



ScreenSkills' Apprenticeship Pilots Summary Findings

Author: Tim Weiss, Director of Vocational Skills

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Foreword

Apprenticeships are as important today as when they began in the 1500s and fundamentally, the principles have remained unchanged – on-the-job training, learning career-building skills. While the UK's successive industrial and technological revolutions have changed the nature of employment and the skills required to build a career, the core concept of apprenticeships – 'earn-as-you-learn' – remains a powerful and effective way of building a skilled and inclusive workforce, despite the challenges often associated with their delivery today.

ScreenSkills, industry-funded and sector-led, is the skills body for the UK screen industries and part of the wider Creative Industries that has been identified as a priority sector as a driver for growth, employment and innovation. We exist solely to provide a unified and coherent approach to skills for a freelance, project- and innovation-based sector that is constantly evolving. Evidence-based and data-informed, we provide high quality, accessible and standardised training and career development programmes for people at every career stage who make UK content which everyone loves and trusts. Our objective is to help create a sustainable, inclusive and diverse workforce that significantly contributes to the UK's national and regional economic growth and bolsters the UK's global reputation for high-quality content and market-leading innovation.

We have been actively involved in helping to shape apprenticeships since before the reform of the system in 2016 and the introduction of new apprenticeship standards in England and the levy across the UK. We believe that apprenticeships can potentially provide an opportunity for someone looking for a career in the screen industries. In many ways, apprenticeships are a great leveller, offering a gateway for people irrespective of background, or level of educational attainment.

Our approach is always to be solution-focused and pragmatic. We hosted multiple workshops so industry understood the reformed system, and together we worked collaboratively with the Department for Education and the newly created Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to facilitate the creation of the new apprenticeship standards with employers. Throughout the process, we have consistently listened to what our employer colleagues and the apprentices themselves have been telling us, building an informed, real-time picture of the current system and how it could be even more viable in our fast-growing industry.

Today, this sector is facing acute skills shortages and gaps, and apprenticeships can potentially be a vital part of the solution. We have been leveraging our unique role as an industry-led, strategic leader, to actively campaign and engage with Government Ministers and officials, industry partners and other business sectors that offer apprenticeships, to help shape a system that takes into consideration the distinctive and particular nature of our freelance and project-based creative community.

The two apprenticeships pilots in this report are part of that active collaboration between Government and our sector. The first pilot, from 2020 to 2023, was funded by the then Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with industry partners, Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery. The second pilot started in 2022 and will end in January 2024. Funded by the Department for Education and five employers, the lead partner is Amazon Prime Video, with apprentices also being hosted by Sky (with APX Content Ventures), Banijay, Lime Pictures and Fremantle.

There have been specific benefits in both pilots. By the end of the second programme, fifty-three apprentices will have received training and gained valuable on-the-job experience; and almost three quarters of the participants from the first pilot are now working in the screen industries.

But ultimately our findings illustrate the serious systemic issues that are preventing our sector from taking full advantage of the opportunity that earn-as-you-learn training presents. Therefore, ScreenSkills believes that there needs to be fundamental legislative change to the apprenticeship system for film and TV production, and for the wider screen industries.

Primarily, the levy needs to be made more flexible. By doing so, it can provide funding for a greater range of relevant, industry-recognised vocational training options for every career stage, and support additional employer costs. Additionally, apprenticeship standards should reflect the duration of training required for the specific occupation, rather than be fixed in length, to ensure maximum mutual benefit for apprentices and the companies that employ them.

However, there are also shorter term changes that will improve the immediate impact and effectiveness of the current system and inform future change.

Foremost, ScreenSkills as the industry agency to support both apprentices and employers. The sector also needs more industry-recognised training providers to improve the quality and relevance of off-the-job training; and more precise tailoring of apprenticeship standards to specific job roles. This summer, we will publish further research on the adoption and usage of existing standards within the sector.

We also recommend a detailed assessment of the current apprenticeship models in the screen industries including comparison with other training programmes in terms of their effectiveness and overall economic impact.

ScreenSkills is incredibly proud to have been an active partner in these pilots and would like to thank our industry partners, DCMS and DfE. The pilots did create opportunities for individuals who might never have considered it possible to pursue their dreams. Their hard work and commitment should be lauded. But more needs to be done to make apprenticeships viable, effective and attractive to potential apprentices and employers alike.

Seetha Kumar, CEO, ScreenSkills
May 2023

1. Overview

This paper presents ScreenSkills' evaluation and findings from its two apprenticeship pilot programmes. The paper consists of:

- Executive summary
- Background context on apprenticeships and the aims of the pilots
- Summary of common findings from both pilot programmes
- Conclusions and recommendations for future policy changes in light of these pilots
- Appendices:
 - A. Summary findings from Pilot One
 - B. Pilot One: Netflix feedback on ScreenSkills apprenticeship pilot
 - C. Pilot Two: CFE Research Evaluation of Pilot – interim findings
 - D. Comparison between Trainee Finder and apprenticeship pilot structures
 - E. Selective glossary of apprenticeship terminology

2. Executive summary

Between 2020 and 2023, ScreenSkills has run two apprenticeship pilots with industry partners Amazon Prime Video, Netflix, Warner Bros Discovery, Sky with APX Content Ventures, Banijay, Lime Pictures and Fremantle, co-funded respectively by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and the Department for Education. The first pilot ran between January 2020 and February 2023 (including one year pause during the Covid pandemic), while the second pilot started in February 2022 and will fully end in January 2024. The purpose of the pilots was to test whether a limited agency-based apprenticeship model was effective for the project-based nature common in the film and TV production sector.

Our focus and learnings from these pilots are specifically regarding the system in England.

Following an assessment of the two pilots, ScreenSkills has identified the following principal findings:

- Both pilots allowed screen industry employers to use some of their unspent apprenticeship levy on training, giving apprentices significant skills and experience in production roles, particularly from their on-the-job training.
- The pilots supported apprentices from diverse backgrounds to gain employment in film and TV production despite a lack of experience. ScreenSkills supported employers, training providers and apprentices well to coordinate placements and training.
- However, the industry partners have stated that the external and internal costs of running the apprenticeship agency model as currently structured are unsustainable in the long-term, particularly due to the resource required to identify sufficient suitable, continuous placements to provide on-the-job training at scale.
- Additionally, the industry partners feel that the lack of relevance and low quality of some of the standards and off-the-job training make these costs poor value for money and therefore less viable for production companies, especially compared with other routes for entry-level talent that are more cost-effective.

While Screenskills believes in and supports the principle of an agency model, ultimately the model as currently structured (in either the Apprenticeship Programme supported by DCMS, or the DfE Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agency programme) is not sufficiently flexible to provide a viable long-term apprenticeship training solution for roles in film and TV production.

On this basis, ScreenSkills is making a series of recommendations in terms of changes to apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy that would make them more effective for roles in film and TV production, and the wider screen industries.

Our central recommendation is to **reform the current apprenticeship levy** by:

- **Broadening the scope of the levy beyond apprenticeships** to support a broader range and diversity of industry-recognised vocational training options.
- **Reforming funding rules so that levy funding can be used to cover the additional employer costs of providing apprenticeships**, not just the costs of the apprenticeship training.
- **Removing the fixed minimum-length requirements** of apprenticeship standards, so they can be better aligned to the duration of training required for the job.

Shorter-term improvements

- **Funding for ScreenSkills as the intermediary industry agency** that can incorporate some of the successful aspects of the agency model.
- **More industry-recognised specialist training providers**, developed through close collaboration between industry and training providers and ensuring funding bands are sufficient to include specialist trainers.
- **Ensuring apprenticeship standards are tailored** to specific roles in the sector (rather than being contextualised) and that opportunities are identified to develop specialist pathways within existing apprenticeships when the relevant standards are reviewed.
- **An assessment of apprenticeship models** in the screen industries including the viability of combining the portable flexible-job apprenticeship model with aspects of the agency model piloted by Screenskills, and an economic comparison with other existing non-apprenticeship training routes.

3. Background context

ScreenSkills – who we are

Relaunched and rebranded in 2018, ScreenSkills is the skills body for the UK screen industries. An independent charity, industry-funded and business-led, it helps to train people at every career stage who make UK content which everyone loves and trusts.

By identifying key skills gaps using industry data and insight, ScreenSkills plays a leading role in the creation of high quality, accessible and standardised training and development programmes that create and sustain a skilled and inclusive workforce, enabling growth and future innovation, and actively contributing to the future creativity, health and prosperity of the sector.

ScreenSkills is evidence-based and data-informed, a respected thought-leader across the sector, and an agile delivery partner embedded throughout the entire cycle of content production. Our unique position has enabled ScreenSkills to build a much needed unified, cross-industry, strategic approach to training and skills, focusing on skills needed today and the likely skills tomorrow.

Apprenticeships: a summary

In 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) reformed the apprenticeship system, introducing apprenticeship standards for England that focused on individual occupations and a new UK-wide funding model through an apprenticeship levy. The reforms set out to support people of all ages gain high-quality skills and experience, and help employers offer more training opportunities to build a skilled workforce for the UK. The aim was to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships, and to address growing skills shortages by ensuring significant numbers of higher quality apprenticeships that met employers’ needs.

Specifically, the apprenticeship levy is charged to all UK employers with an annual PAYE bill over £3 million, and is paid monthly at a rate of 0.5% of an employer’s annual pay bill over this threshold. Levy payments are turned into apprenticeship digital vouchers (including a 10% contribution from Government) for employers to spend on apprenticeship training only – as illustrated in Figure 1. Training is typically approximately 17% of the total cost: see Figure 2. All other costs, e.g. recruitment, wages, holiday, sick pay, have to be met by the employer.

