critical barrier that needs to be

overcome so degree apprenticeships can be seen as a real choice for those considering HE. This is important given the culture in the UK, where common pressure is towards university and attainment of a traditional degree.¹⁹ However, this is a singular, qualitative response and more research into the perceptions of degree apprenticeships in society is needed to help quantify the prevalence of such suggestions.

Other concerns hinted at the perceived difficulty of juggling a job and a degree at the same time:

'My family did not understand why I wanted to complete a degree as they did not believe this was a necessity. They had concerns about what pressures this would have on my work life balance and wellbeing. However, since I started on the course, they have tried to support me when possible.'

'They were concerned it might be too much for me to fit around the demands of my job.'

Some comments indicated that family were not always aware of what was required in order to complete the apprenticeship, or were unable to provide adequate support:

'I don't have all the time required to do all the reading, additional tasks and even assessments and I don't get the support needed to do them.'

'They do not fully understand the commitment.'

Finally, two comments from Level 7 learners indicated that the degree apprenticeship is part of career progression, and didn't really require especial levels of support from family beyond the norm:

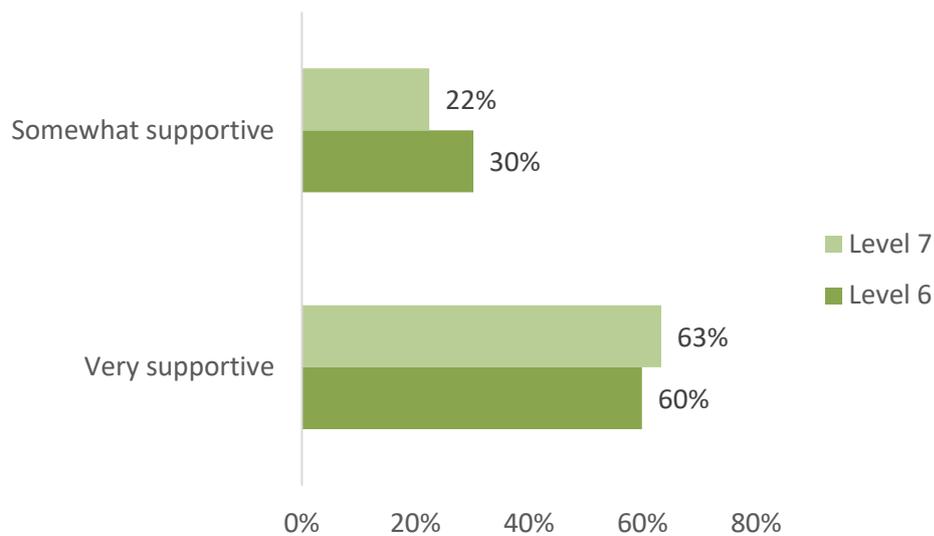
'It's part of my development within my current job, rather than a life-changing experience for me.'

'I already have 2 Bachelor honours degrees - why would I want a third? The degree wasn't the pulling factor, it was the chartered manager status; work suggested that I would be suited to it.'

Level of support from friends is show in Figure 3.9.

¹⁹ School Leavers Feel Pushed Down University Route, AAT News, 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.aat.org.uk/aat-news/school-leavers-feel-pushed-down-university-route>

Figure 3.9: Level of support from friends of choice of degree apprenticeship route



Base: all respondents n=257

Although quite high, support from friends was less strong than that from family; 60 percent (121/206) of those at Level 6 and 63 percent of those at Level 7 (31/49) said that their friends were very supportive. Compared to Figure 3.8 above, the proportion of respondents who felt their friends were very supportive was 27 percentage points lower than family at Level 6 and 13 percentage points lower at Level 7.

Again, qualitative comments revealed some of the reasons that might explain situations where learners do not experience high levels of support from friends and peers. Some learners suggested that the novelty of the degree apprenticeship offer might be making friends reluctant to offer unqualified support:

'Friends did not seem to think degree apprenticeships were a good thing. They were more in favour of university full-time to study a degree.'

'Most have never heard of degree apprenticeships, so they did not really understand what I was doing. I think now that I have started and they can see the benefits they are far more supportive.'

While in response to a question on support, this latter remark reveals more about the self-directing and outcome motivated nature of degree apprentices supporting the conclusions made in Section 3.2.2. For some degree apprentices it seems it does not matter that their format of study is not popular or understood by others, but it fits with their career or other aspects identified as motivations elsewhere in this report.

Others suggested that part of the lack of support experienced was due to friends being rather uninterested:

'I live away from family so don't get chance for much support and friends don't disagree with my decision but will leave me to my own devices. There may be times I have to turn down invites to events and regular commitments to fit in the taught sessions and they understand and don't pressure me otherwise.'

'Because they have their own interests and chasing their own agenda.' [sic]

'They have no interest in how or whether I choose to study. Being considerably over 30 peer pressure is not a factor for me.'

