Apprenticeships in the Screen Industries

Final Report

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Prepared by:	David Scott, Oli Taylor, Laura Malley
Checked by:	Ali Zaidi
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Submitted to:	Jack Cortvriend, ScreenSkills

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Contents

Glossary

Term	Description
Animation	Visual media that is made from a series of drawings, computer graphics, or photographs of inanimate objects (such as puppets) and that simulates movement by slight progressive changes in each frame.
Apprenticeship	An apprenticeship is a paid job where the employee learns while working. Alongside on-the-job training, apprentices spend at least 20% of their working hours completing classroom-based learning with a college, university or training provider which leads to a nationally recognised qualification.
APS	Annual Population Survey - a continuous household survey of the UK. The topics covered include employment and unemployment, as well as housing, ethnicity, religion, health and education. The sample size per year is approximately 320,000 respondents.
BFI	British Film Institute – a film and television charitable organisation which promotes and preserves film-making and television in the UK.
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility – the concept of businesses' integrating actions to tackle social and environmental issues as part of their business operations. It aims to ensure businesses achieve a balance of social, environmental and business objectives.
Census	The census is undertaken by the Office for National Statistics every 10 years to give a picture of all the people and households in England and Wales. The last Census was completed in 2022.
End-point assessments	The final stage of an apprenticeship. It is an impartial assessment of whether your apprentice has developed the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard.
Film and TV production	The design, planning and filming of television shows or films.
HR	Human resources – the department of a business that is charged with finding, recruiting, screening, and training job applicants, as well as administering any employer benefits.
IfATE	The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education - an employer led organisation that supports technical education and apprenticeships in the UK. This includes managing apprenticeship standards. It is funded by the Department for Education.
Level	Learning levels reflect the educational skills of a particular qualification. Level 2 is equivalent to GCSE qualifications, Level 3 is equivalent to A Level or T Level qualifications, Level 4 is equivalent to Higher National Certificates; Level 5 is equivalent to Higher National Diplomas, Level 6 is equivalent to a Bachelors degree and Level 7 is equivalent to a Masters degree.
LFS	The Labour Force Survey – a survey of the employment circumstances of the UK population. It is the largest household survey in the UK and provides the official measures of employment and unemployment. The sample is made up of approximately 40,000 responding UK households and 100,000 individuals per quarter.
Large business	Employers with over 250 employers or with a turnover of over €50 million.
SMEs	Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises – Enterprises with no more than 500 employees.
Micro-business	Businesses having fewer than ten employees.
ONS	Office of National Statistics – national body that collects, analyses and disseminates statistics about the UK's economy, society and population.
Post-production	Post-production is the final stage in film and programme-making where footage is cut, music, sound and commentary are mixed and visual effects are added.
Small business	Businesses with between 10 and 49 employees and an annual turnover or balance sheet of under €10 million.

Term	Description
VFX	Visual Effects - Combining computer-generated (CG) sequences with live-action footage to create scenes that cannot be filmed in real life.

Executive summary

This is the final report for a research study examining the take up of apprenticeships in five sectors of the screen industries (film, television, VFX, post-production and animation) and the enablers and barriers that affect employers providing apprenticeship placements. The research was commissioned alongside the recent ScreenSkills apprenticeship pilots and its evaluation to identify how industry barriers to taking on apprentices could be overcome. It drew on semi-structured interviews with 20 employers and four stakeholders, alongside analysis of national data from the 2021 Census, Department for Education statistical first releases, data from the Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education (IfATE), and the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Key findings

The take-up of apprenticeships

- There are a relatively high number of young people studying screen training courses in schools, further education and HE. British Film Institute (BFI) data[1] shows that over 20,000 individuals were studying screen-related higher education programmes and over 75,000 young people were studying the subject in school or college in 2019. However, despite this, the screen industries have experienced challenges in recruiting new entrants with the right mix of skills. ScreenSkills' on-going industry skills assessment reports commonly identify that over a third of sector employers experience skills gaps among the existing workforce and/or recruitment challenges.
- Apprenticeships are a potential solution to addressing these skills gaps, as during their learning apprentices develop a mix of technical and practical 'on-the-job' skills. However, the take up of apprenticeships in the screen industries is relatively low. In the 2021/22 academic year, there were 1,377 apprenticeships[2] provided in the screen industries. This equates to one apprentice for every 66 workers, based on BFI sector estimates[3]. This is lower than construction (one apprentice for every 45 workers) and ICT (one apprentice for every 38 workers). These sectors have a similarly high proportion of self-employed workers to the screen industries, although they differ from the screen industries in other ways.

Employer perceptions of apprenticeships

- One reason for this was varied levels of awareness of apprenticeships among employers. Some employers, and particularly large employers, had a very good understanding of apprenticeships and what they entail. However, there were also some, mainly those that had not taken on apprenticeships, that understood some of the broad characteristics of apprenticeships but lacked detailed understanding of what they entailed. This was generally attributed to apprenticeships not being well-established in the sector.
- Apprenticeships were understood by employers to bring benefits to the industries. Most employers, whether they had taken on apprentices or not, acknowledged that they can increase workforce diversity and inclusion by creating new entrant routes that were more

[1] BFI (2019) Film Education and Industry Employment. Available at: www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-film-education-and-industry-employment-2019-11-05.pdf

[2] DfE (2023) Apprenticeships and traineeships (ILR). Available at: Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

[3] BFI (2019) Film Education and Industry Employment.

accessible to young people from a range of backgrounds, while also increasing local recruitment so employers could 'give something back' to their local community. Some also noted that apprenticeships enable new entrants to be more work ready and to increase the pipeline of new entrants.

- However, there was a strong view among interviewees that apprenticeships may be less effective for the industries than other work-based learning routes. A key reason for this was the perceived high level of bureaucracy involved in apprenticeships. Some employers also reported that the off-the-job training apprenticeships received was often less effective than the in-house training they provide to junior staff and new entrants.
- There were also varied views from employers on the quality of the screen industries apprenticeship standards. This centred around the broadness of the learning objectives set out in the standards. For some, this was appropriate – they felt it was important that apprentices developed a wide range of skills and skills that were applicable across the sectors. However, others felt that it was difficult to cover all the requirements.

Structural barriers affecting apprenticeship take-up

- The high proportion of micro-employers in the screen industries has also likely had a negative effect on the take-up of apprenticeships. Some employers reported that a key barrier to taking on apprentices was a lack of staff to provide supervision. Furthermore, a few employers did not feel that they had sufficient HR systems to provide the necessary level of support for apprentices.
- The high proportion of short-term contracts in the film and TV sub-sectors was a key reported barrier to employers taking on apprenticeships. As most did not last the minimum length of an apprenticeship (12 months) they felt they could not commit to providing apprentices with fixed job roles for the entire duration of their apprenticeship. In addition, they often had gaps in between projects, which made it difficult to provide continuous work for an apprentice. This was, however, less of an issue for VFX and post-production employers.
- Some of the employers that were interviewed, particularly those from film and TV production, reported that the project-based nature of sector work requires staff to be flexible with their time. As a result, the limit of apprentices working only 40 hours per week was also a commonly reported barrier for taking on apprentices.
- Accessing the apprenticeship levy did not play a major role in employers' decision to take on apprentices. This is because the employers felt they still have to make a substantial financial contribution to cover salary and HR and administrative costs.

The apprenticeship provider base

- The number of providers delivering most screen-related standards is relatively small. While there is a high number of providers (98) offering the most general Level 3 standard Content Creator apprenticeship (formerly the Junior Content Producer apprenticeship), there are only 32 providers offering any of the other 21 sector-specific screen industries apprenticeship standards in England, with each apprenticeship standard being offered by no more than eight providers. Some standards are not currently delivered by any providers.
- The areas covered by screen industries apprenticeship providers are skewed towards London and the South East, which perhaps reflects the industry spread of employers. There are 22 providers delivering apprenticeships in this area. Other regions of England have fewer than 12 providers.