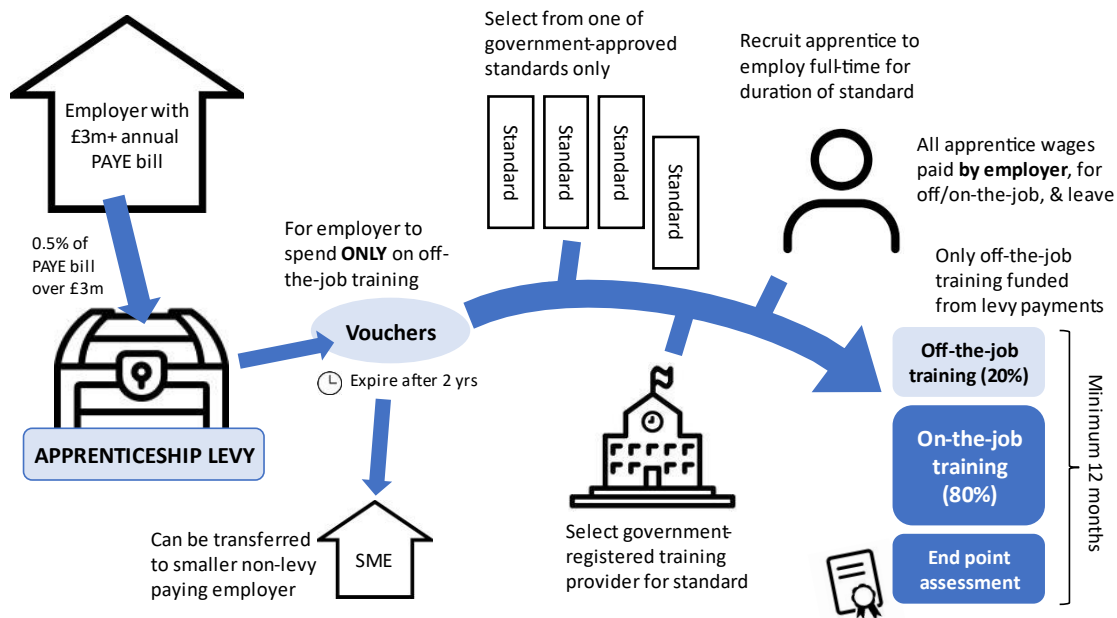


Figure 1: A summary of the apprenticeship system in England

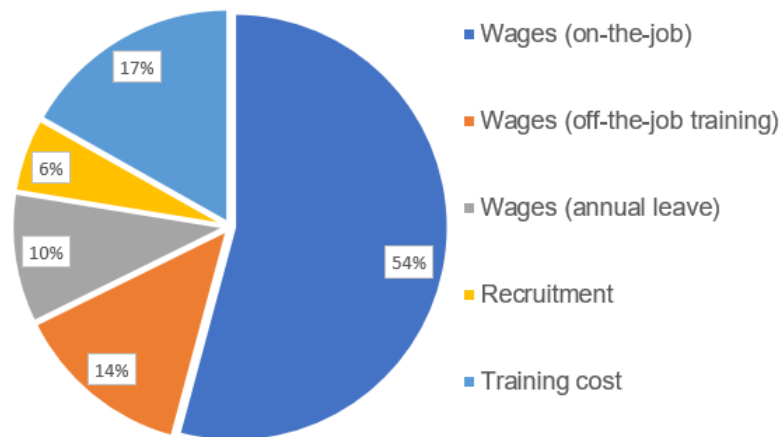


Figure 2: An approximate breakdown of the total cost per apprentice to the employer on a standard, linear apprenticeship, c 17% of which can be funded by apprenticeship levy payments.¹

An apprenticeship is a paid job with a training element. The job lasts a minimum of twelve months, including on-the-job training learnt via an employer (c.80% of the programme) and off-the-job training delivered by a training provider, paid for by the levy (c.20%). The training provider needs to be Government-registered; industry is not involved in this approval process. Apprentices sit an end-point assessment upon completing the programme and if they pass are awarded an apprenticeship certificate.

Apprentices can only train via an apprenticeship if there is a Government-approved apprenticeship standard or framework written by employer groups and validated in England by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), who also determine the levy funding available for off-the-job training costs for each standard. However, where similar standards already exist in other sectors (e.g. accounting), IfATE require training providers to contextualise and adapt this curriculum rather than develop a tailored standard.

In the devolved nations, apprenticeships are based on frameworks (e.g. Creative Media) which are broader than the standards used in the system in England.

Apprenticeships in the screen industry: ScreenSkills activity

ScreenSkills has worked closely with industry and Government since 2015 to understand and communicate the impact of the new apprenticeship system, including the introduction of the apprenticeship levy.

Apprenticeship uptake in the screen industries has been slow despite the appetite for vocational training, with a peak of 1,300 new apprentices starting in 2021-22². One of the key contributing factors affecting uptake has been the requirement for apprentices to be employed for the full duration of their programme. This has been a challenge in the screen industries (particularly film and TV production) where contracts are determined by the length of the production and are often short-term, being project-dependent.

¹ Based on an 18-month apprenticeship with £9,000 funding, with apprentice wages at London Living Wage and 25 days’ annual leave. This is for standard apprenticeships and does not reflect the downtime between productions that is typical in film and TV production.

² Furthermore, 80% of these starts were on the broad, less screen-specific Level 3 standard Content Creator.

ScreenSkills' strategy has been:

- to engage with employers to help them understand the levy and benefit from their feedback
- to lobby extensively for greater flexibility on the levy to make apprenticeships more viable and to help make it possible to “earn while you learn”
- to engage closely with DfE, IfATE and employers to identify and create apprenticeship standards where feasible
- to explore where apprenticeships within this policy structure could work effectively.

ScreenSkills has run regular round-tables with industry leaders and ministers to explore challenges and alternative solutions, and between 2016-21 actively engaged with successive Skills Ministers at DfE, and consecutive Secretaries of State for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Additionally in 2016, ScreenSkills commissioned independent research that projected the estimated quantum paid into the apprenticeship levy and the proportion of this likely to be used. The research concluded that only around 25% of the estimated £20 million of apprenticeship levy funds paid by screen industry employers could be used by the sector, due to the system's inflexibility and lack of alignment with much of the screen industry's employment patterns³.

Since the reforms, ScreenSkills has facilitated the development of 24 new apprenticeship standards⁴ in England, covering occupations across production management, post-production, VFX, animation, broadcast media, technical production and content production. This IfATE-defined development and approval process typically takes 12-18 months for every new or revised standard.

Pilot One: ScreenSkills Apprenticeship Programme (2020-23)

In 2019, after a series of discussions with DCMS regarding social mobility, skills needs and issues preventing greater uptake of apprenticeships in the screen sector, ScreenSkills secured support from then Secretary of State for DCMS Jeremy Wright to test an 'agency' model to enable apprenticeships for project-based roles. Subsequently, Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery volunteered to join the pilot apprenticeship programme.

The pilot was deliberately limited in scope to two employers and with most placements likely to be close to the major film and TV studios in the south-east. Using an 'agency' model, ScreenSkills was the overall employer of 20 apprentices, with multiple placements offered by employer partners to provide the required on-the-job training on productions. This was the first agency pilot in any sector, and illustrated the accepted need for flexibility in the 12-month minimum duration of the formal apprenticeship model for roles in film and TV production. Given the apprenticeship system's incompatibility with short-term, project-based roles, only a small number of standards were available for physical production occupations with skills shortages, and the two roles for the pilot (production assistant and assistant accountant) were chosen from this limited selection.

³ *The Apprenticeship Levy – Making It Work: a report for Creative Skillset* (2016), Oliver & Ohlbaum Associates and The Work Foundation.

⁴ All these apprenticeship standards are available on the IfATE website, for example ones for [production assistant](#) and [post-production technical operator](#) (both used on the ScreenSkills pilots).

The total cost of the pilot was £1,046k, which was funded as follows:

- £685k of industry contributions to cover wages at London Living Wage rate during their employment by ScreenSkills (including on-the-job and off-the-job training)
- £161k of apprenticeship levy transfers from industry partners
- £100k grant from DCMS
- £100k of additional industry support from Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery

The additional DCMS and industry contributions helped cover the programme management, HR and pastoral support and other administrative costs related to delivering the programme. Bursaries also funded some additional travel and accommodation costs for apprentices to attend off-the-job training sessions.

This pilot sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of apprenticeships in production, focusing on the apprenticeship system in England. The partners agreed that the investment required was important to build evidence on where changes to apprenticeship policy might be necessary. This was also discussed and agreed at the ScreenSkills board, where the pilot was seen as a welcome opportunity to inform a wider discussion regarding any potential future reform of the levy.

Therefore, the main areas of focus were:

- To assess the viability of production-based apprenticeships if contractual employment was managed by a single agency (i.e. ScreenSkills), to meet the minimum 12-month employment duration required for apprenticeships in England
- To generate further evidence around flexible apprenticeship models and the apprenticeship levy to inform future recommendations.
- To explore if this approach could further enable levy-paying screen organisations to maximise the use of their apprenticeship levy vouchers.
- To explore the potential of apprenticeships to improve the diversity of people in entry-level production roles.
- To train production assistants and assistant production accountants via a more structured and formal training route.

