



Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional
Apprenticeship Standard

Impact Report

October 2024

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Executive Summary

The importance of Level 7 apprenticeships in the accountancy sector

Levy funding for the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship has been central in addressing skills shortages in the accountancy sector and will play a vital role in supporting Government missions – from economic growth to breaking down barriers to opportunity. This Level 7 apprenticeship integrates Levels 4, 5 and 7 in a 3-year programme. Each year it is transformational in equipping 7,000 young people aged 24 or below with high-level accountancy skills. This gives them the opportunity at an early age to become qualified Chartered Accountants who fill roles in key growth sectors including professional, business and financial services. Level 7 has been instrumental in driving social mobility, equality and diversity in the accountancy sector, while also supporting thousands of SMEs and public sector employers such as the NHS, which rely on levy funding to develop high-level accountancy skills.

Key benefits of the Level 7 in the accountancy sector:

- **Skills development for young people:** Level 7 provides a pathway for young people to become Chartered Accountants, **with over 70% of learners starting at age 24 or below, totalling around 7,000 young people per annum.**
- **Support for SMEs:** Levy funding helps SMEs to develop 1,800–2,000 apprentices annually to fill essential finance roles, often in towns and rural areas. Without this funding SMEs would not be able to train as many new accountants, limiting economic growth.
- **Social mobility & equality:** The apprenticeship promotes diversity, with **85% of Level 7 learners coming from state schools** and many being the first in their family to enter a professional career. This gives young people from disadvantaged backgrounds access to high-paying careers.
- **Economic impact:** High-level accountancy skills, such as audit and tax, are integral to key growth sectors including financial, professional and business services. They also support growth in other priority sectors such as clean energy industries and life sciences. These skills are already seeing critical shortages.

Three statistics about Level 7 accountancy apprentices:

1. 67% come from non-professional family backgrounds
2. 92% of employers expect new recruits at Levels 2, 3 and 4 to progress to Level 7
3. 93% of non-levy employers said that if Level 7 was not available they would find it harder to meet the demand for high-level accountancy skills

Risks of removing levy funding:

1. **Reduced professional career opportunities in accountancy for young people** leading to a reduction in the number of aspiring accountants entering the profession.
2. **Exacerbating the existing skills shortages** of qualified accountants. This will weaken the ability of businesses, including in the financial services sector, to navigate complex and dynamic financial landscapes, leading to increased offshoring of finance functions.
3. **Reduced social mobility** disproportionately affecting young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Blocking access to this essential pathway into the accountancy profession will reverse the equality and diversity improvements the finance sector has achieved.
4. **Constraining economic growth.** SMEs, public sector organisations, and industries reliant on high-level accountancy skills will face increased recruitment and retention challenges, restricting growth and productivity in key sectors.

Recommendation: In order to support the development of young people into the high-skilled accountants essential to the UK's economic future, full levy funding for the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship must be retained. We urge the Government to engage with employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices – particularly SMEs and the public sector – to understand the vital importance of the Level 7 programme, and take into account its contribution to economic growth, social mobility, and high-level finance skills development in developing the new Growth and Skills Levy.

Key Data

AGE OF LEARNERS

70+%

of Level 7 learners are aged 24 or below upon starting their programme

"In 2023, 79% of ICAEW's Level 7 accountancy apprentices were aged 24 or under when they started."

Will Holt, Managing Director of Education & Training, ICAEW

NON-LEVY EMPLOYERS

83%

of non-levy employers employ a greater number of accountancy trainees because of Level 7 funding

"Without the financial support we receive through the levy we would inevitably be more limited in how many new trainees we could fund through their training and hence be restricted in offering as many roles to future young people."

Jill Wright, Partner, Kirk Newsholme Chartered Accountants

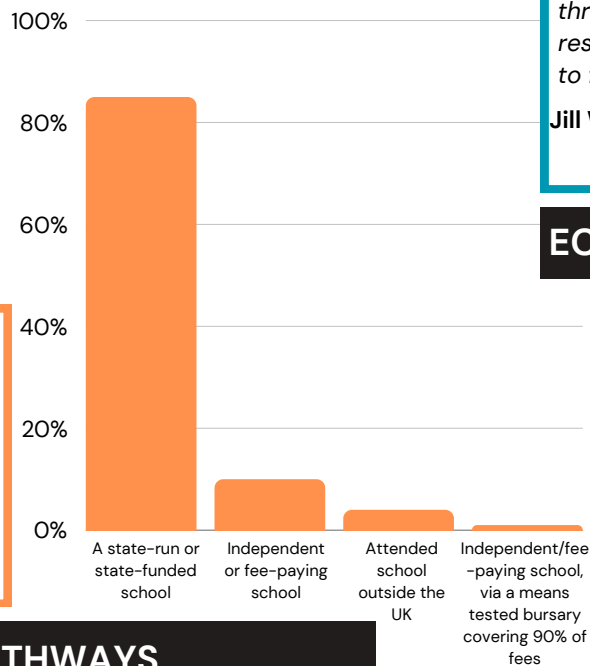
DIVERSITY & SOCIAL MOBILITY

85%

of Level 7 accountancy apprentices attended **state school**

"One of the biggest benefits of the Level 7 apprenticeship is the diversity of people it brings in. It opens the door for people from all sorts of backgrounds."

Alex Ditalia-Riley, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust



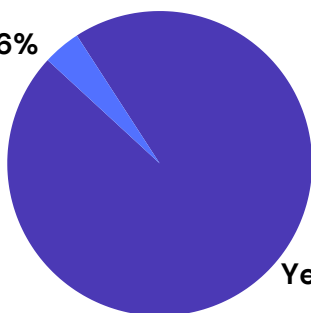
ECONOMY AND SKILLS

94%

of employers say that supporting new accountancy trainees under apprenticeships is an important way to address the lack of experienced, qualified accountants

PROGRESSION PATHWAYS

No 6%



Yes 94%

94%

of apprentices said the potential to progress to complete Level 7 was an important reason they started their accountancy training

"Cutting off pathways to higher qualifications, including the Level 7 apprenticeship pathway that leads to chartered status, risks limiting the range of futures available – having the effect of deterring more of the very talent we're trying to attract."

Sarah Beale, Chief Executive, AAT

"We have seen first-hand the growing need for highly skilled professionals who possess not only technical expertise but also strong leadership and strategic thinking abilities. This is where the introduction of Level 7 apprenticeships has become invaluable to our business and the wider economy."

Darren Eastham, Director, Wheawill & Sudworth, Huddersfield

Sector Overview

Why the accountancy sector is important to the economy

High-level accountancy skills are critical to the UK economy. They are an integral part of the key growth sectors of financial services and professional & business services, and also provide essential services in auditing, tax, financial planning and compliance to other growth sectors such as life sciences and clean energy. The accountancy sector is currently facing critical skills shortages; 90% of employers surveyed said there is currently a lack of experienced, qualified accountants, highlighting the need to support the development of highly skilled professionals. Accountants work in every sector, including thousands of SMEs as well as listed companies and the public sector. They work in cities, towns and rural areas, making the ongoing development of skilled finance professionals essential to local, sectoral and national economic growth and competitiveness.

79%
of employers of accountancy apprentices are involved in the government's four priority sectors



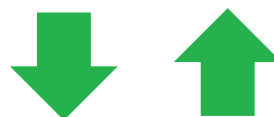
94%
of employers say supporting new trainees under apprenticeships is an important way to address the lack of experienced qualified accountants

Why apprenticeships are important in the accountancy sector

Apprenticeships are vital to the accountancy profession as a structured, pathway for developing young people into highly skilled finance professionals, addressing critical talent shortages while also promoting equality and social mobility. Apprenticeships allow school leavers and graduates to progress from entry-level roles (at Levels 2-4) to become fully qualified Chartered Accountants through the Level 7 programme.

Apprenticeships are essential for filling skills gaps, as they provide practical experience and professional skills alongside technical accountancy knowledge. Apprentices show improved retention rates and better career prospects, creating well-rounded professionals to support critical finance functions. Apprenticeships have improved access to the profession which has increased equality in the workforce. 52% of employers say that apprenticeships have improved the diversity of the trainees they support.

92%
of employers expect entry-level apprentices at Levels 2, 3 or 4 to progress to Level 7



83%
of non-levy employers support a greater number of trainees because of Level 7 funding

Why Level 7 is important to talent progression in accountancy

Level 7 represents the aspirational destination for accountancy apprentices, enabling them to achieve the status of Chartered Accountant, the culmination of a structured progression pathway lasting several years that often begins at lower-levels. For many ambitious, young people Level 7 is the end goal after progressing through Levels 2, 3, and 4.

The Level 7 accountancy standard is actually a three-year programme which actually covers Levels 4, 5, and 7, giving 9,500 learners per annum rapid career advancement and excellent value for money for funding used. The programme equips learners with high-level technical and strategic accounting skills, preparing them for senior leadership roles in finance.

The Level 7 is also a key attractor of talent to the sector, as it provides young people with a clear pathway to a high-level, well-paid career. Over 70% of Level 7 learners are aged 24 or below when starting the programme, totalling around 7,000 young people each year, making Level 7 essential for developing young talent in an industry facing severe skills shortages.

96%
of trainees at all levels said it was their ambition to complete a Level 7 apprenticeship

94%
of apprentices said the potential to complete Level 7 was an important reason for starting their accountancy training

Synopsis

Report outline:

This report outlines the critical reasons why the government must ensure the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship standard continues to receive full levy funding..

Data:

The report is supported by data collected from the four largest providers of accountancy apprenticeships (who support over 90% of learners on the Level 7 programme), plus up-to-date testimonials and case studies collected from First Intuition apprentices and their employers. Also included are results from surveys undertaken between 26 September and 4 October 2024 which received responses from 813 current accountancy apprentices and 228 employers of apprentices.

First Intuition's response to announcements regarding apprenticeships:

First Intuition are pleased about plans to introduce shorter-duration and foundation apprenticeships, addressing our long-standing call for greater flexibility at Level 2.

However, removing funding for Level 7 apprenticeships in accountancy will reduce opportunities for young people, reduce diversity and jeopardise the strength of a sector essential for economic growth.

Implications of reducing funding of Level 7 apprenticeships in accountancy:

- **Impact on Young People:** Over 70% of learners on the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship are aged 24 or below when they start the programme, totalling around 7,000 young people each year. Level 7 serves as an aspirational destination for school leavers and as an entry point for graduates, supporting the development of young people into fully qualified Chartered Accountants.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will reduce access to high-level accountancy qualifications and professional career opportunities for young people

- **Impact on Social Mobility, Equality and Diversity:** This apprenticeship has significantly increased access to the accountancy profession for individuals from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds. 85% of learners on the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship are from state-schools, many of whom are the first in their families to enter a professional career.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will create barriers to opportunity and reduce diversity

- **Impact on Progression Pathways:** The Level 7 apprenticeship is the pinnacle of clear and well-known progression pathways that can start at Levels 2 or 3, and continue through to becoming a fully qualified Chartered Accountant. For many learners the reason they start training as an Accounting Technician (a role in critical demand) is their ambition to progress to Level 7 and this ensures a steady stream of talent to address the sector's talent shortages.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will block progression pathways in the accountancy sector and reduce the appeal of training as an accountant

- **Impact on Post-16 Education Options:** There has been a major shift in recent years towards school leaver routes into the accountancy sector, benefitting the age and social mobility demographics highlighted above. The growing credibility of the Level 7 apprenticeship has offered many young people an attractive way to start a professional accountancy career without the need to suffer the cost of going to University.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will reduce the credibility of non-University routes into accountancy

- **Impact on Aspirations:** Each year the Level 7 apprenticeship represents the end-goal for thousands of ambitious young people entering the accountancy profession. Completing Level 7 is the last step in what can be the culmination of 6 or 7 years of hard work and dedication towards Chartered Accountant status.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will remove the aspirational destination for ambitious young people

- **Impact on Talent Retention:** Level 7 apprentices are more loyal to their employer and show greater retention rates than other trainee chartered accountants.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will make it harder for organisations to retain finance talent

- **Impact on Public Sector Employers:** Many levy-paying government departments, NHS organisations and other public sector employers do not have training budgets beyond their levy pots. They absolutely rely on Level 7 levy funding to support the development of highly skilled accounting talent in their own finance teams.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will mean that many public sector employers will be unable to recruit, train and develop their own high-skilled accountants

- **Impact on Non-levy SMEs in Towns and Rural Areas:** SMEs employ and train 1,800–2,000 Level 7 accountancy apprentices each year, and many of those employers are reliant on levy funding to support the career opportunities they offer in towns and rural areas. Non-levy firms report increasing the number of trainee positions they are able to offer as a result of Level 7 levy funding.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will reduce professional finance career opportunities offered by SMEs in towns and rural areas

- **Impact on the Accountancy Sector:** the accountancy sector is already experiencing significant skills shortages in crucial areas like audit, tax and bookkeeping which are important regulatory requirements. Completing Level 7 is an aspiration that attracts talent into the sector.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will increase existing skills shortages in the accountancy sector

- **Impact on Economic Growth:** Accountants are an integral part of the key growth sectors of financial services and professional & business services, and also support financial decisions in other key growth sectors such as clean energy and life sciences. The high-level finance skills developed on this programme directly contribute to the government's economic growth goals.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will restrict the talent supporting business in key growth sectors of the economy, which will reduce sectoral, regional and national economic growth

- **Impact on National Competitiveness:** as a result of the announcement to reduce Level 7 apprenticeships firms have already started exploring off-shoring work to India and South Africa to make up for anticipated short-falls in domestic talent. This will impact not only short-term GDP but will weaken the power of our financial services and professional & business services sectors.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 will reduce economic competitiveness of businesses in the UK, especially in our financial services and professional & business services sectors

Why the government needs to act now:

Accountancy is a profession where the Level 7 apprenticeship programme has successfully delivered on the goals of the levy; addressing critical high-level skills shortages, supporting economic growth and breaking down barriers to opportunity for young people regardless of their background. This has all been achieved in a professional services sector that supports key growth industries and the wider economy. Reducing funding for the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship would reverse success in areas where levy funding has achieved exactly what it set out to do.

First Intuition's ask from the government:

We recommend that the Government retains full levy funding for Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeships in order to maintain an essential pathway for young people into a highly-skilled profession that supports the wider business community, key growth sectors and national economic growth.

We urge policymakers to engage with employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices, particularly SMEs and public sector organisations who will be most affected by the changes.

We invite government to read this report and supporting evidence to understand the contribution this crucial Level 7 apprenticeship programme makes to economic growth, social mobility and high-level finance skills development.

Data Overview



Introduction

Who is First Intuition?

First Intuition is one of the four largest providers of accountancy apprenticeships in the UK. We offer apprenticeship programmes that have been graded Outstanding by OFSTED, for Level 2, 3, 4 and 7 covering the AAT, ACCA, CIMA and ICAEW qualifications. Every year, First Intuition trains thousands of young accountancy apprentices in training centres across the country, and we play a vital role in addressing local and national skills shortages in specialisms such as audit, tax, accounts preparation and bookkeeping.

First Intuition is a member of several regional and national groups that focus on apprenticeships, skills and the accountancy sector, including the AELP, ICAEW, CBI, Chambers of Commerce and FSB. Our involvement in these, coupled with our first-hand experience working with employers and trainees in the accountancy sector for over 15 years, mean that we are well-placed to represent views on skills and training in the industry.

The Hierarchy of Apprenticeships in Accountancy

Accountancy apprenticeships offer a structured pathway for young people to gain globally recognised professional qualifications while gaining on-the-job work experience in the accounting and finance industry. Programmes are available at several levels, from Levels 2, 3 and 4, up to more advanced qualifications at Level 7. Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017, demand for accountancy apprenticeships by both young people and employers has dramatically increased, to the extent that apprentices now make up around 80% of trainees in First Intuition classrooms.

Apprenticeship standards ensure that young learners gain knowledge through their studies and apply this learning in the workplace, making them career-ready upon completion. A key feature of the hierarchy of accountancy apprenticeships is their flexibility, offering clear and well-understood progression pathways with multiple 'hop-on' and 'hop-off' points that can be tailored to the situation and the needs of each individual learner.

- School leavers often start at Level 2 or 3 to become a Qualified Bookkeeper, typically progressing onto Level 4 which gives them Accounting Technician status. Many then continue to complete Level 7 to become a qualified Chartered Accountant.
- School leavers with a relevant academic background such as an Accounting T-Level can start their apprenticeship journey at Level 4 before moving onto Level 7.
- Graduates will typically start at Level 7, accelerating them to chartered status.

These flexible progression pathways allow individuals to "earn while they learn" once they leave full-time education, and for many they help to eliminate the financial barriers associated with traditional university education. This has made accountancy apprenticeships a key driver of social mobility in the profession, and putting the prospect of becoming a Chartered Accountant within the reach of anyone regardless of their background.

Level 7 apprenticeships are particularly significant as they deliver the final stage of training required to become a fully qualified Chartered Accountant. Level 7 is a three-year programme that actually incorporates Levels 4, 5 and 7, offering excellent value for the funding invested. Learners gain professional skills such as leadership and strategic thinking, ensuring that they are well-equipped for senior roles in the finance industry.

The Accountancy Sector's Role in Economic Growth

The accountancy sector plays a crucial role in supporting the broader economy, providing essential services in areas such as corporate reporting, auditing, tax, budgeting and financial management. High-level accountancy skills are integral to two of the government's eight key growth sectors; financial services and professional & business services. They are also important to other key growth sectors such as life sciences and clean energy industries.

Accountants work for and advise employers in industries across the whole economy, from SMEs to multinationals, and also government departments and public sector organisations such as the NHS.

As the government focuses on its mission of driving economic growth through improving productivity, continued training of skilled accountants is essential to achieving those goals. The accountancy sector's ability to support sound financial management and help businesses navigate complex regulatory environments makes it a critical player in fostering stability and confidence amongst investors.

The profession also plays a key role in supporting social mobility and providing young people with access to high-quality, well-paid careers regardless of their background. Greater diversity and equality in the accountancy sector have been particularly improved by the widespread adoption of apprenticeships by employers of trainee accountants.

As the accountancy sector currently faces critical skills shortages, particularly in specialisms such as audit and tax, the continued development of talent has never been more important. The government's ongoing support for apprenticeships, particularly at higher levels, is vital.

Impact of the Level 7 Apprenticeship Programme

The Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship has transformed training in the accountancy sector by providing an aspirational goal for young people and creating a clear progression path to achieving Chartered Accountant status. 94% of apprentices at all levels say that completing Level 7 was an important reason for starting their accountancy training. The programme has increased diversity and has helped to break down barriers to opportunity, with 85% of Level 7 accountancy apprentices coming from state schools. Apprentices see their earning potential increase by an average of 50-75% from starting their Level 7 apprenticeship through to completing it. This has opened up career opportunities to those who might not have otherwise pursued accountancy, and helped spread job opportunities across the UK, particularly for SMEs and those based in towns and more rural areas.

83% of non-levy employers say they employ more accountancy trainees as a result of the levy funding available for the Level 7 apprenticeship.