One learner, from a social context where no-one in the family or any close friends had completed a traditional degree, proffered an explanation for the perceived lack of support which touches upon possible challenges of social mobility:

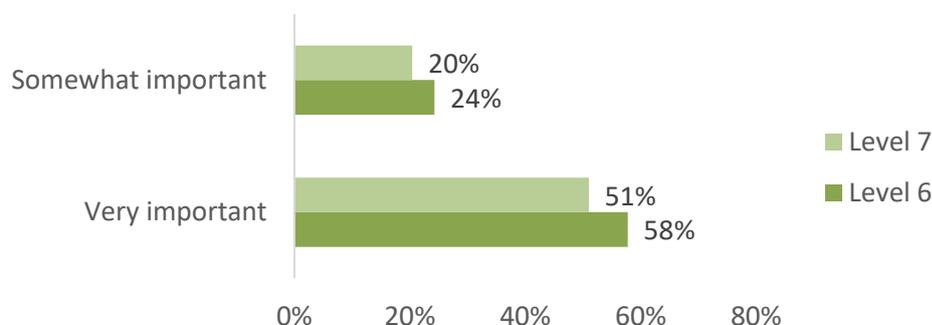
'My friends were a little envious as most of them are not very career driven like I am.'

3.2.5 Cost

One of the features of the degree apprenticeship is that it offers a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification for which the learner incurs no direct tuition costs. Fees are covered from the Apprenticeship Levy and from employer contributions, although part of that may be offset by lower wages offered to learners through the course of their degree apprenticeship than they might otherwise earn if in an equivalent full-time position.²⁰ However, as part of their financial calculations, learners have to take into account that they are not eligible for student loans.

The extent to which cost factored into the decision to pursue a degree apprenticeship for respondents is shown in Figure 3.10 below.

Figure 3.10: Importance of cost as factor in choice of degree apprenticeship



Base: all respondents n=257

²⁰ However, learners are still guaranteed the National Minimum Wage (NMW).

The data indicated that the different financial incentive structure of the degree apprenticeship was indeed an important pull factor in the decision to opt for that route. Fully 82 percent (169/206) of those at Level 6 and 71 percent (35/49) of those at Level 7 cited it as very or somewhat important in their decision-making. In the context of rising university fees and rising proportions of the population qualified to bachelors Level (Level 6) but with large debt burdens, alternative means of being able to compete with peers in the labour market but without incurring the financial consequences may be growing in demand.

There is a mixed policy context surrounding the cost of HE and the recently published 'Review of Post-18 Education and Funding'²¹ suggests that beneficiaries of funded education should bear some of the cost. Given the value placed on financial burden by degree apprentices as outlined in this research, it might be expected that degree apprenticeship numbers would decline should costs be passed onto the learners. Additional research to understand the specific cost implications and incentives to degree apprentices would be required to take this analysis further and the results of this survey only permit broad insight into the role of finance as a motivating factor.

²¹ Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, Independent Panel Report, Department for Education, May 2019. Accessed at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/805127/Review_of_post_18_education_and_funding.pdf

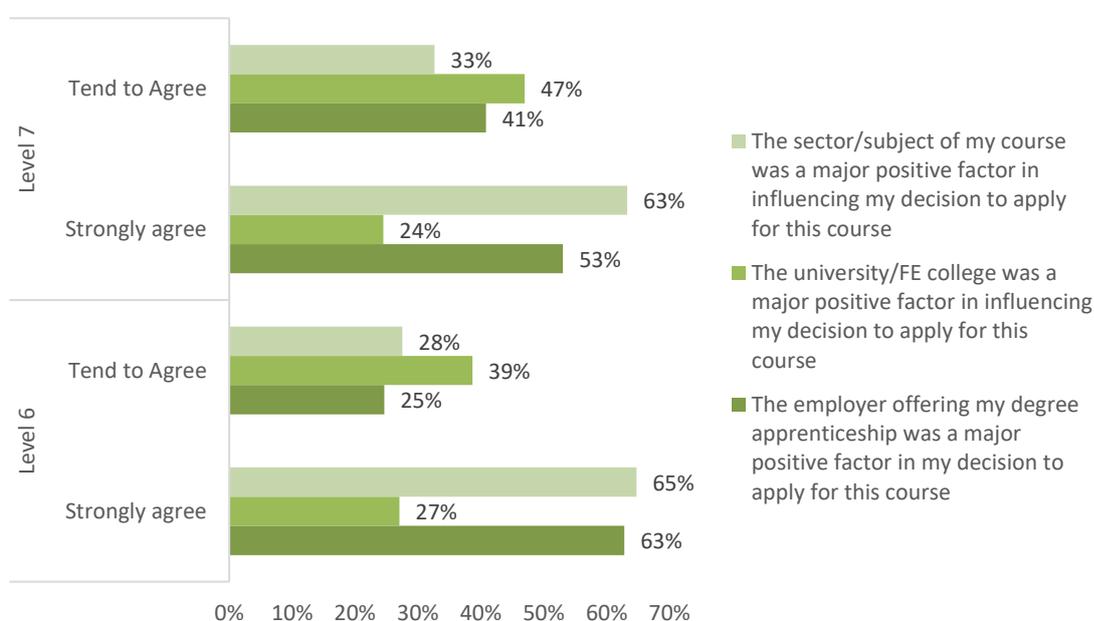
4 Career progression and aspirations

The final section of the survey looked at the fit between the choice of degree apprenticeship and the future career plans of learners who responded to the survey.