The pilot was significantly delayed due to Covid pandemic lockdowns and finally launched in summer 2021. All Spring Media was appointed as training provider (from the handful of providers registered for screen standards) following a competitive tendering process.

Pilot Two: DfE Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agency (FJAA) (2022-24)

The ScreenSkills apprenticeship programme (Pilot One), as well as ongoing lobbying and collaborative working between ScreenSkills and the Creative Industries Council (CIC), successfully enabled closer engagement with the DfE, resulting in their recognition that apprenticeships were not working for parts of the screen sector. A £7m 'Flexi-job Apprenticeship Fund' was subsequently announced in the March 2021 Budget, with bids invited that autumn⁵. Although the first pilot was already underway, ScreenSkills was

⁵ In parallel, DfE launched a separate pilot for 'portable' flexi-job apprenticeships, allowing apprentices to take a series of shorter contracts with a number of employers while completing their off-the-job training. This was run separately from the FJAA pilot to explore a modular solution to apprenticeships across several industries, however not including film and TV production.

encouraged to participate in the DfE-funded Flexi-job Apprenticeship Agency (FJAA) programme. The main aim was to explore whether apprenticeships in England could be feasible for additional screen occupations that are largely freelance or have project-based working patterns.

Pilot Two was created in collaboration with five employers: lead partner Amazon Prime Video, Sky (with APX Content Ventures), Banijay, Lime Pictures and Fremantle. ScreenSkills were awarded a grant from DfE to administer the programme during 2022-23. It should be noted that the funding only supported the first twelve months of the programme, with apprenticeship standards needing to last into the following year, 2023-24. As a result, the five employer partners agreed to support the completion of the pilot, either by taking over employment of apprentices after DfE funding expired, or by continuing to fund ScreenSkills' programme costs instead so it could remain the apprentices' employer.

The aims of the second pilot were:

- To help more screen employers make use of their levy vouchers to train new entrants
- To target in-demand production roles, using the flexi-job model
- To develop the flexi-agency model using learnings from Pilot One, and test this with a wider range of standards and employers, in order to build more evidence of its suitability and viability
- To use the evidence gathered to inform future policy discussions with the DfE, around both the FJAA model and apprenticeships more widely.
- To build industry's relationship and engagement with the DfE (via ScreenSkills) throughout the process, and provide DfE colleagues with the opportunity to gain first-hand experiences of the delivery of the model.

Drawing on the learnings of the first pilot, Pilot Two adopted different approaches to recruitment, training, and the management of placements to aid more effective delivery.

The total forecast costs for Pilot Two are £2,050k, funded as follows:

- £410k grant from DfE to cover ScreenSkills programme delivery and administration costs (including programme management, HR, finance and events) during 2022-23.
- £138k industry contributions to cover programme delivery and administration costs during 2023-24⁶
- £1,205k industry contributions to cover wages at London Living Wage rate (including on-the-job and off-the-job training and leave, plus one-off bursaries to reflect cost of living increases).⁷
- £287k of apprenticeship levy transfers from industry partners
- £10k ScreenSkills funding for additional recruitment and training costs.

We recruited thirty-seven apprentices who started in two cohorts in May and September 2022, across the production assistant, production coordinator, assistant production accountant and edit assistant apprenticeship standards.

⁶ This includes direct contributions to ScreenSkills programme delivery costs from Amazon Prime Video and Sky (with APX Content Ventures), as well as an estimate of internal and overhead costs for Banijay, Lime Pictures and Fremantle, once apprentices' employment transferred to these partners

⁷ This includes apprentices' wages both when employed by ScreenSkills and when employment of some apprentices transferred to partner employers from April 2023.

The apprentices were employed as follows, with Amazon Prime Video as lead partner supporting the largest share of apprentices (this included identifying and funding some apprentice placements on shows not produced or commissioned by Amazon).

Amazon Prime Video	21
Sky (with APX Content Ventures)	8
Banjay	4
Lime Pictures	2
Fremantle	2

All Spring Media was appointed as training provider for the production-based standards for Pilot Two (prior to concerns arising during summer 2022), with London South Bank University appointed for the edit assistant standard. Again there was only a handful of IfATE-registered trainers available for each role, a particular issue for industries like the screen sector with low uptake of apprenticeships.

4. Summary findings

The key common findings from Pilot One and Pilot Two are summarised below in six key areas – recruitment, completion and progression; placements; apprenticeship standards; training; cost and efficiency; and pastoral care/employer support.

These summary findings have been collated from the following:

- an informal evaluation of Pilot One using end-of-activity surveys, and written and verbal reports shared by Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery
- a limited evaluation of Pilot Two undertaken by CFE Research⁸
- ScreenSkills' own experiences and conclusions acting as partner, agency and employer of the apprentices in both pilots.

Recruitment, completion and progression

- Both pilots have proven that apprenticeships can be a possible route for large employers to offer structured training for entry level roles in film and TV production using a limited agency model – but with significant challenges and costs in many cases.
- Both pilots have been successful in supporting new entrants to gain employment and build personal networks within film and TV production, who otherwise felt they would not have progressed into the industry due to insufficient prior connections. 70% of Pilot One apprentices have gained work on productions in the first three to six months since completing their apprenticeship in September/December 2022⁹.

“So for me, without the apprenticeship, I’d have nowhere to go ... It’s hard to find a job, because of being deaf ... And when I saw the apprenticeship come up, I thought I’d apply because I wanted to have a career in TV or film production. So I wanted to have the confidence and skills, and there’s so much now, I’ve got everything. So in the future, I’m not really worried about finding a job.”

Assistant production accountant apprentice (Netflix/Warner Bros Discovery), Pilot One

“The apprenticeship has definitely made me feel a lot more confident ... when you want to enter film and TV, there’s this huge worry around whether it will work out or how far you’ll go, or not really understanding the role you want to go into because there’s not a lot of information out there. I feel ... a lot more secure looking to the future, which is good.”

Edit assistant apprentice (Amazon Prime Video), Pilot Two

- The demographic makeup of the apprentices on both pilots is much more diverse than typical statistics available for the sector as a whole¹⁰. There are higher-than-average

⁸ This was conducted nine months after the start of Pilot Two so it could fall within DfE funding period.

⁹ The remaining apprentices from Pilot One have either not yet found work or in one case moved to a role outside the screen industry.

¹⁰ See for example *Equity, diversity and inclusion in television and radio: 2021-22*, Ofcom (2022), Figure 2; *Annual ScreenSkills Assessment (2019)*, Figure 17; *The Fifth Cut: Diamond at 5 (2022)*, Table 3.

proportions who are female, from ethnic minority backgrounds, with declared disabilities, and who identify as LGBTQ+.

- ScreenSkills exceeded its internal targets in all categories. It should be noted that statistics are similar to those for ScreenSkills' Trainee Finder scheme¹¹.

	ScreenSkills targets	Trainee finder (23-24) ¹²	Pilot One	Pilot Two
Ethnic minority backgrounds	20%	27%	33%	20%
LGBTQ+	10%	22%	25%	29%
Disabled	10%	18%	25%	17%
Female	50%	66%	55%	69%
Outside London ¹³	50%	73%	n/a*	71%
Non-paid schooling	n/a	85%	n/a*	80%
Working class background	n/a	21%	n/a*	26%

*These statistics were not measured for Pilot One.

- Recruitment of assistant production accountants was challenging for both pilots, with notably fewer applications than for other roles. In a few cases, apprentices applied for this role despite appearing to be subsequently more interested in a production role. Between Pilot One and Pilot Two, ScreenSkills worked more closely with the Association for Accounting Technicians (AAT) and publicised the apprenticeships directly to colleges running Level 2 accounting courses to improve the number and suitability of candidates, although industry partners still reported some similar issues arising in Pilot Two.
- The completion and retention rate for both pilots has been very good, with 19 out of 20 apprentices from Pilot One completing their programme¹⁴, and (at time of publication) 34 of 37 apprentices from Pilot Two remain on the programme¹⁵. This compares very favourably with the national average for apprenticeship completion of 58% (2020-21).

Placements

- Apprentices from both pilots have commented on the positive skills, experience and contacts gained during the on-the-job learning of their placements, and individual productions have reported being pleased with the work and attitude of their apprentices. Placements on both pilots included high-profile productions such as *Bridgerton* (Netflix), *Wonka* (Warner Bros Discovery), *The Devil's Hour* (Amazon Prime Video), *Breeders* (Sky with APX Content Ventures), *Ambulance* (Banijay), *Hollyoaks* (Lime Pictures) and *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* (Fremantle).
- However, both pilots have shown that even when working with major film and TV studios during a production boom, there is not a sufficient flow of suitable productions available

¹¹ See Appendix D for explanation of Trainee Finder and comparison with apprenticeship structure.

¹² Combined statistics for Trainee Finder for trainees on HETV and Film versions of programme.

¹³ From any region outside the M25, as per the Ofcom out of London definition. 46% of Pilot 2 apprentices were based outside London and the south-east.

¹⁴ Two of the original apprentices withdrew from the programme. One left early on so could be replaced by another applicant. One apprentice was offered a job by a production company before completing.

¹⁵ The three apprentices who have withdrawn from Pilot Two have all done so for personal reasons

within the same studio for apprentices to be placed on one after the other, to enable the continuous employment and on-the-job learning required by the current system. Overlapping schedules might mean it is not an appropriate stage to introduce an apprentice to a production when they become available (it may be too early or too late, and the production could be already fully crewed, for example). Inevitably, this means that some apprentices ended up with 'filler' placements in central, in-house teams that could not always provide fully relevant on-the-job learning.