Trainees on an apprenticeship programme benefit from an 'apprenticeship premium', typically outperforming their peers who pursue non-apprenticeship routes. They gain on-the-job training and develop a wider range of important professional skills and behaviours alongside their technical training. The clear progression pathway to Level 7 also helps employers to retain trainees both during and after their programme. Level 7 not only provides career-changing opportunities but also strengthens the profession by developing the skilled, diverse talent that is essential for the success and growth of the UK economy.

The Level 7 Accountancy Apprenticeship Supports the Labour Government's Missions

The Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship standard supports the Labour Government's missions to "tackle the deep-rooted challenges the country now faces."

Kickstart Economic Growth

The Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship is crucial for driving economic growth by addressing the shortages of high-level skills in the accountancy and finance sector. It allows young people to access good jobs, and allows businesses to develop highly skilled accountants capable of supporting financial management, compliance, and strategic growth. This ensures the UK will have the finance professionals needed to boost productivity and competitiveness, particularly working in SMEs in towns and more rural areas.

Break Down Barriers to Opportunity

Level 7 has played a significant role in breaking down barriers to opportunity by widening access to high-level accountancy careers. 85% of Level 7 apprentices come from state-funded schools, and 57% come from families where neither parent attended university. Level 7 programmes ensure that individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds can achieve Chartered Accountant status, promoting a more inclusive and equal workforce.

Build an NHS Fit for the Future

The Level 7 apprenticeship supports the NHS directly by equipping finance professionals with the skills needed to manage the financial complexities of large healthcare organisations. Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, for example, has successfully used the Level 7 programme to fill critical staffing gaps in its finance department. NHS organisations often lack training budgets outside their levy pots so levy funding for Level 7 is critical to their ability to train high-level finance staff.

Make Britain a Clean Energy Superpower

Accountants play a key role in the financial planning and management of clean energy projects, ensuring that capital investments are sound and sustainable. The Level 7 apprenticeship prepares accountants to support businesses in navigating the financial aspects of transitioning to clean energy, helping them manage risks and allocate resources effectively. By training skilled accountants that can handle the financial challenges of the green economy, the Level 7 apprenticeship supports Britain leading in clean energy initiatives.

Outcomes from this Report:

1

Provide comprehensive evidence showing that the desire to rebalance funding to young people is entirely aligned with supporting the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship standard

2

Inform policymakers about the importance of Level 7 apprenticeships for the accountancy sector and wider UK economy, and why Level 7 apprenticeships should continue to be funded by the levy

The 'Apprenticeship Premium'

The "apprenticeship premium" refers to benefits that apprenticeship programmes offer to trainees and employers over traditional accountancy training routes. It is this premium that have driven incredible growth in the adoption of apprenticeships since the levy was introduced in 2017. First Intuition classrooms have gone from containing only a minority of apprentices to now being made up of around 80% apprentices.

Classroom ratios:

Overall

80% apprentices

Level 7

65% apprentices

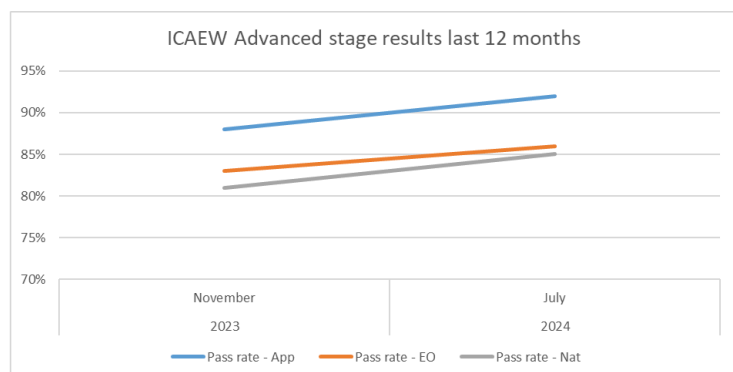
Broader professional skills and behaviours

Alongside technical accountancy training, apprenticeships deliver essential professional skills such as leadership, communication, critical thinking and problem solving. At First Intuition, for example, apprentices participate in our Impact Skills Programme, which allows them to develop these 'soft' skills, better preparing them for senior finance roles. 75% of apprentices say these professional skills are a key motivator for following their Level 7 qualification.

Better pass rates

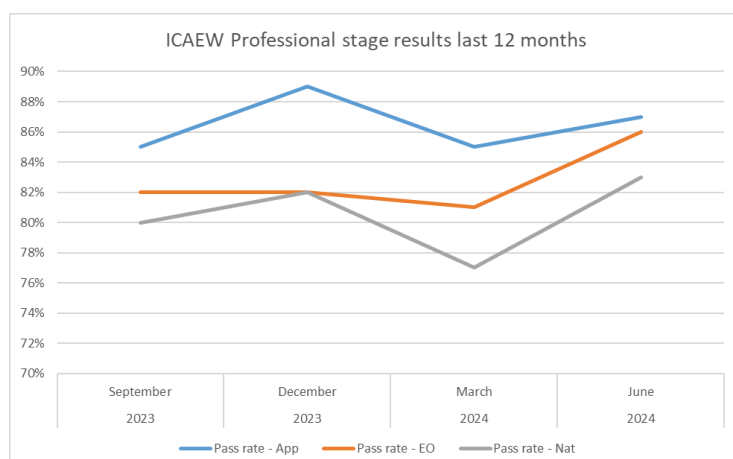
Apprenticeships offer more structured support than traditional programmes, including dedicated coaches working with each learner. These coaches help apprentices manage their workload and exams, providing ongoing guidance and feedback on progress. This extra support leads to higher pass rates for apprentices compared to those taking the same qualification via non-apprenticeship routes. Evidence of higher pass rates can be seen in the graphs below which compare ICAEW exam results at Professional and Advanced Level.

The blue line represents pass rates achieved by First Intuition apprentices, the orange line shows our commercially funded students, and the grey line is the overall national average. Apprentice pass rates are consistently higher.



More reliable progression to qualification

Apprenticeships provide a clear and structured pathway from lower-level qualifications to Level 7, with 58% of accountancy apprentices progressing to a higher level. 94% of apprentices say that completing Level 7 to become a fully qualified Chartered Accountant is a key motivator. Apprentices gain practical experience earlier, often qualifying at a younger age than university graduates.



Improved retention rates

Employers report better staff retention rates among apprentices, as workplace training fosters loyalty and long-term commitment. Companies like TUI Group have seen apprentices, particularly at Level 7, stay with the organisation longer, benefiting both the business and the employee by creating stable, skilled teams.

Better career prospects and earnings

Apprenticeships lead to better career prospects. The combination of the broader professional skills developed, along with hands-on experience of applying technical knowledge in the workplace, make apprentices more valuable to employers. Upon completing their Level 7 apprenticeship, apprentices often experience significant salary increases, with an average uplift of 50-75% from the time they started their programme.

Employers can hire more trainee accountants

Levy funding allows employers, especially SMEs, to hire and train more accountants, helping address the skills shortages in the industry. 83% of non-levy employers have been able to support more trainees due to levy funding of the Level 7 apprenticeship, increasing job opportunities for young people and delivering the talent the accountancy sector is so short of.

"Our finance apprentices start their career with us on the Level 3 AAT and progress through to Level 4 and then onto their Level 7 - at TUI, we have seen every one of our apprentices follow this career path and it has really help with our retention of colleagues but also enabled them to develop their transferrable skills and move into management positions even before they complete their Level 7."

Rebecca Barton, Emerging Talent Demand & Portfolio Manager, Tui Group

"Upon completion of Level 7 qualifications within our company our fully qualified and experienced team members become key client handlers, providing support to businesses across our region from new start up ventures to established companies of up to £50 million turnover. These team members have fantastic career prospects within our firm following their qualifications and those who decide to leave us can also take up extremely career rewarding roles within our sector or within the wider business world."

Jill Wright, Kirk Newsholme Chartered Accountants

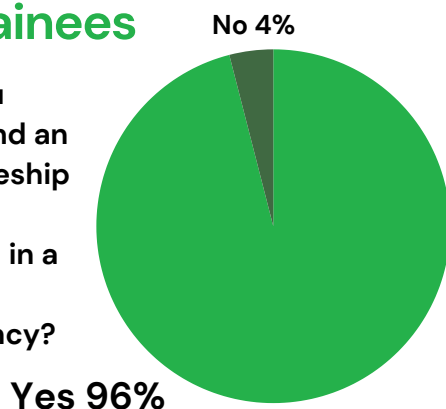
"Without apprenticeship funding we just wouldn't be able to offer L7 qualification to our teams without significant financial burden which will mean that we reduce our recruitment drives at lower apprentice levels as we will have less opportunity to support them through their professional studies."

Jonathan Carr ACA, Co-Owner & Director, Gravitare Accounting

The Value of Apprenticeships

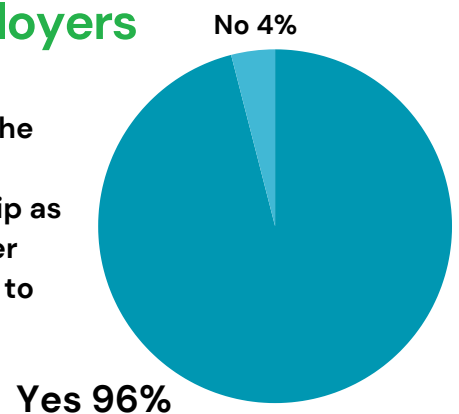
For Trainees

Would you recommend an apprenticeship to others interested in a career in accountancy?



For Employers

Would you recommend the Level 7 apprenticeship as a way for other organisations to develop accountancy talent?



Planned Changes to Apprenticeships

"The government is boosting opportunities for young people through ambitious apprenticeship reforms in England. The Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer and Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson...announced a new Growth and Skills Levy which will replace the existing Apprenticeship Levy and include new Foundation Apprenticeships. These new apprenticeships will give young people a route into careers in critical sectors, enabling them to earn a wage whilst developing vital skills."

[Government website.](#)

First Intuition's Response...

Shorter duration apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships



First Intuition is optimistic about the announcement of plans to introduce shorter-duration apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships, which could address our long-standing call for greater flexibility in the length of a Level 2 programme.

The minimum requirement of one year on an apprenticeship programme has been a major blocker to the uptake of the Level 2 standard in accountancy. This has meant young adults and their employers have missed out on developing key employability skills and behaviours as they enter professional working environments. These 'ready-for-work' skills are something that many employers find entry-level staff lack. A survey of clients conducted by First Intuition in April 2024 found that 47% of employers felt written communication skills amongst entry-level staff was not at the level they expected.

Being able to deliver key Level 2 employability skills over a shorter duration would be transformational for preparing young adults for a full Level 3 apprenticeship.

- Greater flexibility without needing to commit to a 12- month programme
- Opportunity for young people to develop key employability skills and behaviours

We surveyed 200+ employers of accountancy trainees with First Intuition and found that only 23% currently support Level 2 apprenticeships.

If the Level 2 apprenticeship programme was available over a shorter period (for example 6 months), 51% of employers said they would be more likely to use it. This demonstrates the demand for Level 2 over a shorter duration.

51%

of employers would be more likely to use Level 2 apprenticeships if they were available over a shorter period

Removal of levy funding for Level 7 Apprenticeships

“To fund (*shorter duration apprenticeships*), employers are being asked to rebalance their funding for apprenticeships, asking them to invest in younger workers. This will also involve businesses funding more of their Level 7 apprenticeships – equivalent to a master’s degree and often accessed by older or already well qualified employees – outside of the levy.”

[Government website.](#)

Removing funding for Level 7 apprenticeships in accountancy will take professional career opportunities away from young people. This will jeopardise the progression pipeline that develops school leavers and graduates into fully qualified Chartered Accountants.

It will also hinder social mobility in an industry where apprenticeships have driven huge improvements in diversity and equality.

It will exacerbate skills shortages in key areas such as audit, tax, and financial management, which support key growth sectors and are essential for the UK’s economic growth.

Thousands of SMEs who employ accountancy apprentices and are often located in towns and more rural areas of the UK will be disproportionately affected by the removal of levy funding for Level 7 as they often do not have the resources to train as many young people without access to levy funding. This will therefore reduce job and career opportunities in more disadvantaged areas of the UK.

The list to the right illustrates some key implications of reducing levy funding for the Level 7 apprenticeship in accountancy. Some of these key risks will be explored in further detail throughout this report, including:



- Overwhelming impact on young people losing access to high-level qualifications
- Reduction in social mobility, equality and diversity
- Blocking accessible progression pathways in the accountancy sector
- Exacerbation of finance skills shortages, especially in financial services and professional & business services sectors
- Disruption of talent pipelines
- Reduced retention of talent
- Disproportionate impact on SMEs and employers in towns and rural areas
- Reduced national economic growth and competitiveness
- Employers will off-shore finance work to India and South Africa
- Public sector organisations that rely on levy funding will not be able to train Chartered Accountants
- Loss of salary uplift achieved by Level 7 apprentices

- Overwhelming Impact on Young People
- Reduction in Social Mobility, Equality and Diversity
- Blocking Progression Pathways
- Impact on the Economy and Skills

The Level 7 Apprenticeship in Accountancy is...

Vital for Young People



Level 7 is vital to the talent pipeline in the accountancy profession, particularly for young people with ambitions to build successful finance careers. Contrary to the belief that Level 7 is used mainly by older workers, over 70% of learners starting Level 7 accountancy apprenticeships since 2017 have been aged 24 or below, totalling around 7,000 young people each year. Level 7 is an important programme for aspiring accountants, including school leavers and graduates, supporting them to become qualified Chartered Accountants by their early twenties.

Over 70%
of learners
starting the Level
7 programme are
aged 24 or below

There is often an assumption that young people follow lower-level programmes, and older people follow higher-level programmes. However, this is simply not the case in the accountancy sector.

Sector-wide data from the four largest providers of apprenticeships in the accountancy sector showing the age demographic of learners starting Level 7 from 2017–2024

Age	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3	Provider 4	Average
16–18	3%	11.9%	2.8%	2.5%	5%
19–24	63%	78.4%	71.3%	65.7%	70%
25+	34%	9.7%	25.9%	31.8%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

The table above provides an overview of the age demographic of learners starting the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship standard since the levy was introduced in 2017 across the four largest providers in the accountancy sector. **These four providers support around 90% of Level 7 learners in the accountancy sector.**

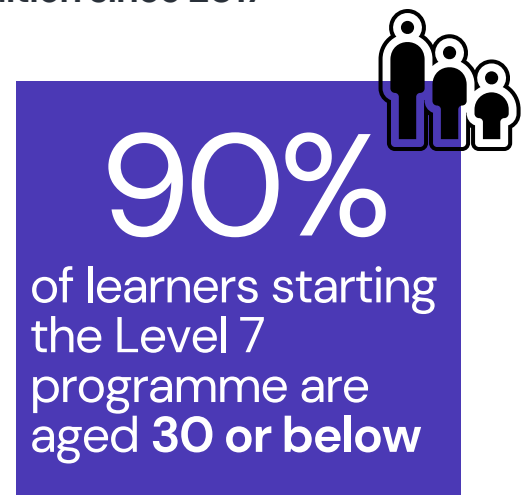
The data includes learners studying for a number of globally-recognised professional accountancy qualifications such as ACCA, CIMA and ICAEW.

The age profile of Level 7 learners with First Intuition since 2017

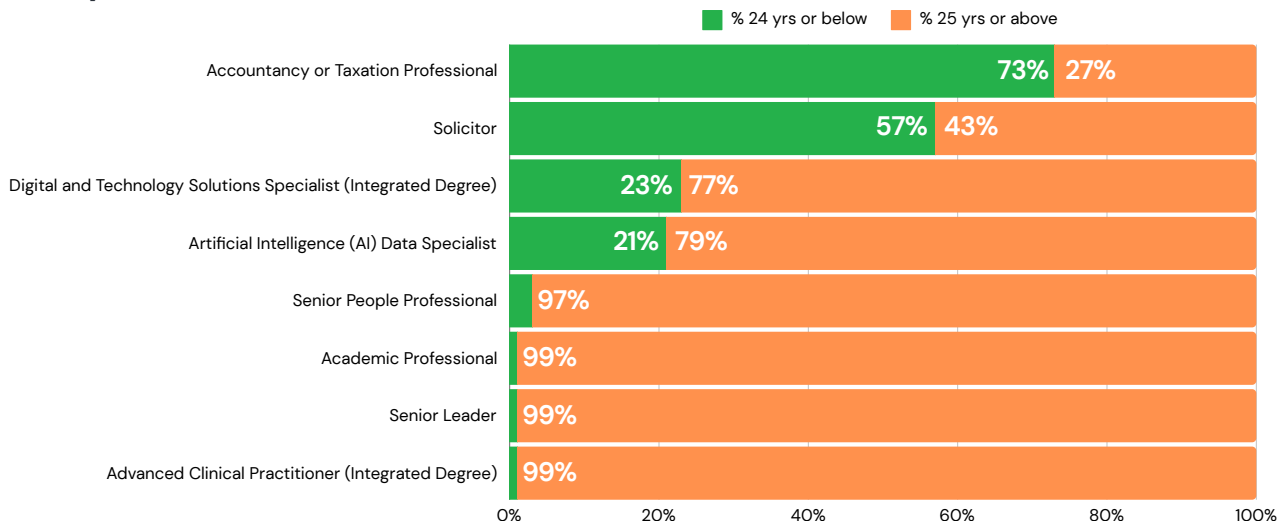
Drilling down into the age profile of learners at First Intuition, the total number of Level 7 starts since the 2017/18 funding year is 7,306. First Intuition's data confirms that 70% of these Level 7 apprentices were aged 24 or below when they started their programme, and also shows that around 90% were aged 30 or below.

Over two-thirds of First Intuition learners who begin a Level 7 programme are recent school leavers or graduates, highlighting again that this programme is widely used by young people to develop high-level skills early in their finance careers.

We can compare the age profile of Level 7 apprentices in accountancy with other popular Level 7 standards:



Age split of the 8 largest Level 7 apprenticeships by volume of starts in 2023/24



The chart above shows the age split of the 8 largest Level 7 apprenticeships by volume of starts in 2023/24. The data was obtained from the Department for Education, and includes all providers of these most commonly used Level 7 apprenticeships.

As well as confirming that over 70% of Level 7 accountancy apprentices are young people, the data clearly shows that the Accountancy/Taxation Professional standard has the highest proportion of learners aged 24 years or below when they start their programme. On the Level 7 these learners work through Levels 4, 5 and 7 over three years.

A quote from an accountancy apprentice currently training on the Level 7 programme

"The apprenticeship programme is going to allow me to complete both the AAT and ACCA qualifications whilst I am still in my early 20s which will set me up for my career in accountancy for the rest of my life."

Callie Weller, Accountant at Red Shoes Accounting Services

Quotes from employers who train Level 7 accountancy apprentices and accountancy awarding bodies about young trainees:

"The age profile of our learners predominantly ranges from 16–25 with school leavers and also people with a non-finance degree wanting to start their finance journey. Some of these start on Level 7 and others, dependant on qualifications already gained, at Level 3 or 4 with aspirations to go onto Level 7. It would not be viable for us to do this without levy funding."