- The apprenticeship provider base is fairly varied in terms of provider type. Of the 32 apprenticeship providers, 14 are independent training providers, while 11 are FE colleges and seven are higher education institutions. There are a higher proportion of FE colleges and HEIs offering screen-related apprenticeships than the national average.
- Some of the employers that had taken on apprentices reported concerns about the quality of support they received from their training provider. While they were not expected to have detailed technical knowledge, it was expected that they should have some basic knowledge about the different job roles in the sector and what they entail. Some also reported specific issues, such as: a lack of support for engaging individuals with learning difficulties or disabilities; a limited selection of off-the-job training options available for apprentices; poor communication; and, in one particular case, poor Ofsted grades.

Conclusions and recommendations

While there are clearly benefits that apprenticeships can bring the screen industries, there are a range of both structural and provision-level barriers that are inhibiting their take up. The study identified the following recommendations to help address them:

For ScreenSkills and the sector:

1. ScreenSkills and partners to conduct further research on options for incorporating in-house training within the off-the-job training requirement for apprenticeships.
2. ScreenSkills to work with employers to develop a ‘best practice’ guide to deliver apprenticeships.
3. ScreenSkills and large sector employers to encourage large private providers, HEIs and colleges in their local area to offer screen industries apprenticeships and support them to do so to a high level of quality.
4. ScreenSkills to continue its work to raise awareness and promote the benefits of apprenticeships to employers.

For the DfE and IfATE

5. The DfE and IfATE to explore flexibilities in allowing apprenticeship levy funding to be used for other related work-based learning routes that incorporate on-the-job training.
6. The DfE and IfATE to provide additional flexibilities to the apprenticeship requirements by removing the requirement for it to lead to a specific job.
7. The DfE to allow Levy funding to be used to cover the employer costs for providing apprenticeships.

1 Introduction

This is the final report for a research study examining apprenticeships in five sectors of the screen industries (film, television, VFX, post-production and animation). It examines the take up of apprenticeships and the enablers and barriers that affect employers providing apprenticeship placements.

1.1 Background and context

The screen industries are a diverse sector, encompassing both technical, technology, engineering and mathematics-related occupations as well as creative design and performing art roles. It is commonly broken down into six areas, which are:

- Film
- Television (including high-end TV, children's TV, unscripted TV)
- Visual Effects (VFX)
- Post-production
- Animation; and
- Games

The sector is dominated by micro and small organisations but also includes a range of large employers such as broadcasters, studios and streamers like the BBC, Warner Bros. Discovery, Netflix and Amazon as well as a growing number of large independent TV production companies.

There are a relatively high number of young people studying screen industries training courses in schools, further education (FE) and higher education (HE). Data from the BFI show that over 20,000 individuals were studying screen-related higher education programmes and over 75,000 young people were studying the subject in school or college in 2019[4].

However, despite this, the screen industries have experienced challenges in recruiting new entrants with the right mix of skills. ScreenSkills' on-going industry skills assessment reports commonly identify that over a third of sector employers experience skills gaps among the existing workforce and/or recruitment challenges.

Apprenticeships are a potential route for addressing these recruitment challenges. However, screen industries employers' take-up of apprenticeships has historically been low.

To address low apprenticeship take-up, ScreenSkills ran two apprenticeship pilots between 2020 and 2023 through funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Education. The pilots aimed to test *'whether a limited agency-based apprenticeship model was effective for the project-based nature common in the film and TV production sector'.*

The evaluation of the pilots noted how the apprenticeships had enabled individuals from diverse backgrounds to gain employment in the film and TV sector. However, it found the high costs of the apprenticeship agency model, particularly for organising continuous suitable placements, made the model unsustainable. It also found that the perceived lack of relevance and quality of some apprenticeship standards means they were perceived by the industry to provide poor value for money in comparison to other training entry routes.

[4] BFI (2019) film education and industry employment

1.2 Study aims and objectives

This research aims to provide insights into the engagement, understanding, experience and value of apprenticeships among screen industries employers, in order to identify what are the barriers and challenges faced by sector employers in taking on apprentices. This includes examining:

- Attitudes and perceptions in the screen industries towards apprenticeships, and how they are felt to compare to other entry routes.
- What employers see as barriers to establishing apprenticeships and how they can be overcome. This may include structural employment practices in the sector and attitudes towards training and development.
- The quality and relevance of the current apprenticeship standards for the sector, including the extent to which existing standards are felt to reflect the skills needs of the sector.
- What interventions or support could increase apprenticeships take up in the sector.

The research covered five sectors of the screen industries (film, television, VFX, post-production and animation). It did not cover games as there are only two games standards with very little apprenticeship uptake in that sector.

1.3 Research undertaken

1.3.1 Qualitative research

The research draws on qualitative interviews with employers and stakeholders. In total, we interviewed 20 employers and 4 stakeholders. The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted around 45 minutes.

Table 1.1 shows how the 20 employer interviews are split by sub-sector, size, region and prior experience of apprenticeships. It shows:

- The interviews were with a mix of employers that had taken on apprentices (12) and those that had not (8).
- We interviewed at least four employers from each of the five screen sectors within the scope of this research – film (4 interviews), TV (8 interviews), VFX (4 interviews), post-production (5 interviews) and animation (6 interviews). Some employers fit into multiple sub-sector categories, which is why the breakdown of figures in the table adds up to more than 20[5].
- A high proportion of the interviews were with medium/large employers (11 of 20).
- We interviewed at least one employer from seven of the nine English regions (the exceptions being Yorkshire and Humber and the East Midlands). This included nine from London, three from the North West, three from the South West, two from the East of England and one each from the North East, South East and West Midlands. The high number of interviews undertaken with

[5] Three employers worked in both film and television, two worked in both VFX and animation, and one worked in both post-production and animation.

employers in London reflects that it has a larger share of the screen industries workforce.

Table 1.1 Number of employer interviews conducted

	Have not taken apprentices	Have taken apprentices	TOTAL COMPLETED
	8	**12**	**20**
Sub-sector			
TV	2	6	**8**
Film	1	3	**4**
Post-production	2	2	**4**
VFX	1	3	**4**
Animation	4	2	**6**
Size			
Micro	2		**2**
Small	4	2	**6**
Medium/large	2	9	**11**
Region			
East of England	1	1	**2**
London		9	**9**
North West	2	1	**3**
North East	1		**1**
South East		1	**1**
South West	3		**3**
West Midlands	1		**1**
Yorkshire and Humber			**0**
East of England			**0**

The employer interviews were supplemented by interviews with sector stakeholders and training providers that could provide more general views on employer interest and engagement in apprenticeships. We specifically interviewed:

- A small independent training provider for film/TV
- A university training provider for animation
- An industry association body for post-production, VFX and animation
- The Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

These interviews were similarly conducted by telephone and lasted for between 30 and 45 minutes.

1.3.2 Quantitative data analysis

The qualitative research was complemented by analysis of skills and labour market data and research to explore sector demographics and the volume and characteristics of apprentices in the screen industries. The key data sources used were:

- **Census data (2021)**. This provides information on the demographics of employees in the creative, arts and entertainment activities industries. This

includes data on all industries under this broad umbrella. However, it is representative of the screen industries. The low number of responses to the LFS survey also meant it was not possible to conduct sub-analysis by screen industries.

