

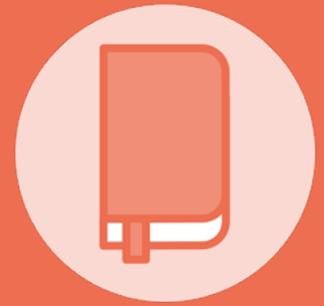
# Conditions for transition:

Supporting young people onto  
apprenticeships and technical  
pathways - a regional analysis

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# Glossary



**ATE** – Apprenticeships and Technical Education – Incorporating the full range of vocational pathways at different levels including Apprenticeships, Degree Apprenticeships, T Levels, Higher Technical Qualifications and other Vocational and Technical Qualifications such as BTECs.

**Gatsby Benchmarks** - The eight aspects of high-quality careers provision based on international evidence.

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each student
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

**CA** – Combined Authority, a body that enables a group of two or more councils to collaborate and act across council boundaries.

**Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)** - The national body for careers education in England, supporting schools and colleges to deliver modern, 21st century careers education.

**Careers education** - A term used in this report to encompass all aspects of careers education - underpinned by the Gatsby Benchmark framework.

**Careers Hub** - Groups of schools, colleges, employers and providers within a local area working together to improve practice. Hub Leads oversee the work and target support to local priorities.

**Careers Leader** - A leadership role overseeing a college or school's provision. Careers Leaders implement and quality assure a careers strategy, network with employers and providers and coordinate the contributions of Careers Advisers and subject teachers.

**Careers Adviser** - A careers professional who provides personal guidance to students and may also have other roles in relation to the delivery of careers provision.

**Compass** - A digital tool used by schools and colleges to track careers provision against the Gatsby Benchmarks based on approximately 50 questions. Compass+ is an upgraded version which allows Careers Leaders to track individual interventions and cohorts.

**Cornerstone Employer** - Provides the employer voice and leadership within a Careers Hub and works nationally, with other cornerstones, on shared careers-related priorities.

**Future Skills Questionnaire (FSQ)** - A set of age-appropriate questionnaires for students asking questions about their career knowledge and skills (career readiness) and their essential skills for the workplace.

**FSM** – Free School Meals – a widely used indicator to understand a learner's likely level of socio-economic disadvantage.

**LA** – Local Authority, a body that is officially responsible for public services and facilities in a particular area.

**LEP** – Local Enterprise Partnership

**LMI** – Labour Market Information – data, statistics, reports and insight about the composition of the labour market and how it is changing.

**LSIP** – Local Skills Improvement Plan – a local collaboration that provides an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive improvement in local skills.

**SME** – Small and Medium Enterprises. An SME is any organisation that has fewer than 250 employees and a turnover of less than €50 million or a balance sheet total less than €43 million.

**Special schools, SEND & AP** - Special schools cater for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); Alternative provision schools (AP) settings provide education for students who can't go to a mainstream school.

# Foreword

During my time at Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre, I had no idea that the BT office just down the road was expanding and searching for new employees.

Studying for my A Levels (Arabic, Economics and Politics) and while busily developing the essential skills I would need for a future job, I considered the university route but due to my personal circumstances, university fees were unaffordable, and taking out an interest-bearing loan was against my faith - I wanted to explore a vocational path. I knew a little about degree apprenticeships through school and felt they were too good to be true! I did my own research and the more I continued to learn, I discovered I could study and get paid for both practical and academic learning. My parents were supportive of my choice to pursue an apprenticeship route and my Economics teacher helped me to find out more about the pathway and with my applications in Year 13.

I was fortunate enough to receive a number of offers from companies to do an apprenticeship with them but ultimately, and from speaking to current apprentices at the company, I chose the BT Group, based on my attraction to its culture and my ongoing passion to work and forge a career in the Tech industry.

I'm now in my fourth year of my Digital & Technology Solutions (Software) Degree and about to move into a permanent Data Engineer role at BT.

Balancing university and my day job has been tough at times, but despite the challenge, I've taken on many responsibilities and developed many skills in programming languages and various technology systems & frameworks.

Outside of my day job, I am also the Co-Chair of the BT Muslim Network and am heavily involved in leading Diversity & Inclusion initiatives across BT Group such as company-wide campaigns on Ramadan, Islamophobia Awareness Month and many other key Islamic events throughout the year. I think this shows the enthusiasm and drive apprentices can bring to any company.

Due to the opportunities and development that my apprenticeship has provided for me, I am immensely passionate about giving back and inspiring those particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds towards apprenticeships and other technical pathways. I might initially have discounted university because of finance and faith but if I could go back knowing what I know now I'd have chosen an apprenticeship in any case.

I am Umayr Tanveer and this is my story.

Every young person's story is unique – and for Umayr all of the elements needed for him to take an apprenticeship lit up at the same time (as they do for many others). He had information from a number of sources, there was a local opportunity (in an industry he was interested in), he had the right skills, the employer was supportive (and had a need), there was an established training programme. This is not the case for every young person.

This report is about what factors enable and inhibit smooth transitions, how these differ around the country and what action we need to take collectively. It uses publicly available data and evidence as a starting point. But at its heart represents the collected insight of over 500 experts from business, education, local government, careers education and young people themselves.

## The process in numbers

- **8** factors that affect transitions for young people
- **40** consultations representing **43** Careers Hubs areas across England. Collectively they work with over **90%** of schools and colleges
- **25** core data points to inform discussion
- Over **500** experts from business, education, local government, careers education and young people themselves
- **1** common framework driving a consensus in each area towards a coherent national view

# Acknowledgements

This report and the work it is based on, and will lead to, is a collaboration between local institutions with an interest in economic growth and skills (Combined Authorities, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) through the network of Careers Hubs. The scores and findings belong to over 500 experts from business, education, local government, training providers and young people themselves. These groups gave up their time to analyse, debate and agree the factors that influence young people's transitions to technical education pathways in their regions. Our thanks to everyone who took part.



# Introduction

There have been considerable efforts over recent years to ensure smoother transitions for young people onto apprenticeships and other technical pathways. There is energy and urgency to this cause – from businesses who want and need more skilled workers – and from young people who are more and more interested in these routes<sup>i</sup> (and the sorts of hands on learning they provide). Most recently, a new legal provision – the [Provider Access Legislation](#) – offers an impetus for schools to engage their students in apprenticeships and technical pathways.

And yet there remains friction at points of transition. This is not surprising given that the transition from one institution to another – and one mode of learning to another – is often complex for young people (with evidence suggesting young people eligible for free school meals face additional barriers<sup>ii</sup>).

The well-trodden path of A-levels and university has history on its side. Skills routes like T Levels and standards-based apprenticeships are much newer.

But getting this right is vital if we are to fulfil our economic goals and, importantly, meet the aspirations of young people themselves.

This report aims to shine a light on the supports and barriers to smoother transitions. Region by region, factor by factor, we have used data and expert insight to diagnose the issues precisely and activate support.

The findings are already stimulating interventions by actors in the system – Careers Hubs, Employers, Educators, Local Government. And in the future, we hope to do much more.

We are now sharing our findings in an open way to help all those invested in this work to have a firm basis for collective, collaborative action.

Fig 1 – Illustration of the eight factors required for a young persons' transition onto an ATE pathway.



## The Apprenticeship and Technical Education Transitions Framework

So, what factors enable and inhibit young people from taking apprenticeships and technical education (ATE) pathways?

It is a debate that fosters strong, diverse opinions and much comment.

What is clear though is that for a young person to transition onto a technical education pathway, one factor is not enough. Our transitions framework (tested and used across the country) highlights that **you need eight things to go right at the same time (see Fig 8 illustrative example in the Annex).**

Only then can lightning strike.

Point	Factor	Description
Labour Market	Employer need	The need of employers for skilled workers
	Employer willingness to offer opportunity	The degree to which employers are offering tangible opportunity for learners through, for example, placements or apprenticeships
Transition	Access to relevant training options	The extent to which relevant training options are accessible in a specific place
	Conversion rate of interest to take up	The extent to which interest in ATE pathways is actualised
	Promotion of ATE options	The degree to which ATE options are promoted
Learner	Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities	Young peoples' relative enthusiasm for occupations and industries which have a sufficient supply of opportunities
	Understanding of ATE routes	The extent to which young people identify they understand ATE routes
	Existing skill levels match requirements for next step	The extent to which young people are able to access ATE pathways with their existing level of skill

### The makings of an ATE Transitions Framework

We put in place a three-stage process:

- Stage 1: Drawing on the literature and best available evidence, we developed and tested an **Apprenticeship and Technical Education - (ATE) Transitions Framework**. This separated out the eight factors that enable transitions for young people as per Fig. 1
- Stage 2: We synthesised publicly available data from the Employer Skills Survey, Individualised Learner Record and other sources listed in Annex 1 with our own data. The goal was to establish the salience of different factors in each region of England. For example, we were able to use online vacancies data from Dec 2022 gleaned from the Local Skills Dashboard (70,860 in Greater Manchester compared with 7,190 in Hull and East Yorkshire) to inform a judgement about employer need for skills in those areas.
- Stage 3: We presented this evidence to experts in each Careers Hub from business, education, Local Government and young people themselves. The aim was to come to a consensus about the degree to which each factor was a support or barrier to ATE transitions in the area. The discussion and mutual challenge from different stakeholders provided context and nuance, alongside crucial insight about how barriers could be overcome.

# Executive Summary

If you ask the question “What prevents young people from taking up apprenticeships and technical and vocational (ATE) pathways?” you may get many different answers. If you speak to a room of employers, they might say young people don’t have the skills they need. If you speak to young people, they might say the opportunities aren’t there. These things might be true, they might once have been true, they might just feel right and act as a kind of shorthand for the complex interplay of different things.

And yet when employers and educators have a shared understanding about how they can work together to improve transitions for young people, there is real impact. Our goal – and the goal of many in the system - is to smooth pathways for young people, reducing friction and fulfilling ambitions. This is achievable and essential both for learners and the wider economy.

## Our ATE Transitions Framework

Over the past year we have worked, region by region, to establish what the key enabling factors are regarding transitions for young people onto ATE pathways, and their relative impact. We have done so through Careers Hubs in partnership with Combined Authorities, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The aim was to come to a shared understanding specific to a place. We did this by presenting the best publicly available data against eight identified factors (the ATE Transitions Framework detailed in the introduction) and then asked local expert groups to assess the extent to which each factor was a support or a barrier. This has provided sharp insight into the key things that need to be unlocked in each area and their relative importance to each other. Crucially, it has and continues to stimulate collective, collaborative action.

This report is about what we learnt and where we go next.

Across the country some factors were identified as more supportive to effective transitions than others (see Figure 2 below)

**Fig 2 - Summary table of most significant supports and barriers on average.**

Factors identified as most significant supports on average across all participating areas	Factors identified as most significant barriers on average across all participating areas
Employer need	Employer willingness to offer opportunity
Promotion of ATE options	Conversion of interest to take up
Understanding of ATE routes	Learner skills match the requirements for next step

Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023

## Key findings

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There was considerable regional variation. Every factor was identified as being a support and a barrier in at least one place. However, there were some common national themes.



**There was a consensus across the country that employers have a need for skilled labour.** This factor was identified as the largest support of the eight. However, for a range of reasons (time, complexity, understanding) **this need was not always matched by their willingness to offer opportunity** which was identified as the largest barrier to young people's transition onto ATE pathways.



**Young people generally understood apprenticeships and to a lesser extent other technical pathways but that was not matched by their take up of these pathways.** The journey from understanding to take up can include many hurdles. This can include a lack of local opportunities, travel difficulties, influence of parents and teachers, ineligibility due to specific requirements, fear of specialisation and the length and variable timing of the application process. **Intent can be transient and erodes over time.**



**Effective programmes exist to support employers, education institutions and young people to engage with ATE pathways.** And there are opportunities for even better data and expert informed collaboration and coordination.