John Chase, Senior Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

"The wide range of skills, knowledge and behaviours that are nurtured on the apprenticeship schemes are invaluable in the workplace. Young people who have not previously had jobs need to be taught how to communicate and behave effectively in a professional workplace. We, of course, guide them through their first years in the workplace very closely but it is essential for their development that this is backed up in a highly managed, highly effective way by the college."

Jenny Milton, Practice Manager, Hardcastle Burton

"In 2024, we hired our first two 'early career' (A-Level students) colleagues in to our Finance team. Both were aged 18 years, one undertaking the Level 3 Assistant Accountant and the other the Level 4 Professional accounting or taxation technician. After a year in, these young colleagues are already asking 'what's next' and they see the Level 7 as an aspirational progression destination, especially when our other colleagues are role modelling this; the new colleagues can see how they've progressed and can aspire to achieve the similar goals."

Heather Rymer, Talent & Early Careers Manager, Leeds Building Society

"In 2023, 79% of ICAEW's Level 7 accountancy apprentices were aged 24 or under when they started, highlighting the programme as a key entry point for those without industry experience. Our data also shows that the number of school leaver starts has more than doubled since the introduction of the Level 7 apprenticeship."

Will Holt, Managing Director of Education & Training, ICAEW, a globally-recognised professional qualification often earned by Level 7 accountancy apprentices

Case Studies:

Profiles of Level 7 accountancy apprentices who were aged 24 or below when starting their programme

Below are some representative examples of young learners with First Intuition who are currently working towards completing the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship. You can find more examples like these in the appendices to this report.

Lois Fish, 24, Semi-Senior Accountant & Auditor at UHY-BPR Heaton

Town/city attended secondary school:

Leeds

Town/city currently working in:

Leeds

Level currently studying

Level 7 ICAEW apprenticeship (I have passed all exams and am in the process of completing my training file to obtain Chartered status)

Level she started her accountancy training at:

Level 2 & 3 studying for the AAT qualification

Was she a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver from A-Levels

Age when she started her first apprenticeship:

18

Age when she started her Level 7 apprenticeship:

21



Eden Day, aged 22, Trainee Accountant at Knights Lowe

Town/city attended secondary school:

Bury St Edmunds

Town/city currently working in:

Bury St Edmunds

Level currently studying:

Currently working towards a Level 7 apprenticeships for ACCA

Level he started his accountancy training at:

Level 2 for AAT

Was he a school leaver or graduate:

A school leaver. I began my training at 18 as a school leaver by studying with First Intuition towards my AAT qualification, starting at Level 2 and working up to Level 4 within approximately three years. I am now starting my Level 7 apprenticeship at the age of 22.

Age when he started his first apprenticeship:

18

Age when he started his Level 7 apprenticeship:

22



The implications of reducing levy funding for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship on young people include:

Reducing levy funding for the Level 7 Accounting/Taxation Professional apprenticeship would have significant and far-reaching implications for young people who aspire to start a career in accountancy. Level 7 is an aspirational destination that attracts young people to the sector and allows them to progress to become fully qualified Chartered Accountants.

1 Reduced access to professional qualifications

Without levy funding, young people would face significant financial barriers to accessing the Level 7 apprenticeship, which is a key route to achieving Chartered Accountant status. If levy funding is removed many small and medium-sized employers could not afford to train as many young people, reducing access to high-salary career opportunities available to young people.

3 Reduced social mobility for young people

The Level 7 apprenticeship has played a crucial role in improving social mobility into the accountancy profession for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The programme offers an attainable pathway into a well-paid career that might otherwise be out of reach for these individuals.

By removing levy funding, young people from low-income families would be disproportionately affected, as they would no longer have access to a cost-effective route into accountancy. This would lead to fewer young people from under-represented backgrounds entering the profession, reversing the significant progress made in recent years to improve diversity and equality.

2 Blocking career progression pathways

Completing Level 7 is the aspirational destination at the top of a clear early-career progression pathway into the accountancy profession. Many young people start their finance careers at Levels 2 or 3 and work their way up to Level 7, becoming fully qualified accountants by their mid-20s. This progression is highly motivating for learners, with 94% of apprentices citing the potential to complete Level 7 as a critical factor in choosing to train as an accountant.

Removing levy funding would block this progression pathway, leaving young people without a clear route to the highest qualification levels in the profession. This would limit their career prospects and discourage young people from entering the accountancy profession in the first place.

4 Worsening skills shortages

The accountancy sector is currently experiencing critical skills shortages. The Level 7 apprenticeship provides a direct pipeline of young, ambitious talent to fill these gaps.

If funding is removed, there would be fewer opportunities for young people to take up training, and the flow into the profession of accountants who have qualified at a young age will be reduced, worsening the existing skills shortages affecting the sector.

The Level 7 Apprenticeship in Accountancy improves...

Social Mobility and Diversity

The Level 7 apprenticeship has played an important role in enhancing diversity and social mobility in the accountancy profession. With 85% of First Intuition's Level 7 learners having attended a state school, 37% being from lower deciles in the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation Indices and 61% reporting that neither parent attended University, the Level 7 programme offers a pathway to becoming a Chartered Accountant for individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. This inclusivity enriches the accountancy profession and has made it more accessible than University routes, particularly in smaller towns and rural areas where the thousands of SME employers of trainee accountants are often based and offer life-changing career opportunities to young people.

Upon signing up with First Intuition, learners complete optional questions regarding their backgrounds. These can be used to understand the social impact of the Level 7 apprenticeship programme.

The type of school attended by Level 7 learners with First Intuition

Table 2

Type of school attended between 11-16?	Percentage
Independent/fee-paying school, via a means tested bursary covering 90% of fees	1%
Attended school outside the UK	4%
Independent or fee-paying school	10%
A state-run or state-funded school	85%
Total	100%

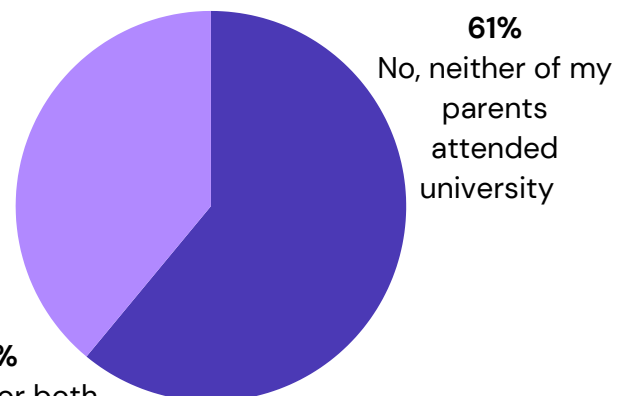
85%

of Level 7 accountancy apprentices attended **state schools**

61%

of Level 7 learners reported that **neither parent attended University**

Did either of your parents attend university and gain a degree by the time you were 18?



39%
Yes, one or both of my parents attended university

61%
No, neither of my parents attended university

The occupation of the main household earner when aged 14 of Level 7 learners with First Intuition

Table 3

Occupation of your main household earner when aged 14	Proportion
Long-term unemployed	2%
Other	5%
Clerical and intermediate occupations	6%
Small business owners who employed less than 25 people	8%
Technical and craft occupations	10%
Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations	14%
Senior, middle or junior managers or administrators	22%
Modern professional & traditional professional occupations	33%
Total	100%

67%

of Level 7 learners come from backgrounds where the main household earner was not a modern or traditional professional



Table 3 shows that 67% of starters on the Level 7 programme with First Intuition (who answered the question) come from backgrounds where the main household earner was not a modern or traditional professional.

There is clear evidence that learners on the Level 7 programme come from a wide variety of academic and economic backgrounds demonstrating the inclusive nature of the programme.

Level 7 apprenticeships have also made the accountancy profession more accessible for young people in smaller towns and rural areas. This is where the thousands of SME employers of apprentice accountants are often based, and where higher-level apprenticeships offer professional career opportunities to young people with limited options.

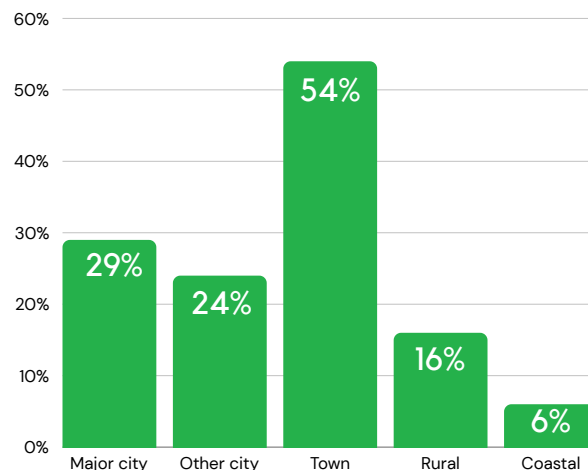
76%

of employers that train Level 7 accountancy apprentices have offices based outside cities



Of the 200+ employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices surveyed, 76% have offices based outside of cities.

The location of UK offices of employers who have Level 7 accountancy apprentices training with First Intuition



Splitting office location data by levy and non-levy employers who support accountancy apprentices



SME non-levy employers use levy funds to train 1,800 – 2,000 Level 7 accountancy apprentices each year.

The bar chart to the left shows that these employers tend to have higher representation in towns, rural and coastal areas which often suffer from greater economic deprivation.

We also asked employers ‘How has the availability of the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship affected the diversity (age, social mobility, economic background, educational needs, etc.) of trainees you support?’ Overall 52% said it has improved diversity. For non-levy employers, an even higher 59% said it has improved diversity.

The impact of completing Level 7 on earning power of the learner

Earlier in 2024 we conducted a salary survey of employers of accountants. This showed that a young person can expect their salary to increase by 60–75% by the time they complete a Level 7 qualification. This will increase by a further 20–25% within 2 years of completion.


In a more recent survey of employers we found an expected average increase in earning power of a Level 7 learner of between 51–75% from starting to completing their programme. 6% of employers said the apprentice would more than double their salary (as can be seen in the chart to the right).

This significant salary uplift as a result of completing a Level 7 programme will benefit the economy as well as the individual. This impact will be greater for those from low socioeconomic backgrounds and will promote social mobility.

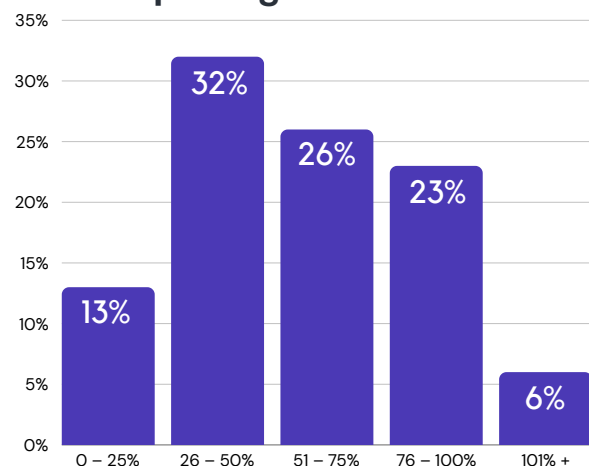
52%
of employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices said the programme’s availability has improved the diversity of the trainees they support



51–75%
is the average increase in earnings a Level 7 accountancy apprentices can expect to see from starting Level 7 through to completing it



The expected uplift in salary from starting a Level 7 apprenticeship through to completing it



91% of accountancy apprentices said earning a higher salary was one reason why it is important to complete Level 7

Quotes from employers who train Level 7 accountancy apprentices about the diversity and social mobility of their trainees:

"One of the biggest benefits of the Level 7 apprenticeship is the diversity of people it brings in. It opens the door for people from all sorts of backgrounds, many of whom wouldn't have been able to afford a higher-level qualification otherwise. This means we can attract a more varied and diverse group of individuals, which makes our workforce stronger and more reflective of the population we serve."

**Alex Ditalia-Riley, Senior CSU
Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital
NHS Trust**

"We have a diverse range of learners on our Level 7 programmes. We have those who have been in the industry a while with no formal qualifications and those who join the business straight from school and university with little work experience. These Level 7 programmes allow them opportunities to develop their skills in all areas and become not only an expert in their field but also support them to become well rounded managers with skills to help develop their teams and mentor individuals."

**Rebecca Barton, Emerging Talent
Demand & Portfolio Manager, Tui
Group**

Using the Apprenticeship levy is a win-win situation for both an employer and the employee, not only does the learner gain a recognised qualification but also has to evidence their development in workplace skills and behaviours. This encourages the employee to take ownership of their development and encourages them to grow professionally. Level 7 apprenticeships increase employee diversity and employee retention."

**Clare Wilson, Group HR Manager, LB
Group, Ipswich, Colchester,
Chelmsford and London**

"The challenges faced by young people these days upon entering the workplace are huge – no jobs are guaranteed – University routes are not guaranteeing better employment or more highly paid roles and those routes are also resulting in huge personal debts."

**Jill Wright, Kirk Newsholme Chartered
Accountants**

The implications of reducing levy funding for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship on social mobility and diversity include:

The Level 7 apprenticeship has been a significant driver in making accountancy careers more accessible to individuals from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Removing funding would reduce access to professional careers for these groups, creating barriers to opportunity and reversing gains in inclusivity and equality that have been achieved in recent years.

1 Fewer young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds reaching higher-paid roles

The Level 7 apprenticeship in accounting helps young people from diverse backgrounds to qualify as Chartered Accountants. Once qualified, these individuals have access to high-paying careers in senior finance positions.

Without levy funding, many employers would struggle to support as many trainees, especially the SMEs that have been pivotal in offering local opportunities to individuals from underrepresented groups. The loss of this funding would result in fewer young people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering the profession, as the cost of training would become a barrier for both employers and learners. This would reduce the profession's appeal to those seeking upward social mobility through well-paid and prestigious career paths in finance.

3 Opportunities reduced in towns and rural areas

Apprenticeships have been particularly effective in reaching young people in smaller towns and rural areas, where the opportunity to build high-earning careers in the accountancy profession might otherwise be limited.

By removing levy funding, the ability of the profession to attract and support a diverse workforce outside major cities would be significantly reduced. Employers, especially the thousands of SMEs who are extremely reliant on levy funding to support trainees, would reduce recruitment of apprentices from diverse backgrounds if they cannot cover the full cost of training. This would result in a less diverse pool of accountants, perpetuating inequality and reducing the potential for the profession to represent the broad spectrum of society that it serves.

2 More young people revert back to less accessible University routes

Removing funding for this Level 7 apprenticeship will reduce the credibility of non-University routes into the accountancy profession.

This will encourage more young people to take the University degree route into finance careers. This will be more costly for the individual as they incur debt and are not paid whilst they learn, which makes it a less accessible option for many young people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The social mobility benefits of apprenticeship routes into the accountancy sector have been enhanced dramatically by Level 7.

Furthermore, graduates often earn lower salaries than similar-aged school leavers as they have less practical workplace experience. When we surveyed employers in April 2024, we found that on average they paid school leavers with 3 years experience £3,569 more than recent graduates of the same age. This highlights the advantage apprentices have at the start of their careers compared to graduates.

The Level 7 Apprenticeship in Accountancy provides a...

Progression Pathway

Apprenticeships serve as a key progression pathway within the accountancy profession, offering a structured route from entry-level qualifications to becoming a fully qualified Chartered Accountant. Apprenticeships provide young people, including school leavers and graduates, with a clear and accessible progression pathway through the various stages of their accountancy training.

Removing levy funding for the Level 7 programme would block this progression pathway by removing the aspirational destination that many learners are working so hard to get to. This would deprive the sector of talent and also limit career progression opportunities for young people.

The accountancy apprenticeship system allows smooth progression from Levels 2, 3 and 4 (Accounting Technician) to Level 7 (Chartered Accountant).

Level 7 itself covers Levels 4, 5 and 7 over a combined three-year programme which aligns with aspirational careers in accountancy.

It is also a more accessible route into high-level finance leadership roles than many accountancy and finance degrees.

There are several, flexible pathways to chartered status:

- A learner can start at Level 2 after completing GCSEs and progress to Level 7, achieving fully qualified status by their early-20s.
- Strong school leavers with relevant A-Levels or T-Levels can start at Levels 3, 4 or even 7, completing Level 7 by age 23 or younger.
- Graduates may start at Level 7, using the programme as an accelerated pathway to full Chartered Accountant status.

Level 7 is a key part of this progression pathway, acting as both an aspirational destination and also as a potential starting point.

We have analysed progression data for our apprentices over the period 2017/18 to YTD 2024/25 and here are our findings:

In total, since 2017/18 **58%** of apprentices at First Intuition have progressed to a higher level programme with First Intuition

Between the 2017/18 and 2023/24 funding years, the proportion of apprentices at First Intuition progressing to a higher level programme with First Intuition has risen by **17%**

68% of apprentices who achieved a Level 2 programme with First Intuition progressed to a higher level programme with First Intuition

64% of apprentices who achieved a Level 3 programme with First Intuition progressed to a higher level programme with First Intuition

50% of apprentices who achieved a Level 4 programme with First Intuition progressed to a Level 7 programme with First Intuition

This shows the very high progression rates in the accountancy sector, all the way from Level 2 to Level 7.

It should be noted that we can only track student progression if they start their higher level programme with First Intuition. There will be an unknown number of students who progress to a higher level programme with another provider, meaning that the figures above will be understating the true progression statistics.

The 'Chimney' of Progression

Ben Rowland, CEO of AELP, uses a 'chimney' analogy to describe how the progression of apprentices from one level to another not only benefits the learners who are progressing, but also benefits new apprentices recruited to backfill the gaps left behind.

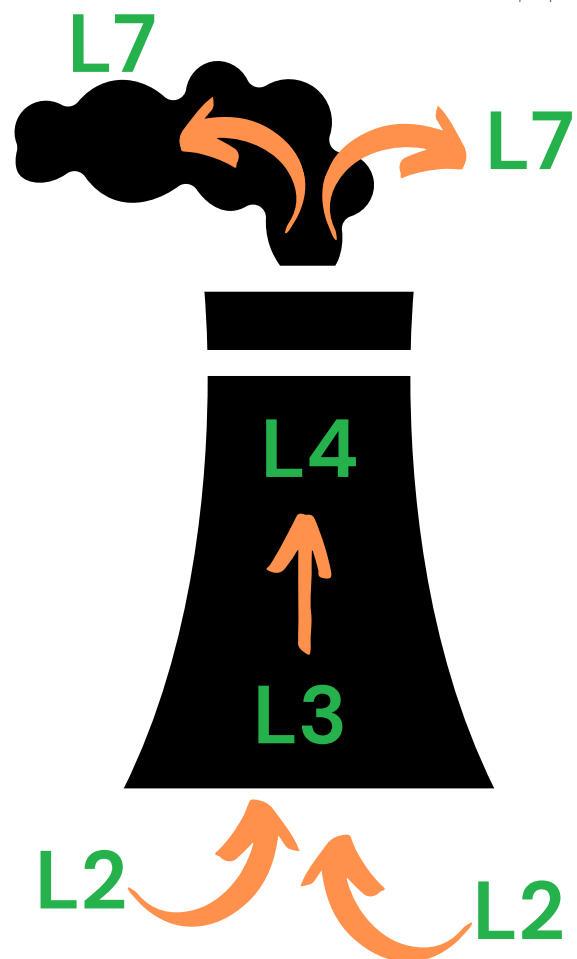
This is exactly what happens every year in hundreds of accountancy firms across the country. Level 4 learners complete and successfully move onto Level 7 (to become Chartered Accountants), which allows Level 3 learners to move up to Level 4, and Level 2 learners to progress to Level 3 roles. Firms then recruit a brand new cohort of entry-level apprentices to start their journey towards Level 7. This strong progression pathway can take a bright 18-year-old school leaver to Chartered Accountant status by the age of 23.