- **Department for Education statistical first release data on apprenticeships.** This includes data on starts, completions and apprentice characteristics, by sector subject area, standard and region.
- **IfATE** data in June 2023 on apprenticeship providers and apprenticeship standards. This includes data on the number and name of providers that offer particular screen industries apprenticeships, both in England and by region.
- **BFI data on the characteristics of the TV and film sectors** that was published in its 2019 Film Education and Industry Employment report[6]. This contains information on the size and composition of the film workforce.

For some datasets, most notably from the DfE and IfATE, it was not always possible to present data specifically for the screen industries and consequently we had to use data for the sector subject area that the screen industries sit within (arts, media and publishing). Additionally, these data sources commonly round the number of apprenticeships to the nearest five learners and consequently are not exact.

The published data on apprenticeships by the DfE rounds the number of apprentices into the nearest five. Additionally, standards with less than five apprentices are rounded to zero so the data was not disclosive. Consequently, the numbers provided in this report will not be exact. The data for 2022/23 is also only available up to March 2023 and therefore does not cover all of the apprenticeship year.

The number of responses from the screen industry for the Annual Business Survey that took on apprentices was very low, and consequently it was not possible to provide robust analysis of this group of employers.

Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data on the number of apprenticeships provided by screen industries employers was requested from the Education and Skills Funding Agency Data Service. However, it was not possible to access this data as the data was deemed to potentially breach employer confidentiality and could potentially be misleading as the SIC codes entered by employers registering with the DfE are not always accurate.

1.4 Structure of this report

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents employer and stakeholder perceptions of apprenticeships, and the current take-up of apprenticeships;
- Chapter 3 describes the structural barriers reported by screen industries employers in inhibiting their ability to offer apprenticeships;
- Chapter 4 examines the delivery of apprenticeships; and
- Chapter 5 presents the conclusions and recommendations from the study.

[6] Available at: www2.bfi.org.uk/sites/bfi.org.uk/files/downloads/bfi-film-education-and-industry-employment-2019-11-05.pdf

2 State of play in screen apprenticeships

This chapter presents the current level of apprenticeship take-up in the screen industry and how this varies by particular apprenticeship standards. It then presents employer perceptions of apprenticeships and what they view as their strengths and weaknesses.

2.1 Take up of apprenticeships

2.1.1 Overall take-up and trends in apprenticeship take up

In the 2021/22 academic year there were 1,377 apprenticeship starts in the screen industries.[7] When compared to the size of the workforce, in the screen industries there is one apprentice for every 66 workers. This is lower than construction (one apprentice for every 46 workers) and ICT (one apprentice for every 45 workers). Both these sectors have a similarly high proportion of self-employed workers to the screen industries, although they differ from the screen industries in other ways. However, the ratio of apprentices in the screen industries is higher than the wider Arts, Media and Publishing sector (one apprentice for every 210 workers) in which the screen industries sit.

Table 2.1 Apprenticeship take-up by subject area[8]

Industry sector	No of app starts	Size of workforce	Ratio of apprentices to size of workforce
Screen Industries	1,377	91,000	1 in 66
Arts, Media and Publishing (the sector subject in which the screen industries sit)	1,911	402,000	1 in 210
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	14,450	556,000	1 in 38
Business, Administration and Law	213,509	4,167,000	1 in 20
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	47,284	2,152,000	1 in 46
Education and Training	12,657	3,333,000	1 in 263
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	146,784	2,518,000	1 in 17
Health, Public Services and Care	180,074	4,508,000	1 in 25
Information and Communication Technology	38,347	1,734,000	1 in 45
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	88,064	3,962,000	1 in 45

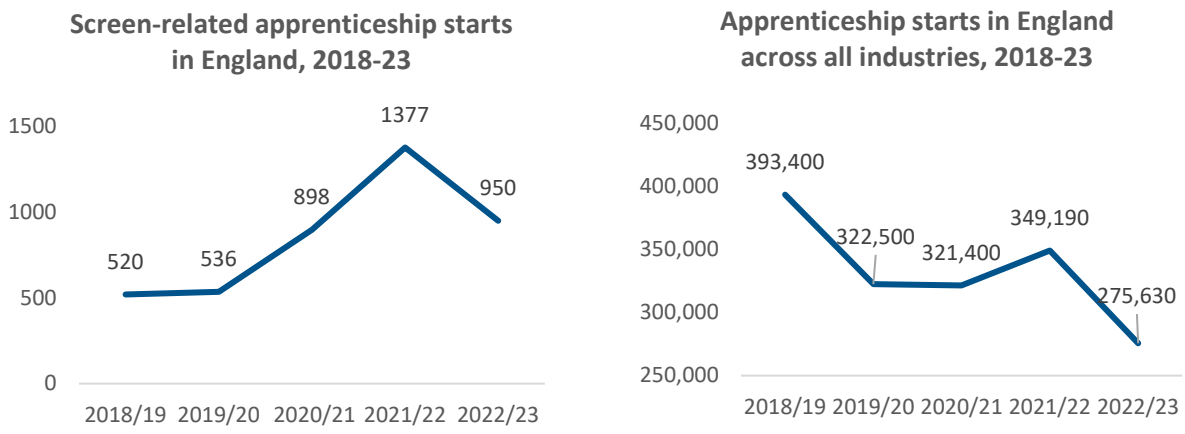
Source: DfE (2023) Apprenticeships and traineeships (ILR).

There has, however, been recent growth in the number of screen industries apprenticeship starts since 2018/19. It has nearly tripled from 520 in 2018/19 to 1,377 in 2021/22 (the last year when full-year data is available). This contrasts with a fall in the overall number of apprenticeship starts in all industries over the same period from 393,400 to 349,190.

[7] This figure includes the more general Level 3 standard Content Creator apprenticeship, accounting for 67% of screen-related apprenticeships. This also includes journalist apprenticeship standards, accounting for 10% of screen-related apprenticeships.

[8] It was not possible to group all sector subject areas to the Standard Industry Classifications used to group employment.

Figure 2.1 Apprenticeship starts in England for the screen industries and all sectors, 2018-23



Source: ScreenSkills Monitoring Data and Department for Education Statistical First Release data (accessed June 2023)

2.1.2 Characteristics of screen industries apprenticeship standards

There are 22 sector-specific apprenticeship standards in the screen industries which cover a range of role and occupations, as well as four apprenticeship standards that are accessible to adapt for screen industries employers (assistant accountant, costume performance technician, creative venue technician and hair, wigs, make-up and prosthetics technician). Of those apprenticeship standards, 10 are at Level Three, eight are at Level Four, four are at Level Five, one at Level Six and three are at Level Seven.[9]

There are also a range of pan-sector apprenticeship standards that can be accessed by screen industries employers for relevant generic roles in their companies, including those related to business, administration and law (95 standards) and in ICT (38 standards).

A relatively high proportion of screen industries apprenticeship standards are at Level Five and above (31%), with the remainder at Level Three and Level Four. This may restrict the number of apprenticeship starts in the sector, as most apprenticeship starts (92% in 2021/22) across all sectors are on standards at Level Three.

2.1.3 Demand and interest for particular apprenticeship standards

There is considerable variation in the take up of specific screen industries apprenticeship standards. Some standards have fewer than 10 enrolments per year since the 2017/18 academic year[10], for example, Assistant Recording Technician,

[9] Level 2 is equivalent to GCSE qualifications, Level 3 is equivalent to A Level or T Level qualifications, Level 4 and equivalent to Higher National Certificates; Level 5 is equivalent to Higher National Diplomas, Level 6 is equivalent to a Bachelors degree and Level 7 is equivalent to a Masters degree. Further information is available at: https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels

[10] When there are less than five individuals on an apprenticeship standard the DfE data rounds this to zero so the data is not disclosive. Therefore it is not possible to identify the apprenticeship standards that have zero enrolments and those that have less than five enrolments.