### How the factors compared?

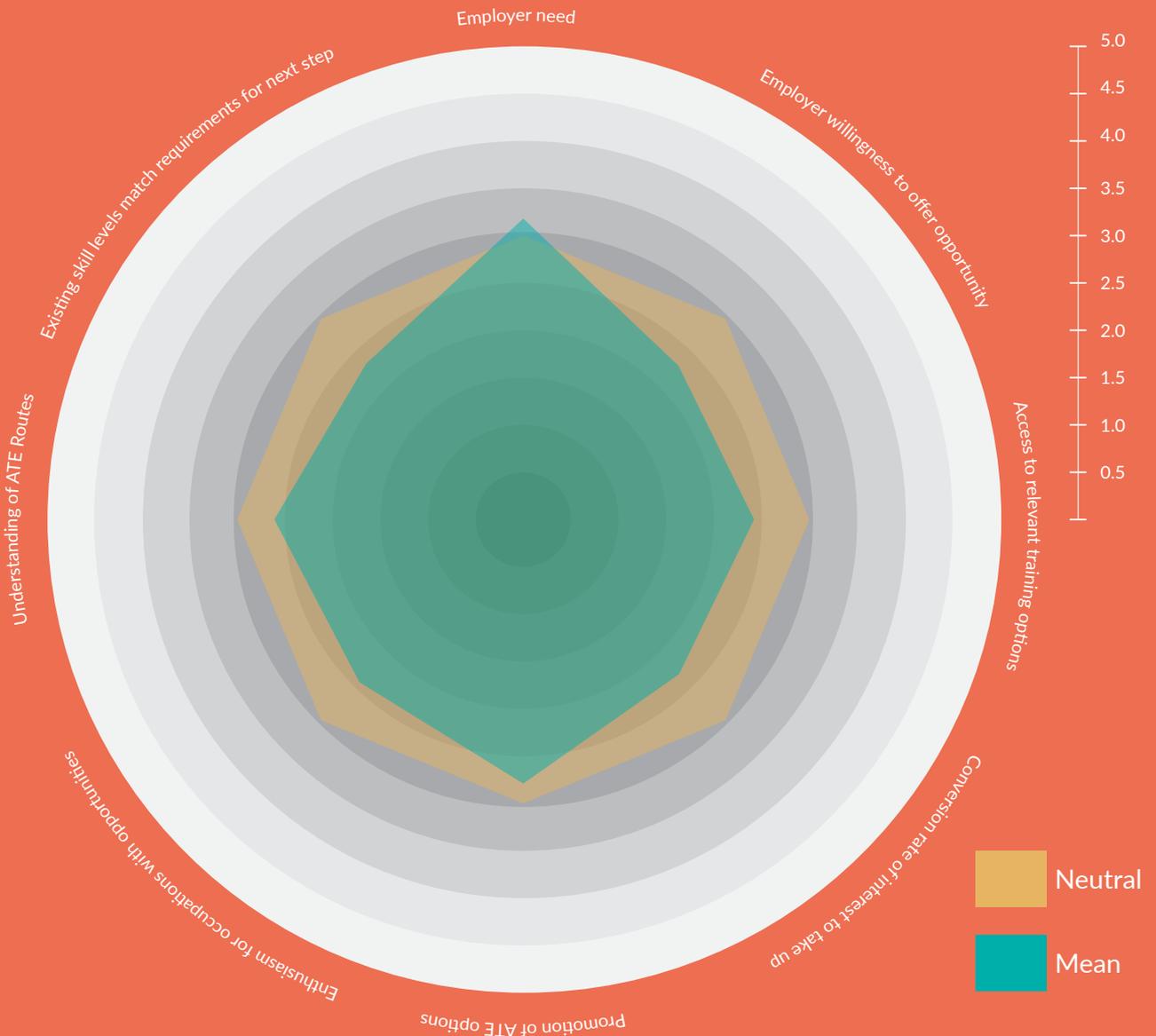
To get to a rating each factor was scored on a Likert Scale (1-5). Expert groups agreed on a rating after reviewing the data packs provided (detailed in Annex 1):

1. This is a significant barrier to ATE transitions and the evidence conclusively points to this
2. This is a barrier to ATE transitions and there is sufficient evidence to indicate it is restricting ATE transitions despite some positive indicators
3. There is roughly equal amount of positive and negative evidence on this criteria and it is broadly neutral in terms of its impact on ATE transitions

4. There is positive evidence this is supporting ATE transitions despite some negative indicators
5. This is a significant support to ATE transitions and the evidence conclusively points to this

Fig 3 shows the national average (mean) of each rating versus a neutral rating (i.e. neither a support nor a barrier). The further from the middle the more of a support to young people’s transitions – the closer to the centre the more a barrier. We can see that employer need (3.18) was considered the most supportive factor nationally.

**Fig 3: The average of Careers Hub scores compared with an example of where each of these factors is thought to be neutral – i.e., neither a support nor a barrier.**



Average scores against each factor are set out below (and ranked).

Fig 4: Ranking of factors by average score from biggest support to biggest barrier.



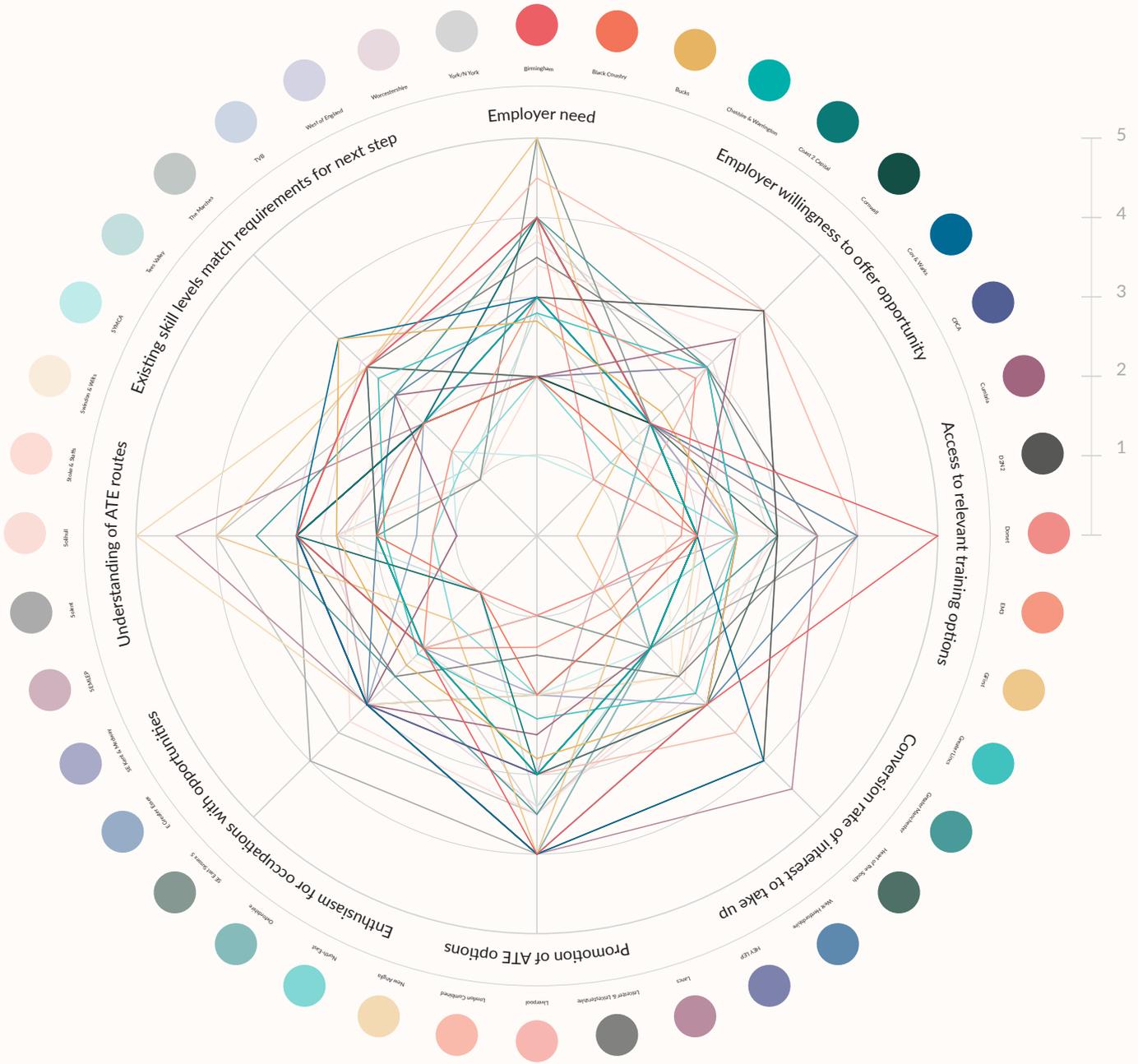
Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE transitions framework scores 2023

Fig 5 below highlights the regional variation – which is considerable. For example, in Birmingham – ‘access to relevant training options’ was scored as a 5 but in Swindon and Wiltshire this was 1.6. Overall, we can see a line of best fit for most factors and some clear examples of success such as ‘Promotion of ATE routes’ in Oxfordshire (4) and ‘Conversion of interest to take up in Lancashire’ (4.5). However, for factors such as ‘existing skills match the requirement for the next step’ and ‘enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities’ the ceiling appears much lower currently.

As above the further out from the middle each line is plotted the more that factor is a support to ATE transitions, the closer to the middle the more a barrier - with 3 being neutral.



Fig 5: A plot of all hub scores by factor.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023

## Next steps for the CEC:

As part of our strategic priorities we remain committed to boosting skills pathways and working with partners to smooth transitions for young people. In practice this means we will:

1. **Deploy this ATE Transitions Framework**
  - We will continue to use this framework with Careers Hubs so we can target support effectively and coherently.
  - We will seek to deploy the framework with sectors. For example, the Salesforce Foundation have committed to using it for a joint programme of support for digital pathways.
  - We will encourage all our partners to use the framework so we have a shared understanding of where best to direct efforts together.
2. **Continue efforts to improve young people's awareness of ATE pathways**, monitored through national Compass data and student insight from CEC's Future Skills Questionnaire<sup>iii</sup>.
3. **Maintain support to schools to meet Provider Access Legislation requirements** by harnessing the Careers Hub infrastructure to track, and build opportunities for, meaningful interactions between students and providers of apprenticeships and technical education.
4. **Support and equip teachers and parents/ carers to understand and promote ATE routes**, by continuing the rollout of CEC's [Teachers Encounters](#) pilot programme with employers, and through collaboration with the Gatsby Foundation to amplify ATE within the [Talking Futures](#) programme aimed at parents/carers.
5. **Launch [Employer Standards](#)** – a set of benchmarks to ensure high quality employer outreach - and work to further bolster employer connections to pre-19 education which include promotion of ATE routes.
6. **Enhance the quality and quantity of experiences of the workplace** to ensure learners are better equipped with the understanding of pathways and the skills required to take the next step.



## Liverpool City Region Careers Hub

The whole process of  
the ATE Transitions  
Framework evaluation

### Why has it been important to critically-assess apprenticeship and technical education transitions?

This issue is of critical importance for the local economy and society. While there have been great initiatives in the region such as student careers champions and employability coaching for learners that reassure employers of an applicant's professionalism, it is important that we look at the whole picture. This process has enabled us to do this by utilising local expertise alongside national insight and support to forge a shared consensus about how we can better work together to address this issue. It highlighted areas that might have been overlooked in a more fluid planning process and brought new partners to the table to support collective action.

### What did the process highlight?

Cornerstone Employers are ingrained within the economic development of the Liverpool City Region. Most employers know what they will need in the future, so their contribution to skills development is vital.

In disadvantaged areas, some young people don't have role models to guide their choices.

Cultural prejudices regarding appropriate pathways are reductive, so it's important to showcase the diversity of possible routes for everyone. Personal principles also inform choices, with a lack of focus on topics like sustainability potentially deterring young people from considering certain industries.

The pandemic has affected the current cohort's social skills, rendering it harder to develop their work-readiness. Enrolling on a technical programme at a lower level before progressing to degree apprenticeships can be a less-daunting way to access higher qualifications. Some highlighted a lack of supported apprenticeship programmes for work-ready SEND students.

These things were often known - but not collectively and were not compared against each other to support a strategic collective effort across all factors and partners.

### How will we use this process to drive improvements?

Our strategic focus will prioritise those who are unaware of their opportunities and on building understanding of future growth sectors to help to align the talent pipeline with the next phase of technical pathways. It will bolster the promotion of ATE options and the conversion of interest. The inclusivity of the current apprenticeship offer will be improved by collaborating with training providers and awarding bodies to carve bespoke technical pathways for young people with SEND improving access to relevant training options. The Student Careers Champions scheme will actively encourage peer-to-peer discussion. Receiving learner feedback on resources and engagement will shape careers provision to meet their needs - weaving student voice through every aspect of the apprenticeship strategy.

For the Liverpool City Region Careers Hub, refining the apprenticeships and technical education transitions approach will encourage social mobility and inclusion - helping every young person to access progression routes for their future.

# Detailed results by factor and place

Employer need

Employer willingness to offer opportunity

Access to relevant training options

Conversion rate of interest to take up

Promotion of ATE options

Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities

Understanding of ATE routes

Existing skill levels match requirements for next step

# 3.18 Employer need

## Average factor score

By employer need, we mean the need of employers (and the labour market) to fill vacancies which require technical skills - not the specific need to recruit apprentices, which is subjective.

Employer need was the highest scoring factor. This factor also had the joint highest variance in scoring between hubs, which was in part informed by a rural / urban divide i.e., urban areas were more likely to cite employer need as a support to transitions compared with rural areas, who were more likely to cite it as a barrier.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- Many groups saw the catalytic power of this factor in supporting other factors: ‘employer challenges around recruitment are providing an opportunity to discuss amplifying ATE’ in Cheshire and Warrington<sup>1</sup>
- As expected, there is high variance across industries and places both between and within Careers Hubs – Cornwall for instance highlighted the seasonal variation in need in tourism and agriculture as a key consideration.
- Many commented that employer need is often at higher levels compared to new entrants. However, there was acknowledgement that this can be perception as well as reality and there is a need to develop talent pipelines for the future and anticipate future skills shortages at higher levels.
- Hubs with schools above the national average for percentage of students on FSM (i.e., more disadvantaged) are more likely to cite employer need as a barrier (2.8), compared to the less disadvantaged (3.4)
- Hubs with students who reported lower than average awareness of T levels are more likely to cite employer need as a barrier (2.2), compared to Hubs with students reporting more awareness (3.2)



<sup>1</sup> A note on quotes – all of the roundtables and consultation from which these were taken were done under Chatham House rules to encourage candour and aid consensus. The quotes are from individuals taking part in the groups in these places and should not be taken as necessarily representative of the whole group's view in that place.