- On both pilots, the studio partners have highlighted the significant in-house project management time and cost required to identify and set up multiple back-to-back placements, as well as to change plans when placements became unavailable. Even with the substantial support of ScreenSkills, this level of input is regarded as unsustainable by employers. It has been more practical (particularly in Pilot Two) in cases when apprentices are working continuously for in-house teams, where this is appropriate for the role and standard.
- One studio partner observed that the provision of multiple, regular placements reduces the apprentice's sense of responsibility to a production, and prepares them less well for the proactive attitude required in being a freelancer.
- Due to other well-established, more flexible entry-level training programmes used in production (such as Trainee Finder), competition for entry-level placements appeared to be high.

Apprenticeship standards

- Employer feedback for both pilots has highlighted that some apprenticeship standards have an imperfect fit to film and TV production roles. ScreenSkills also found this to be the case in relation to assistant production accountants (see below). There is also currently little requirement for formal qualifications in production roles, where experience, knowledge and skills tend to be learnt informally on the job.
- In particular, it was not always possible to contextualise the generic curriculum for the assistant accountant standard to the actual tasks of working as an assistant production accountant. This led to the apprentices from Pilot One being under-prepared for parts of their end-point assessment¹⁶, and ultimately six failed this exam. However, it should be noted that by 3 months after completing the apprenticeship, 70% of these apprentices had gained work in the sector, demonstrating that on-the-job work experience and networking are at this stage more influential than an apprenticeship certificate.
- Feedback from Pilot Two has also questioned whether all the off-the-job training for the production assistant standard is necessary, and whether shorter on-the-job experience could be sufficient (and more attractive and flexible for an employer to offer than an apprenticeship) instead of the current 12-15 months prescribed by the standard.

¹⁶ End-point assessment is the final test on completion of the programme in order to be awarded the apprenticeship certificate. See Figure 1, p3.

Training

- Initial employer feedback during Pilot One showed that regularly releasing apprentices for training whilst on production was disruptive to partners and apprentices, and not conducive to effective working. This was modified for Pilot Two, delivering the off-the-job training via block release at agreed points throughout each apprenticeship, with the bulk of training being front-loaded – thereby reducing this problem.
- Apprentices reported on Pilot Two that the upfront off-the-job training they received made them more confident when starting their placements, providing a foundation level of knowledge about the sector and job roles.
- Several employers from both pilots were dissatisfied with the quality and relevance of the off-the-job training for the production-related standards, and felt there was a disconnect between this and the reality of the job roles. Apprentices from Pilot One who responded to our survey also reported being dissatisfied with the off-the-job training. On Pilot Two, Amazon Prime Video and ScreenSkills offered additional masterclass training sessions to all apprentices to strengthen their learning in key areas such as set etiquette.
- Employers have high standards regarding the industry pedigree of trainers and expect to see significant relevant industry experience, and to be consulted on the appointment of individual trainers, in keeping with other industry-led CPD and bootcamp courses commissioned by organisations such as ScreenSkills.
- The original training provider for both pilots was All Spring Media, who were retained for Pilot Two prior to concerns subsequently arising. However, in November 2022 it had its apprenticeship provision revoked following a critical Ofsted inspection (despite having been awarded training provider of the year months before). Employers also reported concerns about the quality of off-the-job training from this training provider. Despite the small pool of registered training providers available with limited experience in this sector, ScreenSkills were able to appoint replacement providers, with more specific experience in accountancy training and more robust quality assurance methods.
- There has been positive employer feedback regarding some specific training and standards on Pilot Two, notably for edit assistants (where training is led by an experienced post-production expert currently working at DNEG, and formerly The Mill).

Cost and efficiency

- The studios on both pilots have fed back that the overall cost of apprenticeships using the limited agency model (including apprentices' wages while on production, leave and training, apprenticeship levy payments¹⁷, ScreenSkills' programme delivery costs, as well as their own internal time spent on supporting the coordination of multiple placements) is much higher than other entry level training programmes being used in film and TV production. One of the studio partners from Pilot One has estimated the cost to be 50% higher than other entry-level training programmes they operate. However, it should be

¹⁷ Apprenticeship levy payments can only be used to pay for off-the-job training costs, as explained in Figures 1 and 2. All other apprenticeship costs have to be paid by employer.

noted no formal economic analysis has been carried out of apprenticeships in production or the wider screen sector compared with other equivalent effective training routes.

- The two pilots are forecast to cost just over £3m in total. Industry has paid 69% of this cost across both pilots, with 14% relating to training costs – where the spend was covered by levy contributions. These have included some unexpected additional wage costs for employers, such as an increase to the London Living Wage, cost of living payments and bursaries to support apprentices with current financial challenges. There have also been learnings for ScreenSkills in managing the pilot budgets, such as the higher than expected travel expenses for apprentices, and more ScreenSkills' management time being taken up than expected in managing the overall programme and issues arising, as well as agreeing suitable contracts with industry partners, given the complexity of their roles in the pilots.
- For Pilot Two, the requirement to fit all DfE funding into specific financial years meant that the grant could not be aligned to the timing of the apprenticeships, leaving both industry and ScreenSkills exposed during 2023-24. Furthermore, strict restrictions around DfE's funding criteria also led to some additional unrecoverable costs.
- The coordination of multiple placements per apprentice between partners (ScreenSkills/ studio/individual production companies/training provider) has at times been challenging, with complex alignment of placements, training, and line management of the apprentices, leading to inefficiencies and lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities.

Pastoral care and employer support

- Employers reported that the management support provided by ScreenSkills was welcome and worked well. Support included recruitment, advice and guidance for productions, coordinating placements, ongoing pastoral care for apprentices, and liaison and problem-solving with the original and subsequent training providers (see above).
- In some cases the higher-than-average diversity of the apprentice cohorts in both pilots benefitted from additional individual pastoral care provided by ScreenSkills.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the evidence and feedback from both pilots, ScreenSkills has identified the elements that worked well, but also areas of concern where improvements are required.

Our focus and learnings from these pilots are specifically regarding the system in England.

What has worked well

- Both models have allowed screen industry employers to use some of their unspent apprenticeship levy (approximately £448k across both pilots, and 14% of the total costs) on training for new entrants into production roles
- Apprentices gained significant skills and experience particularly from the on-the-job placements during the apprenticeship
- The pilots supported apprentices from diverse backgrounds to gain employment in film and TV production despite having a lack of previous experience or networks
- ScreenSkills supported employers, training providers and apprentices effectively to coordinate placements and training.

Specific challenges

- Studios stated that the increased external and internal costs of running the model are unsustainable in the longer term, in particular due to the resource required to identify sufficient suitable, continuous placements in film and TV production to provide the on-the-job training required by apprenticeships at scale.
- The model is even less sustainable without ongoing funding for the central agency role (which was funded by DfE only until the end of 2022-23), as this adds further costs still for employers.
- The lack of relevance and low quality of some of the standards and off-the-job training make these high costs seem poor value for money and therefore less viable for production companies
- Compared with existing trainee schemes that are perceived as more relevant, better value for money, shorter and more flexible, and equally inclusive in their approach, employers generally did not see the benefit of the additional cost of apprenticeships.

While ScreenSkills believes in and supports the principle of an agency model, ultimately the model as currently structured (in either the Apprenticeship Programme supported by DCMS, or the DfE Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Agency programme) is not sufficiently flexible to provide a viable long-term apprenticeship training solution for roles in film and TV production.

Recommendations

ScreenSkills believes that there needs to be a fundamental change to the apprenticeship model and how the apprenticeship levy is applied within film and TV production (and also the wider screen industries), to take into consideration the distinctive freelance and project-based nature of a sector that has grown rapidly and continues to constantly evolve. These proposed changes can enable apprentices and trainees to gain high-quality skills and experience, and help employers to offer more training opportunities that will support a sustainable and skilled workforce in the UK.

Our central recommendation is to **reform the current apprenticeship levy**, by:

- **broadening the scope of the levy beyond apprenticeships** to support a wider range and diversity of vocational training options that are recognised and quality-assured by an appropriate industry skills body. This could allow funds paid into the levy by the screen industry to be invested in relevant training, routes and interventions for our sector rather than being diverted elsewhere, and which can better reflect the project-based employment patterns of roles in film and TV production.
- **reforming funding rules so that unspent levy funding can cover the additional employer costs of providing apprenticeships**, not just the costs of the apprenticeship training. This could include, for example, using the levy vouchers to fund costs to support an industry agency (see below), paying apprentice wages when off-the-job training or on leave, or funding means-tested bursaries to help increase diversity of new entrants.
- **removing the fixed minimum-length requirements** of apprenticeship standards, so they can be better aligned to the duration of training required for the job, and be reduced where necessary. This will ensure apprentices receive the right amount of training, and ensure the off-the-job training is perceived as fully relevant and value for money.

ScreenSkills recognises that these recommendations could require primary legislation and may not be possible until after the next General Election.

Therefore ScreenSkills also recommends a number of shorter-term changes that would improve the overall experience of apprenticeships in film and TV production (where these are viable to deliver), both for the apprentices themselves as well as for employers.

