**Apprenticeships in Buckinghamshire: Key headlines**

There has been strong growth in apprenticeship starts in Buckinghamshire since 2019/20, particularly in Buckinghamshire-based delivery. However, a larger share of apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire are being started by learners living outside of the county, while Buckinghamshire-based learners are increasingly starting apprenticeships delivered outside of the county.

The number of Buckinghamshire-based learners starting apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire has grown by 12% (+138 learners) since 2019/20. While the number of non-Buckinghamshire-based learners starting apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire has grown by 117% (+714 learners).

The latter can be largely explained by the number of non-Buckinghamshire-based learners starting newly provided business management apprenticeships at the Henley Business School, and the expansion of apprenticeship provision in health by Buckinghamshire New University. Both these providers are located within the Wycombe parliamentary constituency area.

Despite strong growth in the number of apprenticeships being delivered in Buckinghamshire, a lower proportion of Buckinghamshire employers have or offer apprenticeships than the national average. This is largely due to the greater predominance of micro and small businesses in the county than the national average.

In terms of the level of apprenticeships being started, there has been a transition away from lower-level apprenticeships to higher levels. However, while there has been a 31% decline (-112 learners) in the number of Buckinghamshire-based learners starting intermediate level (Level 2) apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire since 2019/20, the number starting apprenticeships at this level delivered outside of the county has grown by 25%. The number of degree apprenticeships being delivered in Buckinghamshire is increasing rapidly, rising more than 7-fold since 2019/20.

The characteristics of apprenticeship learners starting apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire are also becoming more heavily skewed to the 25+ age group, especially for apprenticeships delivered in the Wycombe parliamentary constituency area. However, this again is being largely driven by learners based outside of the county starting apprenticeships now being offered at Henley Business School.

School leavers going onto sustained apprenticeship destinations has been in decline in Buckinghamshire since 2016/17, except for a slight rebound for Key Stage 4[[1]](#footnote-2) destinations following the onset of Covid-19 in 2020/21.

**Section summaries**

**Buckinghamshire-based learners**

This section provides data on apprenticeships that were started by learners who live in Buckinghamshire. Learners could be undertaking apprenticeships that are being delivered within Buckinghamshire or elsewhere.

In 2022/23, just over half (54%) of apprenticeships started by Buckinghamshire-based learners were being delivered by training providers (colleges, universities, private training providers or employer-providers) outside of Buckinghamshire. This is up slightly from 51% in 2019/20.

Buckinghamshire’s year-on-year growth has been stronger than the national average for both apprenticeship starts and achievements. However, on a per head basis, Buckinghamshire is outperformed by the regional and national average. Within Buckinghamshire, there has been strong growth in the number of Aylesbury-based learners in recent years.

Apprenticeships started by people aged 25+ have grown more strongly than other age groups, and make-up a high proportion of learners. Within Buckinghamshire, there are particularly high concentrations of learners aged 25+ starting apprenticeships that live in the Wycombe and Aylesbury parliamentary constituency areas.

The proportion of apprenticeship starts that are at intermediate level has declined since 2016/17, while starts at the higher level have increased, reflecting the transition away from lower-level apprenticeships to higher level. 9% of all apprenticeship starts in 2022/23 were degree apprenticeships, up from 6% in 2019/20.

A lower proportion of starts by Buckinghamshire learners in 2022/23 were in the key sectors of engineering and construction than the national average, while a higher proportion were in health. Since 2017/18, there has been a relatively large drop in the number of apprenticeships started by Buckinghamshire learners in the key sectors of engineering, while those in health, construction and digital recorded strong growth.

Just under a quarter (24%) of apprenticeship starts were in Science, Technology. Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects in 2022/23, however starts declined by 2% between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

**Buckinghamshire-based delivery**

This section provides data on apprenticeships that were delivered in Buckinghamshire by training providers (colleges, universities, private training providers or employer-providers). Learners may live within Buckinghamshire or may live outside of the county.

A larger share of apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire are being started by learners living outside of the county.

Since 2019/20, the number of apprenticeship starts delivered in Buckinghamshire has grown year-on-year, with growth stronger than the national average. At the local level, growth has been particularly strong in the Wycombe parliamentary constituency area, while starts delivered in Chesham & Amersham have fluctuated, and in Beaconsfield declined in 2022/23.

In 2022/23, more than half of apprenticeships delivered in Buckinghamshire were started by learners aged 25+.

In 2019/20, the majority of apprenticeship starts delivered in Buckinghamshire were advanced level apprenticeships. However, over time the proportion of higher-level starts has increased to a similar proportion as the advanced level. Advanced level achievements remain a higher proportion than higher level achievements, likely due to completion lag times. In 2022/23, 13% of starts delivered in Buckinghamshire were degree apprenticeships, up from 2% in 2019/20.

A lower proportion of starts in 2022/23 were in the key sector of engineering than the national average. Since 2019/20, key sectors in health, digital and engineering recorded strong growth in the number starts, while construction declined.

Just under a fifth (19%) of apprenticeship starts delivered in Buckinghamshire were STEM subjects in 2022/23. This is down from a quarter in 2019/20. Much of this decline was seen in Chesham & Amersham, due to Skills4Stem reducing delivery in the area.

**Employers**

In 2022, just 13% of Buckinghamshire employers had or offered apprenticeships. This was significantly lower than the 20% average for England, and neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas. Buckinghamshire employers were more likely not to offer apprenticeships due to the size of their business than the national average, reflecting the greater predominance of micro and small businesses in the county than nationally.

Just over a third (35%) of Buckinghamshire employers plan to offer apprenticeships in the future, up from 29% in 2019. However, it remains lower than the 39% national average.

**Vacancies & applicants**

There were approximately 1.5 applicants per apprenticeship vacancy[[2]](#footnote-3) in Buckinghamshire in 2022, growing to 3.1 applicants per vacancy in 2023, with there being greater demand for apprenticeship vacancies in some subject areas than others. There has been significant growth in applicants to degree level apprenticeship vacancies since 2022.

**School leavers**

The proportion of school leavers going onto sustained apprenticeship destinations has been on a downward trend since 2016/17. The onset of Covid-19 led to a significant drop in 2020/21. However, 2021/22 saw a slight rebound, except for 16-18 sustained apprenticeship destinations[[3]](#footnote-4) in Buckinghamshire.

1. 6 consecutive months participation on an ESFA funded apprenticeship at any time during the destination year (after Year 11) from state-funded mainstream schools [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Vacancies are those recorded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and relate only for those advertised on the Government’s Find an apprenticeship website. Approx. 60% of Buckinghamshire apprenticeship starts are not accounted in the ESFA data. Those not accounted for include: where applications are made directly on the employer website (and not via the Find an apprenticeship website); and when employers provide apprenticeships to upskill their existing staff. Some vacancies listed may be closed early by the training provider or employer. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. 6 consecutive months participation on an ESFA funded apprenticeship at any time during the destination year for those completing 16 to 18 (Key Stage 5) study in schools and colleges. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)