## Expert Insight

To identify the best ways to support young people into apprenticeships and other technical/ vocational qualifications that prepare them for the workplace and signal their skills to employers, we first need to be clear about the skills, knowledge and capabilities that employers need, and how these are likely to change in the future.

The impact of adoption of new technologies, coupled with major demographic and environmental change and other factors, are likely to continue to disrupt the labour market in the coming years. This will impact both the jobs which will be available, and the skills that workers will need to do those jobs.

Whilst some sectors (e.g., non-market services inc. health and education) are projected to see increases in their share of UK employment, other sectors (e.g., manufacturing) will experience significant job destruction. Millions of jobs could be replaced by technology, with some sectors (e.g., transport) experiencing significant losses. Most new jobs will be in 'professional' and 'associate professional' occupational groups, whereas 'administrative and secretarial' and 'skilled trades' will decline slightly. Substantial changes are also expected in the occupational structure of employment, with some occupations (e.g., care workers and programmers) expected to grow, whilst other occupations (e.g., receptionists and warehouse operatives) are likely to decline. Our projections suggest:

### 2.6 million

There will be a projected 2.6 million new jobs by 2035, the majority of which will be taken by females. By contrast, the jobs most vulnerable to automation are currently mainly held by men.

Job losses will be concentrated among blue collar manual occupations, especially in areas where automation is possible, as well as among less skilled white-collar non manual occupations.

Current trends that see young people acquiring more and higher-level qualifications (replacing those generally less qualified people who are leaving the labour market), will continue.

### 369,000 new jobs

Employment in the health sector is expected to increase the fastest, with around 369,000 new jobs by 2035.

The UK economy will see a substantial recovery in Gross Value Added (GVA) output by 2035, following the sharp decline in the pandemic. The construction (+2.4 per cent pa) and trade, accommodation and transport (+2.1 per cent pa) sectors are expected to lead the way.

The sectors with the largest employment declines will be in manufacturing: metal products (-41,000) and other transport equipment (-22,000).

It is vital we understand these changes and prepare young people to enter the future workforce with the right skills to do the jobs that the economy will require.

**Luke Bocock, Research Director, National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER)**



## The Marches LEP

### Why is this factor important?

Research by The Marches LEP highlights that while there is a high demand for apprentices locally, employers were not always connecting effectively with local schools to build awareness of these opportunities. We also needed to better articulate the diversity of skills required in different roles. Increasing awareness of the expectations of employers is vital to developing a curriculum that effectively prepares young people for apprenticeship pathways.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

The LEP found that schools and colleges don't always necessarily understand the variety of roles offered through apprenticeship providers. On the other hand, some local employers were failing to promote their early career opportunities directly to young people in education. A shared engagement network founded on visibility and communication is therefore needed to identify – and fill – skill gaps within the future workforce.

The ATE Transitions Framework process was reassuring in that all stakeholders were united in their desire to bridge the gap between education and employment. To achieve this, senior leadership teams in schools need frequent industry insight to provide relevant careers guidance. Parental engagement is also needed to dispel generational misconceptions regarding vocational and technical pathways.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

Training providers typically target older pupils, so a shift in focus towards Key Stage 3 pupils is intended to tap into their enthusiasm for learning. Engaging early and often will foster aspirations while increasing exposure to employer expectations at a formative age.

Offering training resources and upskilling sessions for influential stakeholders under the collective vision of improving opportunities will embed a greater understanding of the labour market.

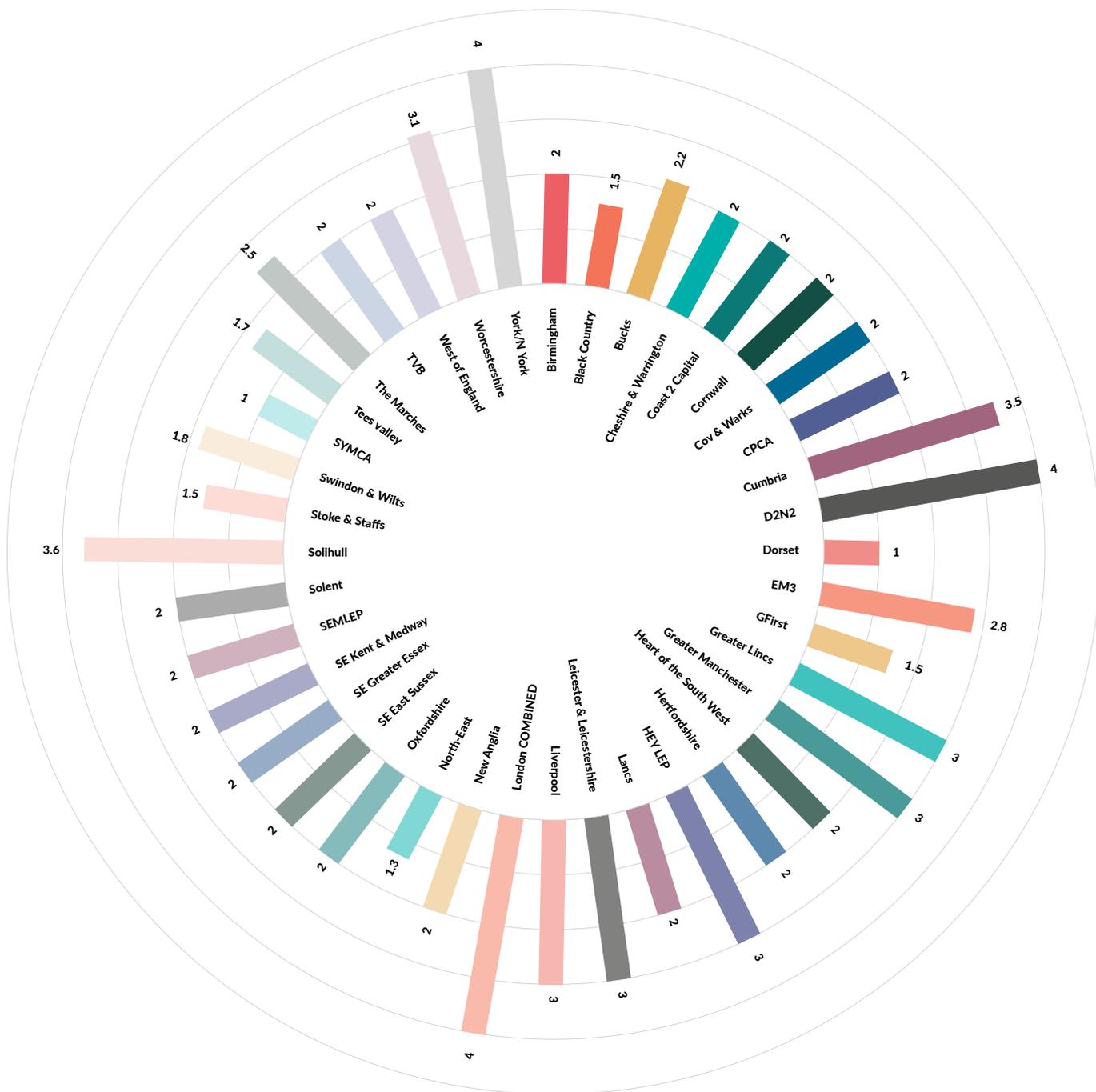
Cornerstone Employers in The Marches area have created a substantial network of employee volunteers to scout the local talent pool, while simultaneously shaping the workforce of tomorrow. Getting other employers to mirror this clustered approach on a national level could increase the amount of sustainable post-school destinations, thereby reducing NEET figures.

# 2.30

Average factor score

## Employer willingness to offer opportunity

Employer willingness to offer opportunity is not the same thing as whether employers ‘would like to’ offer apprenticeships or placements. Overwhelmingly they would. Most understand them too: “76% of employers reported that they have some level of understanding of apprenticeships in their sector”<sup>iv</sup>. ‘Willingness’ should be interpreted as whether they are willing to overcome the obstacles to convert this ‘would like to’ into tangible opportunity for learners. This was the factor overall identified as the greatest barrier.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE transitions framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- Employers may have a willingness but what is urgent can take precedence over what is important when converting that into opportunities for young people: “employers are willing to support in theory but focussed on short-term wins not assets for the future” - Stoke & Staffs
- The administrative and resource burden is often perceived as too high relative to the expected gain, particularly for small firms: “We have a huge amount of micro businesses (92%) and this throws up capacity issues for owner managers coupled with perceptions of difficulty over set up and administration” - Dorset.
- Several groups highlighted the different investments of time, money and resource involved in offering different types of opportunity. Some cited how effective matching of employer engagement to the capacity and interest of those employers can lead to more opportunity overall and how coordination and referral between different programmes can ensure that employer energy is used most efficiently.
- There is an acknowledgement that it is one thing to understand and another to take the leap – many employers identify themselves as wanting to offer opportunity but for one reason or another have not taken this forward.
- Linked to the above point, it was clear that willingness is variable and transient. There is a need to be able to convert quickly – when the process appears too long, confusing or expensive, willingness erodes or remains unrealised.
- It was acknowledged there is a need to balance flexibility for employers with protecting interests of the learners.
- The overwhelming view is that coordination helps: “Commitment from employers is increasing to host placements...but saturated with requests and a coordinated approach is needed” - Yorks & North Yorks



## Expert Insight

Enabling more small businesses to engage with the apprenticeship and technical education system is critical to success. In 2022, there were an estimated 5.5 million SMEs in the UK, representing 61% of private sector employment. Yet it is larger employers who tend to find apprenticeships easier to engage with.

FSB research shows that four in five (78%) of small business employers struggle to hire. To overcome recruitment difficulties, SMEs tend to focus on shorter term fixes. The most popular step is to increase wages, while other common responses include spending more on recruitment and hiring contractors. Only 16% of small business employers say they plan to hire an apprentice in the next 12 months.

This mirrors a key finding in this report; a tight labour market leads to employers increasingly focused on quick fixes for their recruitment problems. However, this isn't the only barrier to engagement.

Time and resources are always in short supply for small business owners and therefore financial incentives can be one effective way to encourage SMEs to hire young apprentices. Reducing the amount of bureaucracy and supporting those businesses that haven't hired an apprentice before is also crucial.

Another key challenge that FSB members report to us is the struggle to find local training providers with courses suitable for their needs. This is particularly true for more specialised roles in more rural areas. It is important that small businesses can access the apprenticeships and technical education courses that met their needs. Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) should be part of the answer, but we should also have an open mind to the possibility of providing more vocational training virtually.

Ultimately, we need an apprenticeship and technical education system that considers the skills needs of the entire labour market, not just of those most able to engage.

**Chris Russell, Senior Policy Manager,  
Federation of Small Businesses**

**78%**

**FSB research shows that four in five (78%) of small business employers struggle to hire**

**5.5 million**

**In 2022, there were an estimated 5.5 million SMEs in the UK, representing 61% of private sector employment**



## York and North Yorkshire LEP

### Why is this factor important?

Research by the York and North Yorkshire LEP supports the fact that employers are generally willing to offer apprenticeship pathways. However, these findings clarify that many employers are currently under-equipped with the resources to maximise their capacity for post-school recruitment.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

Discussions with the LEP's Cornerstone Employer network raised concerns about work experience oversaturation. It can be difficult to justify offering young people valuable workplace encounters when the necessary financial and resource expenditure offers no guaranteed return on recruitment.

There are also general apprehensions regarding the work readiness of school leavers, with employers reluctant to add excessive pressure to young people. Despite this, the demand for replacing an ageing workforce is increasing. Urgently recruiting and training apprentices will mean the knowledge of experienced staff can be shared with the next generation.

The ATE Transitions Framework helped us identify these issues and develop a plan to overcome the barriers.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

A partnership-based approach is crucial to foster a community of collaboration between all stakeholders. Most recruiters are faced by similar challenges, so facilitating cross-industry conversations between employers of all sizes will create a culture of shared best practice. Identifying flagship employers to share their successes with others will also set a regional standard.

The apprenticeship recruitment process can be streamlined by encouraging businesses to align their hiring with the end of the school year. Closer communication between employers and educators will help them to consider productive and sustainable ways to deliver meaningful experiences of the workplace – creating more work-ready school leavers in the process.