These include the following:

- **the funding of ScreenSkills as the industry agency.** We believe that ScreenSkills is best placed to continue some of the successful aspects of the agency model. This could include:
 - identifying and bringing together combined cohorts of apprentices from across multiple employers in order to make the delivery of training viable for training providers, particularly through a front-loaded training model
 - supporting the recruitment of apprentices to aid greater diversity
 - providing consistent pastoral care and support to the apprentices, particularly where companies do not have the capacity to do this effectively.
 - facilitating the review and improvement of apprenticeship standards with IfATE.
 - providing a clear advice and support service to employers to help them better understand how the apprenticeship system operates, what training opportunities it can provide, and to introduce them to appropriate training providers
- **more high-quality, industry-recognised training providers** by using levy funds to encourage industry and apprenticeship providers to collaborate more closely. Sector specialists and employers can deliver off-the-job training of greater relevance and quality, giving employers greater confidence to invest in apprenticeship training using the levy. To support the above improvement, the IfATE-approved funding bands that are allocated for training costs for each apprenticeship standard must be sufficient to attract and encourage specialist trainers to deliver apprenticeships.

- **apprenticeship standards to always be tailored to actual occupations**, rather than obliging training providers to contextualise or adapt a generic standard that is not close enough to the reality of the job. Also to identify opportunities to develop specialist pathways within existing apprenticeships when the relevant standards are reviewed.
- **an assessment of apprenticeship models in the screen industries** that would:
 - review the viability of the portable flexi-job apprenticeship model being trialled separately by the DfE to make a recommendation on whether this modular approach can be combined with aspects of the agency model, so that apprentices do not have to be continuously employed throughout the programme but benefit from industry body support to navigate the system.
 - undertake a thorough economic analysis of apprenticeships including a comparison with existing training routes into the screen industries (e.g. Trainee Finder) to fully understand the real return on investment and to help identify for which occupations in production apprenticeships can be an effective option.

While these recommendations have emerged from our pilots of production apprenticeships, these steps could also increase the effectiveness and perception of apprenticeship standards in other parts of the screen industries.

Appendix A

Pilot One: ScreenSkills Apprenticeship Programme summary findings

1. End of activity summary

While no independent evaluation of Pilot One was undertaken, both Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery shared a verbal or written summary of their experience. Additionally, just over a third of apprentices completed an end of activity survey. This appendix summarises the main findings from these three sources.

Recruitment

- Recruitment to the programme resulted in a more diverse demographic than is currently typical in the sector with a third of participants from ethnic minority backgrounds, a quarter LGBTQ+, a quarter declaring a disability, and 55% female. Some apprentices shared additional needs after starting. Whilst this was a welcome outcome it also occasionally presented some challenges, and the higher than average diversity of the cohorts benefitted from additional individual pastoral care, especially where there was less immediate management support available on production.
- Providing a London Living Wage and a longer-term employment contract through the apprenticeship appears to have been a significant contributing factor in recruiting a broader demographic of apprentices.

Placements

- Pilot One was deliberately limited in its scope to two employers. As a result, the geographical reach of the programme was limited to the South East and Bristol.
- The initial plan for Pilot One was to move apprentices between placements at both industry partners. However, in the post-Covid world this proved logistically challenging and also presented confidentiality risks between new productions, and occasionally resulted in gaps in placements, with either the studios or ScreenSkills having to create temporary work in-house for some roles.
- Studios struggled to accommodate the apprentices on placements due to a lack of productions – even during a production ‘boom’ – which were at an appropriate time or stage for an apprentice to join one after another. Given the delayed start and changes in the external landscape following the pandemic, priorities also changed during the pilot, with Warner Bros Discovery reporting that entry-level roles became less in-demand within their wider production workforce, and placing 10 entry-level apprentices did not reflect their more pressing skills shortages at mid-career stage.
- For the apprenticeship programme this shortage of available entry-level placements was compounded by other entry level employment initiatives including those run in-house by Warner Bros Discovery and Netflix, and programmes such as MamaYouth Project, Resource Productions, and ScreenSkills’ own Trainee Finder, amongst others. This means that this pilot was in competition for available entry-level opportunities, some of

them on established and comparatively simpler programmes, with lower costs for employers and shorter duration.

Training

- Releasing apprentices for block training throughout production was found to be disruptive for productions. This approach was changed for Pilot Two.
- Studios did not regard the quality or relevance of the off-the-job training provided by All Spring Media (the Government-approved training provider appointed for the programme) to be fit for purpose. Particular concerns were raised by one studio regarding perceived lack of industry experience. In addition, both studios felt that the off-the-job training curriculum required by the apprenticeship standards (especially for the assistant production accountant) did not sufficiently match the reality of the job role.
- 71% of apprentices who were surveyed also reported being dissatisfied with their off-the-job training and assessment.

Effectiveness

- Studios reported that the cost of apprenticeships (including the wage, levy and time spent on supporting the coordination of placements¹⁸) was significantly higher than other entry-level training programmes in operation. One studio estimated this to be 50% higher than the cost of other training schemes. However, it should be noted that there has been no formal economic analysis to date of apprenticeships in production or screen more broadly versus other training routes.
- Studios reported that the agency apprenticeship model created some complexities in communication between all parties, i.e. the studio employers, individual productions, ScreenSkills, and the training provider (All Spring Media), with challenges in sharing and maintaining consistent information between different organisations.¹⁹
- Apprentices reported that ScreenSkills' ongoing pastoral support aided continuity and empowered those who initially struggled with the pace and culture of production.
- The assistant production accountants that chose to sit their end point assessment (6 of the 10) all failed the synoptic exam section, because their training focused on specific production accountancy skills and not closely enough on the general financial and management accounting part of the curriculum, as this is not directly relevant to the role. It should be noted however that 70% of the apprentices have subsequently gained work in the sector since completing their programme, demonstrating that on-the-job work experience and networking at this stage carry more weight than an apprenticeship certificate.
- Apprentices for Pilot One were employed on standard ScreenSkills 35-hour contracts in order to manage overtime costs carefully, which made planning problematic for

¹⁸ Apprenticeship levy payments can only be used to pay for off-the-job training costs, as explained in Figures 1 and 2. All other apprenticeship costs here have to be paid by employer.

¹⁹ See comparison between Trainee Finder and apprenticeship pilot coordination in Appendix D

productions when apprentices needed to work a typical 55-hour production week. This was subsequently adjusted for Pilot Two.

- Following the end of Pilot One, Warner Bros Discovery has chosen to prioritise in-house training initiatives instead of apprenticeships.

2. Summary of apprenticeship feedback

- 7 out of the 19 apprentices (37%) completed an end-of-activity survey: a reasonable response rate but small base which is partially representative of the cohort.
- Respondents were aged between 20-30.
- 71% knew about apprenticeships and had previously applied for an apprenticeship prior to this one (of these, 66% had previously applied for an apprenticeship in screen).
- 86% had previously applied for other screen roles covering administration, business-related roles (e.g. finance), production, design, digital media, marketing/communications.
- Prior to starting their apprenticeship, 28% of apprentices were unemployed, and 72% were in full time/part time employment (of which 14% were employed in screen).
- Apprentices learnt about these apprenticeship positions via ScreenSkills' website (57%), Facebook (28%) and Twitter (14%).
- Apprentices rated the following additional transferable skills as particularly important in order to get a job in the screen industries:

Skill	Very important	Important	Neutral	Low importance	Not important	Don't know
Work as part of a team	83%	17%	0	0	0	0
Use IT	67%	33%	0	0	0	0
Solve problems	67%	33%	0	0	0	0
Manage time and meet deadlines	50%	50%	0	0	0	0
Manage other people	50%	33%	0	17%	0	0
Budget effectively	50%	17%	17%	0	0	17%
Speak confidently and present ideas	33%	50%	0	17%	0	0
Write clearly	33%	17%	50%	0	0	0
Work with minimal guidance/supervision	0	100%	0	0	0	0

- Apprentices rated the following views both before and after they completed their apprenticeship, showing a positive shift in their perceptions of the industry. After completion, there were more apprentices who felt that the industry was a good personal fit for them, that there were plenty of interesting and well-paid jobs available which didn't rely solely on creativity. However, more apprentices than before also felt that jobs in the industry were insecure.

View	Agree/strongly agree			Disagree/strongly disagree		
	Before	After	Change	Before	After	Change
People like me work in the screen industries	29%	57%	+28%	43%	14%	-29%

There are lots of interesting jobs in the screen industries	71%	100%	+29%	29%	0	-29%
You have to be creative to work in screen	57%	0%	-57%	43%	100%	+57%
Jobs in screen aren't very well paid	14%	14%	0%	29%	72%	+43%
Jobs in screen aren't very secure	29%	57%	+28%	43%	29%	-14%
You have to live in London to get a job in screen	43%	43%	0%	43%	57%	+14%

- ScreenSkills asked apprentices how satisfied they were with specific aspects of their apprenticeship. This showed they valued the time spent on the job and support from their production companies, but were generally dissatisfied with their off-the-job learning and assessment, as well as their wages and working hours.

Aspect	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know
Support received from production companies	29%	29%	14%	0	29%	0	0
Support from Warner Bros/Netflix	29%	43%	0	14%	14%	0	0
Time spent learning how to do the job on production	43%	43%	0	14%	0	0	0
Time spent learning off-the-job	0	0	14%	14%	14%	57%	0
Wage received	0	0	14%	0	29%	57%	0
Assessment process			14%	29%	14%	43%	0
Working hours	29%	0	0	14%	29%	29%	0



Appendix B

Pilot One: Netflix feedback on ScreenSkills apprenticeship pilot

(see overleaf)

Netflix feedback on the ScreenSkills apprenticeship programme pilot

April 2023 (updated)

The pilot (a programme run in collaboration with Netflix and Warner Bros Discovery) was intended and designed to stress-test the apprenticeship model for freelance crew in production and production accounting roles. Following the conclusion of the pilot we have compiled some feedback on the operational challenges and other observations on the success of the programme.