Data since 2017/18 shows that 58% of First Intuition's accountancy apprentices progressed to a higher level, including Level 7. 91% of employers of Level 7 apprentices said that when their apprentices progress to higher levels, they recruit to backfill roles at lower levels.

This benefits not only successive intakes of young apprentices, but also the employers who deploy their skills, the businesses that those firms support and advise, and the local, regional and national economies they are all part of.

We surveyed 200+ employers that employ accountancy apprentices about the progression opportunities that Level 7 apprenticeships provide their trainees. Here we show three data points:

Generally speaking, do you expect entry-level apprentices at Levels 2, 3 or 4 to progress to a higher-level apprenticeship programme than the one they started at? **98%** said Yes



Generally speaking, do you have ambitions for entry-level apprentices at Levels 2, 3 or 4 to ultimately progress to a Level 7 apprenticeship programme? **93%** said Yes

Generally speaking, when apprentices progress to higher levels, do you recruit to backfill roles at a lower level? **91%** said Yes

Removing levy funding for Level 7 will block the progression pathway that is so important to developing highly skilled accountants. This will reduce motivation and limit career advancement for thousands of young apprentices. The ability to achieve Chartered Accountant status is a key driver of both recruitment and retention in the profession.

Progression from Previous Apprenticeships:

When a Level 7 apprentice signs onto a First Intuition programme, we ask if they have previously started or completed an apprenticeship. 800+ learners answered 'yes' to that question (from 2017 - 2024) and of those, their previous apprenticeship level is shown in the table below.

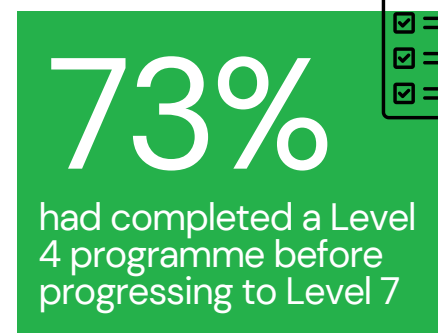
The previous level of Level 7 apprentices with First Intuition

Table 4

Previous apprenticeship	Percentage
Level 2 AAT	1.7%
Level 3 AAT	12.9%
Level 4 AAT	49.7%
Level 4 ICAEW	1.7%
Level 4 CIMA	0.8%
Level 4 ACCA	0.6%
Level 4 ATT	0.4%
Level 5 L&M	0.3%
Level 7 transfer	26.7%
Other	5.2%
Total	100.0%

26.7% of the learners in Table 4 are 'Level 7 transfers' where learners have previously started a Level 7 programme with another provider but have then changed employers and re-started with First Intuition.

Of the remaining students, 73% had completed a Level 4 programme before progressing to their Level 7 programme.



High Progression Rates Demonstrate the Value of the Pathway

The Level 7 apprenticeship is a key motivator for learners on lower level programmes, as it represents the ultimate goal for many apprentices. We surveyed over 800 of our apprentices and found a strong culture of aspiration for progression to Level 7:

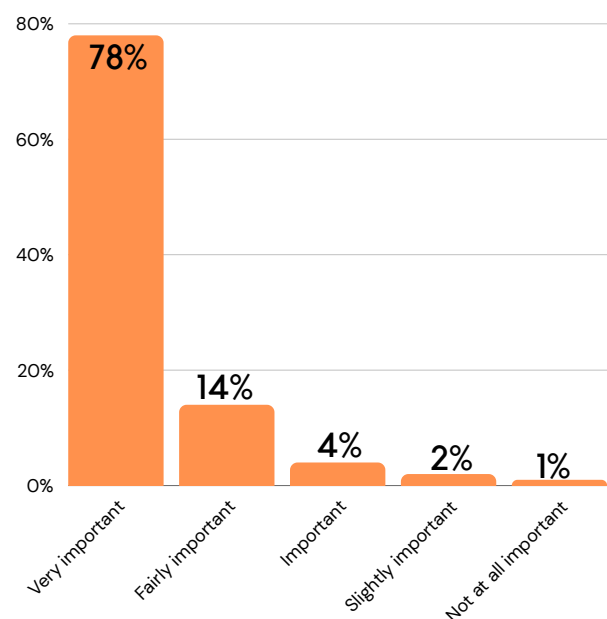
94%
said Yes

Was the potential to progress to complete Level 7 an important reason for starting your accountancy training?

Is it your ambition to complete a Level 7 apprenticeship?

96%
said Yes

How important to you is achieving a Level 7 apprenticeship to fulfill your long-term career aspirations?



92%

of learners think achieving a Level 7 apprenticeship is very or fairly important to fulfill their long-term career plans

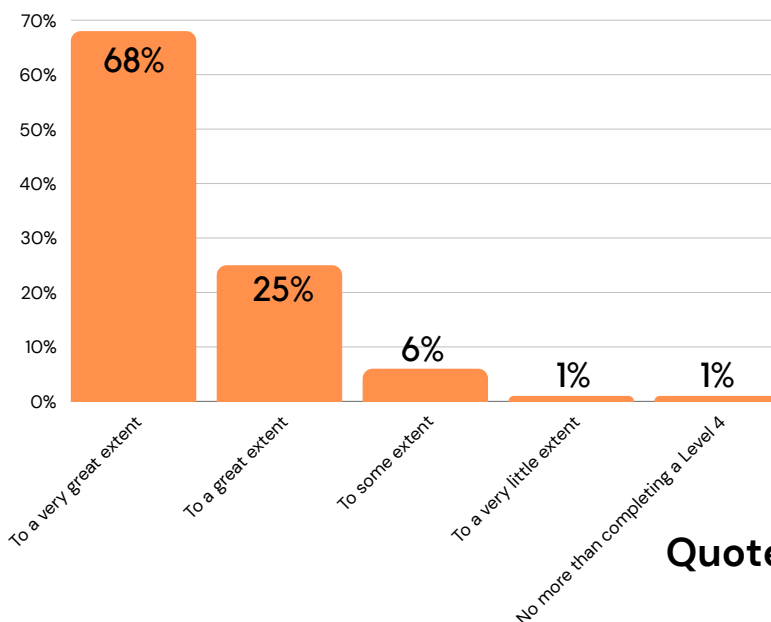
Long-Term Career Goals

We asked over 800 of apprentice accountants if they feel accountancy apprenticeships adequately prepare young people for long-term success in the accounting profession and 96% said yes. This demonstrates the extent to which young accountancy trainees see apprenticeships as a means to long-term success in their accountancy career.

96%
said Yes

Do you feel accountancy apprenticeships adequately prepare young people for long-term success in the accounting profession?

To what extent do you feel that completing a Level 7 apprenticeship (to achieve fully qualified Chartered Accountant status) provides a strong foundation for a career in accounting?

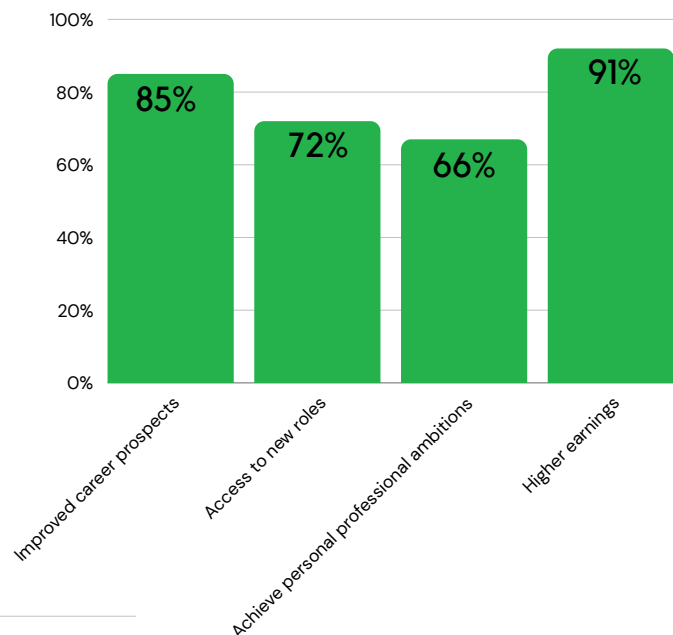


"The apprenticeship provides a clear pathway of professional development and educates you from day one on all things accountancy making you an asset to your firm with all the skills and knowledge you gain throughout."

Chloe Langford, Associate at Evelyn (East) Partners LLP

Why is it important to you to achieve your Level 7 qualification?

High percentages of Level 7 apprentices feel that higher earnings and improved career prospects are important reasons for them to achieve their Level 7 apprenticeship. This further confirms that progression aspirations are strongly tied into achieving the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship.



Accountancy apprentices were also asked the extent to which completing a Level 7 provides a strong foundation for a career in accounting. 93% of trainees said either to a great or a very great extent. This further illustrates apprentices' views on the value of Level 7 for laying the foundations for a successful career in accounting.

Quotes from Level 7 apprentices:

"The apprenticeship has given me a head start in my career as I will be qualifying as a Chartered Accountant with 6 years of experience within the industry."

Lois Fish, Semi-Senior Accountant & Auditor at UHY-BPR Heaton

Addressing Talent Shortages in the Accountancy Sector:

Results of a recent survey of over 200 employers highlight the extent to which the accountancy sector is suffering a lack of experienced, qualified accountants, as well as the extent to which apprenticeships help to address these skills shortages in the industry

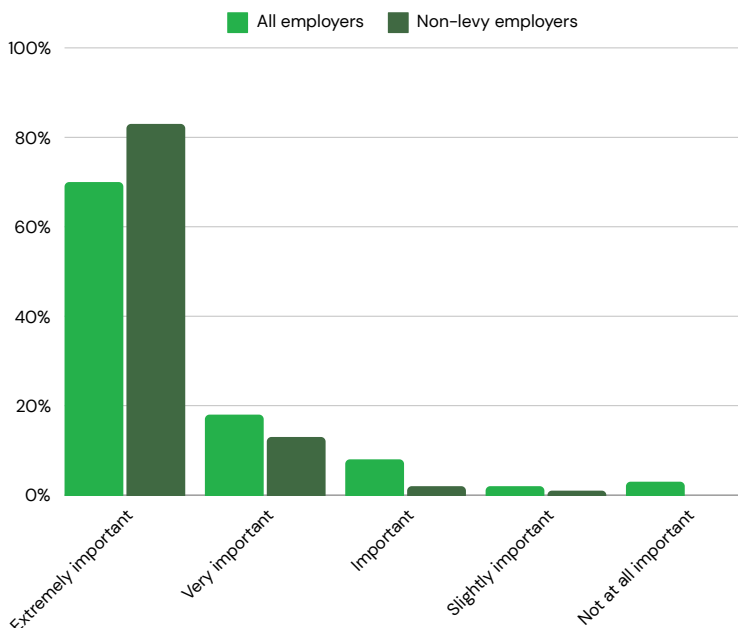
Is there currently a lack of experienced, qualified accountants?

90% of employers Agree or Strongly Agree

Are apprenticeships an important way to address the lack of experienced qualified accountants?

94% of employers Agree or Strongly Agree

How important is the Level 7 apprenticeship as a way to develop talent in your organisation?



Across all types of employers with accountancy apprentices, 96% say Level 7 is an important way to develop talent in their organisation, including 70% saying it is extremely important. For non-levy employers results are even stronger. 99% say it is important and 83% say it is extremely important. This data demonstrates the extent to which employers rely on Level 7 for developing talent in their organisation.

99%

of non-levy employers think Level 7 apprenticeships are important for developing talent in their organisation



Level 7 levy funding increases the number of trainees supported

The table below shows that Level 7 levy funding allows the majority of employers to recruit and support greater numbers of trainee accountants, particularly non-levy employers. This clearly illustrates the considerable impact removing funding for this Level 7 would have on reducing career opportunities and increasing skills gaps in the accountancy sector.

83%

of non-levy employers support more trainees because of the Level 7 apprenticeship



How has the availability of the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship affected the volume of trainees you support?

	All employers	Non-levy employers	Employers based in Towns, Rural or Coastal areas
We support more trainees because of the Level 7 apprenticeship	72%	83%	71%
We support the same number of trainees regardless of the Level 7 apprenticeship	27%	16%	27%
We support less trainees because of the Level 7 apprenticeship	1%	1%	2%

Quotes from employers that train Level 7 accountancy apprentices about progression pathways for their trainees:

"Since the introduction of the Level 7 Apprenticeships we have seen increased interest in our scheme and have been able to hire four Level 7 starters a year. We have also been able to extend our offering from degree leavers to school leavers, and when we hire at Level 3 or Level 4 this is not simply to complete the Level 3 or Level 4 qualification but to progress all the way through and is essentially a 'degree apprenticeship' qualification that we have built for these young people. I am absolutely certain that reducing Level 7 funding will not only restrict the number of individuals that we can offer these opportunities too, due to the cost, but also our 'degree apprenticeship' route will effectively be restricted if not stopped entirely."

Chloe Britnell, Partner, PJCO Chartered Accountants

"On completion of the Level 7 apprenticeship we aim to retain them in the business which allows us to grow and expand our business and give the now qualified Accountant the prospect of a future career. The growth of the business enables us to pay them the increased market wage rate that they deserve."

"The Apprenticeship funding enables us to have a continuous year on year program and stream of apprentices which we may not be able to afford without the funding. This then develops the individual and the firm which benefits everyone."

Andrew Taffs, Partner, Giess Wallis Crisp Chartered Accountants

"The apprenticeship offers more than the technical content with skills days and sessions promoting personal development e.g. leadership, influencing and communication. The pathway that we have for apprentices including Level 7 opens up a wide range of career prospects including leading positions within the Trust. Once qualified, the earning potential doubles from starting to finishing the qualification."

John Chase, Senior Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

The Level 7 is also seen as a real key destination for all our apprentices. Our finance apprentices start their career with us on the Level 3 AAT and progress through to Level 4 and then onto their Level 7 – at TUI, we have seen every one of our apprentices follow this career path and it has really help with our retention of colleagues but also enabled them to develop their transferrable skills and move into management positions even before they complete their Level 7."

Rebecca Barton, Emerging Talent Demand & Portfolio Manager, Tui Group

We have found the Level 7 apprenticeship to be a key stepping stone for those who start at lower levels. It provides a clear path for career progression and gives them a long-term goal and career path to work towards. Many of our employees begin at entry-level roles and see Level 7 as the goal to reach, helping them move into senior positions within our organisation.

Alex Ditalia-Riley, Senior CSU Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

The implications of reducing levy funding for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship on progression pathways:

Reducing levy funding for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship would have significant consequences for the progression pathways that underpin talent development within the accountancy profession. Level 7 acts as the aspirational destination of a structured learning and development journey for school leavers that often begins at Levels 2 or 3, advancing through to full Chartered Accountant status. It is also a key career entry point for graduates. Without funding for this critical final step, the progression pathway would be severely disrupted.

1 Reduced attraction, motivation and retention in the accountancy profession

The ability to progress through the different levels of accountancy training is a major motivator for apprentices. Many young people enter training at lower levels with the intention of advancing to Level 7, which offers the globally-recognised Chartered Accountant qualifications.

Without funding for Level 7, this progression pathway would be blocked, and motivation for learners to advance through the earlier levels would be significantly diminished. 94% of apprentices state that the opportunity to achieve Level 7 and become a fully qualified accountant is a key factor in starting their training. Without this clear end goal, many apprentices would opt out of pursuing high-level qualifications, which would impact the number of fully qualified accountants entering the profession.

2 Blocking access to the final stage of apprenticeship progression

Many learners who begin their accountancy journey at Level 2 or 3 rely on the opportunity to progress to Level 7 to achieve full Chartered Accountant status. The Level 7 apprenticeship has been particularly important for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may not have the financial means to pursue a university education. Reducing funding for this final stage of progression would result in many employers recruiting fewer trainees. As a result, many aspiring accountants would be left without a viable route to complete their qualification.

Blocking this pathway to Level 7 would create barriers to opportunity for many individuals from diverse backgrounds to access high-level careers in finance, filling industry skills gaps and fuelling growth in the economy,

3 Worsening skills shortages in key growth sectors

Level 7 is critical for addressing skills shortages in the accountancy profession. By allowing learners to progress from Accounting Technician to Chartered Accountant, the Level 7 apprenticeship ensures that the financial services and professional & business services sectors can meet the demand for highly skilled professionals.

The Level 7 programme equips learners with advanced skills essential for the profession's most critical roles, such as auditors and tax specialists. Without the ability to complete their training, many learners would be unable to fill these roles, exacerbating existing shortages. Reducing levy funding for Level 7 would disrupt the flow of qualified professionals into these high-demand areas, worsening the skills gap and reducing the accountancy profession's capacity to support key growth sectors.

The Level 7 Apprenticeship in Accountancy's...

Impact on the Economy and Skills

The Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship plays a pivotal role in developing high-level finance skills that drive economic growth and address critical skills gaps in the accountancy sector. High-level accountancy skills are integral to the new Industrial Strategy's key growth sectors of financial services and professional & business services, and also play an important role providing financial expertise, audit functions, tax advice, and strategic financial management in other key growth sectors such as life sciences and clean energy industries.

Reducing levy funding for this programme would have significant negative implications for the accountancy profession's ability to meet the increasing demand for highly skilled finance professionals. This would affect key growth sectors identified in the new Industrial Strategy and limit the government's economic growth ambitions. The diagram below illustrates this:

The Level 7 Apprenticeship: The Link Between Skills in Accountancy and Economic Growth

Accountants are essential to the operation of the entire economy. Their work underpins financial stability, regulatory compliance and strategic decision-making in every sector, from SMEs and multinational corporations, to government departments and NHS hospitals. High-level accountancy skills such as audit and tax are integral to the key growth sectors of financial services and professional & business services.

The Level 7 apprenticeship plays a crucial role in developing the high-level finance skills necessary for roles which are already in critical demand. Without qualified Chartered Accountants, businesses in key growth sectors would struggle to maintain financial health, secure investments, and comply with tax and audit requirements, which would negatively impact growth, stability and confidence in the wider economy.

The recent Skills England report on skills shortages identified Accounting Technicians as being in critical demand, with areas such as audit, tax and bookkeeping also currently suffering from an acute shortage of talent.