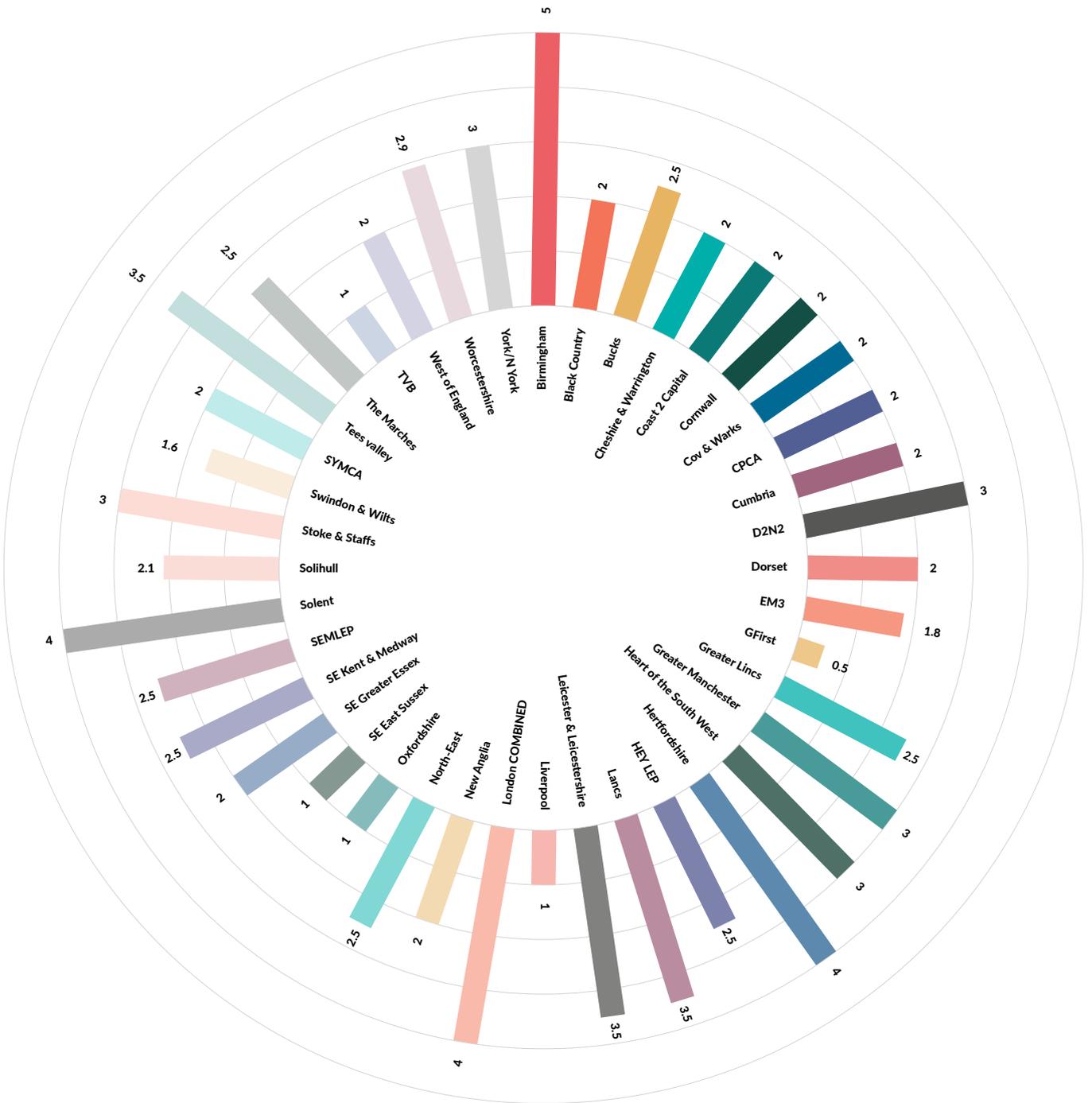
Equipping training providers with a communication toolkit can support them in optimising their school engagement. Simplifying the outreach process for employers in this way will help to achieve a quality dialogue when creating tangible apprenticeship opportunities across the network.

# 2.42

Average factor score

## Access to relevant training options

Access to relevant training options is the factor with the joint highest variance between Careers Hubs. This incorporates employer and learner access and discussion centred around factors such as public transport links, the diversity of training options and funding for study.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- Buses and local transport matter. We heard from learners, employers and training providers that young people's options could be limited by not being able to physically get to their preferred training option "transport across rural areas acts as a barrier to accessing relevant training options" Cambridgeshire & Peterborough.
- Finance plays a role. Groups highlighted that some learning choices such as apprenticeship schemes can impact on wider family income and eligibility for other financial support and this was thought to be a factor for some learners.
- Some groups are affected more than others. For example: "there are particular barriers for young people with SEND" - Buckinghamshire
- Capacity in training providers was also cited. Some institutions were reporting they can't run some courses for as many learners as they would like as they can't find enough teachers.
- Hubs with schools in mixed urban/rural areas are more likely to cite access to relevant training options as a barrier (2.3), compared to Hubs with schools in predominantly urban areas (2.7).
- Hubs with schools below the national average for percentage of students on FSM (i.e., less disadvantaged) are more likely to cite access to relevant training options as a barrier (2.2), compared to the more disadvantaged (2.9).



## Expert Insight

Training providers up and down the country offer high quality education and training options. Colleges alone serve over one and half million 16+ students every year: from vocational and technical qualifications in digital media and agriculture; to apprenticeships in electrical installation and accountancy; and a third of all A Levels. The opportunities are truly amazing.

For learners, a wide range of influences - or a combination of them - can support or inhibit access. These can include finance, transport and accessibility. Additionally, over 25% of 16 to 18-year-olds in colleges disclose a learning difficulty or disability, and there is more that could be done to support them and their training providers on their journeys.

These are just some of the challenges; student well-being, recruiting and retaining well-qualified teaching and support staff, and sourcing work placement opportunities are also high on college lists of the daily issues they face, and which can affect the options available to students.

Turning to solutions, support with transport could help some learners. Connectivity between schools and colleges to share transition information continues to be important and flexible financial support for training providers can also help them provide more tailored innovative support which can improve access.

**Catherine Sezen, Director of Education Policy,  
Association of Colleges**

**Over 25%**

**of 16 to 18-year-olds in colleges  
disclose a learning difficulty or disability**





## Birmingham Careers Hub

### Why is this factor important?

Research by the Birmingham Careers Hub established that young people have good foundational knowledge about apprenticeships, with plenty of businesses offering relevant opportunities. Equipping young people to confidently navigate their options will help them to make ambitious and informed choices for their futures.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

Birmingham has a rich pool of provision that employers and educators sometimes don't effectively communicate how to access. Feedback indicated that some teachers in local schools had low awareness of apprenticeship application processes like assessment centres. A broader understanding of the processes surrounding accessing ATE pathways is needed to support learners to connect with local opportunities.

In terms of socio-economic accessibility, families on welfare support may be reluctant to encourage apprenticeships due to the impact it has on household means-testing.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

The Birmingham Careers Hub is in the process of rolling out an Access to Apprenticeship pilot, in which year 12 pupils from deprived communities will receive intensive employability and application support from flagship employers.

The Hub is also inviting training providers from four different sectors to contribute to a series of live sessions surrounding the Provider Access Legislation. Offering both in-person and virtual events will make information broadly accessible – so all stakeholders can work towards meeting the skills needs of the future.

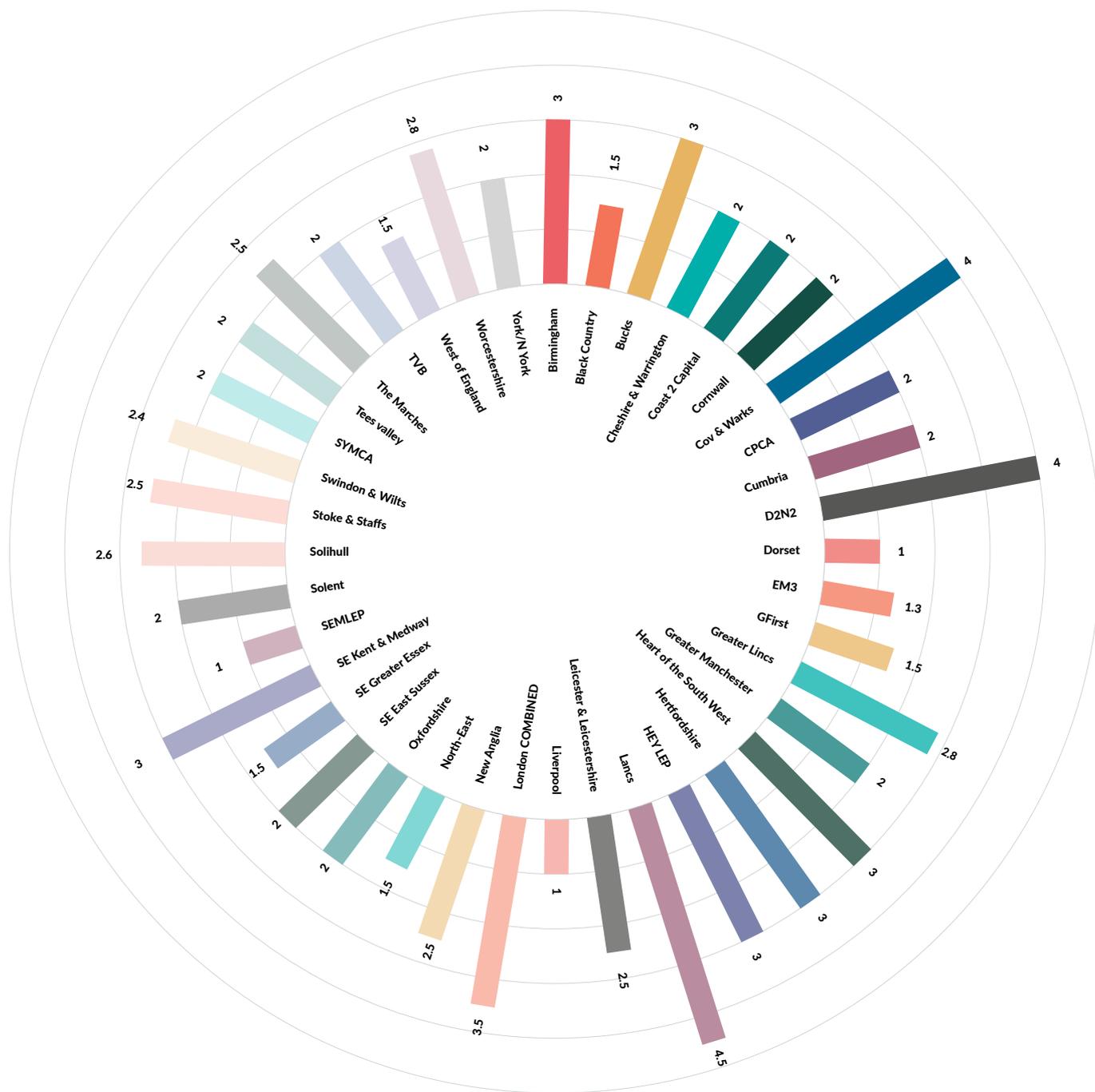
Likewise, encouraging Teacher Encounter participation will reinforce the necessity of including employability skills in the curriculum – fostering a shared accountability between employers and educators. Sharing the successes of these events with Careers Leaders across the region will motivate wider involvement.

# 2.31

Average factor score

## Conversion rate from interest to take up

This factor was identified as the second most significant barrier and provoked a wide range of discussion and involved the broadest range of different elements. Included in this were parental support, teacher support, the nature of the application process, the alignment of timing and perceived risk.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- This was identified as the second largest barrier on average. A complex interplay of elements were highlighted which included:
- Timing - “Apprenticeships start dates often don't align with end of school / college years so learners become nervous and go with the easier option” - Greater Essex.
- Money - Current financial rewards as well as projected future rewards were identified as important. Groups noted a pathway is not a binary choice but a relative choice against other options at a moment in time - for example when work and higher wages become relatively easier to come by outside of technical pathways it will change the calculation on converting for learners.
- Culture - “there are cultural barriers to young people progressing to ATE” - Greater Manchester.
- Parents - “Parents often do not feel comfortable supporting their child to complete an apprenticeship application” - Hertfordshire.
- Teacher support - “Need to improve teachers’ knowledge of ATE, students will often take the easiest option” - Oxfordshire.
- The application process - “The application process for apprenticeships is too cumbersome with individual applications required for each apprenticeship and multiple (shifting) deadlines to submit applications” - Coast 2 Capital.
- Lack of support and feedback - “Lack of employer feedback during application process, if young people are rejected, they do not know what the negative factors within the application process were to then improve” - SEMLEP.



## Expert Insight

Each year, UCAS supports nearly 1.5 million individuals explore their next step across the full range of post-secondary choices. In recent years, we've seen interest in apprenticeship opportunities grow significantly. Currently, we know that 40% of those interested in undergraduate study are also interested in apprenticeship options, equating to around 430,000 individuals. This figure will only grow – UCAS projects in 2030 we could see up to a million higher education applicants in a single cycle with demand increasing across the full range of choices available to students. But this interest doesn't necessarily convert into apprenticeship starts. Our recent research with The Sutton Trust highlights that the number of starts at Level 4 and above for under 19 year olds is less than 5,000, with twice as many degree apprentices from the wealthiest areas compared to the poorest, indicating disparities in entry by background.

So how do we convert interest into take-up, ensuring that a greater number of students from all backgrounds can benefit from the life changing opportunities of an apprenticeship offers?

Firstly, information. Previous UCAS research has shown how one in three students consider university as early as primary school, yet this new report finds this figure is less than 5% for apprenticeships.

Secondly, the research finds a significant proportion of students do not pursue an apprenticeship because of challenges in accessing opportunities. Three in five (61%) former applicants did not pursue an apprenticeship because they could not find one in their preferred location while one in three (35%) students previously interested in taking up an apprenticeship said they were prevented from doing so due to a lack of available roles.

Lastly and specific to this factor, there's the practical challenge of how to apply for apprenticeships in a complicated landscape. Here, UCAS is ready to play its part. Earlier this year, we announced our intention to accelerate our plans to bring our services for aspiring apprentices onto an equal footing with aspiring undergraduates – meaning for the first time, students will be able to look and apply for apprenticeship opportunities side by side undergraduate courses, bringing true parity to the experience of students exploring their options.