Broadcast and Media Systems Engineer, Post-Production Engineer, Props Technician and Storyboard Artist. However, apprenticeships for Content Creator are relatively high, with 830 starts in 2021/22.

Demand for apprenticeships in the screen industries tends to be for lower level (L3) standards. For 2021/22, despite the relatively low proportion of Level Three standards compared with other sectors, the vast majority of screen-related apprenticeships starts were Level Three (92%), primarily due to the high number of starts for the content creator and production assistant standards. Level Four represented 3%; Level Five represented 4%; Level Six represented 1%; and Level Seven represented 1% of all apprenticeship starts.

Table 2.2 Apprenticeship starts by screen industries apprenticeship standards

Level		17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/3[11]
3	Broadcast and Media Systems Technical Operator			10	low	low	low
3	Camera Prep Technician				no data	10	no data
3	Junior Journalist[12]	90	70	110	50	60	low
3	Photographic Assistant		no data	10	20	20	20
3	Production Assistant (Screen and Audio)	50	60	50	30	80	120
3	Props technician			no data	no data	no data	no data
4	Assistant Recording Technician				no data	low	low
4	Assistant Technical Director (Visual Effects)[13]	low	10	low	low	no data	
4	Junior 2D Artist (Visual Effects)[14]	10	10	10	low	10	low
4	Junior Animator				no data	10	no data
4	Junior Vfx Artist (Generalist)				no data	10	low
4	Media Production Co-Ordinator				low	40	60
4	Post Production Technical Operator		no data	10	10	10	20
4	Content Creator	no data	300	440	1270	830	590
5	Broadcast and Media Systems Technician			no data	10	low	low

[11] Figures for 2022/23 are provisional and cover the first three quarters (Aug 2022 to Apr 2023). All other years are final, full-year figures.

[12] This standard was replaced by the Level 5 Journalist standard in December 2021

[13] This standard was merged with the Junior 2D Artist and Junior VFX Artist in 2022-23

[14] This standard was merged with Assistant Tech Director and Junior VFX standards in 2022-23

Level		17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/3[11]
5	Storyboard Artist			no data	no data	no data	no data
5	Post-Production Engineer				no data	no data	no data
5	Journalist					50	70
6	Broadcast and Media Systems Engineer (Integrated Degree)		no data	no data	no data	no data	no data
7	Creative Industries Production Manager			no data	low	10	10
7	Outside Broadcasting Engineer (Integrated Degree)	no data	low	10	low	no data	low
7	Senior Journalist				10	20	50

*Source: DfE Apprenticeship enrolment data - https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships/2020-21. *These apprenticeships have been merged into one combined standard for 2022/23.*

2.1.4 Characteristics of learners on screen industries apprenticeships

The learners that participate in screen industries apprenticeships are reasonably diverse and better represent the population than the screen industries in terms of gender and disability.

In each year from 2016/17 to 2021/22, over 15% of apprenticeships were from minority ethnic groups. This is in line with the UK population, where 18% of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds. It is just above the proportion of ethnic minority workers in the motion picture, video and television production, sound recording and music publishing activities and programming and broadcasting industries in the 2021 Census (14%), which are the broader industries where the screen industries sit.[15]

The number of learners on apprenticeships with disabilities is also relatively high. For each year except one, at least 13% of the apprenticeship learners had a known learning difficulty or disability.[16] This is similar to the situation in England and Wales, where 16.7% of the population have a known disability. It is also significantly higher than the average for the broader industries where the screen industries sit at 8%.

There is a relatively even gender split among screen industries apprentices. In most years since 2016/17 over half of apprentices were female. This was significantly higher than the average for the broader industries where the screen industries sit at 39%.

[15] Industry averages have been calculated from the weighted data contained in the 2021 Census. Data refers to SIC codes 59 (Motion picture, video and television production, sound recording and music publishing activities) and 60 (Programming and broadcasting activities).

[16] The Government Statistical Service (GSS) harmonised standard definition of disability covers people who people who assessed their day-to-day activities as limited by long-term physical or mental health conditions or illnesses are considered disabled. This definition of a disabled person meets the harmonised standard for measuring disability and is in line with the Equality Act (2010).

> *"This drive has definitely worked. It has been brilliant. So, [in the cohort of around 10 apprentices] we had 50/50 male female, we had 25% BAME and we had one career changer who was an older individual in their 40s. And we had one with a disability as well. So, from that perspective, it's really starting to work for us".*
>
> Large VFX company

The Department for Education statistical first release data on apprentice characteristics does not contain data on other protected characteristics, such as sexual orientation, religion and marriage status.

2.2 Sector awareness of apprenticeships

The study found varied levels of awareness of apprenticeships among employers. Some employers, and particularly large employers, had a very good understanding of apprenticeships and what they entail. However, there were also some, mainly those that had not taken on apprenticeships, that understood some of the broad characteristics of apprenticeships but lacked detailed understanding of what they entailed.

Some sector stakeholders noted that the varied awareness of apprenticeships was due to the programmes not being well-established in the sector, unlike industries such as engineering and construction. As a result, few individuals working in the industry have seen the benefits of apprenticeships and how they work in practice. In addition, unlike other sectors, there are few managers that have come through the apprenticeship route that can promote the benefits of apprenticeships.

The lack of awareness and experience of apprenticeships also created problems for employers when they did take on apprentices. Some were not aware of the apprenticeship system's breakdown of roles and responsibilities between themselves and training providers, or the documentation they are required to collect. As a result, some experienced challenges in the outset in developing the systems required to deal with the provider engagement and documentation.

> *"The process to me wasn't super clear, after going through it all, I felt that there was so much paperwork which obviously I read through and dealt with, but the process is daunting to begin with (…) it's not that clear how you pay them, how they'll go do their education, how they'll learn on the job, who's going to teach them".*
>
> A small VFX employer

2.3 Employer perceptions of apprenticeships

2.3.1 Benefits and disadvantages of apprenticeships

Most employers cited some benefits to apprenticeships. This included;

- **Increasing workforce diversity and inclusion (D&I).** Most employers who had taken on apprentices said that a main reason for doing so was to widen their talent pool and *'reach people we had not yet reached'.* This was because the employers felt that their workforce was under-represented in terms of: individuals from ethnic minorities (reported by employers across all screen industries); individuals with learning disabilities and difficulties (particularly

highlighted by employers in TV and film); and women (particularly reported to be under-represented in VFX and post-production). Some employers highlighted, however, that the screen industries were not unique in their lack of diversity, as this was common across technical roles in the UK as a whole.

- **To 'give something back' to the areas in which they are based.** These employers believed that by using local apprenticeship providers they could give local young people an opportunity to gain employment in the sector, which may otherwise be limited because of high competition from graduates for entry level roles. Interviewees also felt that it provided an opportunity for employers to recruit from the local area. This will help the sector ensure its workforce is more representative of the different regions in the UK, rather than relying on people moving to an area to fill vacancies, which some employers reported leads to individuals moving away from London and the South East to other regions. As one employer stated: *"we just have to make it work. We have a kind of duty. Even if it doesn't add to the bottom line, it is worthwhile for us and for the industry".*
- **Supporting organisations' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies.** Some employers reported that employing apprentices and others via work-based learning was used as part of their CSR commitment to support their local community and disadvantaged groups. This in turn was felt to improve the reputation of the company which helped them recruit and retain industry talent. Employers that were part publicly funded felt it was also valuable for demonstrating the value the organisation brings to the public.
- **Filling skills shortage occupations** (occupations where employers struggle to recruit new entrants). Nearly all employers believed that apprenticeships could support this as it provided a new entry route to the sector to complement existing graduate recruitment. This view was consistent among both employers that took on apprentices and those that did not. One VFX CEO said they can "*help to establish a steady pipeline, to ensure that no one is rushed up the chain*". Another interviewee described how the industry "*is always after new talent*" and how the industry "*is young and always wanting to engage with more young people*". Another employer said that "*more people in [the industry] is good for the industry and therefore it's good for us… even if the [individual] leaves and joins a competitor*".
- **Addressing sector skills gaps** (where workers in the sector have inadequate skill types/levels). Some employers that took on younger employees and trained them on-the-job felt this helped alleviate some of the skills gaps they experience with new graduate entrants, primarily around soft skills such as communication, resilience and a lack of understanding of the commercial environment.