4.1 Sector, HE institution and employer

Respondents were asked whether the choice of the degree apprenticeship was motivated by either the sector/area of study, the HE institution delivering the qualification, or the employer through which it was offered. The results are shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Positive influences on decision to choose specific degree apprenticeship



Base: all respondents n=258

At both Levels, the strongest pull factor cited by survey respondents was the choice of subject/sector. Ninety-three percent (191/207) of Level 6 learners and 96 percent (47/49) of those at Level 7 said that they either strongly agreed or tended to agree that the subject or sector was an important positive motivation for them.

The employer through which the degree apprenticeship was being offered was also seen as very important, with 87 percent (181/207) of those at Level 6 and 94 percent of those at Level 7 (46/49) stating that they either strongly agreed or tended to agree that the employer offering the degree apprenticeship was an important positive motivation for them.

The choice of HE institution that was awarding the qualification secured lower levels of perceived importance. At Level 6, 27 percent (56/207) of learners strongly agreed, with a further 39 percent (80/207) tending to agree, that the awarding institution was of importance to them. At Level 7, the corresponding levels of agreement were 25 percent (12/48) in strong agreement and 47 percent (23/48) tending to agree.

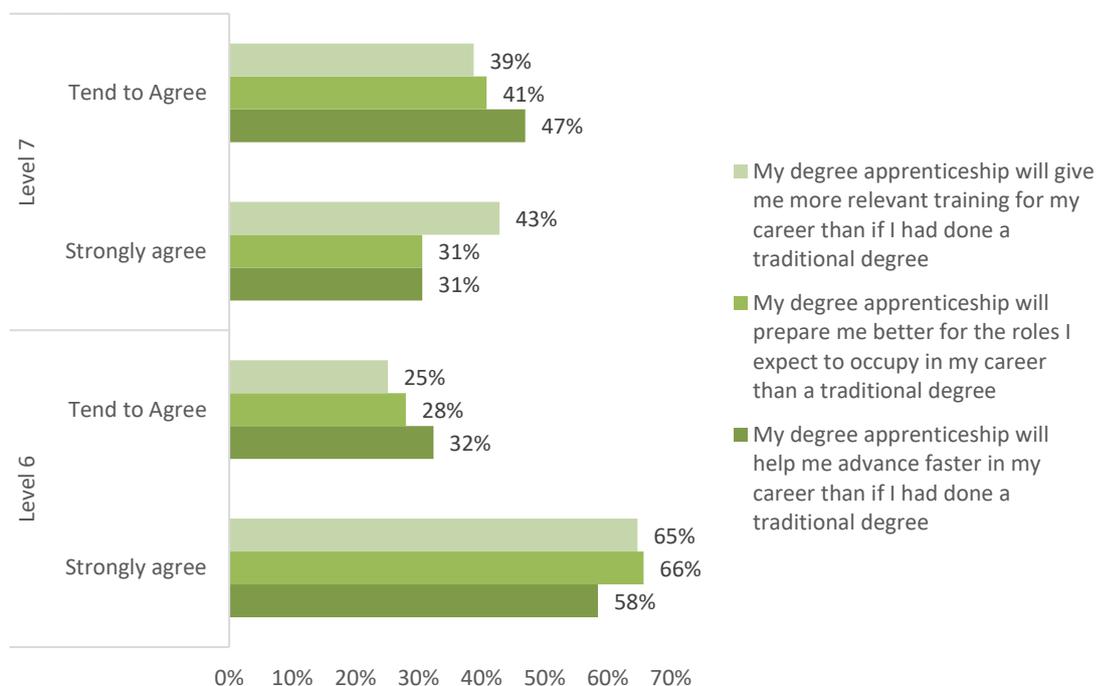
4.2 Future impact of completing degree apprenticeship

The survey asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements about their perception of the relationship between their degree apprenticeship and their future career.

4.2.1 Career progression

The aspiration for degree apprenticeships is that they will enable a class of worker to emerge with a high level of skills but whose skills are adapted to the demands of modern enterprise. From the perspective of learners, the design of the degree apprenticeship curriculum should enable them to shift or progress quickly in their career paths without the need for additional skills training beyond the degree, as might be the case with graduates from traditional degrees. The extent to which some of these perceptions are reflected within the sample is shown in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Future impact of degree apprenticeship on career progression



Base: all respondents n=257

In general, the direct impact of the degree apprenticeship upon career progression was perceived as being higher by learners at Level 6 than Level 7. The proportion of Level 6 respondents who strongly agreed that the degree apprenticeship would give more relevant training than a traditional degree was 26 percentage points above Level 7. A 35 percentage point difference in the proportion of those who felt that the degree apprenticeship would better help them prepare for roles they expected to occupy during their career, also existed between Level 6 and Level 7. Finally, the proportion of Level 6 respondents who thought that a degree apprenticeship would help them advance faster was 27 percentage points above Level 7.