Cost and efficiency

1. The cost to production of taking an apprentice was very high - approx 1.5x the cost of other trainees, due to the cost of their ongoing pay whilst training, and ScreenSkills costs as employers / mentors. This made taking on apprentices a challenging proposition from a production perspective, as while the reasons for the higher costs were understood, qualifications are not an industry requirement for new entrants, and so the basis for incurring these additional costs was hard to justify.
2. Additionally, other training programmes in both production accounting and the production office exist outside of the apprenticeship pilot, both within the industry and also at ScreenSkills (eg the NAPATS programme run by Netflix to transfer in and train in assistant accounting, and the ScreenSkills trainee finder programme). These programmes are more efficient and more flexible for productions to use.
3. The cost of the apprentices, coupled with the standard ScreenSkills 35-hour contract, meant that most apprentices were working less than all other crew. This was suboptimal for the apprentices, as their learning and development opportunities were ultimately more limited than those for other trainees.
4. The duty of care to the apprentices was taken seriously, as was the importance of finding appropriate work placements. Towards the end of the programme, it was increasingly difficult to find appropriate placements (because of budgetary considerations and/or timing of the suitable opportunities). This resulted in Netflix's in-house training programme Grow Creative stepping in to fund four apprentices through to the end of their programme - a solution to the immediate problem, but not one which would be sustainable if it were an ongoing concern.

Diversity and Inclusion


5. One of the objectives of the apprenticeship pilot was to allow opportunities for people from underrepresented backgrounds, and to remove barriers to entry. Although the cohort was a very diverse group, the limitation of working a 35 hour week while other trainees were able to work longer hours created cost of living challenges for the apprentices. One apprentice stated he was looking forward to the programme ending so he could work more hours and earn more money, as London rent was so high he had had to borrow money from his parents. On a larger scale these sorts of restrictions on working hours could create barriers to entry and impede social mobility within the workforce.

Exemptions

6. During the recruitment of the apprentices, it became apparent that some applications were disallowed because of government funding restrictions regarding their education history - for example London Screen Academy students, whose education was seen to be too similar to the production apprenticeship. We understand that at least one of the apprentices who would have preferred the production route took the accounting route as a way into the industry as their previous education disqualified them from pursuing the production route. Given the level of investment in all of the apprentices, it is disappointing when any of them are not fully committed to the area they are being trained in, and would recommend that recruitment needs to better filter the applicants.

Training

7. The fact that classroom training was held in blocks during production proved disruptive for the productions themselves, and led to scenarios where apprentices were given less responsibility than other trainees, as they were not consistently present (coupled with their shorter hours).
8. The relevance of the classroom training to the work the apprentices were carrying out day-to-day was limited. As has since been discovered, All Spring Media were not delivering good quality, relevant training to the apprentices, and there was no consultation on who All Spring Media were employing as trainers.
9. The standards being delivered against were not matched to the job roles they were carrying out. In the case of the assistant accountant apprentices, the standard had no relationship with production accounting. Despite this the standard had to be used, as the development of a new production accounting standard had been disallowed by the Institute of Apprenticeships, as had the development of a production specific pathway within the accounting standard.


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10. At the end of the accounts apprenticeship, six of the nine apprentices failed their end point assessment, the other three chose not to take it because they were aware they had not been taught the relevant information to pass. However, seven of them found themselves work in the industry. This further demonstrates that the qualification itself is not what industry requires, and that on the job work experience is what is valued by industry.

Placements

11. Although ScreenSkills took responsibility for speaking to productions and getting the apprentices set up on their placements, there was nevertheless a considerable amount of time invested internally at Netflix to identify suitable placements, educate the production teams on the concept and answer questions, in addition to trying to minimise gaps in the schedule of placements. Because apprentices were switching between Warner Bros Discovery and Netflix, and given the constantly evolving nature of production schedules, any changes on placements at Warner Bros Discovery impacted on the requirements of Netflix. This led to highly changeable asks, which proved labour-intensive and would be completely unsustainable at any scale.
12. ScreenSkills' role in the pilot created an additional layer of communication, with some productions talking to their Netflix exec about an issue with an apprentice, and not telling ScreenSkills (the apprentices' employer), and vice versa. Some supervisors on production felt ill-equipped as to what to expect, particularly in one instance, where there had been no communication (not even to ScreenSkills) about one of the apprentices who needed some reasonable adjustments leading to a difficult first placement. We consider it essential that all employees and trainees are set up for success, and so additional training and support was provided for the production teams on subsequent placements.

Apprentices

13. More generally, we observed that the programme by its design removed the individual's responsibility to the production, which is a crucial part of being a freelancer, and put them in a more passive role. This led to questions about some apprentices' commitment, and their expectations of working in the industry longer term.
14. One production offered a placement to an apprentice who turned it down due to challenges commuting to the opposite side of London. The same production offered another apprentice a placement, but was turned down because the apprentice did not want to carry on after the programme had finished, and was looking for other work. This created a strain on Netflix's relationship with that



production team, who had spent time on due diligence and getting feedback on the apprentices. Another apprentice didn't turn up to work after a training week, and left the apprenticeship early, as did another when they were offered a different job in the industry.

15. These experiences meant it became necessary to establish whether an apprentice would take a particular placement in a certain location and for particular dates, before it was suggested to the production, adding further to the logistical challenges around scheduling placements.

Conclusions and recommendations

16. Based on our experience as outlined above, Netflix would be extremely cautious about engaging in further apprenticeship pilots. The resource required to deliver a programme with a qualification that is not needed by industry is too high, and is not effective or desirable from a commercial perspective.

17. Although participating in the pilot unlocked Apprenticeship Levy funds which Netflix could not have otherwise invested in training, the high costs outlined above in delivering the programme meant this money was not spent efficiently relative to other training investments. The overall return on investment was not high enough to suggest that the pilot could present a scalable solution to better utilising Apprenticeship Levy funds in the sector in future.

18. It is not clear that apprentices will ultimately enjoy greater success in their careers in the industry. Netflix would recommend ScreenSkills track the success of the apprentices over a period of time to measure the impact of the investment in their classroom training and qualification in helping to accelerate their careers. This could be compared to other trainees who did not take the apprenticeship route.

19. In addition, Netflix would recommend ScreenSkills and DCMS work to 'unlock' the apprenticeship levy funds to facilitate more flexible approaches to training which are developed and delivered by industry (an example of this being the ScreenSkills HETV fund), rather than continue to use the apprenticeship model, with training and qualifications that are not relevant nor required by the sector.

Appendix C: Pilot Two – Evaluation of the Flexi-Jobs Apprenticeship Scheme Pilot – Interim findings

Client:	ScreenSkills
Date:	March 2023
Author:	Rachael Archer and Lindsey Bowes

Introduction

Flexi-Jobs Apprenticeship Scheme Pilot

The Department for Education (DfE) launched the £7 million Flexi-Job Apprenticeship fund in August 2021. Flexi-Job Apprenticeships have been designed to ensure those sectors that are dominated by short-term contracts or other non-standard employment models are able to access the benefits of apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are delivered in two ways through FJAS:

Model 1: where a flexi-job apprenticeship **agency employs the apprentice** directly for the duration of their apprenticeship but arranges placements for the apprentice with host businesses.

Model 2: where, supported by a training provider, the **apprentice secures multiple short employment contracts** directly with businesses that support the requirements of the apprenticeship (referred to as a Portable Flexi-Job Apprenticeship).

Non-standard and short-term contracts are typical within the screen industries which also experience skills gaps and shortages and a relative lack of diversity within its workforce. The screen sector's industry body, ScreenSkills, is piloting the Flexi-Job Apprenticeship Scheme (FJAS) with support from the DfE, building on an earlier pilot funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and industry. The FJAS being piloted by ScreenSkills is adopting Model 1. ScreenSkills, therefore, employs the apprentices directly and works with five studio partners and other production and post-production companies to provide

placements. Two cohorts of apprentices are being supported through the pilot which commenced their training in May (n=19) and September 2022 (n=17). The apprenticeships funded through the pilot are:

- Production coordinator
- Production assistant
- Accounts assistant
- Edit assistant

Pilot evaluation

CFE is supporting ScreenSkills to evaluate the DfE-funded pilot to assess how well it is working, between the end of November 2022 and early January 2023, approximately nine to ten months into the programme overall. Data for the evaluation to date has been collected via a baseline survey of 34 (out of 36²⁰) apprentices which was co-designed and disseminated by ScreenSkills, and ten individual, paired and group interviews conducted by CFE. ScreenSkills FJAS programme managers, five studio partners and one training provider were consulted, along with four apprentices who were between four to six months into their training.

Characteristics of apprentices

The scheme has attracted applicants from a range of age groups (Table 1) and lower socio-economic groups, defined by eligibility for Free School Meals while at school (n = 6).

Table 1: Age group

	Number of apprentices
16-19	11
20-24	16
25-30	6
40+	1
Total	34

²⁰ There were originally 37 apprentices recruited for Pilot 2. One apprentice had withdrawn in July 2022 before the baseline survey was conducted, making a total then of 36.