> *"All of our competitors are in the same boat as us […] visual effects degrees are not turning out the people that any of us need and we're all on the same page with that. We've all tried influencing higher education to little success. So, we're all very much in the opinion that we just need to do it ourselves. So, apprenticeships seem the obvious way to do that"*
>
> Large VFX Company, uses a lot of apprenticeships

To realise these benefits, the employers that took on apprentices most commonly took on early career apprenticeships at Level Three, targeting 18-24-year-olds. Most also did not have an expectation that new entrants would be 'industry ready' at

the start. They therefore intended to train the apprentices on the job and, consequently, were more interested in selecting individuals that were ambitious and had a positive attitude.

However, there was a strong view among interviewees that apprenticeships may be less effective for the sector than other work-based learning routes, which corroborates the findings from the 2021 ScreenSkills Assessment. A key reason for this was the perceived high level of bureaucracy involved in apprenticeships. Employers particularly felt there was substantial paperwork for ensuring that the prescribed learning content is met and appropriately tracked and recorded, and that any additional HR requirements are complied with.

Some employers in the animation, VFX and post-production sectors reported that the off-the-job training apprenticeships received was often less effective than the in-house training they provide to junior staff and new entrants. Most of the large employers we interviewed have these systems in place, which they felt were necessary to train staff on the specific software and methods that they employ in the organisation. However, the apprenticeship providers were not able to use their in-house training as part of apprentices' off-the-job training.

A few employers that had offered apprenticeships also reported that they still had more work to do to ensure they are accessed by young people from a wide range of class backgrounds. Furthermore, the characteristics data shows that apprentices in the screen industries are only slightly more representative of minority ethnic groups than the wider industries. Interviewees noted that while apprenticeships were accessible to a wider range of individuals than most traditional sector recruitment routes, particularly in terms of gender and disability, there was still a lack of understanding among young people about what the sector entails and the range of roles in the sector. This, coupled with a lack of positive role models, can have an effect in deterring some young people from under-represented groups, including those from minority ethnic groups, applying for screen industries apprenticeships. Addressing this requires more effective careers information, advice and guidance at schools and colleges to raise awareness of sector jobs and apprenticeship entry routes.

2.4 Perceived structure and relevance of existing standards

There were varied views from employers across all subsectors on the apprenticeship standards. This centred on the broadness of the learning objectives set out in the standards. For some, this was appropriate – they felt it was important that apprentices developed a wide range of skills that were applicable across the sector. However, others felt that it was difficult to cover all the requirements of the apprenticeships as some of the tasks in the standards were not conducted in their organisation.

The relative views on this issue seem to depend upon the size of the employer and the specificity of their work. For example, a small specialist animation company will use a limited set of equipment, software and techniques that are relevant to their business, and if the apprenticeship includes content outside of this scope, they struggle to provide the work experience necessary for the apprentice to gain competence in that area. These organisations are less likely to be involved in the development of standards due to capacity issues and the perception that their *'voices will not be heard'.* However, this means that their needs can be missed.

Some employers also suggested that the learning content for animation, VFX and post-production roles was out of date. This was not a criticism of the standards *per*

se, but they felt that the fast-paced nature of the sector meant that the skills required by industry change regularly. As a result, they felt the standards needed to be more flexible and adaptable to incorporate new industry practices.

> "*The industry changes so much based on new technologies, some jobs that we are doing now did not exist 5 or 10 years ago since there are constant changes in the ways that people are consuming content.*"
>
> A small animation employer

There were varied opinions amongst employers on the provision of classroom-based modules that focus on theory. Most recognised the need for apprenticeship standards to cover some theoretical topics, with one post-production employer reporting this contributes to a trainee picking up skills and knowledge quicker in the workplace. However, several employers that had not hosted apprentices were put off by what they perceived to be too much theoretical content in apprenticeship training and believed that more emphasis should be given to practical skills instead.

Employers across screen industries sectors were also concerned about the lack of emphasis on soft skills required by apprentices. They felt that important skills such as composing emails and interacting with clients were not sufficiently covered in the standards. However, they are key skills that apprentices needed to develop to progress in the sector.

> *"Many new starters have come to me say they can operate this bit of equipment. I say "fantastic", but what frustrates me is none of them have been taught about composition, about creative interpretation, about working collaboratively within a team. Most of all, they don't have the soft skills to work in the environment and culture in which you have to make this work in a commercial environment."*
>
> Small Animation Company, no apprentices

2.5 Accessing funding

While large employers acknowledged that taking on apprenticeships allowed them to utilise funding from the apprenticeship levy, for many this did not play a major role in their decision to take on apprentices. This is because while the levy covers the cost of training, the employers are still required to pay for the salary cost for the apprentice and therefore have to make a significant financial contribution. The ScreenSkills' Apprenticeship Pilots Summary Findings report estimated that 83% of the employment costs for apprenticeships needed to come from outside the levy.

Further, some employers felt there was a substantial cost to cover the administration and HR support required by apprentices. As presented earlier in this chapter, employers felt that there was a high administrative requirement in providing the necessary documentation for apprentices and to ensure they have the required HR support. This has a substantial resource implication on employers. This is especially relevant for smaller companies that have limited personnel or HR functions, or for projects with a high proportion of freelancers who will not have costed managing/coordinating apprentices into their budget. This has led several employers to suggest that a dedicated resource for mentoring or a dedicated apprenticeship coordinator role would ease this pressure and make apprentices a more attractive option.

Many employers that wish to take on apprentices have to balance the financial cost of taking on apprentices with its benefits in terms of supporting them to address skills shortages and gaps and widen the recruitment pool. Those that take on apprentices generally believe the benefits outweigh the costs. However, the costs can limit the number of apprentices they are capable of taking on, impacting the potential of scaling up apprenticeship programmes.

Some employers and providers also felt that the funding rules were not flexible to the working patterns of the sector, meaning that apprenticeships posed a financial risk to employers. This was particularly the case in film and TV production, where work is oftentimes project-based and not evenly spread throughout the year. As one provider said:

> *"They are applying apprenticeship funding rules in an environment where there isn't traditionally long-term employment like in other sectors. The funding rules seem to be designed for individuals in a permanent position working 35 hours a week, rather than the working styles of apprentices in the sector…There is a drive for the industry to use levy more flexibly, and this could result in a bigger uptake in apprenticeships".*
>
> Provider

Most employers welcomed the opportunity to test the agency-based apprenticeship approach to apprenticeships that was piloted by ScreenSkills. However, some struggled to persuade film and TV production companies to work with apprentices. In many cases, the costs of apprentices were higher than providing placements. This was because there were additional costs for employers on this scheme as they had to pick up the apprentice's wage payments to incentivise content makers to utilise the apprentices.

There were also some production companies that wanted to use the apprenticeship levy to fund their in-house training programmes for new starters. This would allow it to fund new entrants that are ineligible for the apprenticeship route as they already hold degree qualifications.