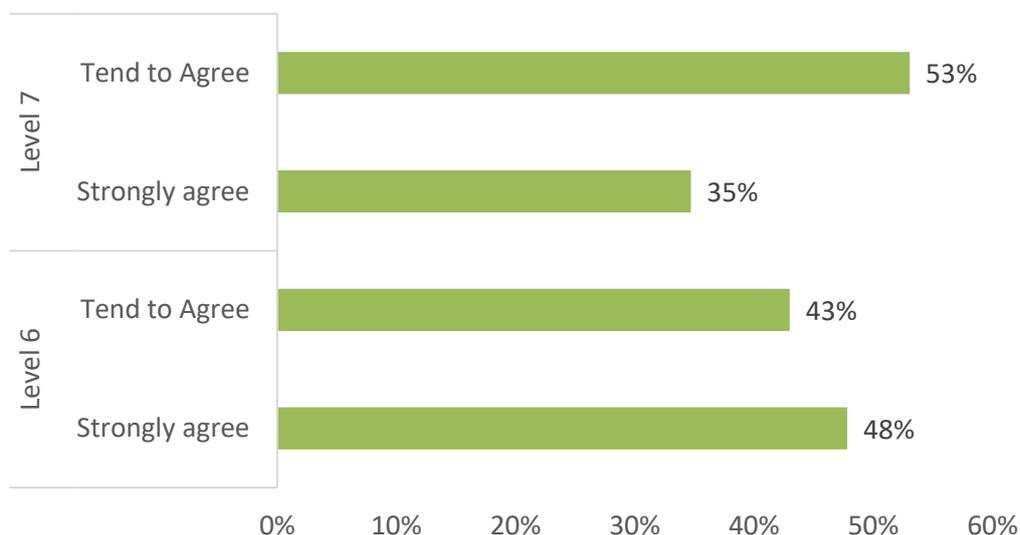
The differences are clearer when cross-tabulated against the age of respondents. Looking at the perceived impact of the degree apprenticeship on relevant training for a career, 76 percent (70/92) of those under 21 strongly agreed that it would have an impact compared to 42 percent (36/86) of those over 30 years old. Regarding preparation for a career, 75 percent (69/92) of the youngest learners felt strongly that the degree apprenticeship would have an important impact, compared to 41 percent (35/86) of those over 30. Finally, the optimism of the youngest cohort could be a factor in the perceived impact of degree apprenticeships on the speed of career advancement, with 72 percent (67/93) of those under the age of 21 strongly agreeing that it would have an impact, compared to 35 percent (30/86) of those over 30.

A number of possible reasons may be provided for these results. By gaining a Level 6 qualification respondents are now better qualified for their career and sector than they would otherwise have been. Level 7 respondents are more likely to have some experience in the workplace and have attended an HE institution in the past, giving them a greater skill and qualification base compared to Level 6 respondents (90 percent of Level 7 respondents have attended HE compared to 33 percent of Level 6, see Section 3.1.1). Alternatively, as revealed by this research, younger learners are likely to have less full-time employment experience and it may be that Level 6 respondents are naive and overly confident of the benefits that the degree apprenticeship is going to provide in their career. These suggested reasons would need further exploration and research to be evidenced but provide some potential explanations for the differences between Levels. However, that there is a strong perception of a positive impact of degree apprenticeships on career prospects among the Level 6 respondents is a good indicator of the applicability of degree apprentices to those who undertake them.

4.2.2 Portability

There is a high level of agreement across Levels that a degree apprenticeship will adequately prepare the learner to work anywhere within the sector (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Perceived portability of qualification within sector

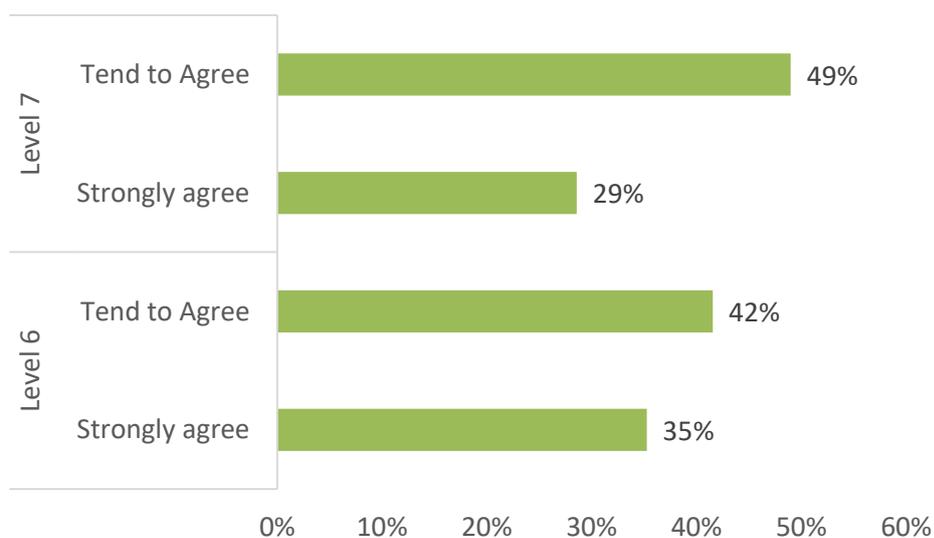


Base: all respondents n=258

Ninety-one percent (188/206) of those at Level 6 and 90 percent (45/49) of those at Level 7 either strongly agreed or tended to agree that they expected to be able to work anywhere within the sector with the degree apprenticeship.