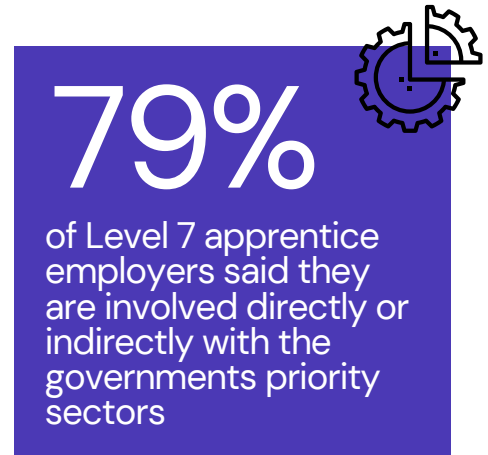
Reducing funding for Level 7 will block the talent pipeline in accountancy, exacerbating existing skills shortages.



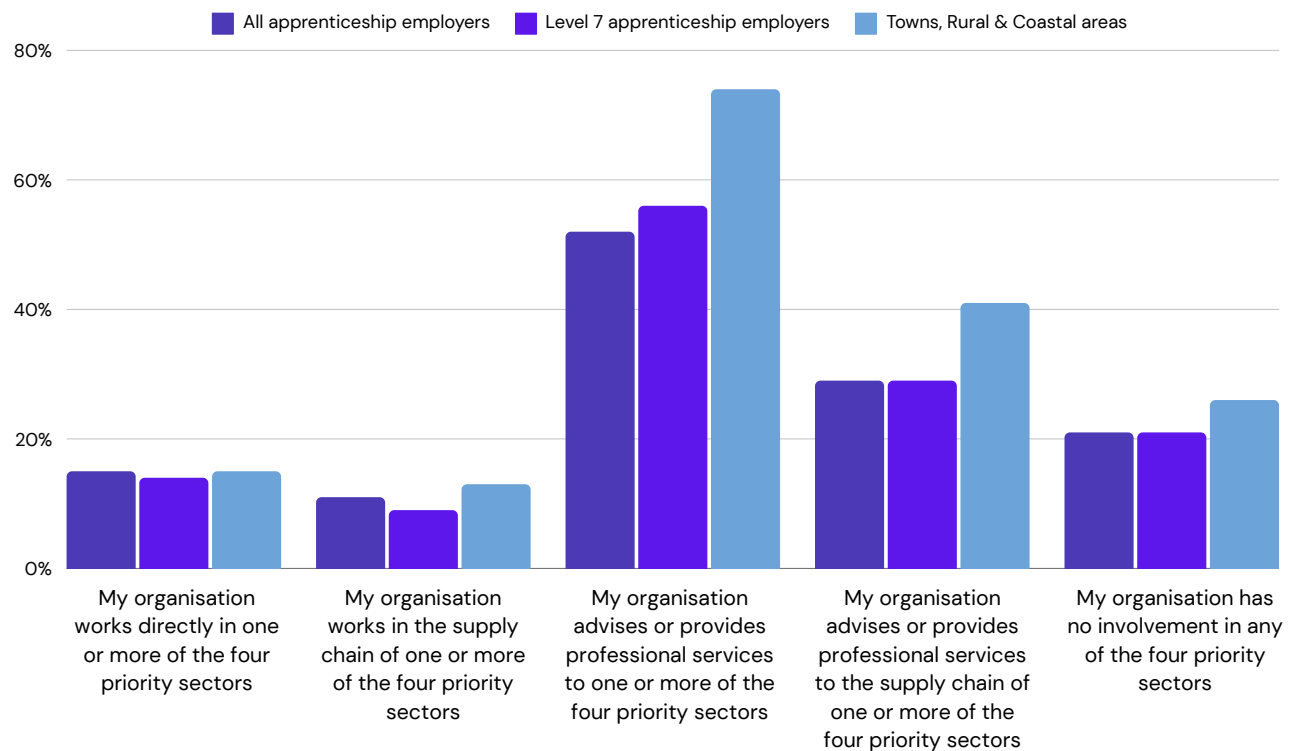
Examples of the Accountancy Industry's Role in the UK Economy

In response to a survey, employers of accountancy apprentices were asked about their involvement with the government's key priority sectors; Digital, Life Sciences, House Building & Construction and Green.

79% of employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices said they are involved directly or indirectly with these priority sectors, further demonstrating the accountancy industry's importance in the government's growth ambitions for the UK economy.



How would you describe the involvement of your organisation in the Government's priority sectors? (Digital, Life Sciences, House Building & Construction and Green)



The chart above shows the percentage of employers who train accountancy apprentices that are involved in the government's priority sectors (Digital, Life Sciences, House Building & Construction and Green).

The results show that providing advice and professional services to the four priority sectors is extremely common amongst employers who support Level 7 accountancy apprentices. This is even more pronounced for organisations based in towns and more rural areas.

- **79% of organisations currently training apprentices (both with and without Level 7 apprentices) have some direct or indirect involvement with the government's priority sectors**
- **74% of organisations based in towns and rural areas have some direct or indirect involvement with the government's priority sectors**



The Role of Level 7 in Equipping Accountants with Workplace Skills

Generally, do you feel that your newly recruited trainees lack appropriate employability skills and behaviours for the workplace when they start?

79%

said yes, to some degree or to a high degree

79% of employers of accountancy apprentices think that newly recruited trainees lack appropriate employability skills and behaviours for the workplace when they start.

However, 84% of employers surveyed with Level 7 trainees think apprentices are well or extremely well prepared for handling the responsibilities of higher-level roles after completing their Level 7 apprenticeship. This indicates the Level 7 apprenticeship's role in developing important skills.

If the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship were no longer available, would your organisation be able to provide enough roles to meet the demand for high-level accountancy skills?

	Yes, we could easily meet the demand through other means	No, we would find it harder to meet the demand
All apprentice employers	12%	88%
Level 7 apprentice employers	7%	93%
Towns, Rural & Coastal areas	12%	88%

88% of employers said that if the Level 7 apprenticeship were no longer available, their organisation would not be able to provide enough roles to meet the demand for high-level accountancy skills. For employers with Level 7 apprentices, this figure was 93%.

98% of employers agreed that Level 7 apprentices add value in the workplace.

This data further demonstrates how important the Level 7 apprenticeship is for developing the talent needed to meet the demand for highly skilled accountants.

84%

of employers think apprentices are well prepared for handling the responsibilities of higher-level roles after completing Level 7

How well-prepared do you feel apprentices are for handling the responsibilities of higher-level roles after completing their Level 7 apprenticeship?

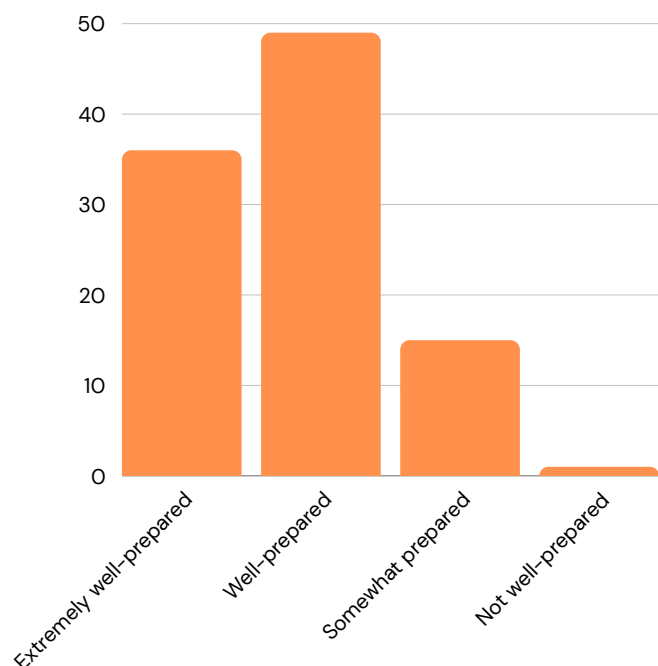
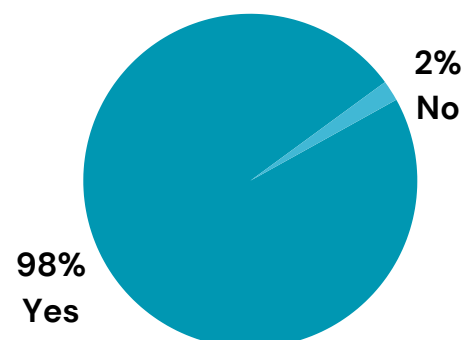


Table 7

Do you find that Level 7 apprentices add value in the workplace?



"The development of our business and our success in employing and training our team and servicing our clients is based on our ability to offer training and development at Level 7 in the professional exam routes that we offer.

Without the financial support we receive through the levy we would inevitably be more limited in how many new trainees we could fund through their training and hence be restricted in offering as many roles to future young people."

Jill Wright, Kirk Newsholme Chartered Accountants

"As a long-established organisation within our industry, we have seen first-hand the growing need for highly skilled professionals who possess not only technical expertise but also strong leadership and strategic thinking abilities. This is where the introduction of Level 7 apprenticeships has become invaluable to our business and the wider economy.

"We have found that young apprentices who complete Level 7 apprenticeships emerge as well-rounded leaders, with the knowledge and skills to take on senior roles and influence business strategy. These apprentices also support the development of critical areas such as project management, digital transformation, and data analytics, ensuring that our workforce is prepared for the evolving demands of our industry."

Darren Eastham, Director, Wheawill & Sudworth, Huddersfield

Quotes from employers that train Level 7 accountancy apprentices and the accountancy awarding bodies about the impact for the Level 7 on the economy and skills:

"Young people often enter accountancy because they see a great career for themselves, either as Accounting Technicians or as a springboard to other opportunities. Cutting off pathways to higher qualifications, including the Level 7 apprenticeship pathway that leads to chartered status, risks limiting the range of futures available – having the effect of deterring more of the very talent we're trying to attract."

Sarah Beale, Chief Executive, AAT (The most common qualification followed by Level 2,3 and 4 accountancy apprentices and a major pipeline to the Level 7 standard)

"Continued financial support for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship is essential to ensure the accounting profession remains accessible, inclusive, and capable of meeting the future demands of the economy. Our data shows that this apprenticeship provides significant value for aspiring accountants, the profession, and the wider economy."

Will Holt, Managing Director of Education & Training, ICAEW, a popular qualification earned by Level 7 accountancy apprentices

The implications of reducing levy funding for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship on the economy and skills

As a critical pathway for developing highly skilled accountants, the Level 7 apprenticeship ensures that employers can access the high-level expertise needed to meet financial, regulatory, and strategic demands. Reducing funding for this Level 7 programme would disrupt the talent pipeline in the sector and exacerbate existing skills shortages in the key growth sectors of financial services and professional & business services.

1 Reduction in high-level accountancy and finance skills

Government funding for Level 7 programmes in accountancy has enabled employers to invest in high-level qualification training for greater numbers of aspiring accountants. This has proven to be a highly effective way to fill finance skills gaps and enhance the long-term sustainability of organisations in key growth sectors.

Reducing funding for this Level 7 would mean that both the volume and the quality of training suffer, impacting the capacity of work undertaken in the financial services, professional & business services and other key growth sectors that accountants support. Furthermore, many government departments, NHS organisations and other public sector employers do not have training budgets beyond their levy pots. They rely on levy funding to support the development of talent in their finance teams. Removing funding for this Level 7 will mean that public sector employers are unable to train Chartered Accountants.

2 Negative impact on economic growth and national competitiveness

Accountants are fundamental to the operation of businesses across all industries. They ensure that companies comply with accounting regulations, manage financial risks, and make strategic decisions based on sound financial analysis. The Level 7 apprenticeship produces fully qualified Chartered Accountants, who are essential for providing this expertise. If funding is reduced, the shortage of qualified finance professionals would impact business efficiency and growth.

Reducing funding will impact national competitiveness as firms off-shore work to India and South Africa to make up for short-falls in domestic talent. This will impact not only short-term GDP but will weaken the power of our professional services sector over time.

3 Blocking talent progression pathways

The Level 7 apprenticeship is an essential end-point of a structured progression pathway that allows learners to move from entry-level qualifications to becoming fully qualified Chartered Accountants. In recent years it has been pivotal in filling skills gaps. Reducing levy funding would block this progression pipeline, discouraging young people from entering the accountancy profession and limiting opportunities for those already on lower-level apprenticeships. Removing the levy funding would reduce the number of young people advancing to higher qualifications, creating a bottleneck in the development of future accounting talent.

Conclusion

Call to action:

In order to support the development of young people into the high-skilled accountants essential to the UK's economic future, full levy funding for the Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation Professional apprenticeship must be retained. This will help to protect key Government missions for economic growth and breaking down barriers to opportunity.

We urge the Government to engage with employers of Level 7 accountancy apprentices — particularly SMEs and in the public sector — to understand the vital importance of the Level 7 programme, and take into account its contribution to economic growth, social mobility, and high-level finance skills development.

Level 7 apprenticeship programmes play a crucial role in improving diversity and equality for young people in the accountancy sector. It provides a progression pathway for individuals from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds to become fully qualified Chartered Accountants with high-level career opportunities. In particular, each year it is a critical pathway for 7,000 young people aged 24 or below to enter the accountancy profession, helping to address existing skills shortages in the sector.

High-level accountancy skills are integral two of the eight key growth sectors laid out in the new Industrial Strategy; financial services and professional & business services. Accountants also provide important expertise and advice in other key growth sectors such as life sciences and clean energy industries. Accountancy specialisms such as audit and tax are fundamental to delivering economic growth, as well as stability and confidence to investors. Reducing levy funding for this Level 7 will exacerbate the critical skill shortages already being experienced in these areas.

As well as the negative impact on young people, reducing funding for Level 7 accountancy apprenticeships will disproportionately impact SMEs and those based in towns and rural areas. Non-levy employers use levy funding to recruit and train 1,800 to 2,000 Level 7 accountancy apprentices each year. Removal of levy funding will reduce the number of trainees these SMEs can employ and will further increase disadvantage by removing professional career opportunities for young people outside major cities.

Accountancy is a sector where the Level 7 apprenticeship programme has successfully delivered on the goals of the levy; helping to address critical skills shortages while breaking down barriers to opportunity and opening up career opportunities for young people from all backgrounds. Removing funding for the Level 7 Accounting/Taxation Professional apprenticeship standard will reverse this progress in an area where levy funding has achieved exactly what it set out to do.

Appendix

Learner voices:

Alexandria (Lexi) Heywood, Audit Senior, Larking Gowen (Norwich, UK)

Town/city attended secondary school: Norwich, UK

Town/city currently working in:

Norwich, UK until October 2024

Hamilton, Bermuda from October 2024

Qualification and level currently studying:

ICAEW – ACA Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

MSc International Finance and Accounting

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

Graduate

Age now:

28

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

23

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

23

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

28

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

No

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Wasn't sure what I wanted to be when I grew up - felt an accountancy qualification would provide me with a wide range of skills and knowledge that I could apply to any industry

Apprenticeship route: it was a requirement of our training contract

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

It was a requirement of all the training contracts when I was applying in 2018 - I wouldn't have been able to obtain a training contract (and therefore an accountancy qualification) without it.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Beyond the technical skills I've gained during my apprenticeship, the key thing I want to mention is the stark improvement in my self confidence and communication skills in a professional setting.

At university the focus of the coaching was always on how to present and work with others, but the apprenticeship took it one step further and showed me how to apply it in the work place. This has been invaluable when speaking to colleagues, managers and clients. For instance, being able to clearly explain to a client we have identified an issue during the audit, what needs to be done to correct the problem and safeguards in place to ensure the problem doesn't happen again in the future.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

I've been able to progress through the levels at my current firm, currently working as an Audit Senior. I've recently accepted a position to emigrate to Bermuda starting in October 2024. I would not be in the position I am today without the apprenticeship and support of my tutors.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes.



How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey? I cannot thank First Intuition enough for the support they provided throughout my apprenticeship journey both in and out of the classroom. They have an incredible army of tutors and support staff to help guide students through the programme. All the tutors were incredible and willing to go above and beyond whether it was helping schedule skills days around audit schedule, locating missing folders, to providing more detailed explanation on topics I particularly struggled with.

Amy Cushen, Finance Analyst – Cruise Operations at TUI

Qualification and level currently studying: CIMA Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT Level 2

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School Leaver

Age now:

Not provided

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

Not provided

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

Not provided

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

Not provided

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I chose the apprenticeship route rather than going to university as I felt that this would be more beneficial for me. I liked the idea of learning and earning all at once, and gaining valuable working experience. It was initially the idea of working at TUI that attracted me to this apprenticeship, and now after working in 3 different roles in Finance I am really pleased that I chose the accountancy path.

Do you feel there would have been any barriers to pursuing a career in accountancy without the apprenticeship programmes that you have been following?

I don't necessarily think that there are any barriers to pursuing a career in accountancy without the apprenticeship, but I definitely think that the apprenticeship programme has been the most beneficial way of pursuing this career. The real world work experience that you get, which you wouldn't get from university, is certainly the most valuable part of the apprenticeship programme and can be applied to your studies which is useful.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Since starting my apprenticeship, I have been able to develop my excel skills as I use this software on a daily basis, and have learnt how to use formulas and put together pivot tables to summarise and analyse data in my day to day work. I also feel that my communication skills have improved greatly since starting my apprenticeship as a school leaver. I have been lucky enough to experience 3 different roles in Finance over the last 6 years of my apprenticeship and have been able to network and form good working relationships with many people as a result.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition have been a good support system for me throughout my apprenticeship. The courses are always thorough and cover all the content that we need to know for our exams, and my skills coach is always on hand to answer any questions that I have.

How do you feel your apprenticeship has impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

I think my apprenticeship has been, and will continue to be, really beneficial for me. I will have secured a CIMA qualification once I have finished my last few exams which will certainly help to further my career prospects. The experience that I have gained from working in different Finance teams and the skills that I have developed along the

way, through meeting new people and taking the lead in various projects, is something that will help me massively going forward.