It is through making apprenticeship opportunities more accessible and visible, increasing supply, and ensuring accessibility to those of all backgrounds that we will translate interest into apprenticeship starts.

**Ben Jordan, Head of Policy, UCAS**

## 1.5 million

UCAS supports nearly 1.5 million individuals explore their next step across the full range of post-secondary choices



## 61%

Three in five (61%) former applicants did not pursue an apprenticeship because they could not find one in their preferred location



## Lancashire Skills Hub

### Why is this factor important?

There's been a disparity between labour shortages and apprenticeship uptake since the pandemic. To improve conversion rates, The Lancashire Skills Hub is aiming to support schools and colleges in developing the technically-skilled individuals that businesses need today.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

A strong regional legacy of apprenticeships in Lancashire means awareness is high, with plenty of information available regarding technical pathways on the whole. The Skills Hub is confident that young people are interested in pursuing technical careers, but external factors like family finances and transport accessibility present obstacles.

Technical and vocational pathways need to be more visible and understandable in order for opportunities to be converted into placements. To improve work-readiness, employability skills need to be strengthened. Parental awareness of apprenticeships need to be increased. And overcomplicated application processes for apprenticeships are a deterrent for young people too.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

The Lancashire Skills Pledge provides one front door for employers to engage in and pledge to skills and employment programmes across Lancashire. This includes apprenticeships. Delivered collaboratively with 12 business networks across Lancashire, employers commit to apprenticeships and to becoming apprenticeship ambassadors. Similarly, ensuring information about technical education is part of all Enterprise Adviser inductions, means that apprenticeship conversion can be at the core of their volunteering approach.

The Early Connect DfE and UCAS pilot will take place in Lancashire which aims to redress the application process by marketing apprenticeship opportunities on the same platform as academic degrees to college and sixth form leavers. The plan is to improve conversion rates by targeting group of young people by raising the visibility of apprenticeship opportunities, and by encouraging employers to start their recruitment drives early for next year's leavers.

Facilitating an apprenticeship levy transfer network can also give SMEs access to unspent funds from organisations with vaster resources. In Lancashire the local Levy Transfer Network has supported larger organisations to transfer almost £1m to smaller and medium sized businesses.

# 2.79

# Promotion of ATE options

## Average factor score

This factor is the second highest scoring with high variance between different places. It incorporates the work that schools, employers, training providers and other actors have undertaken to promote apprenticeships and technical education pathways.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- Second best performing factor overall.
- There is a need to link promotion to application: “It was felt that this was just information sharing and that students were not receiving the support they need to apply and be successful” - West of England.
- Discussion highlighted progress in the quantity of promotion happening but reflected a desire to increase the quality of the experiences and there was widespread acknowledgement the Provider Access Legislation should help with this.
- There are challenges in forging mutually beneficial relationships between schools and providers exacerbated by other factors such as rurality, type of provision and tailoring activity for different groups of learners.
- Hubs with a greater proportion of schools above the national average for number of Gatsby Benchmarks (which define what world class careers provision in education looks like) achieved are more likely to cite promotion of ATE options as a support, compared to those below the average.



## Expert Insight

The greatest potential for growth in apprenticeships and technical education is 16–18-year-olds actively looking for vibrant and rewarding alternatives to university.

Evidence shows there is a need to simplify and improve the apprenticeship recruitment process. That's why it's vital that we can bring apprenticeships closer to young people while they are still engaged in education.

It's one reason why the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (AAN) that I chair is linking up with the Careers & Enterprise Company to champion apprenticeship opportunities in schools.

The AAN is a group of over 950 employers and 400 former/current apprentices who use their advocacy for technical education to get others involved. By joining forces with local Careers Hubs as the route to schools, the aim is to connect young people with local employers much earlier in their final academic year when considering the full spectrum of their options.

The key to effective promotion of ATE routes is broad collaboration that links young people to genuine opportunity and where support is tailored and targeted to their specific needs and ambitions.

Government is rightly investing significant funding into high-quality careers advice – that advice must present comprehensive information on all technical education routes. The AAN wants to bring these career routes to life by taking Ambassadors into schools to talk about their compelling stories of success, career progression, and the transferable skills gained. And promoting opportunities is also about changing mindsets and dispelling myths.

Technical education has been transformed recently – we all must shout out about the tremendous opportunities.

These Ambassadors are magnificent role models. They can inspire, excite, and influence children to see the incredible benefits apprenticeships and technical education routes can bring – to themselves, local economic prosperity, and the local communities they are based in.

Together, we will grow awareness and take up of technical education routes.

**Anthony Impey MBE, Chair,  
Apprenticeship Ambassador Network**

## 950

The AAN is a group of over 950 employers and 400 former/current apprentices who use their advocacy for technical education to get others involved





## D2N2 LEP

### Why is this factor important?

Research states that, by the age of seven, young people can start to adopt limiting career stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity and social background. By age nine, they can start to abandon their biggest ambitions. For the D2N2 Careers Hub, placing apprenticeship promotion at the centre of the skills ecosystem is a crucial way to minimise missed opportunities.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

The Provider Access Legislation has amplified a national responsibility for promoting technical education options. However, uncertainty following the pandemic has resulted in traditional career paths seeming like a safer option. Similarly, an apprenticeship's assurance of eventual pay rises is harder to consider as immediately advantageous when there is pressure on day-to-day expenses.

Employers don't always understand how to approach their apprenticeship levy, and sometimes don't realise the outcomes they could achieve by upskilling new and existing staff. Statistics on apprenticeship fulfilment rates are also partly affected by employers misperceiving the added value of completing endpoint assessments.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

Alongside other websites, D2N2 signposts young people to new apprenticeship opportunities using an online labour market. Ensuring that informative content is delivered through interlinked digital resources creates a consistency of messaging across the network.

Business Growth Hubs are key assets when appealing to training providers, reminding recruiters that apprentices are an affordable way to fill labour gaps. Re-targeting the pool of students who exited programmes due to the pandemic could also increase the proportion of young people progressing into higher level opportunities.

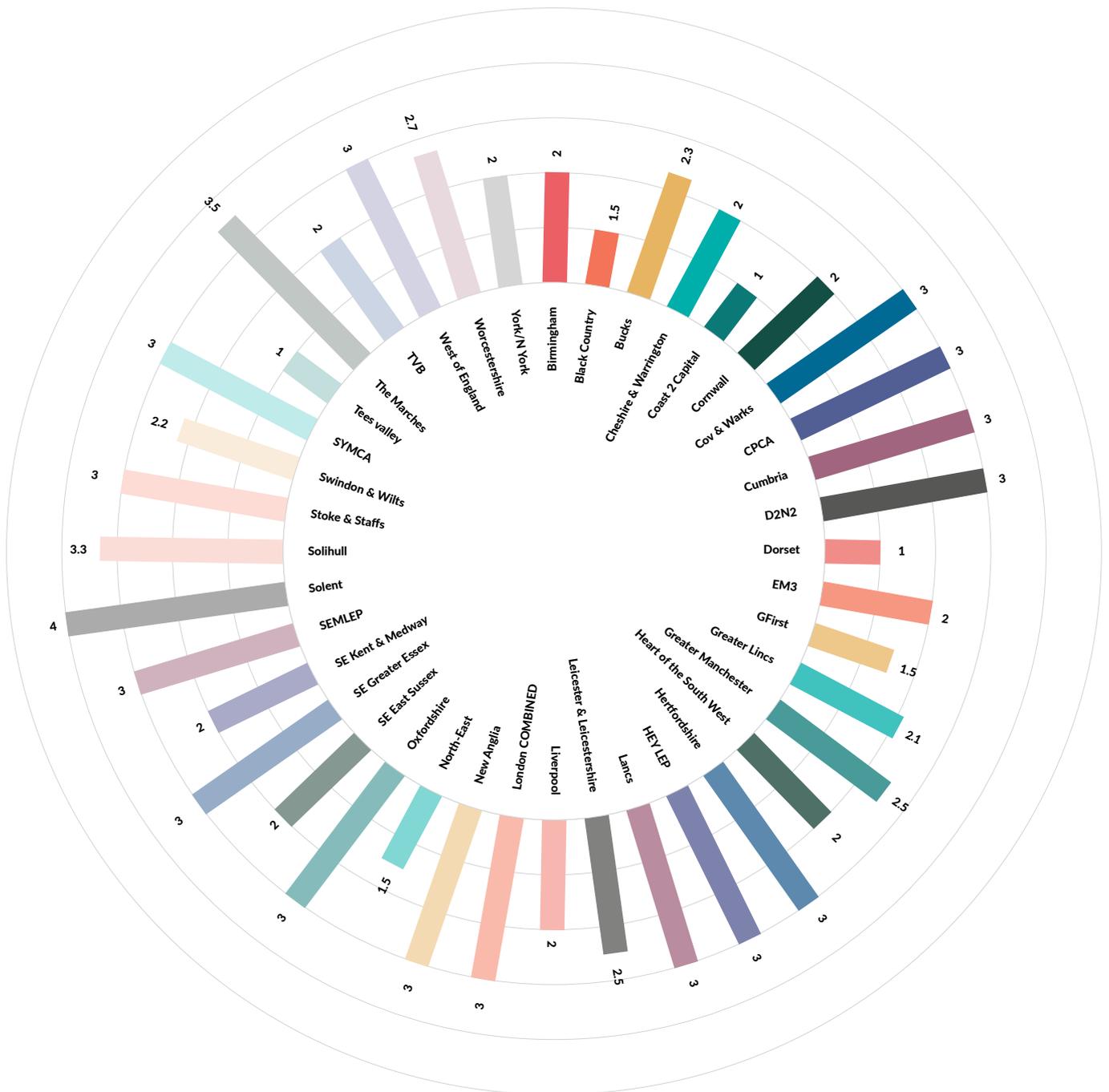
Identifying apprenticeship ambassadors will positively influence a network of skills-based workers, while teacher encounter schemes support educators to understand ATE pathways from the perspective of a learner. Setting standards amongst influential stakeholders in these ways will create a culture of accountability, garnered towards holistically promoting technical post-school destinations.

# 2.43

Average factor score

## Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities

The debate on learner transitions often centres around pathways not industries. Several groups identified difficulties in attracting learners to take up opportunities in some occupations / sectors. This was often due to negative learner perceptions around the industry, job roles and pay and conditions. Many contributors commented that learners often didn't understand the plurality of roles in an industry (e.g. the range of marketing and communications roles in the NHS) and said more could be done to demonstrate the range of roles available. This factor saw the second lowest variance across all hubs despite the regional differences in the labour markets.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- A complex picture with different drivers. There is a balance to be struck between the need for learners to be interested in occupations where there are gaps and efforts to try and shape opportunities to meet learner aspirations.
- Very few learners ever make a choice based on needing to “fill vacancies created by an aging workforce” and the language employers and training providers use is important.
- “Whilst enthusiasm amongst young people for accessing ATE pathways is increasing...there is a need to ensure that...decision making is fully informed by Labour Market Information” - Swindon and Wiltshire.
- “There is a mismatch of aspiration and opportunity, many move out of area to fulfil their aspiration” - Heart of the South-West.
- “Are Employers in some sectors reluctant to offer opportunities to young people?” - Tees Valley.
- It was highlighted by many groups that we should accept some disconnect – when a choice is hypothetical it is less solid than when it becomes actualised, and the ambition should be convergence of interests over time.



## Expert Insight

Whilst studying for my A-Levels (Geography, Psychology and Sports Science) I had a gut feeling my practical learning style would be less suited to the structure of university but concentrated hard on the task at hand, achieving my A-Levels and receiving unconditional offers for my first and second choice universities. It took me until A-Level results day to decide not to go to university, instead taking a year out to research and re-evaluate my options.

I had never given myself the time to consider anything other than university. Knowing I wanted to gain further qualifications, an apprenticeship offered me the balance I was searching for. I couldn't quite believe the reality of receiving a degree qualification and job-specific experience whilst gaining a competitive salary.

My parents were supportive of my choice to pursue an apprenticeship route, urging me to do what was right for me. I scoured sources such as Indeed and Apprenticeships.gov.uk to find a career path suiting my interests and skills, whilst seeking advice on career pathways and applications by reaching out to friends and relatives.

Not set on a particular professional pathway, I applied for numerous apprenticeships across different career fields and qualification levels. I ultimately chose my degree apprenticeship with BAE Systems as a top rated apprenticeship employer. The exciting prospect of creating the next generation of products and services and playing my part in protecting those who serve and protect us was unmatched and connected strongly with my personal values.

I was supported by the company when relocating from Surrey to Portsmouth, through offers of shared apprentice accommodation and networking, helping me to make a new group of friends in an unfamiliar area.

Looking back, something I hadn't quite appreciated at the time was how well my apprenticeship would set me up for my career ahead. Having recently graduated from my four-year Project Management Degree Apprenticeship, I have begun a permanent role as an Assistant Project Manager for BAE Systems.

My passion for inspiring the next generation leads me to devote a proportion of my time volunteering at local schools, advising young students of alternative education pathways and sharing my enriching apprenticeship experience.