3 Sector barriers to taking on apprentices

This chapter explores the sector barriers that can inhibit the take-up of apprenticeships, including issues related to the size and structure of the sector, the nature of the contracts and work in the sector, and the sector's culture.

3.1 Employer size

The screen industries have a high proportion of SMEs. In total, 52% of the sector workforce were employed in micro businesses in 2019[17]. This is higher than the UK economy as a whole, where in 2022 only 32% of the UK workforce were employed in micro-businesses[18].

The high proportion of micro-employers in the screen industries has likely had a negative effect on the take-up of apprenticeships. Some employers reported that a key barrier to taking apprenticeships was a lack of staff to provide supervision. These employers reported that a high proportion of their staff were contractors or

[17] BFI (2019) film education and industry employment 2018

[18] House of Commons Library (2022) Business Statistics

worked off-site and therefore were unable to provide day-to-day contact with apprentices. This was exacerbated by increased home-working since the pandemic. Some smaller employers also reported having limited personnel or HR functions in order to support the recruitment of apprentices and in undertaking the administration. Furthermore, a couple of SME employers did not feel that they had sufficient HR systems to provide the necessary level of support for apprentices, such as performance review processes, pastoral support and complaints procedures.

However, some employers that did invest in changing HR systems to accommodate apprenticeships reported that it led to positive culture and governance changes, and so consequently rolled these changes out more widely across their organisation. One employer, for example, introduced new processes such as a buddy/mentor system in line with that seen on apprenticeships. Another had modelled elements of their workplace's code of conduct on their apprenticeship contract. Finally, an HR professional described how they had integrated an apprentice's 'anti-bullying' resources into the company's structures. Working with apprenticeships has also allowed a few organisations to identify and share best practice regarding HR processes. These changes have led to apprenticeships having wider benefits across their company.

"*One apprentice had autism that we were not told about. He had a bad time on the production floor as a result of us not having the right support in place. However, this experience helped us develop a support structure for neurodiverse employees, which is being rolled out across the company. Now, he is thriving in the industry. We know he will be brilliant. And hopefully this will help others going forward.*"

Large TV and Film production company, some apprentices

3.2 Nature of contracts in the screen industries

The screen industries have a high proportion of freelancers in the sector. LFS data shows that between 2020-2023 over a third of the workforce were freelancers. This included 37% of the TV and film production workforce and 46% of the post-production workforce.[19]

The high volume of freelancers was attributed by employers to the project-based nature of work in the sector, particularly in production. The small employers that we interviewed reported that they mostly delivered short-duration contracts lasting 3-6 months. Freelancers allowed them to scale their workforce depending on the number of projects they were delivering.

The high proportion of short-term contracts in the film and TV sub-sectors was a key reported barrier to employers taking on apprenticeships. As most did not last the minimum length of an apprenticeship (12 months) they felt they could not commit to providing apprentices with fixed job roles for the entire duration of their apprenticeship. In addition, they often had gaps in between projects, which made it difficult to provide continuous work for an apprentice.

The short-term nature of productions was also reported to be a barrier for large employers. Even when they produce programmes themselves, most have a short series run. Moving apprentices to different productions, which can differ

[19] DCMS (2023) Sectors Economic Estimates.

substantially, makes it difficult to ensure that apprentices are able to develop all the skills to pass the end-point assessment. As a result, some large employers that did use apprentices said they only placed them in programmes that take place throughout the year, such as soaps and news.

These issues are, however, more of a factor for some sectors of the screen industries rather than others. In sectors such as VFX and post-production the work was felt to be more consistent across the year. These sectors are more studio-based and have work planned for longer in advance.

3.3 Sector hours

Some of the employers that we interviewed, and particularly those from film and TV production, reported that the project-based nature of sector work requires staff to be flexible with their time. This is reflected in the LFS data, where 37% of all staff in the screen industries reported working overtime[20]. This is similar to the findings from the Film and TV Charity's 2022 *Looking Glass Survey* of screen industries employers which found that 33% of film and TV employees are currently working over 50 hours per week.[21]

As a result, the limit of apprentices working only 40 hours per week was also a commonly reported barrier for TV and film production employers taking on apprentices. Some employers felt this did not meet needs when there were intense periods of work. As a result, they did not feel that apprentices were a cost-efficient way to staff projects.

Similarly, the proportion of time that apprentices have to spend on off-the-job learning also was felt by employers to make it difficult for them to take on apprentices. This was an issue reported by employers across all screen industries. They felt this reduced the amount of time that the apprentices could undertake project work.

Delivering the off-the-job training via block release (consolidated training delivered over an intensive block of time rather than via weekly day release), such as before they started their placement, or at the end of a project, could alleviate this issue. However, some employers noted this is not always available and even if it was, as productions could rarely follow the expected timeline and that even with agreed teaching blocks, they could find themselves understaffed.

3.4 Travel and work arrangements

Some employers reported that the varied hours and locations of sector work made it difficult for them to commit to using apprenticeships. This was mostly an issue with TV and film production roles. These employers felt apprentices found it challenging to travel to locations as they often had to rely on public transport, which could be costly and made it difficult to arrive early when many of the productions began. These employers felt that the apprentice model did not meet the demands of industries that requires geographical mobility.

The need for mobility is an issue for all trainee programmes, and not just apprenticeships. However, it is more of an issue for apprentices as they commonly need to travel to undertake training at a training provider. Furthermore, VFX and

[20] Overtime is defined in the LFS survey as staff working over the core hours that they are contracted to work.

[21] Film and TV Charity, Looking Glass Survey (2022).

animator roles tend to require less geographical mobility and therefore this was seen as far less of a problem in these sectors.

3.5 Organisational culture

Interviewees often referred to the industries' culture as a potential barrier to taking on apprentices. At the heart of this was the historical lack of apprenticeships and a lack of knowledge around how apprenticeships work or could offer value for businesses across all subsectors. Several employers spoke of an 'old school' or 'traditional' culture within the industries as a limiting factor for taking on apprentices. This made it difficult to 'make the business case' for taking on apprentices, particularly when they provide less flexibility than other recruitment methods. As a result, some interviewees described how they had struggled to convince colleagues of the added value apprentices could bring, particularly in comparison to internships and graduate schemes.

A key challenge experienced by the sector is that senior leaders have little knowledge of apprenticeships, and most sector apprenticeship routes are relatively new. This means that, in contrast to other sectors, there are unlikely to be many senior leaders in organisations that have themselves entered the sector through apprenticeships and can be more supportive of the programme as a result.

Where employers have taken on apprenticeships at scale, a key supporting element has been having senior manager buy-in. When this is in place employers find that convincing operational staff to take on apprentices has been relatively straightforward. Some have even been issued with targets on the number of apprenticeship places that they need to create in their department.

4 Effectiveness of the apprenticeship provider base

This chapter examines the training providers that offer screen industries apprenticeships and employer perceptions of the quality of provision.

4.1 Size of the provider base

The number of providers delivering most screen-related standards is relatively small. While there is a high number of providers (98) offering the most general Level Three standard Content Creator apprenticeship, there are only 32 providers offering at least one of the other screen-related apprenticeships in England, and each apprenticeship standard is offered by no more than eight providers.

Some standards are not currently delivered by any providers, such as outside broadcast engineer, storyboard artist and VFX supervisor (see Figure 4.1 below). The widest range of providers for standards beyond Content Creator are for photographic assistant (seven) and senior journalist (six).

In addition, the range of screen industries apprenticeships offered by each provider is quite limited. Only four providers offered more than four standards (one provider offered seven; two providers offered six; and one provider offered five). Just under two thirds (63%) of providers offered just one apprenticeship standard.