Callie Weller, Accountant at Red Shoes Accounting Services

Previous roles:

Accountant at Red Shoes Accounting Services

Town/city attended secondary school:

Witchford, Cambridgeshire

Town/city currently working in:

Littleport, Cambridgeshire

Qualification and level currently studying:

ACCA Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Started at AAT Level 2 and Level 3 at sixth form, then completed AAT Level 4 with First Intuition

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

Sixth form leaver

Age now:

22

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

19

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

23

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Maths was always my stronger subject in school and I knew I wanted a career involving working in an office. I knew I didn't want to go to university, so when I found out you could become an accountant without going to university, I thought this would be a good option for me. That is also why I chose the apprenticeship route as I like the fact you can earn money as you learn. I am somebody who learns best from seeing something and being able to physically practice it myself, rather than just reading and listening, so practically applying myself in the workplace is much better suited to me.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

If I were to attempt the level 4 or level 7 qualifications without an apprenticeship, I think I would have really struggled to keep myself motivated and on top of the exams. I like the fact that with an apprenticeship I have a training planner, so all of my tuition, revision and exams are planned for me and I have a routine. I think if it was left to me to pick which exams I do and when I do them, I would find it easy to put them off and leave them until the following quarter, therefore it would have taken me a lot longer to complete the qualification. Whereas the apprenticeship makes me stick to completing one exam every quarter.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

I have been able to apply a wide range of knowledge and skills which I have gained through my apprenticeship to the workplace. I would say the main skills I have gained are communication and building relationships. These skills are vital to my job, as I am always communicating with clients and colleagues and therefore building relationships with



them. Working as part of a team is a big aspect of my job, so gaining these skills has helped me to do this effectively and feel confident in doing so. The knowledge which I have picked up from the exams has helped me to expand on my capabilities and take on a wider range of tasks. This particularly applies to the exams involving tax and financial reporting.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

As I have mentioned above, the apprenticeship programme is going to allow me to complete AAT and ACCA whilst I am still in my early 20s which will set me up for my career in accountancy for the rest of my life. As the ACCA qualification includes such a wide range of exams, it has given me more of an indication as to the different types of accounting that are out there and helped solidify the type of route I want to go down within my career.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

Intuition have always been very helpful, whether that be with the exams or with the apprenticeship aspect. When I have emailed questions to tutors, they always respond within 1- 2 days with the answers and I find the materials that

they provide are very helpful in preparing you for the exams. My skills coach for both my level 4 and level 7 apprenticeships have always been on hand to answer any questions I have had about the apprenticeship side of things, such as learning logs, portfolios and just general queries that I have.

Chloe Langford, Associate at Evelyn (East) Partners LLP (previously Ashcroft LLP)

Previous roles: Student Accountant at Ensors Chartered Accountants

Town/city attended secondary school:

Cambridge

Town/city currently working in:

Cambridge

Qualification and level currently studying (or completed):

ICAEW Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Started at Level 4 fast track (Level 3) AAT at Ensors Chartered Accountants.

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver

Age now:

22

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

20

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

Expected to finish at 23 (pending final exams)

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes, it was advertised as an apprenticeship accountancy role.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

University did not appeal to me, I wanted to start work but also gain further education/qualifications, so an apprenticeship was perfect for me as you earn while you learn!

I studied Business at A Level and really enjoyed the financial module which resulted in me discussing careers in this at my sixth form with accountancy being the most similar career path.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

The amount of learning and knowledge I have gained would be not be available to me if I was not on an apprenticeship.

Not all firms offer funding for the exams if not on an apprenticeship – so it would have been limited. The amount of time you get to study and learn would not be the same if I was not on apprenticeship.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Ethics and integrity is a big one especially when understanding what professional behaviour is required from an accountant and our legal responsibilities. The training and development provided throughout the apprenticeship helps to identify any potential unethical activities and what actions we should take to mitigate this.

An example of this would be a conflict of interest between a recently divorced husband and wife who wanted full confidentiality from one another since the divorce when dealing with their tax affairs.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The apprenticeship provides a clear pathway of professional development and educates you from day one on all things accountancy making you an asset to your firm with all the skills and knowledge you gain throughout.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes, it is a fantastic way to start your accountancy career as it provides all the necessary training needed to be a successful chartered accountant.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

They provide a learning development coach who you meet with approx. every 6-8 weeks to discuss progression and targets set in your apprenticeship. Development of my skills and behaviours are tested here usually in the form of a written essay to ensure I am of the required level to suit my job role.

The tutors who teach the ICAEW courses are absolutely fantastic and are always willing to go above and beyond to help with any last-minute revision and tips for exams.

Danny Sutton, Finance and Compliance Manager at First Intuition Chelmsford

Pervious roles:

- First Intuition Chelmsford, Finance and Compliance Manager
- First Intuition Chelmsford, Finance and Compliance Officer
- First Intuition Chelmsford, Finance Assistant

Town/city attended secondary school:

Braintree, Essex

Town/city currently working in:

Chelmsford, Essex

Qualification and level currently studying (or completed):

Completed ACCA Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Started at Level 2

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver, aged 17 after attending the first year of sixth form

Age now:

25



Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

17

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

20

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

No.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Wanted to enter the workplace and begin earning money and experience instead of following the traditional education system. Knew I had a passion for numbers and problem solving which fitted with an accounting role.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

Potentially the financing aspect would be a significant barrier for myself.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

I regularly submit important financial statements with little to no assistance and the ability to manage a small team has been achieved by learning the soft skills as part of the apprenticeship programme.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

I have been able to become a manager within my business and have a respected qualification and skills that would help make me an attractive prospect for external companies.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition are both my employer and study centre, so they have been extremely important in forming my career from a school leaver to a manager reporting to the board of directors.

Eden Day, Trainee Accountant at Knights Lowe

Town/city attended secondary school:

Bury St Edmunds

Town/city currently working in:

Bury St Edmunds

Qualification and level currently studying:

Currently working towards a Level 7 qualification with ACCA

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT Level 2

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver. I began my training at 18 as a school leaver by studying with First Intuition towards my AAT Level 4 apprenticeship, starting at Level 2 and working up to Level 4 within approximately three years. I am now starting my Level 7 apprenticeship at the age of 22.

Age now:

22

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18



Age when starting your level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when finishing your level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

In terms of my awareness of entry points into accountancy, I was aware of the various qualifications I could study for in order to further my knowledge, however, the specific path laid out for me in terms of studying through the levels of AAT would not have been known to me had I not taken a job in the field. I do feel that this was a very beneficial route in terms of building foundation knowledge before progressing through the higher levels and this would be my recommendation to school leavers in a similar situation to myself at the time.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I had been motivated to pursue a career in accountancy from a young age, however the source of my desire to pursue this career is somewhat of a mystery to me! A family member does work in a similar role, so this is likely to be what made me want to give it a try. My choice of taking the apprenticeship route was a result of the prescribed path for trainees at Knights Lowe, as such I did not necessarily choose this route personally, or in favour of another. That being said, I do feel that I've been on the right path with my studies so far!

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

I think the obvious barriers to entry in terms of a career (and education) in accountancy are funding for studies, as the courses, particularly if studying is done through training providers like FI or Kaplan, can likely be very costly! The apprenticeship programme does mitigate this however, and with many employers paying for study this means that the issue of cost would rarely be a concern for anyone wishing to take up a role in accountancy. The only other barrier I can think of would likely be time. For a younger candidate taking so many exams would likely not be an issue for some, but those with other commitments such as children etc, I can imagine finding the time to study would be very difficult.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

One example of applying the skills learned throughout my apprenticeship to my job would be the use of knowledge learned in taxation courses to better inform my work in these areas. Taxation especially is sometimes a minefield of various rules, allowances and reliefs that would be difficult to navigate without the proper tuition. I feel my knowledge in these areas (both corporate and personal tax) has vastly improved as a result of my training with First Intuition, though I still have a long way to go!

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The knowledge and training gained through my apprenticeship has definitely improved my career prospects in accountancy as well as in other fields to some degree. The qualifications and experience I have accrued can be applied in a swathe of industries and professions, as such I feel it is very valuable.

Would you recommend a level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

I would recommend a level 7 accountancy apprenticeship, however in my experience I feel that if I did not have the foundation of knowledge from prior experience and AAT level 4, I would find the content difficult to grasp initially.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition has supported me in my apprenticeship journey by providing high-quality tuition for the varying subjects and courses in both the AAT and ACCA syllabuses, as well as training in professional development through focused sessions on professional skills such as teamwork and effective communication. I have always felt well-prepared for the exams I have sat and have found the study resources provided by FI to be invaluable.

Ellie Crick, Management Accountant at British Sugar

(soon to be Finance Business Partner at Worldwide Fruit)

Previous roles:

- Finance Assistant at British Sugar
- Various Accounts Payable roles

Town/city attend secondary school:

Donington, Spalding (Thomas Cowley High School)

Town/city currently working in:

Wissington, Kings Lynn (this is at British Sugar where I have been for nearly 4 years)

Soon to be Spalding

Qualification and level currently studying:

I am currently studying CGMA and have just completed the Operational level.

I have completed AAT Level 2, 3 & 4 through apprenticeships. **Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:**

Level 2 as I was straight out of school and had not previously had any business studies.

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

A school leaver. I went to sixth form for less than half an academic year, decided the generic path of university wasn't for me and I wasn't enjoying what I was studying (Biology, Psychology & History). So I left and got an apprenticeship in Accountancy.

Age now:

23

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

17

Age when starting your level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when finishing your level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

To be completely honest my uncle has a very successful career in accounting, and he now has his own business and the biggest house I have ever seen! (That was the initial draw in!) When I started to explore this as a career, I felt it would be well suited to me; I have a keen eye for detail, I am organised, methodical, I have a passion for learning and I'd like to think I'm very trustworthy.

The debt of university didn't appeal to me and the idea of learning a profession for so many years without putting it into practise I also find scary. With an apprenticeship I've been able to put my skills learnt in the classroom into practise every single day, since day one. Also I believe my apprenticeship has enabled me to have an upper hand on my peers who have taken the university route, as at 23 I can say I have 6 years work experience in the profession and am just as qualified as those who completed university.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

University would then have been the chosen option. My friends have recently graduated and so would be getting their first roles in business, I can imagine this wouldn't be a Finance Business Partner role like I am in now, so I would be further behind in my career I believe if apprenticeships weren't a thing.



Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

I believe my learnings from the CGMA apprenticeship have played such a key part in me securing my new role as Finance Business Partner at Worldwide Fruit. On the second stage of the interview process I was asked to present to numerous different stakeholders, one of them being the Finance Director, on 'what risks do you believe the company faces and how can finance help to mitigate these risks?'. I'd say 90% of the PowerPoint was showcasing all the knowledge and skills I had learnt from the CGMA course so far. I had recently studied and passed the P1 Management Accounting exam and used this content to talk about techniques such as sensitivity analysis, alleviating bottlenecks, breakeven, pricing competitively – all things which are so relevant to real life businesses. At the point of interviewing I was currently revising for the operational case study exam, the first time I had taken an exam like it. This seemed perfect timing as we discussed risks the business faced in the case study and I was able to apply and adapt this way of thinking to the real life business that I was interviewing for. I have found the knowledge and skills that I have learnt so far from this apprenticeship invaluable!

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

N/A

Would you recommend a level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes!!

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

I would highly recommend First Intuition to anyone looking to study an accountancy course. Not only is the learning material great with so many practice questions and mock exams on the online learning portal, but the quality of teaching is also excellent. I feel the tutors go above and beyond, their passion for the course and their students really shines through and it's a lovely learning environment to be in. When I attend study sessions in person in the classroom I always come away feeling so motivated and inspired! I also find my skills coach to be so helpful, always replying to my queries in a timely manner and making sure she regularly checks in on me and my progress.

Evie Halliwell, Tutor at First Intuition Northwest

Previous roles:

Previously worked in an accounting/audit practice starting as an apprentice and working my way up to senior audit adviser.

Town/city attended secondary school:

Bolton

Town/city currently working in:

Currently working in Manchester.

Qualification and level currently studying:

Qualified - I studied my AAT levels 2-4 and then went on to complete me ACA to become a chartered accountant.

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Started at AAT Level 2, then completed Level 3 and 4

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

I started my apprenticeship after attending one year of sixth form.

Age now:

26

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

17

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

24



Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

No

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I selected A levels with the intention of going to university but quickly realised I was ready to be in the working environment. I hadn't heard much about apprenticeships whilst at school as university was very much encouraged but decided to look around at apprenticeship options after speaking with family friends. It quickly became apparent that accountancy was a fantastic option that would provide career opportunities and job security whilst making use of my numerical and problem solving skills.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

The apprenticeship programme really allows for a lot of work experience, which is something I wouldn't have gained nearly as much of at such a young age if I had gone down the university route. I strongly believe my experience working in practice alongside studying has allowed me to progress to where I am today.

Another advantage of an accountancy apprenticeship is the cost saving. I was able to work full time and earn a wage whilst being put through my professional qualifications via the apprenticeship, meaning I have no student debt. Again, not something that is always possible when going down the university route.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

The technical knowledge gained throughout my apprenticeship allowed me to provide high quality work for clients whilst working in practice. For example a strong understanding of accounting/auditing standards is required to prepare/audit complex financial statements for complex clients. The soft skills learned throughout my apprenticeship were equally as important, people think being an accountant is all about working out numbers, but often a lot of time is spent building relationships with clients, advising and also managing and training other members of the team.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The apprenticeship has massively improved my career prospects in accountancy. The professional qualification (ACA) itself hugely increases employability as the qualifications are often required for senior roles within the profession. The work experience and skill development is also attractive to employers but also allows me to be confident in my own abilities making me better prepared to take on challenges in the future. Including within my current position as a tutor.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes, absolutely.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition were there for every step of my level 7 apprenticeship, with guidance surrounding all areas whether it was exams, in-center classes or help with the apprenticeship requirements themselves. A professional qualification can feel like a big challenge, but first intuition was great at breaking that down into manageable chunks that were achievable alongside full-time work.

Jasmine Ulliyott, Trainee Accountant at Smailes Goldie

Which town or city did you attend secondary school?

Driffild Secondary School

Which town or city are you currently working in?

Hull

What qualification and level are you currently studying (or have completed if relevant)?

I am currently studying my ACA qualification and am sitting my professional level exams.



What qualification and level did you start your accountancy training at (if different to what you are currently studying)?

I started on the AAT qualification and completed both level three and four.

Did you start your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate (or other)?

A school leaver after completing A levels (Maths, Biology and Sociology)

Age now:

22

Age when you started your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when you started your level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when you finished your level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I pursued a career in accounting as it involves continuous development including expanding technical knowledge through studying and following regulations that are constantly evolving. I chose an apprenticeship as the skills and knowledge throughout tuition and exams can be directly and indirectly applied in the workplace allowing me to progress within role.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

I would have still pursued a career in accountancy however it would have been more challenging outside of the apprenticeship programme. It is important to have the relevant technical knowledge but without having other skills such as problem solving to identify appropriate solutions or effective communication with colleagues and clients it would make it more challenging as this is a significant aspect of the role.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Knowledge:

Has helped me to ensure the correct accounting treatment has been applied to the work I complete. For example, the completion of my tax modules has ensured that items have been treated correctly for tax purposes, so the correct amount of tax has been paid to HMRC.

Gain an understanding of work completed by other departments and appreciate how this connected with the work I complete to support the wider business purpose of Smailes Goldie.

Skills:

Leadership as I work as part of a wider team and am responsible to effectively managing my own time and the time of other trainees. As part of this it has also been important to be approachable for the trainees to address any issues as they arise and keep the work progressing.

Communication from both the perspective of upwards communication for timely updates to the manager on the progress of the work and downward communication in terms of training, delegation and constructive feedback. This was supported by the completion of a leadership skills day on my L4 AAT apprenticeship.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

My apprenticeship has allowed me to apply knowledge and practice skills which has meant I have relevant experience that I would not have gained if I was completing the qualification standalone.

Would you recommend a level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey? First Intuition has supported me through the apprenticeships I have completed by having an allocated Skills Coach. This is someone who you can contact about any issues or questions you have throughout completing the apprenticeship. They also give support and advice to stay on target for completing apprenticeship work.

First Intuition also have excellent tutors who are knowledgeable about the subject area they are teaching; they are always approachable and willing to answer any questions. The resources and quality of materials are also good and include prerecorded lectures to recap any areas of the course.

Jordan Smith, Senior at Whittings LLP

Previous roles:

Trainee Accounts Technician

Town/city attended secondary school:

March, Cambridgeshire

Town/city currently working in:

March, Cambridgeshire

Qualification and level currently studying (or completed):

Completed AAT and ACA studies (July 2024)

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Started at Level 2 AAT in September 2018, progressing to ACA.

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver (after completing GCSEs)

Age now:

22

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

16

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

20

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

During school, business and economics really interested me alongside mathematics. My employer, Whittings LLP, attended the school careers fayre where the apprenticeship was advertised alongside the AAT studies route via First Intuition. I applied for an interview and was offered the job just after completing my GCSE exams. I wanted to start working as soon as possible and feel that learning on-the-job while also earning a salary was a no brainer compared to university where I would incur debt. I feel that apprenticeship has boosted my development as I have gained a vast amount of experience of the industry alongside passing my exams to gain the relevant qualifications I wanted.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

At the time, there was speculation of how easy it was to gain a job as a university graduate so I ceased the opportunity while it was available. The cost of my qualifications have been covered by my employer, which I would not of been able to afford on my own. In addition to this, I would not of been able to progress through the qualifications, or pass the exams, without the support of my employer and First Intuition.



Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

The same ethical principles have been applied from AAT Level 2 through to ACA studies and these are now engrained into my day-to-day worklife. For example, as an auditor I am always exercising professional scepticism throughout my discussions with clients and review of documentation. The skills days have particularly improved my communication skills especially when presenting to a group.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The apprenticeship has allowed to me gain my AAT and ACA qualifications. Now I am well equipped to progress through the roles with my current employer and take on more responsibilities to increase my value to the firm.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

My skills and development coaches have ensured that my apprenticeship requirements are on target for being achieved when the end point assessment arrives. First Intuition tutors are readily available to help with any questions and will go the extra mile to ensure that you are ready for upcoming exams.

Keri John, Accountant at Whitings LLP

Town/city attended secondary school:

Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds

Town/city currently working in:

Mildenhall, Bury St Edmunds

Qualification and level currently studying:

ACCA Level 7 (Completed in April 2024)

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

A Levels, starting with Level 3 fast track, then completing Level 4 and Level 7

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School Leaver

Age now:

25

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

19

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

24

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I was unaware on what profession I wanted to go into while I was studying A levels. We had to do work experience during Year 12 and my maths tutor recommended accountancy. Therefore I applied at my current employer and was granted work experience for a week. Once I had completed this they offered me a job to go straight into after A Levels. This suited me more as I was able to earn while learning rather than accumulating debt at university. I have stayed with the same firm throughout my qualifications as they are very supportive.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

If I did not have the apprenticeship programme I would've had to go to University in order to become an accountant.

This was not the path I particularly wanted to go down due to health issues when I was younger. Level 7 would also still need to be completed if I had a degree in accounting and therefore the cost of this along side the degree cost may have been too much and therefore I may have considered another career path.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

The apprenticeship has helped me gain time management skills which is very important within the accounting industry. My communication skills have also improved greatly which has allowed me to grow my own portfolio and create professional relationships with my clients.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The apprenticeship has impacted my career prospects as it has enabled me to achieve Level 7- ACCA and therefore a Chartered Accountant. This has opened up a lot of avenues within the profession which, if I wanted too at some point I would be able to venture too.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition has a large group of employees who are there to support us throughout our journey. You get to know each member of staff and build a relationship with them all to feel comfortable enough to talk to any whenever you need assistance.

Kimberley Gibb, Accountant at Hardcastle Burton LLP

Previous roles: Started as an accounting assistant (trainee accountant) and I am now a Qualified accountant

Town/city attended secondary school:

Buntingford

Town/city currently working in:

Royston - Hertfordshire

Qualification and level currently studying:

I completed level 7 in January 2024

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT Combined Level 2 & 3

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School Leaver

Age now:

25

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

24

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

As a school leaver I wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to do. All I knew was that I enjoyed maths and it was something I was strong at.