**Sophie Slimm, Assistant Project Manager,  
BAE Systems Maritime Services**





## The Solent LEP

### Why is this factor important?

For Solent LEP, the messaging from schools and colleges regarding career progression can be traditionally university-centric, which can suppress aspirations for alternative pathways. Improving enthusiasm among young people by demonstrating the merits of technical routes and occupations will increase the likelihood of apprenticeships being pursued.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

As an example, we found in the Solent area that there are 67 possible educational journeys that overlap with the aerospace and engineering industries alone, showing the variety of progressive routes in technical job markets. Many employers have well-developed apprenticeship programmes and alumni networks that serve as evidence of the exciting transferability of these pathways.

Young people can be reassured by the fact that apprenticeships are a low-cost pursuit. Unlike traditional degrees, technical qualifications don't usually result in debt – and you can earn while you learn. We need to ensure apprenticeships are seen as an on a par with and as an equal alternative to academic routes.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

Meaningful workplace encounters within the local community are inspirational for young people, but it's helpful to limit the work needed to be done by schools and employers when planning these events. The Solent LEP organises one-off Immersive Days– capturing the imagination of young people by highlighting the range of occupations within one sector. Exposure to diverse workforces can also raise aspirations through relatability.

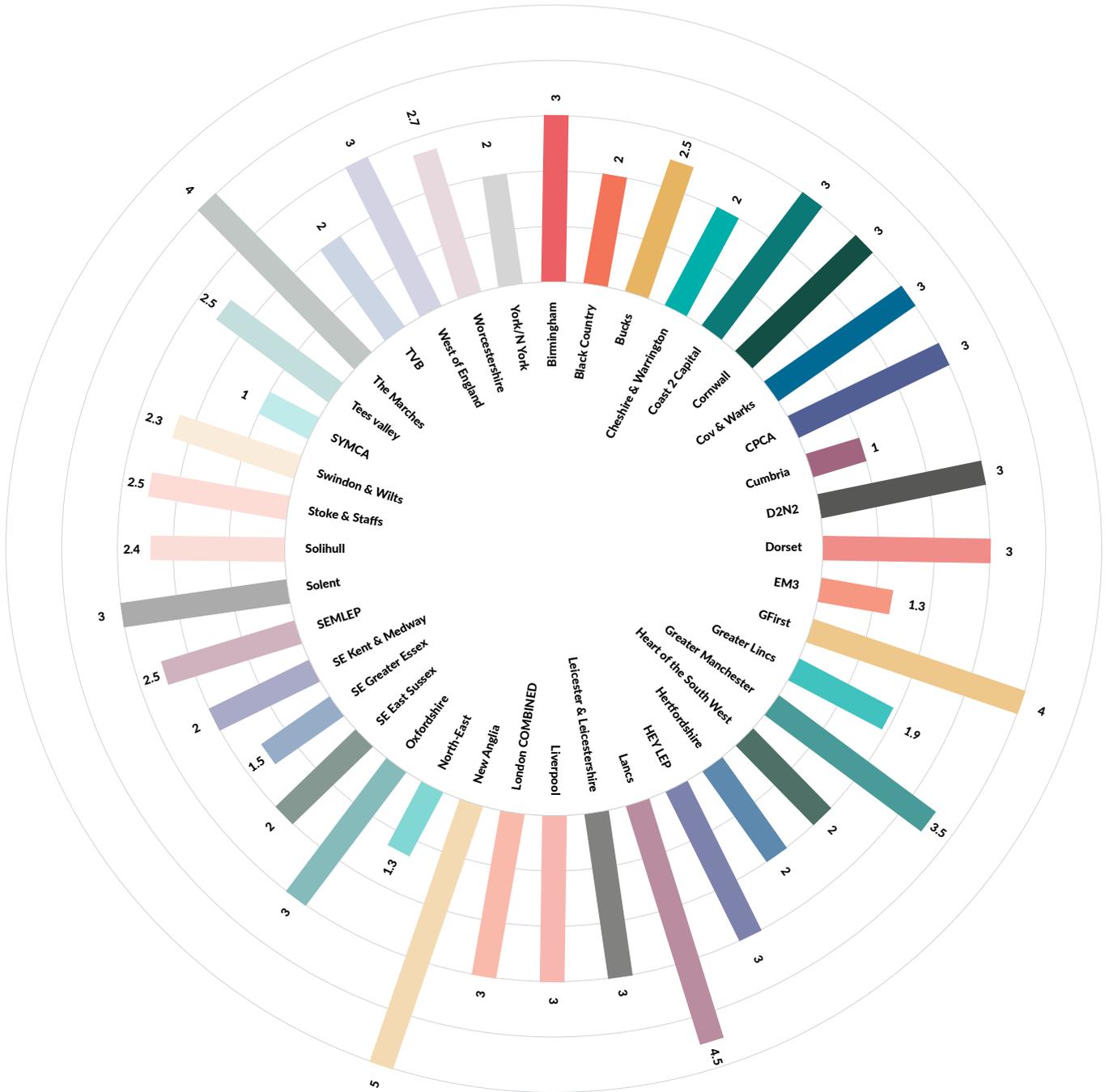
We will be recording the positive responses of young people at engagement events to boost advocacy with all our stakeholders. Moving forwards, advanced video media and virtual reality headsets may represent exciting ways to offer more efficient immersive encounters. Sharing this proof of the enthusiasm generated due to workplace exposure shows the impact that meaningful engagement has on a young person's ambitions.

# 2.61

# Understanding of ATE routes

## Average factor score

We know a lot about perceived understanding of ATE routes, but the depth and accuracy of this understanding is less clear. For example, some people may have inaccurate understanding of pathways but still identify they do understand them, and others may actually understand but not perceive that they do. Clearly, this is an important factor to consider and there is a recognition that progress has been made and it is the third highest scoring factor.



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework scores 2023



## What the analysis tells us

- “Higher awareness than ever of ATE pathways, however learners are not equipped to proceed through application process alone” - SEMLEP.
- “Understanding has risen in the last year, Parents and students are more informed” - The Marches.
- Training providers and employers identified that learners understanding of vocational pathways was sometimes inaccurate and lacked depth.
- It was acknowledged that the system is complex and variable – therefore we need to think about what is realistic and necessary for young people to understand and what they need to know when.
- There is a danger we overly focus on this factor because it is most tangible, but it won’t affect outcomes without other areas, there is a need to link this understanding to the next decision point and support.
- Change (for example the introduction of T Levels) means we should accept a transition in understanding and growing from a low base when this occurs.
- In a marketized system this factor should correlate with the availability of provision and promotion of these pathways, and we do see some evidence of this. Hubs with students who reported lower than average awareness of apprenticeships are more likely to cite access to relevant training options as a barrier (2.1), compared to Hubs with students reporting more awareness (2.8).



## Expert Insight

From my GCSE years up until A-levels, I attended Mulberry Academy Shoreditch in East London, where I pursued A-levels in Computer Science, Mathematics, and Politics. To be completely honest, I wasn't entirely certain about my career path, and my aspirations varied widely – from wanting to become a midwife to considering a career as a lawyer, often influenced by the TV shows I binge-watched. However, a consistent passion for problem-solving led me to explore the role of a software development engineer after conducting some research. This discovery felt like I had finally found my niche.

Although attending university was always a goal, my faith was first for me and I wanted to avoid taking loans with interest. The world of apprenticeships opened up a new avenue for me. The prospect of gaining work experience alongside earning an accredited degree seemed almost too good to be true. This journey eventually led me to my current position at Amazon, where I am an apprentice software development engineer. I am now approaching the final year of my digital and technology solution degree with a specialization in software engineering.

Undoubtedly, the journey has had its challenges. Lacking previous interview experience, my pursuit of apprenticeships highlighted the need for me to improve my interview skills. Fortunately, I had unwavering support from my family, who boosted my confidence before interviews and patiently listened to my post-interview rants. Some teachers at my school also played a crucial role, offering their time to help me through the process. After I was selected for the position, Amazon fed back that they chose me because of my potential, rather than my existing technical abilities, which they have focused on helping me develop through courses and accreditation since I've been in post.

I am now at the end of my second year at Amazon, with my final year about to commence. While time has flown by, the vast expanse of knowledge left to explore keeps me engaged. This is why I appreciate Amazon's culture, which fosters curiosity and continuous learning. My manager fully supports my personal development journey and encourages me to take courses to enhance my skills.

And so, I am Fadumina Barre, and this is my story.

**v, Software Development Engineer Apprentice, Amazon (UK)**





## New Anglia LEP

### Why is this factor important?

There's a general feeling across the New Anglia LEP that there's no longer a reductive cultural view of young people pursuing technical pathways. Moving forwards, educators and employers need to help learners recognise the variety of pathways available in each sector. Building a shared understanding of apprenticeships and technical routes will make further progress possible.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

Learners, employers, parents and educators all have varying needs and expectations. Without frequent and meaningful engagement, it's hard for each stakeholder to fully empathise with the experiences of others – preventing optimal collaboration. It can also be difficult to find ways to accurately measure levels of understanding.

The ATE Transitions Framework process helped bring together a shared understanding and action plan. The New Anglia LEP is confident in the strength of its Cornerstone Employer group. Although initial conversations with the network showed a hesitation towards offering ATE pathways, there was an encouraging keenness to take more accountability for future improvement.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

A consistent combination of quantitative and qualitative data is needed to accurately discern each stakeholder's overall understanding of ATE pathways – from every perspective. For young people, data-driven research can be achieved through the Future Skills Questionnaire; bolstering these results with anecdotal evidence will strike a balance when measuring learner perspective.

Having candid conversations with Cornerstone Employer networks is one way to ensure all members are aligned on the needs of young people, education and the local economy. Working alongside a core group who are all committed to making an impact will make it easier to collaborate and meet key targets.

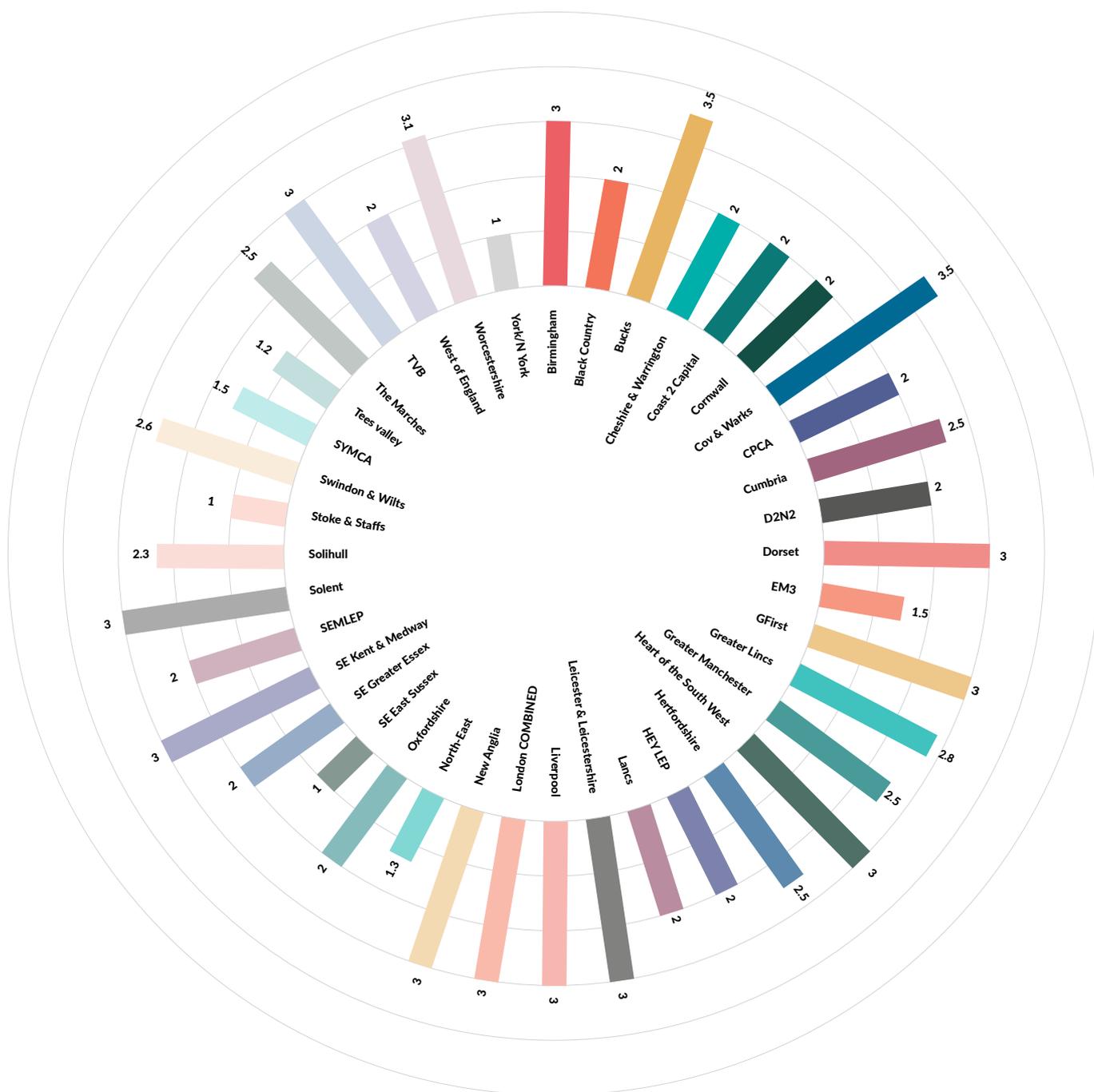
The upcoming distribution of employer standards resources will map business' current provisions against national guidelines – supporting them to understand their capabilities and identify ways to improve their apprenticeship provisions.