Figure 4.1 Number of apprenticeship providers per standard (excluding the Content Creator apprenticeship)

Level	Standard	No. Providers
3	Broadcast and Media Systems Technical Operator	1
3	Camera Prep Technician	5
3	Junior Journalist	5
3	Photographic Assistant	7
3	Production Assistant (Screen and Audio)	7
3	Props technician	5
4	Assistant Recording Technician	2
4	Assistant Technical Director (Visual Effects	2
4	Junior 2D Artist (Visual Effects)	2
4	Junior Animator	0
4	Junior VFX Artist (Generalist)	5
4	Media Production Co-Ordinator	3
4	Post Production Technical Operator	2
5	Broadcast and Media Systems Technician	4
5	Post-production Engineer	1
5	Journalist	5
6	Broadcast and Media Systems Engineer (Integrated Degree)	2

Level	Standard	No. Providers
7	Creative Industries Production Manager	1
7	Outside Broadcasting Engineer (Integrated Degree)	0
7	Senior Journalist	6
7	Storyboard Artist	0

Source: Data derived from searching the IfATE 'find an apprentice' portal

The number of screen industries apprenticeship providers is skewed towards London and the South East, which perhaps reflects the industry spread of employers. There are 22 providers delivering apprenticeships in this area. Other regions in England have far fewer providers, with 12 in the West Midlands, 11 in the North East, 10 in the South West and eight in the East Midlands, the North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, and East Anglia.

A full list of providers offering screen industries apprenticeships can be found in Annex 1.

Employers that had taken on apprentices similarly felt there were limited options for the providers that they could choose. They attributed this to the small number of apprentices in the sector making it not economically viable for some providers to invest in resources and assessors to support a small group of learners.

Most employers stated that the limited size of the provider base presented challenges. Those that had had a negative experience with an apprenticeship provider felt they had little opportunity to select an alternative provider. Some also felt that the limited competition also meant that providers had little incentive to improve standards.

4.2 Characteristics of apprenticeship providers

The apprenticeship provider base is fairly varied in terms of provider type. Of the 32 apprenticeship providers, 14 are independent training providers (44%), while 11 are FE colleges (34%) and seven are higher education institutions (HEIs) (22%).

There are a higher proportion of FE colleges and HEIs offering screen-related apprenticeships than the national average of 21% and 15% respectively. This may indicate the potential for increasing the number of independent training providers offering screen-related apprenticeships who could be more responsive given their lower overheads. This may reflect the higher proportion of screen-related degree-level apprenticeship standards above level 5.

Provider Type	Number Providing Screen-related Apprenticeships	Proportion Providing Screen-related Apprenticeships	Proportion providing any Apprenticeship
HEI	7	22%	15%
FE	11	34%	21%
Independent	14	44%	64%

The volume of apprentices that individual providers take on is also quite small. In 2021/22, when 24 providers offered screen-related apprenticeships, 16 providers supported less than five apprenticeships for each of the standards they delivered. The majority of these providers were independent. Even those that delivered more

than five apprenticeship standards had no more than 24 learners on a particular apprenticeship standard. The low number of apprenticeships may be discouraging other providers in delivering screen industries apprenticeships.

In the interviews, some employers said they would welcome more independent training providers delivering screen sector apprenticeships, as they felt they were also more flexible and adaptive to their needs. Furthermore, these providers often have lower heads than HEIs and colleges and can viably take on smaller cohorts. However, some employers also valued colleges and HEIs providing screen industries apprenticeships as they felt that these organisations could better provide apprentices access with specialist equipment when they were conducting off-the-job learning.

4.3 Quality of the provider base

Some of the employers that had taken on apprentices reported concerns about the quality of support they received from their training provider, which were mostly FE colleges. In some cases, this was discouraging them from providing apprenticeships in future. The key issues they reported were:

- **A limited selection of off-the-job training options available for apprentices.** Most employers reported areas of off-the-job training that they felt would be valuable to apprentices but which the training provider was unable to provide. This included courses on particular software and methods.
- **Poor communication.** A few employers also reported that there was little guidance on how to support apprentices, and information about the criteria for end-point assessments being provided late.
- **Poor overall quality of provision.** A significant provider providing screen-related apprenticeships was deemed to be inadequate for the provision of apprenticeships in a recent Ofsted inspection. As a result, they have had their funding contracts terminated, resulting in them no longer offering apprenticeships. Other employers also reported poor quality provision delivered by the provider.

Some employers that had not taken on apprentices also struggled to find good quality providers. Some had been approached by training providers to deliver apprenticeships and had been disappointed by their lack of technical and sector knowledge. While they acknowledged that it would be unrealistic for providers to have in-depth sector knowledge given the dynamic nature of the sector, most felt they needed basic sector knowledge to ensure that new apprentices understand the role and what is expected of them, and to advise the employer on what activities they need to provide to meet the apprenticeship requirements.

Even when some employers have not engaged providers, the research found that some employers have a general mistrust of the expertise of publicly-funded training providers. Several VFX and animation employers in particular felt that the training schemes that they had developed internally were able to provide better quality training that is more tailored to their environment than the training delivered within apprenticeships. One employer felt it was more effective to establish themselves as an apprenticeship training provider and deliver the training in-house rather than engage an external training provider.

Some employers did report more positive provider experiences, however, such as when providers had commissioned industry experts to provide apprenticeship

training on their behalf. This improved employer confidence in training and reduced the perceived risk of taking on an apprentice.

There was also a strong correlation between employer satisfaction with apprenticeships and the effectiveness of the recruitment methods for bringing them in. Employers were generally most positive about apprentices when they had been able to meet with prospective apprentices beforehand and able to inform them about the job and the sector. When the apprentices had been selected by the training provider some employers felt they were not always right for the role, although this should not occur as it is not recommended practice.

Provider interviewees agreed on the importance of employer trust in providers. One interviewee emphasised that the quality of the relationship between employer and provider is one of the most important factors for employers.

5 Conclusions

The research suggests that apprenticeships are currently not as good a fit for the screen industries as they are for other industries. This is due to structural factors of the sector, combined with limitations with the apprenticeship standards that are available and the responsiveness and quality of the provider base.

5.1 Structural barriers for apprenticeships in the screen industries

In terms of structural issues, the key challenge is the nature of work in the screen industries. For film and TV production, short project-based assignments that most employers deliver make it difficult for employers to provide continuous work for apprenticeships during the minimum 12-month duration of an apprenticeship. Different production projects may also require a variety of skills and activities, which make it difficult for employers to commit to covering all the skills required for the end-point assessments. Gaps between projects can also result in low periods where apprentices are not being meaningfully utilised. This is consistent for both large and small employers.

Another key barrier is the high number of micro-businesses in the sector and the liberal use of freelancers. As such, many employers feel they do not have sufficient core staff to both provide supervision to the apprentice and to have the appropriate HR systems in place to manage the apprenticeship documentation. There are fewer structural barriers for employers in the animation and post-production industries to take on apprentices. However, these sectors also widely use freelancers, although to a lesser degree that film and TV production.

There are also concerns among employers that the nature of the sector requires many junior staff needing to travel and to work longer hours on weeks when there are production deadlines. Employers have limited opportunity to do this with apprenticeships, with their time limited to 40 hours per week and also needing to incorporate time for off-the-job learning. As a result, some employers regard apprentices as poor value, as they cannot be utilised for the same amount of time as trainees recruited through other means.

These factors make it difficult for employers in TV and film to take on apprenticeships without major adaptions to how they work and allocating substantial resource allocated to manage apprentice time. There is also limited incentive for employers to invest in this as due to high interest in the sector many can fill junior roles through graduate recruitment and traineeships which were felt to be far less onerous and provide more flexibility.