I chose an apprenticeship because the idea of sitting in university lectures did not appeal to me at all. I liked that an apprenticeship gave me experience in the job as I didn't want to risk getting into a large amount of debt obtaining a university degree to then find I didn't like accountancy.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

Funding. Lack of guidance and support because without my employer and First Intuition, I had no clue what was involved in becoming an accountant.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

It has helped me progress from a junior performing basic tasks to a qualified accountant performing more senior roles such as reviewing financial statements and preparing tax returns. It has also given me confidence in both myself and my work.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

Having 7 years on the job experience plus my AAT and ACCA qualifications has opened up so many doors for me. It will help me get a job in pretty much any role within the finance sector.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

Provided a structured learning program which I progressed through. Outside of class they were always contactable for additional support.

Lauren, Assistant Management Accountant at Vistry Group

Previous job titles:

Accountants Assistant and Trainee Management Accountant.

Which town or city did you attend secondary school?

Bristol

Which town or city are you currently working in?

Bristol

What qualification and level are you currently studying (or have completed if relevant)?

ACCA Level 7 apprenticeship

What qualification and level did you start your accountancy training at (if different to what you are currently studying)?

AAT Level 3

Did you start your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate (or other)?

Sixth Form leaver

Age now:

24

Age when you started your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when you started your level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when you finished your level 7 apprenticeship (if relevant):

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I always enjoyed maths in school and wanted to pursue a career which involved figure work so after doing some research I thought accountancy would be an interesting option. I chose the apprenticeship route as I liked the prospect of furthering my education whilst getting experience in a relevant role. Also, the apprenticeship route allowed me to earn whilst I was learning, whereas the university route would have meant incurring student debt.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

The main barrier that would have prevented me from pursuing a career in accountancy, if the apprenticeship programme wasn't an option, was going to university. I no longer wanted to be in full time education after sixth form and the university lifestyle didn't appeal to me when I was considering my options. Another barrier would have been the cost of the college fees and qualifications.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Recently, I have been mentoring a colleague who is completing their Level 4 AAT apprenticeship. I have developed my communication skills and built a strong relationship with them by considering their learning needs and amending my communication to be supportive. I've also tried to create an environment where they can learn but also feel comfortable to ask me for help. From this I have also been able to develop my leadership skills. I have learned that being a manager doesn't necessarily make you a leader and have been keen to ensure I motivate my colleagues. I have attended courses on how to give and receive feedback to ensure I am supporting my colleagues and giving effective feedback whilst also understanding my own reaction to feedback and ensuring I am learning from any mistakes. I am keen to be continuously improving and reflect on this to ensure I am progressing.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

My apprenticeship has massively impacted my career prospects in accountancy as I have learnt how to develop and perform many skills which are essential to the business environment. I have learned technical knowledge from my exams which has enabled me to apply that knowledge to experiences in the workplace and therefore helped me progress in my career. The skills I have developed have allowed me to build relationships with and gain the trust and respect of my colleagues through strong performance and a high standard of work. This has led to opportunities to practice my leadership skills and be a mentor to my peers.

Would you recommend a level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes! I am a strong believer that the apprenticeship route is the best route for someone considering a career in accountancy. Applying the technical knowledge, I learnt in the classes to real world situations has really helped me develop my learning. Also, the skills I have developed over the apprenticeship have helped me to be successful in my working life.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

Throughout my apprenticeships I have been massively supported by my teachers and tutors. The tutors who teach the classes have impeccable accounting knowledge in the areas they teach and can explain the courses in different ways to support individual learning needs whilst also applying real world experience to the topics. This has really helped me as I find it easier to absorb the technical knowledge if I have an example to apply it to. At First Intuition they provide a strong and versatile study framework which helped me whilst I have been learning as I struggle to understand what I have been taught straight away. The classroom tutors are available after study hours to support student learning whilst revising and we are provided with course notes, questions to practice and an online system with videos explaining the notes. My apprenticeship tutors have been a great support to my learning. They have helped me combat stress when exams have been approaching and offered advice when trying to consider new workplace opportunities. This has resulted in an improvement of my accounting knowledge and professional skills throughout the years. The 10 weekly reviews I have with my tutors have allowed me to reflect on my achievements throughout my career whilst highlighting any gaps in knowledge and skill. At First Intuition, I have also had the opportunity to attend skills days which have helped me develop my professional skills. This is something I have found extremely helpful, especially as a level 3 and level 4 apprentice as some of these skills I hadn't practiced in work so this was a great way to build confidence before applying it in the workplace.

Lois Fish, Semi-Senior Accountant & Auditor at UHY-BPR Heaton

Town/city attended secondary school:

Leeds

Town/city currently working in:

Leeds

Qualification and level currently studying (or completed):

Level 7 ICAEW apprenticeship (I have passed all exams and am in the process of completing my training file to obtain Chartered status)

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

Hybrid of Level 2 & 3 AAT

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver from A-Levels

Age now:

24

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

24

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I choose a career in accounting as I had a natural aptitude for working with numbers but also had a real interest in business operations. I choose the apprenticeship route as it enabled me to complete the chartered qualification whilst gaining invaluable experience within the workplace. Another perk of the apprenticeship route is earning a full time salary whilst studying.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

None.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

The knowledge and skills gained throughout the apprenticeship are invaluable and are applied daily within my role. The skills learnt through the apprenticeship have enabled me to effectively build strong relationships with both colleagues and clients.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

The apprenticeship has given me a head start in my career as I will be qualifying as a chartered accountant but with 6 years of experience within the industry.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes, absolutely.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First intuition have been a huge help throughout my apprenticeship journey. The tutors were dedicated to my success and would always go above and beyond to support me in the lead up to the exams. The skills coaches & support staff were really good at setting out the whole apprenticeship journey from the start so I had a clear vision of what was expected of me each and were always on hand to assist with any queries I had.



Max Thomas Hares, Trainee Accountant at Hardcastle Burton LLP

Town/city attended secondary school:

Stevenage - Hertfordshire

Town/city currently working in:

Royston - Hertfordshire

Qualification and level currently studying:

ACA – Level 7

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT Combined Level 2 & 3

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School Leaver

Age now:

22

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

19

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Following my school studies, I thought a career in accountancy would suit me due to my love for numbers and business. The apprenticeship route was extremely appealing for me as I decided quite early on that university would not be the route for me as I enjoyed working in the real world.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

Without apprenticeships, I probably wouldn't have chosen a career in accountancy due to the cost of university and it simply not being the route for me. I wanted to learn whilst earning and the routes available in accountancy meant I could learn on the job skills whilst being paid.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Throughout my AAT studies, and my upcoming ACA studies, the information learnt in college really allows me to excel in my job role. I learn the concepts in college and am able to take this into the office and apply this to real life scenarios. For example, I learnt different tax reliefs available to businesses during my AAT Level 4 Business Tax studies, such as business asset disposal relief. I was then able to send an email to a client discussing this whilst my partner was out of the office on annual leave.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

My apprenticeship has impacted my career prospects in accountancy in an extremely positive manner. Not only have I been able to learn the relevant concepts which I can apply in my every day role, but it has given me the confidence to regularly speak with clients. As a result of this, following my studies I would love to become senior management with the hope to progress onto partner once qualified.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes – absolutely!

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition have been fantastic throughout. From the tutors, to the apprenticeship team there is always someone on hand to support you throughout your journey. Having been studying with FI now for around three years I am really pleased to have chosen this route over university and cannot fault the learning process in anyway.



Max Whiteley, Product Domain Expert at Dext

Previous roles:

- Associate Director at Accounts and Legal
- Cloud Accountant at UHY Hacker Young

Town/city attended secondary school:

St Ambrose - Hale Barns, Altrincham, Cheshire

Town/city currently working in:

Working remotely in Manchester for a London-based firm

Qualification and level currently studying (or completed):

Level 7 - Completed ICAEW Qualification

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT Level 2

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver

Age now:

29

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

15 (before GCSE results, youngest in the year)

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

20

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

26

Before you started your apprenticeship programme were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes - Found out from a colleague on year 9 work experience.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Always loved working, didn't really enjoy school, even though I achieved good grades. Accountancy seemed to be the highest sort of apprenticeship that I could access and I was good at maths. I also come from a family where there was no pressure to go to university which helped.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

The amount of debt I would have incurred from going to university.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Real life experience including soft skills, advisory, sales, marketing, people management, team management the list goes on. by the time my peers were out of uni and in the same job as me, I had 5 years experience on them, and it showed.



How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy? No, never, only helped, I always felt I was ahead of my competition with the experience I had gained

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes, 100%.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

Where do I start with First Intuition? I honestly don't think I would have qualified without them! I failed the odd exam, but the staff were incredible in helping me through. Smaller classes, approachable teaches with years of experience, out of hours support and revision material that wasn't 10,000 page manuals, but actionable examples to help the content sink in. Oh and a 16th floor sky line college in Manchester was a bonus.

Oliver Waters, Audit and Accounts Assistant at Streets Chartered Accountants

Town/city attended secondary school:

Sawtry (Peterborough)

Town/city currently working in:

Peterborough

Qualification and level currently studying:

I am studying towards the level 7 ACA qualification.

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

I started at level 2 AAT to complete some initial courses but not the whole qualification. I then moved onto AAT levels 3 & 4 with First Intuition in which I have qualified in both levels.

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

School leaver after sixth form.

Age now:

23

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

23

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I had an active interest in finance and business at A-levels and wanted to pursue this. I chose the apprenticeship route as it allowed me to gain the knowledge side of going to university but also it allowed me to gain the relevant practical experience needed and get paid for it.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

An accounting qualification/University.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Through the skills days provided as part of my apprenticeship I have increased my communication skills which I use daily at the office when speaking to staff and clients.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

It has impacted them in a positive way. Now I have gained my MAAT status I have many more opportunities to further my skills and knowledge in this field which will enable better career prospects.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

First Intuition has been very helpful throughout my journey. They have done this by providing useful and helpful tutors, skills coaches who monitor progress regularly and help with any queries, and a supportive customer service team.

Sean Gavin Nicholls, Accountant at Hardcastle Burton LLP

Previous roles:

- Trainee Accountant (Aug – 2016 to Jan – 2024)
- Senior Accountant (Feb – 2024 to present)

Town/city attended secondary school:

I attended Soham Village College – Cambridgeshire for secondary school.

Town/city currently working in:

I currently work in Royston, Hertfordshire.

Qualification and level currently studying:

I completed my AAT Apprenticeship 15/12/2020 and completed my ACCA L7 Apprenticeship Feb-24

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

I started at AAT Level 2 (September 2016)

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

I started as an A Level School Leaver

Age now:

26

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

22

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

25

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

No, I had met my current employers at a careers fair at Long Road Sixth form college, before the apprenticeship programme was introduced. I became aware of this prior to starting my AAT Level 3/4 apprenticeship.

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

I always wanted to be involved in something business related/facing and enjoyed finance aspects of my business studies. I decided to chose the apprenticeship option as I wanted to work alongside my studies.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

My A Level Grades (and subjects) would likely not have permitted me to attend University and I also didn't particularly want to attend university to study an accounting based degree so I decided to take the route of learning alongside my work.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

The skills days you attend as part of the apprenticeship help to develop key work skills, such as group working, presentation, communication and many more. I have been able to apply these skills within my day to day working my whole career.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

Think it made me a more well rounded employee as a result of the additional skills days that are on offer on the apprenticeship and it would ultimately make me a more desirable hire in the event it was against someone who simply passed the exams.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes, for me it offers you so much more than a degree and you have opportunities to gain real experience working alongside your studies and benefiting from the support of your colleagues and First Intuition. **How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?**

First Intuition have helped me progress through every exam, skills submission, timesheet submission or report submission since 2016. They helped me recover from failed exams and ensured I was still supported during my re-sit's. As someone who was never exam inclined...I can honestly say without their support I would not be qualified today.

Tom Foley, Audit Senior at Hardcastle Burton LLP

Town/city attended secondary school:

Bassingbourn

Town/city currently working in:

Royston

Qualification and level currently studying:

ICAEW level 7 apprenticeship

Qualification and level you started your accountancy training at:

AAT level 2 apprenticeship

Whether you started your apprenticeship as a school leaver or graduate:

Started my apprenticeship as a school leaver

Age now:

23

Age when starting your first apprenticeship:

18

Age when starting your Level 7 apprenticeship:

21

Age when finishing your Level 7 apprenticeship:

N/A

Before you started your apprenticeship programme, were you aware of this as an entry point into accountancy?

Yes

What motivated you to pursue a career in accountancy, and why did you choose the apprenticeship route over other options?

Interesting work and I have found it an interesting role with many options for my future career path.

Without the apprenticeship programme, what barriers (if any) would have prevented you from pursuing a career in accountancy?

Lack of knowledge and experience with a range of accountancy subjects would have prevented me from knowing what roles are out there and the skills required.

Can you give an example of how the knowledge and skills you have gained throughout your apprenticeship have been applied in your job?

Increase numerical and language skills whilst also building accountancy specific knowledge on company accounting, audit and tax.

How has your apprenticeship impacted your career prospects in accountancy?

Improved my prospects by obtaining a professional qualification and furthered my studying which has definitely helped my career options in accountancy.

Would you recommend a Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship?

Yes.

How have First Intuition supported your apprenticeship journey?

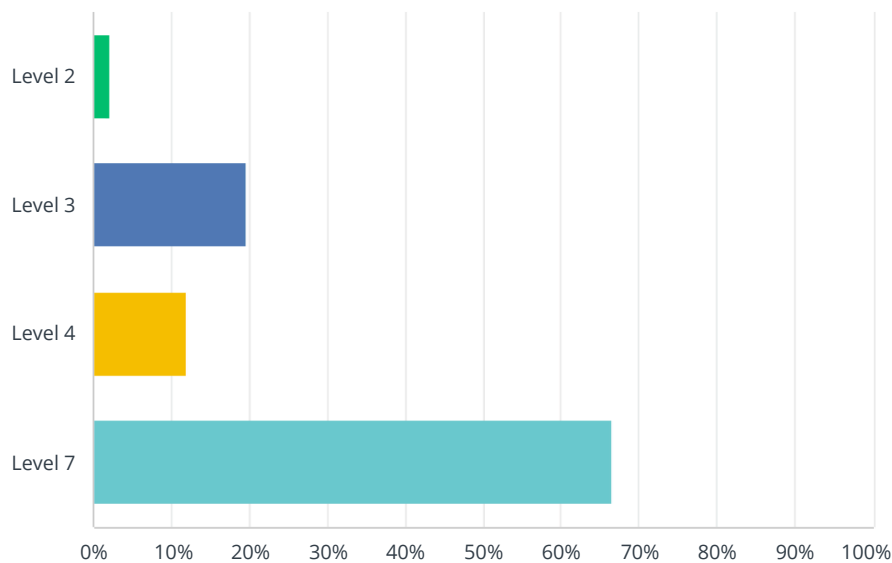
Been at first intuition for several years have always had good tutors and support staff through exam, which has made the process much easier.

Results of survey of accountancy apprentices undertaken from 26 September to 4 October 2024

In some cases, percentages shown in the main body of the report have been calculated based on survey results excluding 'don't know' responses where appropriate.

What level of accountancy apprenticeship are you currently studying for?

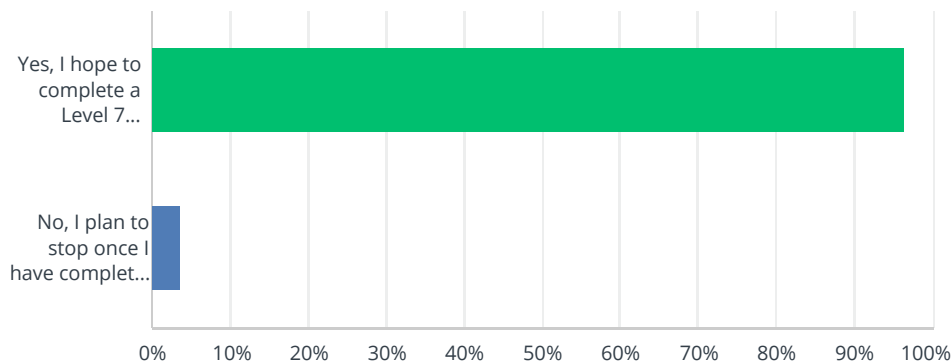
Answered: 766 Skipped: 51



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Level 2	2.09%	16
Level 3	19.58%	150
Level 4	11.88%	91
Level 7	66.45%	509
TOTAL		766

Is it your ambition to complete a Level 7 apprenticeship (covering a qualification such as ACCA, CIMA, ICAEW or other)?

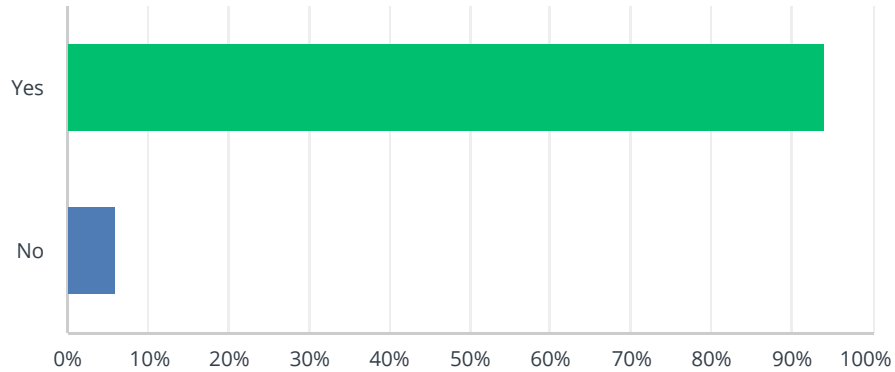
Answered: 766 Skipped: 51



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I hope to complete a Level 7 apprenticeship	96.48%	739
No, I plan to stop once I have completed level 2, 3 or 4	3.52%	27
TOTAL		766

Was the potential to progress to complete Level 7 (to achieve fully qualified chartered accountant status) an important reason for starting your accountancy training?

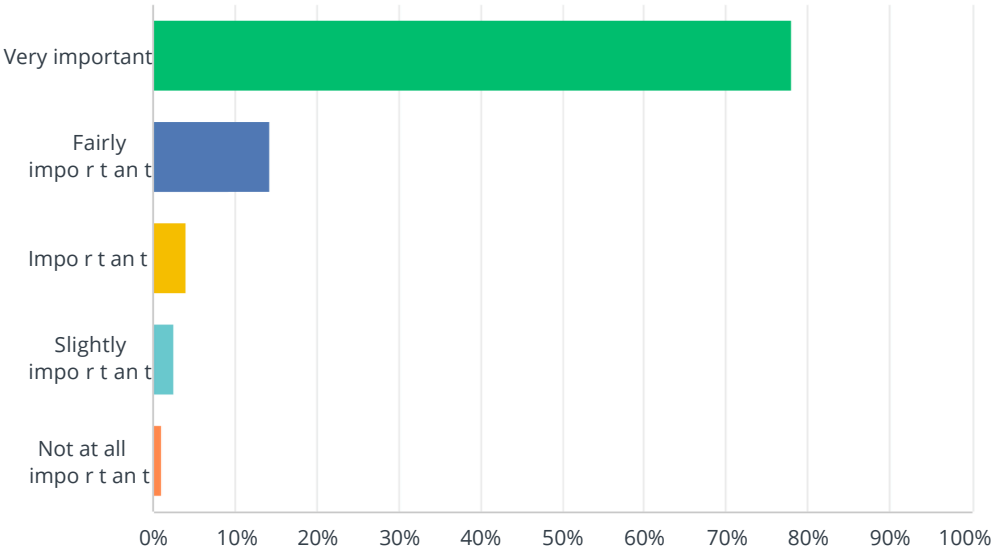
Answered: 716 Skipped: 101



ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		93.99%	673
No		6.01%	43
TOTAL			716

How important to you is achieving a Level 7 apprenticeship (covering a qualification such as ACCA, CIMA, ICAEW or other) to fulfill your long-term career aspirations?