The apprentices who are taking part in the pilot scheme had very limited prior experience of working in the screen industries. The majority were either working full-time in other sectors (n= 10) or in full-time study (n = 10); just two were employed in the screen industries on a part-time basis before they started their apprenticeship. However, nearly half (n =16) had previously applied for roles in the screen sector, mostly in production (n=15), without success.

Most apprentices²¹ had heard about apprenticeships at school and a third had applied for at least one prior to joining the pilot, predominantly in the screen industries (7 out of 11 who had applied). The current cohorts of apprentices surveyed are working in a range of roles (Table 2).

Table 2: Apprenticeship

Job role	Number of apprentices
Accounts assistant	11
Production co-ordinator	9
Production assistant	9
Edit assistant	5
Total	34

²¹ 8 had not been told about apprenticeships at school and 3 couldn't remember.

Summary of key findings

The key findings from the evaluation to date are summarised in the tables that follow. The aspects of the scheme which are working well, those which are working less well, and considerations for the screen industry and government when developing similar training are identified. These considerations do not seek to suggest solutions to the issues identified.

Sector engagement		
Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five leading studios have partnered in the scheme and assisted ScreenSkills to identify and support placement opportunities for apprentices within their own organisations and with independent production companies they work with. Studio partners valued the opportunity to participate in the apprentice recruitment assessment panels which were perceived to run smoothly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small independent production companies can lack the resources to provide placement opportunities and support apprentices to develop the skills needed to address gaps and shortages. Brokering and sustaining relationships with small independent production companies via studio partners placed greater administrative burden on both ScreenSkills and studio partners than anticipated. All studio partners wish to participate in the recruitment process to ensure apprentices are appropriate for the opportunities they offer. However, not all partners had the opportunity to engage as fully in the process, due to the need to adhere to short DfE delivery deadlines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to develop cost-effective ways to sustain the engagement of small independent production companies without increasing the burden on ScreenSkills and/or studio partners. Ensure studio partners can all participate fully in the recruitment and selection process for the apprentices they host to secure their buy-in and commitment to the scheme.

Management and delivery		
Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role fulfilled by the ScreenSkills' programme managers has been critical to the delivery of the pilot. Key functions that have worked well include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifying and setting up placements with studio partners and their independent production companies ○ Rearranging placements in response to changes in production schedule ○ Ensuring placements offer appropriate skills development opportunities ○ Co-ordinating on-the-job and off-the-job training for apprenticeships ○ Ensuring studio partners and training providers are kept informed of apprentices' progress ○ Ensuring apprentices have a consistent point of contact when moving between placements ○ Providing pastoral support to apprentices ○ Ensuring suitable providers are in place to deliver off-the-job training that meets industry requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of management time required from ScreenSkills to facilitate communication with and between partners (studios, production companies, apprentices and training provider staff and tutors) was greater than anticipated, particularly when the nature, coverage and timing of the placements changed. • The level of project management time required from studio partners for managing changes to placements (internally and externally). • Securing placements with hosts with sufficient lead, particularly in production, where schedules change at short notice presented a challenge. Securing placements at short notice can result in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of certainty about the structure and content of on-the-job training and lead to stress and frustration among apprentices ○ Concerns among training providers about meeting Ofsted's expectations in relation to pastoral support and safeguarding ○ Perceived increased risk of a lack of coherence between placements and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the volume of project management support needed to oversee and coordinate the arrangement of the placements (particularly when they are not with studio partners closely engaged in the scheme) can be reduced, or if not, how it can be sustained. • How the process can be simplified to encourage and enable more employers, particularly smaller independent production companies, to take part in FJAS or a similar scheme in the future.

	<p>that apprentices may not have opportunities to develop the full range of competences required by the apprenticeship standard.</p>	
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Cost of the model		
Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers in the screen industries have been able to benefit from their apprenticeship levy payments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FJAS is perceived to be more expensive to run than ‘traditional’ apprenticeships (with a single employer and without an agency) and other trainee schemes, given the additional time required to co-ordinate and manage multiple placements. Training providers require additional resources to integrate off-the-job training into multiple placements. When the cohorts of apprentices are relatively small, it is not possible to achieve economies of scale. Several studio partners did not anticipate needing to meet certain costs for FJAS such as travel expenses for off-the-job training, the London living wage for apprentices based elsewhere in the country, and one-off cost of living payments, some of which were not available to other employees which resulted in some frustration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure employers understand from the outset the costs and level of resource required to support apprentices through FJAS. Consider whether there is scope to allow employer to use their apprenticeship levy to meet some of the additional costs (e.g. project management, provision of on-the-job training and training leave).

Placements and on-the-job training

Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placements within studio partners' head offices (e.g. for accounts assistants and production co-ordinators) work effectively. Apprentices get to work on a range projects/productions and studio partners can more easily manage the placement and support apprentices. • Apprentices are perceived to develop generic employability (e.g. communication skills) as well as the technical skills associated with their specific role through their on-the-job training. • Working on a variety of placements/productions supports apprentices to develop their professional networks. • Gaining work experience with highly regarded studios and production companies helps to strengthen apprentices' CVs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing an apprentice with a single host for the duration of their training runs counter to the objective of the scheme and risks limiting the range of experiences gained. • Some of the apprenticeship standards are less suited to the industry. One studio partner suggested that the production assistant role only requires six months training and the skills could be (more effectively) acquired through on-the-job experience rather than an apprenticeship of at least 12 months. • Some placements fell through at the last minute as a result of changes to production schedules and/or lack of time or resource within small, independent production companies. • Placements arranged within production companies through studio partners appear to vary in terms of quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider working with the industry to increase the scope and/or work with government to reduce the length of the apprenticeship standard for production assistants to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Off-the-job training		
Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The upfront blocks of training provide foundation knowledge (including about the sector and specific job roles) and skills (including software) which help to increase apprentices' confidence going into their placement. The upfront training reduces the amount of time apprentices spend off-the-job once their placements commence which makes it easier for production companies to accommodate the training around filming schedules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Studio partners find it challenging to work with different training providers that each have their own criteria, materials and paperwork. Studio partners received limited information on the content and schedules of off-the-job training directly from training providers. A lack of industry experience can affect the quality of the off-the-job training, particularly the extent to which it is sufficiently tailored to the screen industries context. The six-to-eight-week window for the End Point Assessment (EPA) is insufficient when there are unexpected issues (e.g. the apprentice experiences health issues, there is lack of availability of assessors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure employers receive advance notice of apprentices' training schedules to enable them to integrate on and off the job training effectively. Ensure training providers and mentors understand the screen industries and are able to tailor off-the-job training, particularly for generic roles (such as accounts assistant) appropriately. Greater standardisation of training materials and paperwork would help to reduce burden on employers. Consider extending the EPA timeframe to 12 weeks.

Widening access to the screen industries		
Aspects which work well	Aspects which work less well	Issues for consideration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality applicants are attracted to the scheme by the opportunity to secure up to 18 months employment in the screen industries. • FJAS facilitates access to the screen industries for people who have not been able to secure training or employment in the sector previously, including school leavers and those from lower socio-economic groups. • FJAS equips apprentices with the skills and experience needed to secure production roles in the future which could help to address skills shortages. • Some apprentices have been offered a role after they have completed their training with their placement host. • The pilot has enabled studio partners and production companies to engage with apprenticeships and encouraged them to consider engaging with them (albeit through a non-FJAS or more cost effective model) in the future. • FJAS has demonstrated that apprenticeships in production and post-production can be an effective way to train new starters in the industry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some studio partners expected the pool of applicants, particularly for the accounts assistant apprenticeship, to be larger and stronger overall • One studio partner perceived that their in-house traineeship programme attracts more diverse participants (in terms of ethnicity) and achieves greater geographic reach outside of London. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how to further extend the reach of the programme to achieve even greater diversity of recruits. • Foster relationship with more accounting bodies and stakeholders to promote the accounts assistant apprenticeship to those with relevant financial knowledge and an interest in working in the screen industries to increase the pipeline of applicants.

Conclusions

In summary, the key findings of the evaluation of the FJAS to date are:

- The successful delivery of the scheme is highly dependent on the support provided by the ScreenSkills programme managers to arrange placements, align these with off-the-job training schedules and criteria, and maintain communications between the multiple stakeholders involved (studio partners, placement hosts within production companies, training providers and apprentices).
- Overcoming the barriers of limited time and resource in smaller independent production companies has presented a key challenge. Any future rollout of the scheme would depend on securing funding (whether from government or the industry) for these essential roles, particularly if the ambition is to engage more small independent production companies as placement hosts.
- The scheme has demonstrated that apprenticeships are a feasible way for large employers in the screen industries to provide structured training for entry level roles, in particular accounts assistants and edit assistants. However, in these cases there is a perception that employers hosting their own apprenticeships rather than via an intermediary in the FJAS model would be more cost-efficient and afford employers greater control over the terms of apprentices' contracts and the content of their training. Other employers meanwhile perceive other trainee schemes to be better value for money. Further research into the costs of different trainee schemes could help identify whether this perception is valid.
- The scheme has increased access to entry level roles in the screen industries, especially for younger entrants without degrees and from lower socio-economic backgrounds who do not have an existing network of contacts. Improved forward planning and stability of placements (where possible given the frequency of changing schedules in the industry) would improve apprentices' experience of the scheme. It is apparent that these elements are easier to achieve for in-house placements for certain roles arranged by large employers in the screen industries.
- Training providers have invested significantly in the development of the new apprenticeships and building up industry experience. They require larger cohorts of apprentices to ensure these apprenticeships are financially viable to deliver.