5.2 Limitations with apprenticeships

The quality of apprenticeship standards and their structure was perceived to be varied. Some employers value that they are broad, noting that it is difficult to incorporate specific technical skills in industries that are rapidly changing. However, others feel the content is too broad to be relevant to particular employers and the standards quickly become out of date due to it taking a minimum of 1-2 years to develop apprenticeship standards and then a lengthy consultation and approval process. They require substantial further support to be provided by employers to train apprentices in the software and techniques that they use, but this training cannot always be captured in the apprenticeship standard as it does not link to the

end-point assessments. In the animation and post-production sectors, in particular, the generic nature of the apprenticeship training was felt to be a barrier to take-up as it did not cover the specific software and processes that the employer uses.

There were also mixed views on the value of the off-the-job training, as this is often quite generic in nature and takes valuable time away from apprentices undertaking job-specific tasks. Many employers felt the current model of day release is not appropriate for the project-based nature of sector work, and the availability of block release for training is not widely available and difficult to arrange as the deadlines for production commonly slip.

These factors are exacerbated by only a small pool of providers delivering apprenticeship standards. Indeed, outside of London and the South East, there are only a few apprenticeship providers and they are mainly national providers that deliver training in employer premises. This means that employers have limited choice, and the small number of apprenticeship providers results in a lack of competition which does not incentivise providers to improve standards.

A relatively high proportion of employers were also unhappy about the quality of the apprenticeship provision. Some noted a lack of understanding of the sector among apprenticeship providers, as well as limited flexibility, and limited control over the selection of apprenticeships. In a sector where apprenticeships are not well-established, these initial negative experiences of apprenticeships can discourage senior leaders from continuing to invest in further apprentices.

5.3 Existing good practice that can be built on

Despite these issues, most employers recognise the value in broadening recruitment routes into the sector to increase sector diversity, support corporate social responsibility and to ‘give something back’ to their local area. Their main concern is that apprenticeships in their current form are not always efficient.

Additional funding and support to cover extra employer costs in taking on apprentices can therefore make apprenticeships more worthwhile to employers. However, this also needs to be coupled with further support from providers to enable apprenticeships to be more tailored to the needs of the sector. This could, for example, include more flexible arrangements for training to sit outside busy periods. An agency model can also potentially be effective as it allows apprentices to work across multiple employers, but the experiences from the ScreenSkills Apprenticeship pilots have shown that this model also creates challenges.

The in-house training that employers provide is also a strength of the sector. This means it is important for this to count towards the off-the-job learning on apprenticeship standards. It allows the apprenticeship training to be specific to particular job roles in specific employers and also enables employers to feel they have control over the training that apprentices take.

There is also scope for the levy funding to support a more diverse range of training programmes that support new entrants to the screen industries. It could potentially play a role in ensuring more structured training for new entrants, which would be a move away from the more informal recruitment that currently takes place.

5.4 Recommendations

The study identified the following recommendations to improve the take-up of apprenticeships within the sector.

For ScreenSkills and the sector:

1. **ScreenSkills and partners to conduct further research on options for incorporating in-house training within the off-the-job training requirement for apprenticeships**. Doing this would provide employers with more flexibility on how the training is delivered, and reduce the issues experienced by employers when they have to release staff to attend training at a provider. Most employers that delivered in-house training felt this was very effective in supporting new staff in their role, which reflects the requirements of the off-the-job apprenticeship training.
2. **ScreenSkills to work with employers to develop a 'best practice' guide to deliver apprenticeships.** This will help improve the quality of apprenticeships by ensuring providers understand what employers expect in terms of apprenticeships and for apprenticeship coordinators/managers in employers to understand what they should do to deliver. This should include specifying good practice approaches to recruitment, HR support to be provided to apprentices, organisation and delivery of off-the-job training. It should use employer good practice examples as well as learnings from the ScreenSkills Apprenticeship Pilots.
3. **ScreenSkills and large sector employers to encourage large private providers, HEIs and colleges in their local area to offer screen industries apprenticeships and support them to do so.** This will give employers more choice to identify apprenticeship providers that best meet their needs. This should focus on providers that deliver a high volume of screen skills programmes. Initiatives that could encourage providers to offer apprenticeships include: providing/loaning of specialist equipment and software that apprentices can use; providing assurances of the potential numbers that they could put forward for apprenticeships; and developing educator capacity through providing them with opportunities to observe industry practice. This should initially focus on VFX and post-production roles where it is more feasible to take on apprenticeships because the work is more regular.
4. **ScreenSkills to continue its work to raise awareness and promote the benefits of apprenticeships to employers.** There continues to be more to be done to raise awareness of apprenticeships, particularly among senior leaders. This should build on employer testimonies from those that have taken on apprenticeships.

For the DfE and IfATE:

5. **The DfE and IfATE to explore flexibilities in using apprenticeship levy funding to be used for other related work-based learning routes that incorporates on-the-job training.** The study identified that the apprenticeship route is not feasible for some employers, particularly when their workforce is dominated by freelancers and most of the work they do is on short-turnaround projects. There is value in encouraging these employers to support work-based learning which helps the sector alleviate skills gaps and shortages while also increasing the diversity of new entrants to the sector.
6. **The DfE and IfATE to provide additional flexibilities to the apprenticeship requirements that support an agency or flexi-apprenticeship models, including removing the fixed-length requirement for apprenticeships.** This is more suitable for particular screen industries, such as TV and Film production sector, where a high proportion of the workforce are freelance contractors. Doing this can increase the take-up on apprenticeships within these sectors, as

it would allow more flexible Apprenticeship Training Association models where apprentices can undertake placements in different employers in order to learn the skills required to complete the end-point assessment.

7. **Allow Levy funding to be used to cover the employer costs for providing apprenticeships**. This is often the major financial barrier for employers to take on apprentices. Covering employer costs also allows employers to improve their HR processes which can have a longer-term impact on the sector.

As such, the study findings reinforce the recommendations of the ScreenSkills' Apprenticeship Pilots Summary Findings for reforming aspects of the current apprenticeship levy and in building short-term improvements through more flexible apprenticeship models and the provider base.

ANNEXES

Annex 1 Screen industry apprenticeship providers

Provider	Location	Type	No of screen sector apprenticeships offered
Access To Music Limited	National	Independent	1
Apprentify Limited	National	Independent	1
Barking And Dagenham College	London	College	1
Birmingham City University	West Midlands	HEI	1
Birmingham Metropolitan College	West Midlands	College	1
Blue Lion Training Academy Limited	National	Independent	2
Bournemouth And Poole College	South West	College	1
Chichester College Group	South East	College	1
City College Plymouth	South West	College	1
City Of Portsmouth College	South East	College	1
Darlington College	North East	College	1
Day One Trust	London	Independent	1
East Durham College	North East	College	1
GBS Apprenticeships	National	Independent	5
Ginger Nut Training	National	Independent	1
Isle Of Wight College	Isle of Wight	College	6
Learning And Development Bureau Ltd	South East	Independent	1
London South Bank University	London	HEI	2
London Vesta College	London	College	1
Mybe Awards Ltd	National	Independent	1
Purple Beard Ltd	London	Independent	1
Ravensbourne University London	London (offers national)	HEI	1
Skills4STEM	National	Independent	4
Solihull College And University Centre	West Midlands	HEI	1
The Apprenticeship College Ltd	London	Independent	6
The Bauer Academy	National	Independent	4
The JGA Group	London	College	2
The Press Association Limited	London	Independent	2
The West Midlands Creative Alliance Limited	West Midlands	Independent	7

Provider	Location	Type	No of screen sector apprenticeships offered
University Of Kent	South East	HEI	1
University Of Portsmouth	South East	HEI	1
University Of Sunderland	North East	HEI	2