The extent to which that portability extends to the perception that the degree apprenticeship prepares learners to work across sectors is shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Perceived portability of qualification across sectors



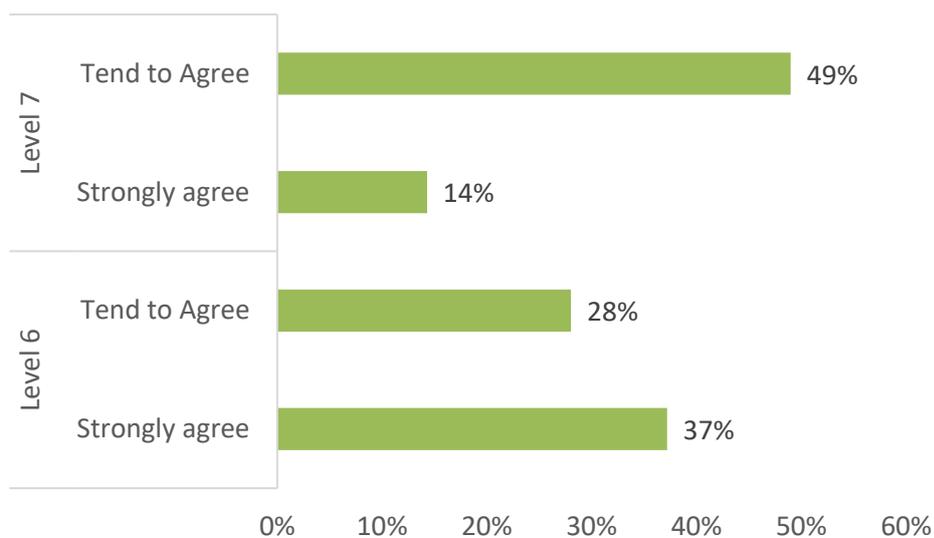
Base: all respondents n=258

Just over three-quarters of the sample - 77 percent of those at Level 6, (158/207), and 78 percent of those at Level 7, (38/49) – expected that their degree apprenticeship would be portable across sectors during the course of their career. This future-proofing of the degree apprenticeship could be important to the increasing take-up rates for what is still a new format of provision.

4.2.3 Aspirations and attitudes

The rapid growth of self-employment has been a pronounced feature of the UK labour market in recent years. The number of self-employed increased from 3.3 million people (12 percent of the labour force) in 2001 to 4.8 million (15.1 percent of the labour force) in 2017.²² While degree apprenticeships are offered by employers, in collaboration with HE institutions, in order to develop a more skilled workforce, it is possible that they may equally be used to reward loyal employees and to respond to business needs, rather than serving as potential routes to self-employment and entrepreneurship. However, the data collected in the course of this survey shows (Figure 4.5) that learners in degree apprenticeship programmes still retain the desire to someday be self-employed.

Figure 4.5: Aspirations for self-employment



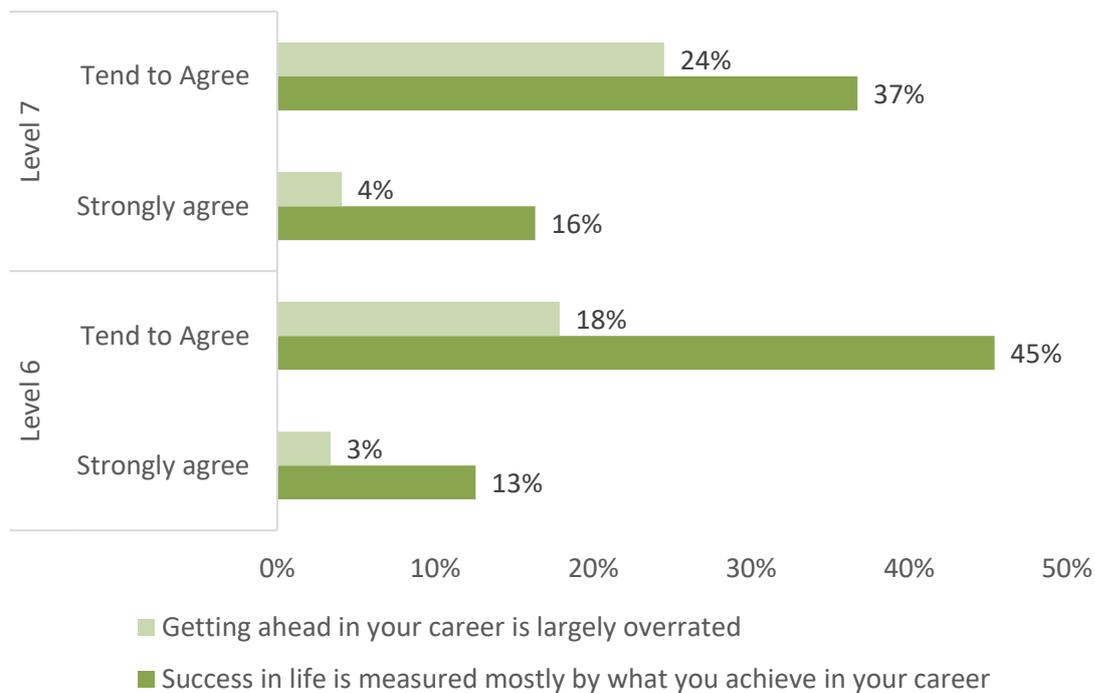
Base: all respondents n=258

Almost two-thirds of the sample – 65 percent, (135/206), at Level 6 and 63 percent, (31/49), at Level 7 – reported that they would like to be self-employed sometime in the future. While those figures are consistent across Levels, the intensity (strongly agree versus tended to agree) is greater among Level 6 learners (37 percent strongly agree) compared to Level 7 learners (14 percent), again, perhaps reflecting different educational and career paths to date. Cross tabulating this question with age revealed significant differences. There was strong agreement among those under 21 was at 50 percent (46/93), compared to 19 percent (16/86) for those over 30.