These findings are based on research conducted in the early stages of the scheme, when apprentices were between 4-6 months into their training. Further research, including follow-up interviews with stakeholders and a survey of the apprentices once the apprenticeships have ended would provide further insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the scheme and its impact on apprentices, employers and the sector in the short-term

Appendix D

Comparison between Trainee Finder and apprenticeship pilot structures

Trainee Finder is an entry-level paid placement scheme run by ScreenSkills which places trainees on film, children’s live-action TV, high-end TV and animation productions to ensure a continued supply of a new generation of talent. In 2023-24, the programme will support over 350 trainees, and between launch in 2016 and 2022 it supported over 1,400 people to complete 3,335 placements.

In order to take Trainee Finder trainees on their production, production companies must be a paying member of the Film Skills Fund, High-end TV Skills Fund, Children’s TV Skills Fund or Animation Skills Fund. Taking trainees through Trainee Finder enables production companies to claim funding towards a trainee’s salary from the funds managed by ScreenSkills for part of the duration of the trainee’s time on the production.

Each trainee is supported by ScreenSkills for a year, with placements lasting four weeks to 20 weeks, though longer productions can have trainees for over 20 weeks if suitable. This means they can fit as many placements as possible within the duration of the Trainee Finder programme, although on average trainees go on 3-4 placements per year. The trainee is employed on a short-term contract by the production company for each placement, with ScreenSkills continuing to support their training plan and skills development. ScreenSkills provides 2-3 days’ induction training on employability skills and department-specific skills and knowledge, as well as some training courses on evenings and weekends during their placements on areas such as career planning, mental health awareness, or finance for freelancers.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the differences between the structure and communication on the ScreenSkills apprenticeship pilots and Trainee Finder.

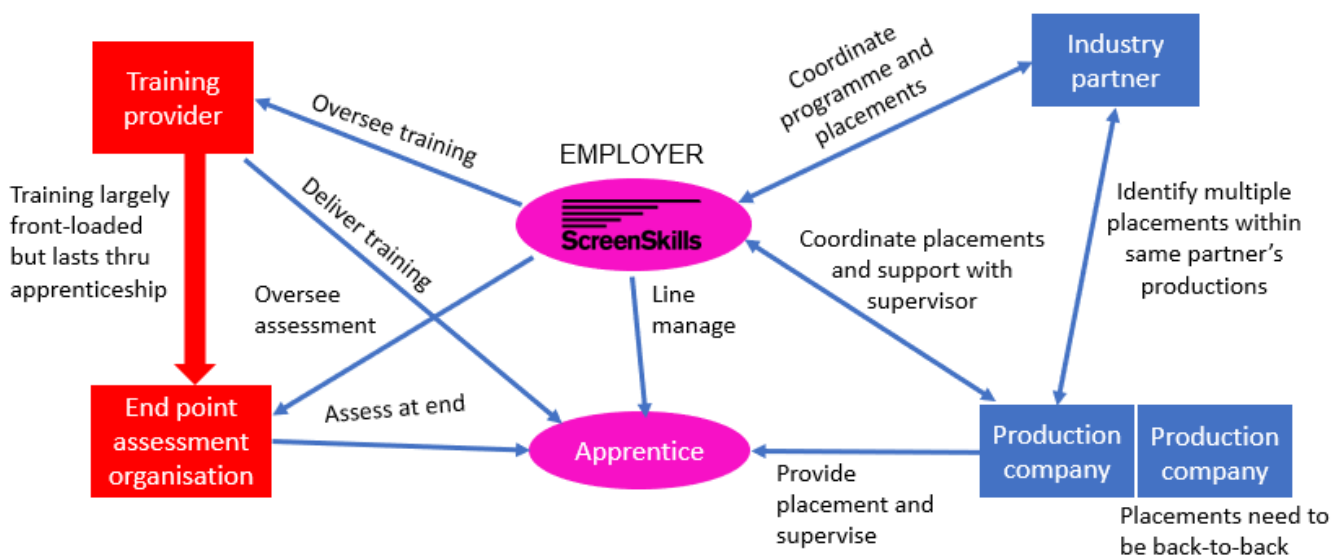


Figure 3: A summary of the structure and communication between stakeholders on ScreenSkills apprenticeship pilots

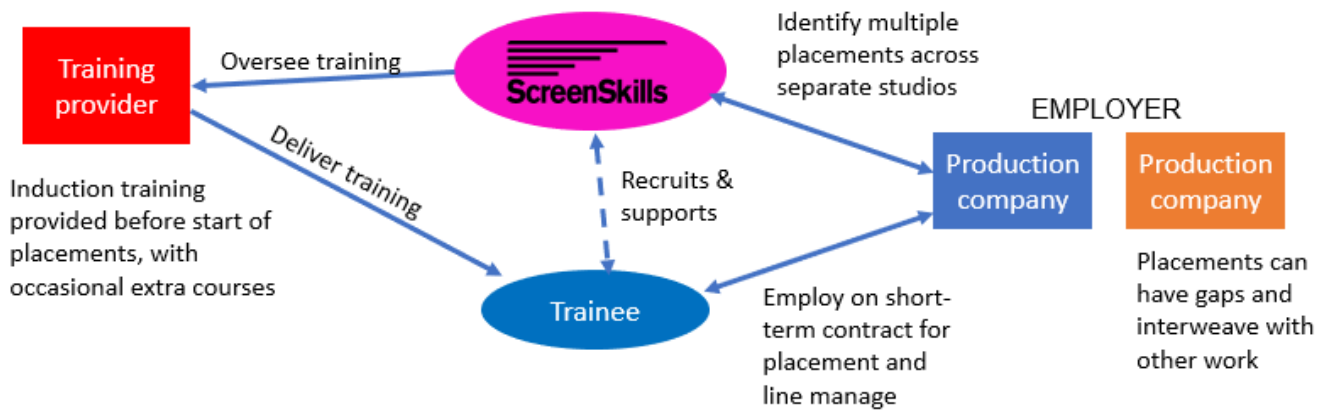


Figure 4: A summary of the structure and communication between stakeholders on ScreenSkills Trainee Finder programmes

This comparison shows that the structure and communication are significantly simpler for Trainee Finder, primarily because:

- Apprenticeships programmes last much longer than Trainee Finder, and provide in-depth formal qualifications and assessment. The content and scope of Trainee Finder’s training can be flexible rather than having to conform to a Government-approved standard or funding band.
- The trainees are employed by the production companies offering the placements rather than by ScreenSkills, providing greater clarity around responsibility
- Trainee Finder placements do not have to be back-to-back, can be interspersed with independent work, and can be spread across multiple production companies and studios.

Appendix E

Selective glossary of apprenticeship terminology

Apprenticeship	A paid job with a training element conforming to industry standards in a recognised occupation. It involves a substantial programme of on and off-the-job training.
Apprenticeship standard	Current apprenticeship model for England since 2016. Based on a document created by employer Trailblazer Groups, defining the knowledge, skills and behaviour required to be competent in a specific occupation. This competence is tested by an independent, end-point assessment.
Apprenticeship levy	<p>The funding system for apprenticeship training, whereby all UK employers with an annual PAYE bill over £3 million pay 0.5% of their annual pay bill above this threshold into the levy 'pot'.</p> <p>Each employer's levy payments are turned into apprenticeship digital vouchers (including a 10% top-up contribution from Government), for employers to spend on apprenticeship training only.</p>
Contextualisation	Adaptation of the training curriculum for an apprenticeship standard that has been created for one particular occupation, so it can be used for a similar role in the same or (usually) different sector.
End-point assessment	<p>A rigorous independent assessment taken by the apprentice at the end of their apprenticeship training programme to test that they can perform the occupation they have been trained in, and can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard.</p> <p>End-point assessment tests are created and delivered by end-point assessment organisations, that have to be entirely separate from training providers.</p>
Flexi-job apprenticeship agency (FJAA)	Organisation (such as ScreenSkills) that employs apprentices and places them with one or more host employers to complete all or part of their apprenticeship training. Part of Government's FJAA pilot programme funded by Department for Education (DfE).
Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE)	<p>The Government body responsible for improving the quality of apprenticeships and technical education in England. IfATE is an arm's length body of the Department for Education (DfE).</p> <p>IfATE runs a management and validation process for all existing or new apprenticeship standards, including allocating the amount of levy funding that can be used to pay for training on any particular standard.</p>
Levy vouchers	Digital vouchers to the value of an employer's contribution to the apprenticeship levy (plus 10% top-up contribution from Government). These can be spent on apprenticeship training only, delivered by a government-registered training provider and using an apprenticeship standard as its basis.
Off-the-job training	Training for apprentices delivered by a Government-registered training provider "off the job", when apprentices are not carrying out their day-to-day work activities. This training can

	<p>either take place on a training provider’s premises or in a separate location within the workplace. It is meant to take up approximately 20% of the duration of the apprenticeship programme, and can be delivered flexibly either in intermittent training blocks or regularly throughout.</p>
On-the-job training	<p>Training for apprentices delivered by the employer “on the job”, while they are carrying out their day-to-day activities in the workplace. This training should be based on the list of knowledge, skills and behaviours detailed in the apprenticeship standard. It is meant to take up approximately 80% of the duration of the apprenticeship programme.</p>
Training provider	<p>A training company that runs the off-the-job training for apprentices during their apprenticeship programme. This can be a college, university or independent training provider (often smaller and more specialist). Has to be approved and listed on the Government’s Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers.</p>