## 2.33

Average factor score

# Existing skill levels match requirements for next step

It is important not to interpret this factor purely through the prism of young people and any mismatch as a result of the deficit of their skills. This is the point at which learner skills and employer requirements meet. Success is in finding the right spot at which they meet at different levels. This factor is seen as a barrier nearly everywhere and with the least variance in scoring but a plurality of reasons were cited.



## What the analysis tells us

- There is distance to travel from an employer and training provider perspective as well as a learner and a system one. There will always need to be a choice and a balance between widening access and recruiting those who have the highest verified skill levels. The consensus was that the need is to ensure there is a match between learners' skills and employers' requirements at various entry points be they higher or lower levels.
- "Employers in some sectors are hesitant to offer opportunities to young people as they perceive them as not work ready" - York & North Yorks.
- "Young people have unrealistic expectations of the world of work" - West of England.
- "Due to the impact of Covid young people are less ready for the world of work" - The Marches.
- "Achievement levels do not always match aspirations" - Lancashire.
- "Can apprenticeship applications prioritise skills over education and experience? (i.e., a skills-based application process)" - Coast to Capital.
- For some groups of learners there has been success in early identification of mismatch to close gaps in particular SEND learners.
- Maths & English requirements were thought to be prohibitive for some not just on access but on aspiration: "Learners say they will actively not do courses where maths is a requirement, they don't want to go through the cycle of failure again" - Greater Essex.



## Expert Insight

A key factor to ensure the widest opportunity for progression into apprenticeships or other technical pathways for young people is that their skills match the requirements for the next step. This can be wider employability skills or specific skills such as the level of maths and English attainment that has been achieved at GCSE. A grade of 4 or above is typically expected to ensure successful progression into a range of technical programmes, whether that is Level 2 or 3 study, and depending on the pathway chosen the preference might be for numeracy or literacy skills.

Some skills are a significant pre-requisite within apprenticeship programmes as it forms part of the gateway achievement to progress onto end-point assessment. In other technical programmes it might not be an embedded requirement but some study programmes may be more difficult to follow where good number or word/language skills are needed.

Success is best judged by the degree to which a learner's options are kept open as they look to progress into study post 16. A good level of maths and English will keep many pathways open to a learner but if this is not achieved at 16 then they can look to follow a Functional Skills programme as this will help to close that gap.

To close existing gaps there are several things that have been shown to be effective such as;

- Providing a taste of certain study areas during 14-16 education can be a good way to explore possible technical routes to follow at 16. The closer learners can match their GCSE or Technical Award study to a technical pathway they wish to follow at 16, the easier it will be to judge whether they are ready for the next step.
- Linking work experience options to intended pathways if there is a particular route learners would like to follow, in addition to early investigation of what types of courses are offered in the region and where learners might need to go to follow that study programme. This might be by staying at school, attending a local college or working with a training provider that specialises in supporting the apprenticeships that learners want to follow.
- Recognising that the immediate transition at 16 may not always be possible and sometimes it might be necessary to find a bridge between the desired pathway by exploring a variety of options at school or local training providers to build up the required skill.

**Patrick Craven, Director of Policy, Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement, City & Guilds.**





## Worcestershire LEP

### Why is this factor important?

The Worcestershire LEP identifies that it can be challenging for some work-ready young people to meet all the skills criteria in apprenticeship applications. These criteria can present particular barriers for those with additional learning needs. To make technical pathways more inclusive and accessible, there needs to be a focus on building the skills that align to employment entry requirements.

### What regional push and pull factors are present?

A significant number of SEND and non-SEND learners in Worcestershire are deterred from apprenticeship opportunities due to employers requiring a certain level of academic qualifications. However, many industries do have vacancies that would be suitable for those with lower academic attainment, whose skills can then be developed in the workplace.

It's also often easier to incorporate alternative approaches to employability development within SEND environments, whereas the prescribed mainstream curriculum can be harder to refine.

### How can improvements be made within this factor?

Investing time and training for young people with lower academic results can improve both recruitment and long-term retention, representing a cost-effective approach to bringing people into the business and fulfilling skills needs. Communicating this with Cornerstone Employer networks through outreach events will further promote inclusivity and diversity within ATE pathways.

The Worcestershire LEP has created a 'Passport to...' scheme that enhances sector-based learning within SEND schools. Initially focusing on hospitality and retail, these yearly curricular resources include pre-set lesson plans (adaptable for all levels of learner) and workplace encounters – improving the next generation's employability and social skills for use in accessible industries.

With support from NOCN, the first two 'Passport' courses will become accredited from September 2023 onwards, giving these achievements an established reputation when used during application processes. The CEC has supported us locally to create resources to support young people with SEND to offer alternative entry-level qualifications within the digital and healthcare industries.

**What have we  
learnt from this  
exercise?**

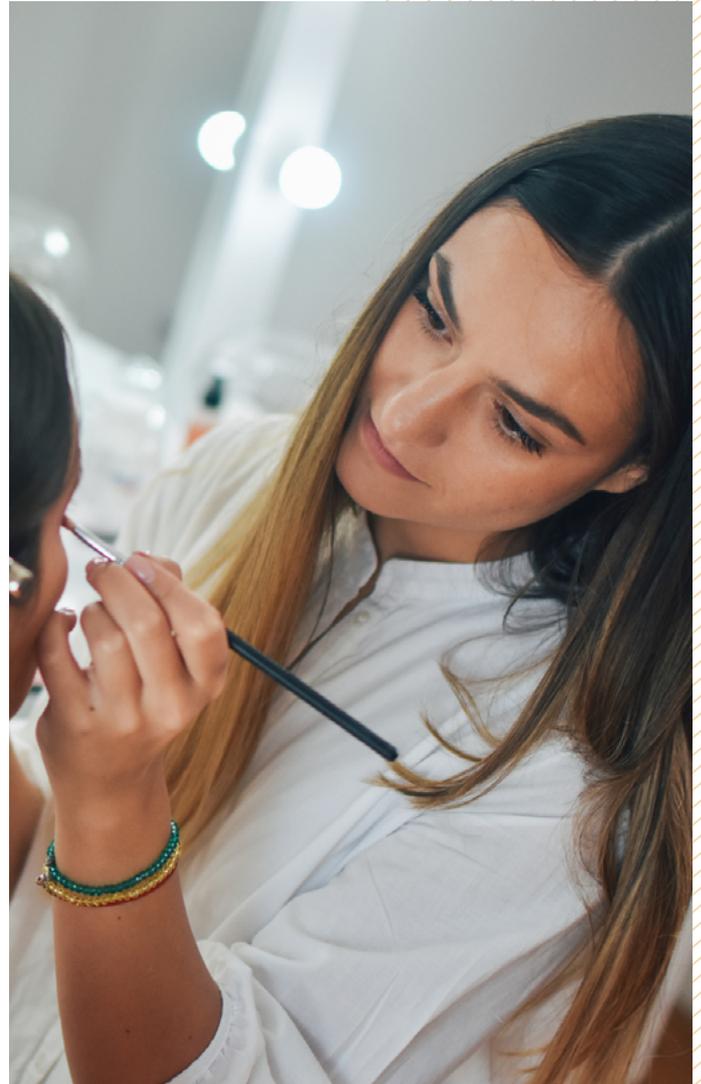
What prevents young people taking apprenticeships and technical pathways depends. It depends on who they are, it depends where they are and it depends what pathway they are pursuing.

Intent from employers, young people and other actors, **fluctuates and erodes**. For a successful transition we need all the factors to light up at the same time. To achieve this we need consensus, connectivity and collective action.

We learnt from experts that factors are often conflated which means **the wrong treatment can be applied to the wrong symptom**. For example, we found places where acute employer need is identified but there are barriers turning need into opportunity for young people. Or where a lack of applications is established as a barrier for the local economy and business, but action has centred on building understanding of pathways (which is already high) rather than supporting those who understand to apply.

The goal of the ATE Transitions Framework is to build consensus amongst employers, educators, local government and other actors to diagnose and act collectively.

And it is clear from this process that there is extraordinary **energy, expertise and ability to overcome barriers identified**.





## What is Success?

Success is not every young person taking an apprenticeship or technical education pathway. It is making sure that every young person is not prevented from taking these routes if they might want to.

It is not about every supportive actor - be they local government, careers education provider or parent - removing all the barriers. It is about making sure that their energy, expertise and resources are used effectively when they engage and pointed at the most significant limiting barriers where they can have the greatest impact.

Each of the Careers Hubs this year will work to mitigate or remove a barrier identified through this process (indicative breakdown by factor in fig.6 below). We will then measure and report on the effectiveness of that effort against the same data points used to inform the diagnosis.

Some aspects can be tackled and led by Careers Hubs and those they will lead. Some common national careers education challenges have been identified and those we will explore alongside others in the system. However, it will take a collective effort across all eight factors and all actors to move the needle.

**What next?**

## Collective learning

Despite the variation in scoring there are some consistent views on the principles for success.

There has been progress at a learner level as shown by the rise in understanding of pathways but there is a need to continue to build the ecosystem around them. Teachers, parents, and the other factors that can erode interest become the next frontier.

Willingness to take the leap on both the employer and learner side can be transient and erodes – so when all the aspects light up, there is a need to be able to strike immediately. We should work collectively to remove the barriers and learn from what is working in terms of support around employers, training providers and learners.

Local areas, sectors and pathways could further think sequentially about issues – barriers often come in order and action should be based on the life stage of the specific ecosystem and tailored accordingly. For example, there may be no use mass-promoting a route for which access is too low.

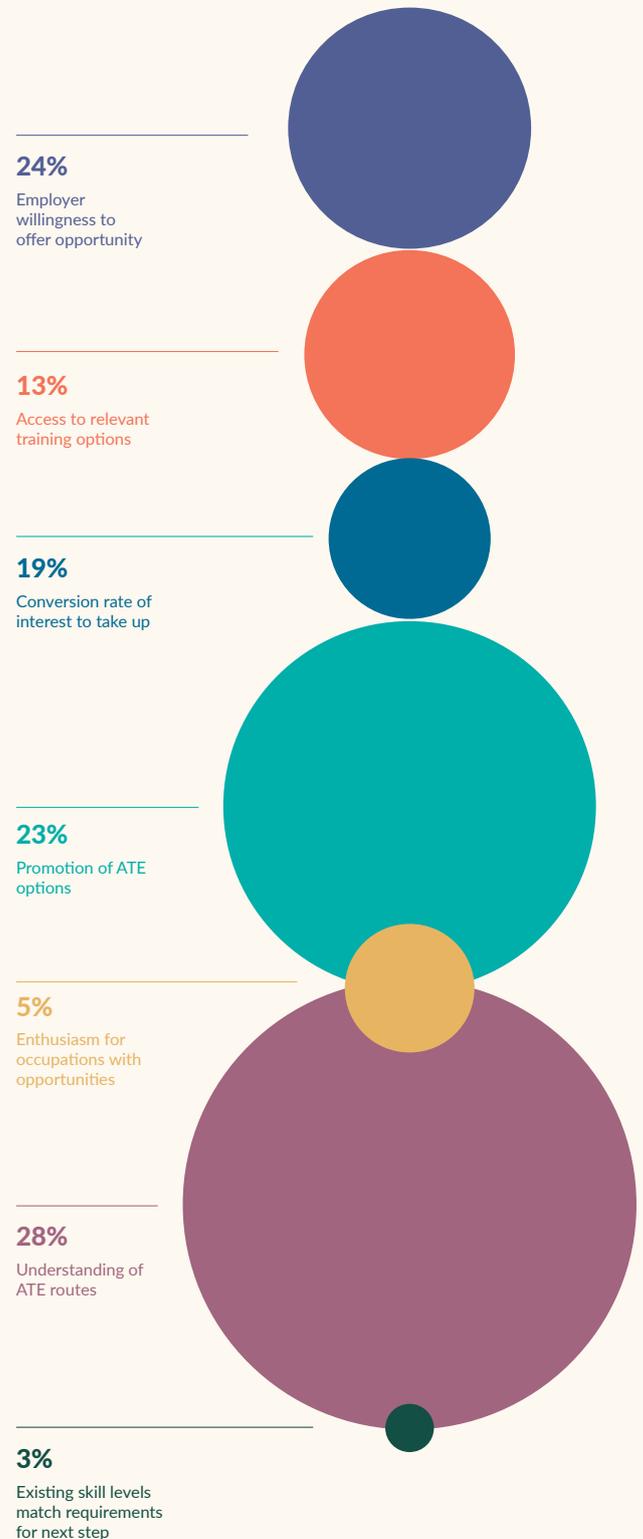
## At a local level

Each Careers Hub has agreed a primary factor to focus on (indicative summary breakdown in fig 6) for the coming year informed by this analysis. CEC is investing in these projects and many Careers Hubs and their host organisations will utilise additional resources and expertise to deliver them. They may join their activity to existing initiatives in collaboration with a range of partners.