²² Trends in Self-Employment in the UK, ONS, 2018.

Much of the appeal of degree apprenticeships has been focused around the workplace and career benefits as well as financial incentives, as opposed to quality of life and wellbeing concerns. In order to assess whether degree apprenticeships are only attracting learners who are focussed on careers and career progression, some more general questions were asked of survey respondents to understand the importance they give to work and career (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6: Career and ambition

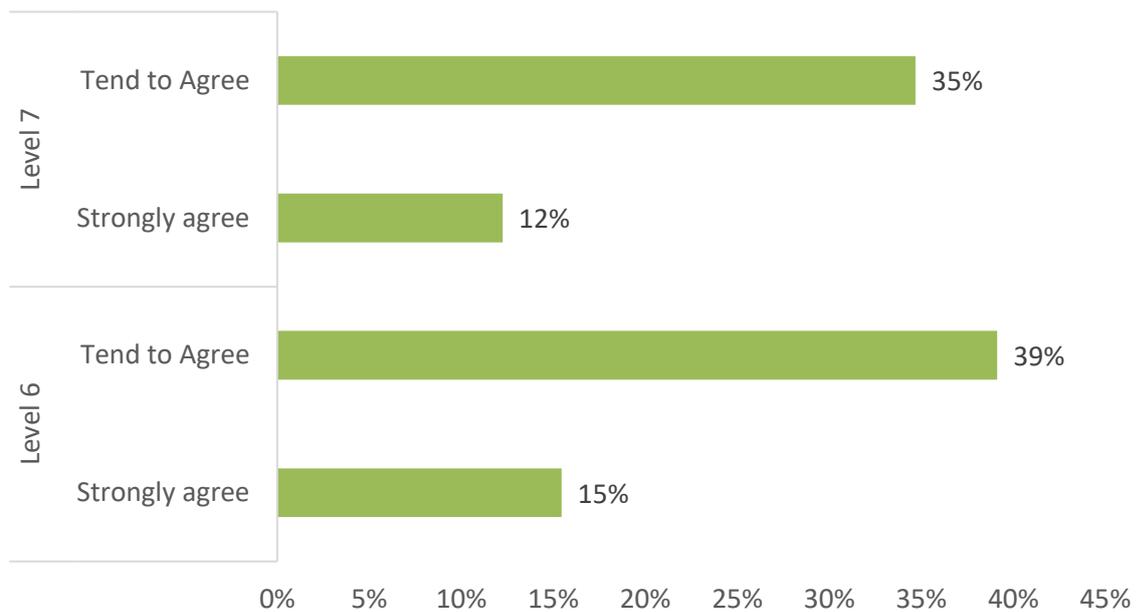


Base: all respondents n=258

The importance of career to the learners could be gauged from the observation that only 21 percent (44/207) of Level 6 and 28 percent (14/49) of Level 7 learners felt that showing ambition in one’s career was ‘largely overrated’. Over half of the sample – 58 percent, (120/207), at Level 6 and 53 percent, (26/49) at Level 7 – either strongly agreed or tended to agree with the statement that ‘success in life is measured mostly by what you achieve in your career’.

Cross-validation for these findings comes from the data shown in Figure 4.7 below, asking respondents if they believe that in general people worry too much about their careers.

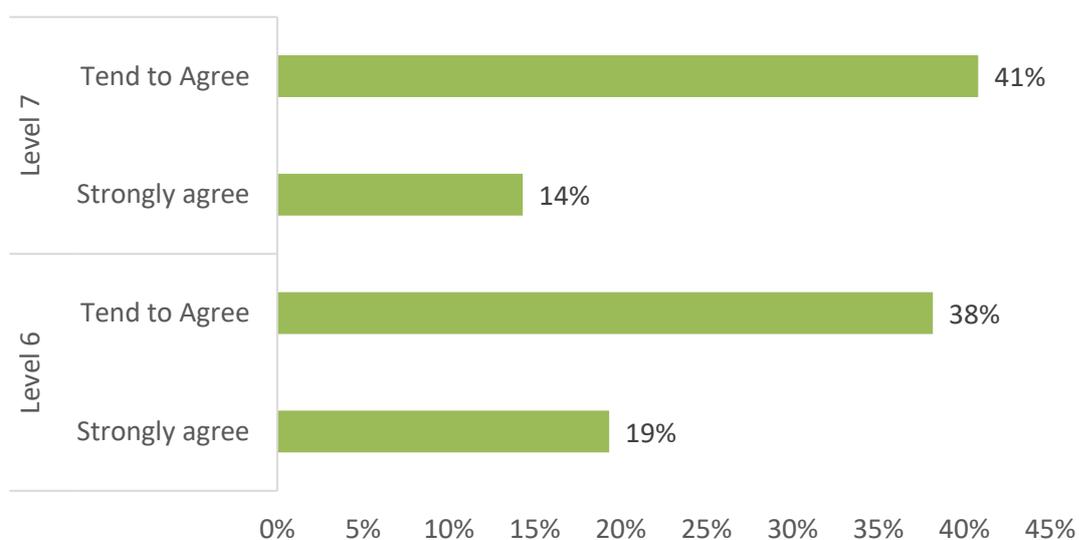
Figure 4.7: People worry too much about their careers



Base: all respondents n=256

Only about half of the sample – 54 percent at Level 6, (113/207) and 47 percent, (23/49), at Level 7 – indicated they were in some level of agreement that people worry too much about their careers, with strong agreement at 15 percent (32/207) at Level 6 and 12 percent (6/49) at Level 7. This, and the points made in the last paragraph, could suggest a commitment by degree apprentices to lifelong learning with career attainment secondary to other goals. Further corroboration is shown in Figure 4.8, which displays levels of agreement with the statement that respondents do not feel defined by their job.

Figure 4.8: Feeling defined by one's job

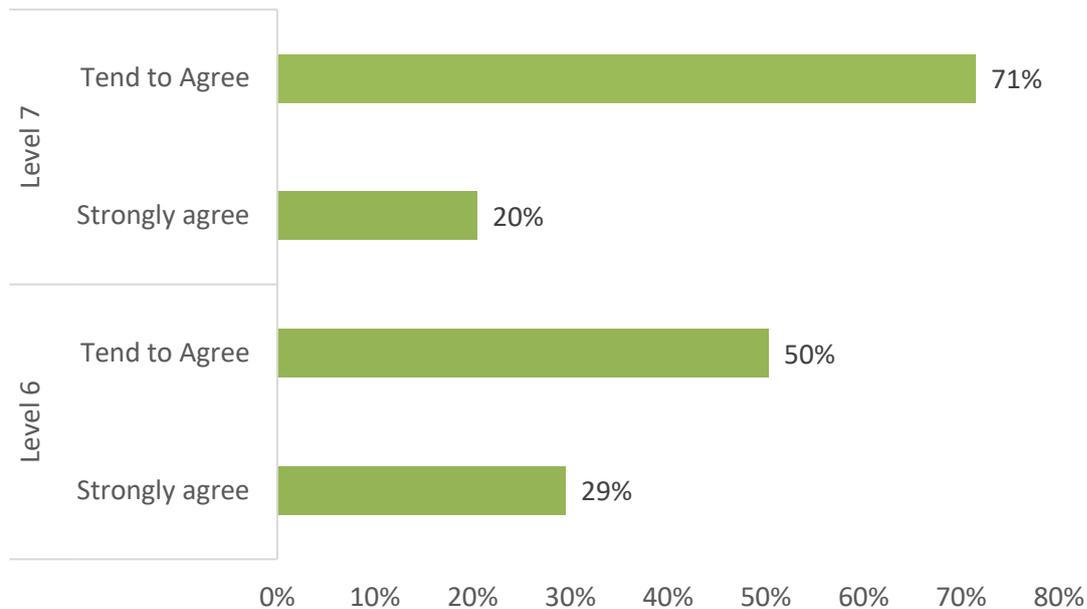


Base: all respondents n=257

There was little appreciable correlation with age in the answer to this question, with 58 percent (54/93) of those under 21 in some form of agreement compared to 60 percent (52/86) of those who are over 30 years old, suggesting that this was a feeling that was more universally shared and not conditioned by level and experience.

Finally, the link between career, money and well-being is highlighted by the responses shown in Figure 4.9.

Figure 4.9: Salary and life-satisfaction



Base: all respondents n=256

Seventy-nine percent (165/207) of Level 6 learners and 91 percent (45/49) of Level 7 learners showed varying levels of agreement with the statement that the ability to make a decent salary is important to a happy life. Agreement was strongest among the under 21 year olds (34 percent, 32/93) and lowest among the over 30 year olds (21 percent, 18/86).

5 Conclusions

In conducting this survey and analysis there are several findings that demonstrate the motivating factors behind choosing degree apprenticeships.

That degree apprenticeships offer paid employment alongside the education element was the highest rated motivating factor by degree apprentices. Unlike traditional degree programmes, degree apprentices incur no tuition fees and cost was a somewhat or very important factor for 82 percent of Level 6 and 71 percent of Level 7 respondents. In the context of rising student fees and subsequent debt for traditional degrees, the option to complete a Level 6 or 7 qualification without incurring such tuition costs appears an important consideration for those who opt for degree apprenticeships.

Importantly, one-quarter of respondents said they would not have considered any other form of education or training had degree apprenticeships not been available to them. This demonstrates that degree apprenticeships are filling a need in the market. Encouraging for the continued support of degree apprenticeships, 12 percent of respondents who would otherwise have not engaged with HE are undertaking a degree apprenticeship and have no other HE qualifications. This has important consequences for the training and up-skilling of the labour force where individuals would otherwise not have the same skill level as those who had pursued a more traditional route to that of a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification.