It is important to say that Careers Hubs will not necessarily focus on the lowest scoring factor. Some factors are more likely to be beyond the ability of Careers Hubs alone to influence with the resource available.

In addition, much good work is already underway which we will not duplicate or dilute.

**Fig 6: Overview breakdown of draft agreed areas of focus for Careers Hubs in 2023/24.**



Source: Careers & Enterprise Company analysis of combined Careers Hubs ATE Transitions Framework responses 2023

## Local expert groups who led the scoring will be vital in implementing the projects and helping drive the conversation on other elements.

Partnership remains vital – where expertise or potential support exists in tackling an identified barrier then we ask those in the lead to focus on and address prime limiting factors. Doing so will ensure that activity aligns and there is a greater chance of all eight factors lighting up at the same time.

Ideas are emerging from local groups and their discussions about the use of the framework and future engagement include:



- Encouragement for LSIP's to align their efforts with Careers Hubs to help young people to learn about and be inspired to take the routes identified by local labour market needs, and to develop enthusiasm for the occupations with opportunities.



- Seek to identify ways and means to improve the eight factors that influence young people's progression to apprenticeships and technical education pathways, in particular those most commonly identified as barriers.



- Training provider networks, careers education providers and employer bodies should continue to deepen collaboration to increase the quality and quantity of PAL compliant encounters. The goal should be to reduce the individual resource cost and increase the ease for schools to engage with them to support the promotion of ATE pathways.



- Using the Framework as a coordinating function – avoiding duplication, to target local initiatives at areas where they should have the greatest impact:



- Utilise the identified indicators of each factor as a common measurement to demonstrate the impact of initiatives and work with CEC to identify further data sources used as indicators.



- Share resources, tools or evidence that would support progress against any of the eight success factors to inform a national resource directory.



- Use as a starting point for understanding the impact that wider ambitions such as promoting social mobility for marginalised communities, driving productivity in key industries or economic development might have on improving ATE transitions.

If you are reading this and were not involved and would like to be, do get in touch with your local [Careers Hub](#) or us directly.

# At a national level

## What areas will CEC focus on?

As part of our strategic priorities we remain committed to boosting skills pathways and working with partners to smooth transitions for young people. In practice this means we will:

1. Deploy this ATE Transitions Framework
  - We will continue to use this Framework with Careers Hubs so we can target support effectively and coherently
  - We will seek to deploy the Framework with sectors. For example, the Salesforce Foundation have committed to using it for a joint programme of support for digital pathways.
  - We will encourage all our partners to use the Framework so we have a shared understanding of where best to direct efforts together.
2. Continue efforts to improve young people's awareness of ATE pathways, monitored through national Compass data and student insight from CEC's Future Skills Questionnaire<sup>iii</sup>.
3. Maintain support to schools to meet Provider Access Legislation requirements by harnessing the Careers Hub infrastructure to track, and build opportunities for meaningful interactions between students and providers of apprenticeships and technical education.
4. Support and equip teachers and parents/ carers to understand and promote ATE routes, by continuing roll out of CEC's Teachers Encounters pilot programme with employers, and through collaboration with the Gatsby Foundation to amplify ATE within the Talking Futures programme aimed at parents/carers.
5. Launch Employer Standards – a set of benchmarks to ensure high quality employer outreach - and work to further bolster employer connections to pre-19 education.
6. Enhance the quality and quantity of experiences of the workplace to ensure learners are better equipped with the understanding of pathways and the skills required to take the next step.

## Digital Futures Accelerator Fund

The Careers & Enterprise Company is partnering with the Salesforce Foundation to deliver the Digital Futures Accelerator Fund to catalyse take up of apprenticeship and technical education pathways into digital jobs. The design features for this programme are to:

- Innovate the way local areas can identify inhibiting factors for take up levels of apprenticeships and technical routes into digital careers.
- Resource targeted provision, prioritizing socio-economically disadvantaged young people, to develop new practice to overcome systemic challenges in filling digital roles.
- Evaluate impact leading to the design of replicable models that can be scaled across CEC's [Network of Careers Hubs](#).

The Fund will utilize CEC's Careers Hub infrastructure and data to commission novel, evidence-based approaches to tackling entrenched barriers. It is designed to incubate early-stage innovation and systemic solutions for at least 3,000 young people, with tailored packages of support and funding, applied through an established national network. The results of the Fund will serve as a catalyst for CEC to apply the learnings, and an opportunity to propagate future delivery, across CEC's Network of Careers Hubs through further targeted work to support more disadvantaged young people.

# Annex 1: Methodology

In consultation with a range of partners and experts and informed by a range of excellent existing analyses such as those authored by EPI<sup>v</sup>, NFER<sup>vi</sup>, Ofqual<sup>vii</sup> and UCAS<sup>viii</sup>, we have identified the eight key factors that are required for a young person to transition to an apprenticeship or other technical education pathway. They illustrate the breadth of factors that influence transitions across the labour market, educational experience and application point.

Underneath each of these eight factors we have then curated relevant data from public sources such as the Local Skills Dashboard, ILR, Department for Education statistics and Employer Skills Survey and our own such as Compass and the Future Skills Questionnaire. This has then formed a unique data pack for each Careers Hub<sup>2</sup>.

**Fig 7: Eight key factors for successful apprenticeship and technical education transitions**

Category	Sub Criteria	Relevant data sources <sup>3</sup>	Specific Indicators
Labour Market	Employer need	Local Skills Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many online job adverts were there in December 2022 and where does your area rank nationally?</li> <li>• What is the % of total employment that these vacancies represent?</li> <li>• Have these vacancies increased or decreased in the last year?</li> <li>• What proportion of all vacancies were identified as being due to skills shortage in the most recent Employer Skills Survey?</li> </ul>
	Employer willingness to offer opportunity	Employer Skills Survey, Employer Pulse Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2019 what % of employers reported they were aware of apprenticeships and had a very good knowledge of what is involved?</li> <li>• In 2019 what % of employers currently had any staff undertaking formal apprenticeships at site?</li> <li>• In 2019 what % of employers had had anyone on a work placement from college in the last 12 months?</li> <li>• In 2019 what % of employers were very interested in providing work-placements to T Level Students?</li> </ul>
Transition	Access to relevant training options	ILR <sup>4</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roughly do more than 70% of learners have access to good technical pathways near their home and do the majority of learners find these easy enough to access i.e., through transport and timings and virtual options?</li> <li>• What was the total number of apprenticeship starts for under 19's in 2021/22?</li> </ul>
	Conversion rate of interest to take up	ILR, Compass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For what % of schools have 76-100% of learners had information about the full range of apprenticeships?</li> <li>• What % of learners sustain an apprenticeship on leaving KS4?</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup>In some cases, Careers Hubs worked together to agree a single collective response as in London.

<sup>3</sup>For each factor we provided some core data points but many individual hubs augmented with additional data they held

<sup>4</sup>For this factor we provided a single data point and posed two questions to our expert groups

Category	Sub Criteria	Relevant data sources <sup>3</sup>	Specific Indicators
Transition	Promotion of ATE options	Compass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For what % of schools have 76-100% of learners had meaningful encounters with Independent Training Providers?</li> <li>• What % of school learners had meaningful encounters with Further Education Colleges?</li> <li>• What % of schools report all learners in Year 8/9 have had at least two meaningful encounters with providers of apprenticeships and technical education during KS3 phase that meet the requirements of PAL?</li> <li>• What % of schools report all learners in Year 10/11 have had at least two meaningful encounters with providers of apprenticeships and technical education during KS4 phase that meet the requirements of PAL?</li> <li>• What % of schools report all learners in Year 12/13 have had at least two meaningful encounters with providers of apprenticeships and technical education during KS5 phase that meet the requirements of PAL?</li> </ul>
	Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities	Future Skills Questionnaire, Local Skills Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which industries do learners at KS4 report the most interest in working in in the future?</li> <li>• Which industries have the highest % of vacancies?</li> </ul>
	Understanding of ATE routes	Future Skills Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What % of learners in KS4 identify themselves as understanding Apprenticeships as an option after Y11?</li> <li>• What % of learners in KS4 identify themselves as understanding understand Traineeships as an option after Y11?</li> <li>• What % of learners in KS4 identify themselves as understanding T Levels as an option after Y11?</li> <li>• What % of learners in KS4 identify themselves as understanding understand other vocational routes such as BTECs as an option after Y11?</li> </ul>
	Existing skill levels match requirements for next step	DfE, Future Skills Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What % of learners have achieved a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19?</li> <li>• In KS4 what % of learners identify themselves as having essential skills for life and work?</li> </ul>

Careers Hubs were then asked to consult and use a Likert scale to provide a single score for each factor as to whether it is a support to young people transitioning to ATE pathways in their area or a barrier. This score was agreed and endorsed by representatives from business, local government, employer representative bodies, young people, schools, colleges, training providers and careers education.

Careers Hubs are jointly delivered by CEC and local democratic institutions (Combined Authorities, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships). They ensure that a national careers framework is tailored to local need, bringing together schools, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers together across England.

The goal is to make it easier for schools and colleges to improve how they prepare young people for their next steps.

Careers Hubs drive progress against the Gatsby Benchmarks by enabling schools and colleges and their Careers Leaders to access training and support, and to collaborate in a focussed way, bringing together best practice and local labour market insight.

Hubs offer schools and colleges dedicated support from the local hub team and facilitate partnerships with key employers committed to improving careers across an area.

Careers Hubs took different approaches. Most utilised existing groups or convened new ones made up of the relevant stakeholders to discuss and agree the scores in person. Some used online forms to gain an initial view and then ratified and discussed online together. A few consulted widely and then drafted indicative scores and had these validated through specific conversations.

All Careers Hubs have scored according to the above criteria and informed by the central guidance provided and the data packs.

These scores and the accompanying summaries of the discussions and agreed areas of focus which inform this report were then all submitted to the Careers & Enterprise Company central team in June 2023.

## Fig 8. Scoring criteria for the 8 key factors

1



This is a significant barrier to ATE transitions and the evidence conclusively points to this.

2



This is a barrier to ATE Transitions and there is sufficient evidence to indicate it is restricting ATE transitions despite some positive indicators.

3



There is roughly equal amount positive and negative evidence in this criteria and it is broadly neutral in terms of its impact on ATE transitions.

4



There is positive evidence this is supporting ATE transitions despite some negative indicators.

5



This is a significant support to ATE transitions and the evidence conclusively points to this.

### A note on scoring

The scores are not - and should not be interpreted as - absolute measures of performance. What they are is relative statements of priority and interpretation informed by evidence, discussion and compromise. One hub that scores a factor as a 1 - may in fact outperform on some of the measures of one which scores higher. The purpose of scoring is to provide a mechanism to make a value judgement about the extent to which factors are agreed to be barriers or supports in a place relative to each other and create a clear roadmap to prioritising activity through a common consensus.

However - the indicators used to inform the discussion will become the target goals of the intervention. In other words, the mechanism of diagnosis will become the mechanism of measurement. To take an example if a hub has identified promotion of ATE options as the area of focus for their project - then the indicators (PAL and BM7) will be how impact is assessed.

Despite the guidance provided and because of the flexibility and local ownership of the scoring there will be a natural variation in scoring. It is important to bear this in mind when comparing Careers Hubs with each other.

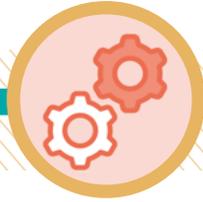
When we run this exercise again in the summer of 2024, we would expect to see the underlying data and therefore the scores improve for the areas of focus. The extent to which that has happened will also help us understand what approaches are most effective in which places.

# Fig 9. The ideal learner journey

This illustrative example shows how the eight factors influence a learner journey. In this case the eight factors have positively influenced to enable the learner to access and thrive in their chosen ATE pathway.



When I started school I had a keen interest in cars and thought I might want a job working with them in some way.



Just before starting my GCSEs a new car plant opened nearby and sparked my interest even more.



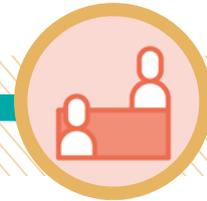
The company started advertising a whole range of different jobs, which looked really interesting and I wanted to know more.



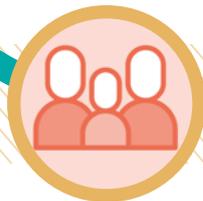
My teachers and Careers Leader in school had a real focus on helping us develop skills and showing how they were used in different jobs which helped me see how what I was learning could set me up for an apprenticeship.



The company came into our school and spoke about all the different sorts of jobs, apprenticeships and what sort of exams I'd need to move on to doing an apprenticeship. They also gave real work based projects to do in class, which showed how maths was used in their business.



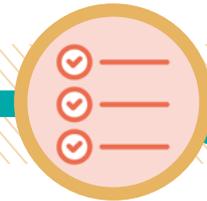
The company said they were having trouble finding people with certain skills in our area so they started an apprenticeship scheme.



I spoke about doing an apprenticeship with my parents. My mum had done one early in her career and really enjoyed it. They were really supportive. They came into the school to talk to the teachers and they highlighted the opportunity with the local car company.



I met some of the apprentices at the car company and did some work placements and work experience with them. I got to know them and they got to know me. I could now really see myself working for them.



I applied for an apprenticeship and was successful.



Now I'm 10 months into a level 2 apprenticeship and loving every minute.

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