One-fifth of respondents had already completed an HE qualification, suggesting that in some instances, degree apprenticeships were being used to either refresh skills or provide retraining. However, the majority of degree apprenticeships were being taken up by learners who had no previous HE qualification demonstrating degree apprenticeships are providing important routes through HE for those who have not previously been able to, or were not inclined to, engage with HE. Ensuring all learners considering HE are aware of the different options open to them, including degree apprenticeships, is important to match the demand and supply of degree apprenticeships and to maximise their success.

Furthermore, 38 percent of respondents viewed degree apprenticeships as an alternative to traditional HE approaches. This is strong confirmation of not only the relevance of the degree apprenticeship subjects and approach but also the characteristics of degree apprentices. Like many early adopters, degree apprentices are independent decision-makers having had to evaluate the relatively new offer based on its merits and limited information and in the context of a culture where traditional routes to achieving a degree through university are highly emphasised. While consulting with family and friends (for Level 6) and with employers (for Level 7) respondents mostly stated that they decided on degree apprenticeships for themselves.

The educational background of the survey respondents was predominantly comprehensive school and sixth form (though there is likely to have been a time delay between completing school and pursuing a degree apprenticeship) yet a marginally higher proportion had attended private or independent schools compared to the average for HE students. Most respondents attended sixth form college as part of their education pathway and 43 percent had undertaken HE before beginning their degree apprenticeship. There is scope, therefore, for engagement of degree apprenticeships both before and after traditional degrees as well as being seen as an alternative to them.

Age had implications on many factors and differences in age broadly followed the Level of study. The typically older Level 7 respondents tended to be living in owned accommodation, whereas the majority of Level 6, with a higher proportion of younger respondents, were living with their parents. Age was also an important consideration when evaluating the motivations for opting for a degree apprenticeship with Level 6 respondents, who tended to be younger, seeing the degree apprenticeship as a means to kickstart a career, compared to Level 7, who were often older, and were using the degree apprenticeship programme to retrain as part of their career development. Level 6 respondents were confident of the impact the degree apprenticeship would have on the speed of their career development and generally had a greater aspiration for self-employment than their Level 7 counterparts.

Schools and colleges have an important role in providing information to prospective learners so they can make informed decisions. That many potential learners are not aware of degree apprenticeships is a fundamentally limiting factor to motivation and the consequent take-up. If awareness of degree apprenticeships increases in society, as well as among potential learners, it may help to shift the traditional university culture in the UK and encourage more learners to consider degree apprenticeships as an option. Degree apprenticeships have been designed to offer another approach to HE for learners and with 23 percent of Level 6 and 33 percent of Level 7 respondents suggesting they would not have pursued any other form of training or qualification there is a clear demand for such an approach.

For 35 percent of Level 6 and 65 percent of Level 7, employers were the key promoter of the degree apprenticeship offer, helping to raise awareness. Nearly all Level 7 learners were in full-time employment prior to starting their degree apprenticeship, 88 percent with their existing employer, while one-third of those on Level 6 courses were in full-time employment, 79 percent of these with their current employer. Consequently, the importance of the role employers play in motivation, promotion and up-take of degree apprenticeships cannot be understated. Employers also provided guidance and advice to many of the respondents considering a degree apprenticeship. Supporting the number of employers engaged in degree apprenticeships, and the flow of information to these employers, is therefore important for the success of degree apprenticeships.

Degree apprenticeships benefit both the individual and the supporting employer by providing business specific training to members of staff. This has consequences for how degree apprenticeships are shaped and not only reinforces the role of the employer, it also iterates that a deeper understanding of the motivations of the employer are needed to help complete the evidence base gathered by this research.

Further research to supplement the results from this initial survey would help to broaden the understanding and evidence of the motivations for opting for degree apprenticeships.

Research on the employers participating in degree apprenticeship programmes to gain an insight into their motivations would usefully contribute to this evidence base. Such research would help policy-making both in promoting and developing degree apprenticeships so the outcomes can be maximised.

Additional investigation to examine the range of prior qualifications held by degree apprentices and at what point in their working lives degree apprentices choose their programmes would also help build on the findings of this study. This information would help to unpick how degree apprenticeships are being used between levels, whether for retraining, upskilling or because their initial HE qualification was not suited for their current career.

Other questions raised by the survey surround the differences in motivations between Level 6 and Level 7 degree apprentices. Exploring perceptions of the impact the degree apprenticeship has on a career and the extent motivation is influenced by existing or new employment is an area that would benefit from further research. This would help to understand the differences in motivations for those who have been employed and could be combined with the suggested research into those with previous HE qualifications to detail how these factors influence motivation.

The impact of occupation emerged as another area which would benefit from further research. Investigation to understand the impact of occupation on the level of degree apprenticeship and whether this is itself impacted by the availability of degree apprenticeships or is caused by the demand, would supplement the findings in this report.

Finally, given the key findings on cost, additional study into the specific motivations of finance and monetary value would improve understanding of the impact this has for degree apprentices. Details on the cost individuals would consider paying for degree apprenticeship and the extent to which employers would further contribute to the programme would help to inform policy and quantify this motivation.

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