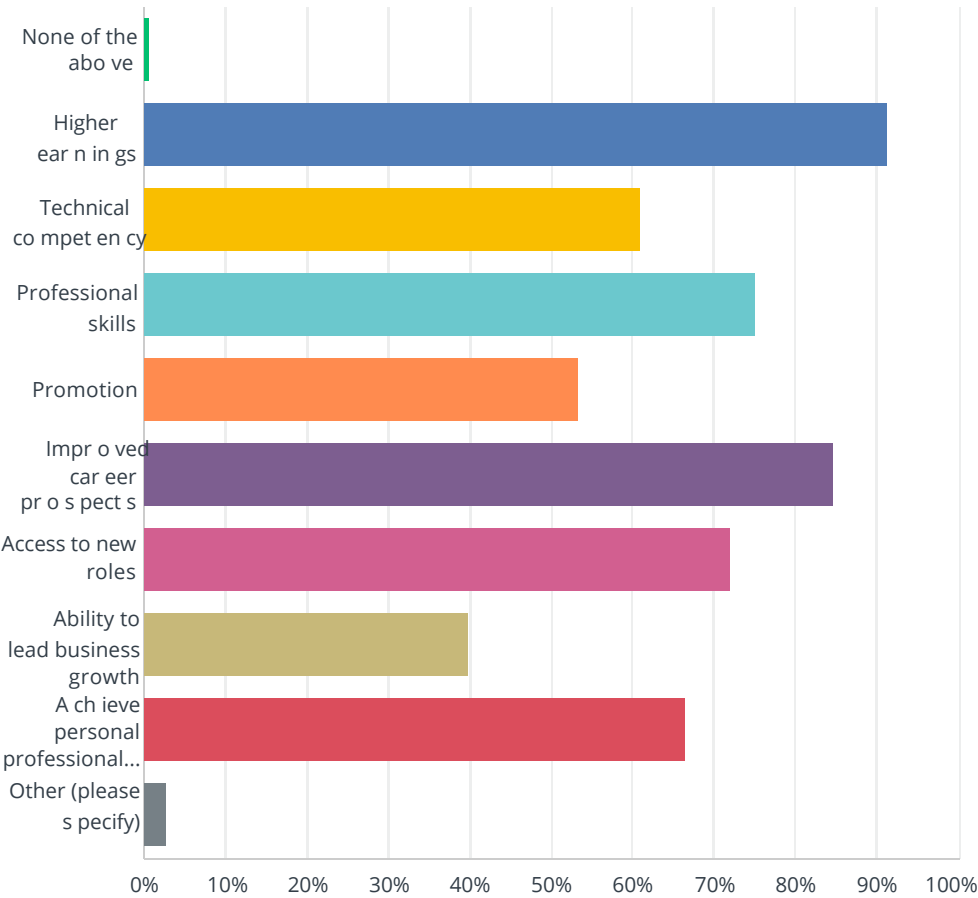
Answered: 716 Skipped: 101



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very important	77.93%	558
Fairly important	14.25%	102
I m port ant	4.05%	29
Slightly important	2.65%	19
Not at all important	1.12%	8
TOTAL		716

Why is it important to you to achieve your Level 7 qualification (Chartered Accountant)? Select all that apply.

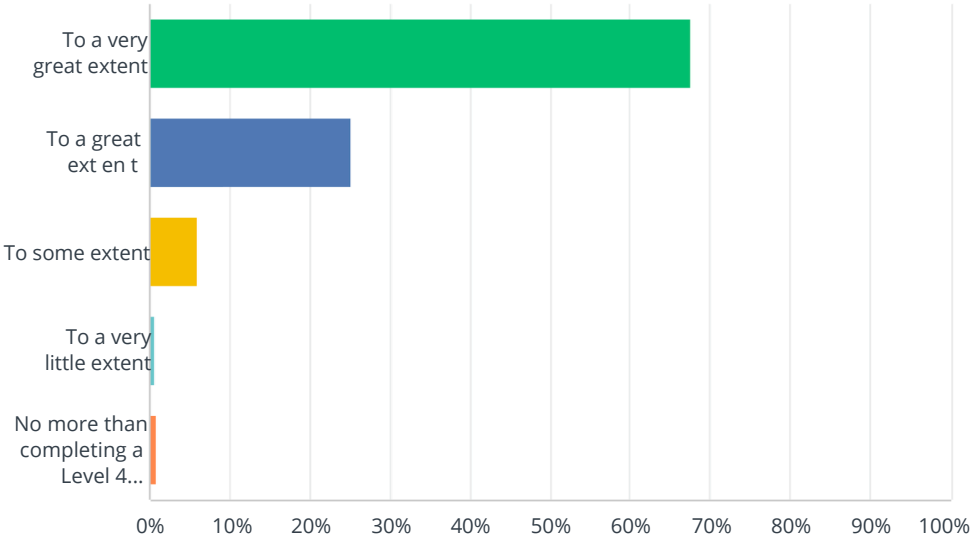
Answered: 716 Skipped: 101



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	0.56%	4
Higher earnings	91.20%	653
Technical competency	61.03%	437
Professional skills	75.14%	538
Promotion	53.21%	381
Improved career prospects	84.64%	606
Access to new roles	72.07%	516
Ability to lead business growth	39.94%	286
Achieve personal professional ambitions	65.48%	476
Other (please specify)	2.79%	20
Total Respondents: 716		

To what extent do you feel that completing a Level 7 apprenticeship (to achieve fully qualified chartered accountant status) provides a strong foundation for a career in accounting?

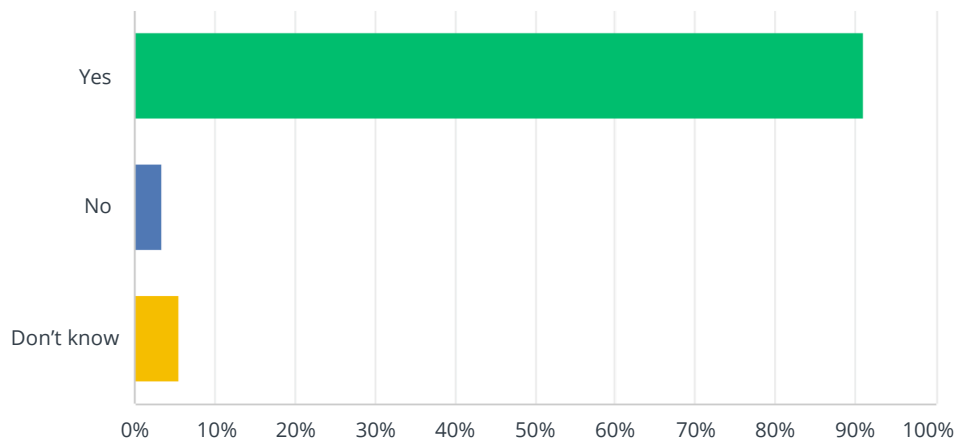
Answered: 730 Skipped: 87



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
To a very great extent	67.53%	493
To a great extent	25.07%	183
To some extent	5.89%	43
To a very little extent	0.68%	5
No more than completing a Level 4 accountancy apprenticeship	0.82%	6
TOTAL		730

Do you feel accountancy apprenticeships adequately prepare young people for long-term success in the accounting profession?

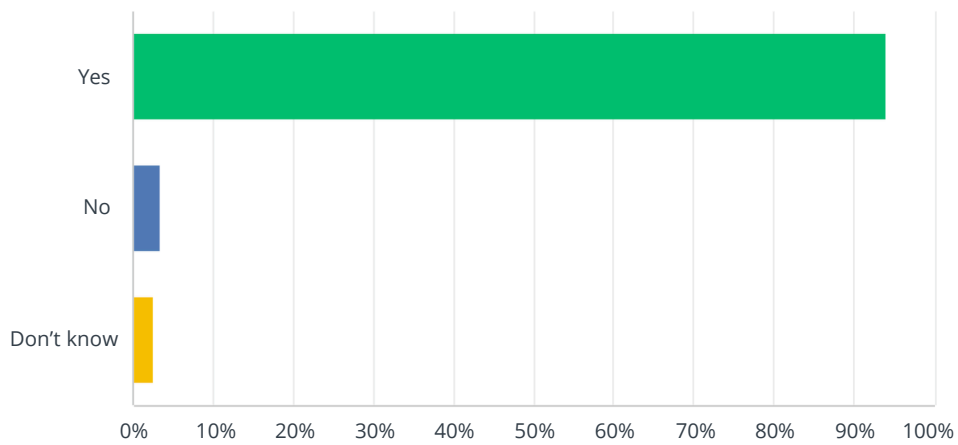
Answered: 730 Skipped: 87



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	91.10%	665
No	3.42%	25
Don't know	5.48%	40
TOTAL		730

Would you recommend an apprenticeship to others interested in a career in accountancy?

Answered: 730 Skipped: 87



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	93.97%	686
No	3.42%	25
Don't know	2.60%	19
TOTAL		730

Employer voices:

John Chase, Senior Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

"I am a senior accountant at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. I just wanted to say how disappointed we would be at the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust if the level 7 accountancy apprenticeship was not supported in the future.

We have more than 10 learners from a wide variety of backgrounds whose training is supported via the levy. We have historically found it difficult to recruit at 'entry level' within finance and the training package we can now offer due to access to the levy funding has seen applications increase ten fold and our staffing gaps filled. The age profile of our learners predominantly ranges from 16-25 with school leavers and also people with a non-finance degree wanting to start their finance journey. Some of these start on level 7 and others, dependant on qualifications already gained, level 3 or 4 with aspirations to go onto level 7. It would not be viable for us to do this through the commercial route.

The apprenticeship offers more than the technical content with skills days and sessions promoting personal development e.g. leadership, influencing and communication. The pathway that we have for apprentices including level 7 opens up a wide range of career prospects including leading positions within the Trust. Once qualified, the earning potential doubles from starting to finishing the qualification.

A significant benefit of the Level 7 apprenticeship is the diversity of people we can attract, from all backgrounds, many of whom wouldn't have been able to afford to contribute to a higher-level qualification otherwise. We have strong evidence around this from the increase in applications when the apprentice training package is included. If funding for the Level 7 apprenticeship was removed, it would be much harder for us to attract the diverse group of talented staff that we hope will become the future of the organisation."

Julie Young, Managing Director, Walter Dawson and Sons, Statutory Auditors and Chartered Accountants with offices in Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, Leyburn, Northallerton and York

"WDS have always believed in apprenticeships to develop and support our employees. We take trainees on every year, usually after their A-Levels to complete their AAT through the apprenticeship scheme. Establishing a career ladder is crucial for everyone to see and understand from the outset, so they are aware of this from Day 1. Once they have completed this, individuals who wish to continue with their studies will be discuss the Level 7 apprenticeship route. As they are continuing their learning, they will typically be young people who have only worked for WDS and are still early in their careers. Our mission statement is to train and inspire our team to be experts in their chosen field, this ensures everyone can have the opportunities to pursue their career goals. We believe the most effective way to achieve this is through apprenticeships which have benefitted our employees and the firm by enhancing their knowledge and confidence to apply this in their daily roles.

Without the Level 7 apprenticeship, we would struggle to support as many of our employees as we do for several reasons. The financial support is essential to enable us to allow them to learn during work hours, and the knowledge base they receive will set them up for their life in their careers. Although we have a wide range of clients, the knowledge they acquire will not be fully covered by our client base or the services we offer. We can teach technical content but the additional benefits they gain from learning with others and applying diverse skillsets to the workplace is invaluable. The difference gained through the level 7 apprenticeship is immeasurable, and the development in the individuals is remarkable. The Level 7 apprenticeship's incredible learnings set our employees up for their entire careers, and seeing them excel beyond the qualification is a source of great pride."

Clare Wilson, Group HR Manager, LB Group, top 75 accountancy firm with offices in Ipswich, Colchester, Chelmsford and London

"The apprenticeship schemes in conjunction with our training providers gives our learners a consistent experience both to their studies and on the job development. We are a people-centric business, where the expertise of our staff makes a real, lasting difference to our clients. Our job is to help our staff in their careers and in turn, help our clients. Our work culture emphasises teamwork, collaboration, and innovation, fostering a dynamic and connected workforce striving to provide our clients with the best possible service. Our employees are the backbone of our success and we are committed to helping them grow and develop in their careers.

We understand that our best asset is our people, and we therefore make sure we provide the right support and opportunities for our team, throughout their career. By providing a supportive environment and progression opportunities, alongside a tailored suite of benefits, we aim to give our team the options to pick a package which best suit their needs. Our trainees will naturally be exposed to valuable, varied experiences, and encouraged to take on responsibility early in their career. Many of our senior management team have worked from junior roles at LB. They put their trust in us to support their career, and now they help others at LB do the same. We have a strong culture of backing good people, which won't change. The learner's success is ultimately the business's success, if they have a great experience, you will retain qualified and experienced talent. Using the Apprenticeship levy is a win-win situation for both an employer and the employee, not only does the learner gain a recognised qualification but also has to evidence their development in workplace skills and behaviours. This encourages the employee to take ownership of their development and encourages them to grow professionally. Level 7 apprenticeships increase employee diversity and employee retention."

Andrew Taffs, Partner, Giess Wallis Crisp Chartered Accountants

"Following the recent comments on potential changes to the Level 7 Apprenticeship, for our Accountancy trainees over many years now it has been an extremely important to them to give a comprehensive training programme with a monitoring process to track their development. The level 7 takes a trainee from a student completing Level 4 to a fully qualified competent Accountant that can use their skills to advise clients. We are a relatively small training office of 32 people taking in at least 1 new Level 2 AAT trainee each year which we have done for over 40 years. We turn the school leaver into a competent Accountant over a 6 year period on completion of the Level 7 apprenticeship. We are proud of the number of students with diverse backgrounds that we and First Intuition have helped follow their dream of becoming competent Accountants. We currently have 3 Level 7 Apprentices which is 10% of our staff. They become a highly valued and valuable person within our Team.

On completion of the Level 7 apprenticeship we aimed to retained them in the business which allows us to grow and expand our business and give the now qualified Accountant the prospect of a future career. The growth of the business enables us to pay them the increased market wage rate that they deserve. The Apprenticeship funding enables us to have a continuous year on year program and stream of apprentices which we may not be able to afford without the funding. This then develops the individual and the firm which benefits everyone."

Chloe Britnell, Partner, PJCO Chartered Accountants

"At PJCO before the Level 7 Apprenticeships we would hire at most two degree leavers who wanted to become accountants per year, some years just one. These are typically individuals who went through university at 18 as they believed that it was the only option available to them, and at 18 didn't know what they wanted to do. At this point we were commercially training these individuals through Kaplan to achieve their ACCA qualification. These individuals after the three years would become fully qualified in all aspects of accounting, managing a portfolio of clients and adding extreme value to our business.

Since the introduction of the Level 7 Apprenticeships we have seen increased interest in our scheme and have been able to hire four Level 7 starters a year. We have also been able to extend our offering from degree leavers to school leavers, and when we hire at Level 3 or Level 4 this is not simply to complete the Level 3 or Level 4 qualification but to progress all the way through and is essentially a 'degree apprenticeship' qualification that we have built for these young people. I am absolutely certain that this change will not only restrict the number of individuals that we can offer these opportunities too, due to the cost, but also our 'degree apprenticeship' route will effectively be restricted if not stopped entirely.

We currently have promised five young people the degree apprenticeship, of which none of them will have started their Level 7 by the August 2025 proposed deadline. We have made this promise under the impression that the funding would be available to them, and this is not something we could support without the funding. The time investment internally to

train these individuals, the required study leave to give them the time and space to grow, and the cost of the commercial courses is not something we could achieve for all five of these individuals who have already started with us on Level 3 or Level 4 courses. Our Apprenticeships have been designed in such a way to make these young people empowered, with all the skills they require to help businesses we serve (mainly in our local area) survive and thrive. With 45% of new businesses failing within the first five years, I believe that these skills are vital for the economy, support for local businesses and also for the development of young individuals.

We have seen some of our apprentices leave to work for bigger firms, start their own firms, develop internally to partner level, or move to work in industry in the finance functions for public companies. It is absolutely vital for our current business plans, growth, and also our brand that the Level 7 Apprenticeships continue. Whilst I understand that all good things do sometimes come to an end, this is not just simply to benefit PJCO, but our entire ethos is to hire young people who just want an opportunity and a chance. We feel that our apprenticeships are a place where young people can become an integral part of the small business advisory team every ambitious business owner wants on their side.

Lastly, I would like to share our mission statement, in the hopes that this consolidates the above concisely. 'We are known for our culture. Our team are self-motivated, always wanting to learn more, and believe they can improve their lifestyles by fast tracking their career through learning, qualification and responsibility. We passionately believe our purpose is to help our clients improve their business and personal lives, create time and build wealth. We have a team who want to better their own lives, their careers and their own wealth, by helping their clients achieve this too.'

Rebecca Barton, Emerging Talent Demand & Portfolio Manager, Tui Group

"The level 7 apprenticeships are invaluable to TUI, not only within finance but within our technology and digital areas as well. At TUI, we have over 400 colleagues on an apprenticeship programme, with over 50 colleagues completing a level 7. We recruit 10-15 graduates each year to complete a level 7 apprenticeship programme with the view that these are the future talent to help drive change within TUI.

We have a diverse range of learners on our level 7 programmes, we have those who have been in the industry a while with no formal qualifications and those who join the business straight from school and university with little work experience, these programmes allow them opportunities to develop their skills in all areas and become not only an expert in their field but also support them to become well rounded managers with skills to help develop their teams and mentor individuals. The level 7 is also seen as a real key destination for all our apprentices. Our finance apprentices start their career with us on the level 3 AAT and progress through to level 4 and then onto their level 7 - at TUI, we have seen every one of our apprentices follow this career path and it has really help with our retention of colleagues but also enabled them to develop their transferrable skills and move into management positions even before they complete their level 7.

On completion of the level 7 apprenticeships our apprentices can not only secure management positions they can also expect to see a significant uplift in their salary due to the qualifications that they gain."

Darren Eastham, Director, Wheawill & Sudworth, Huddersfield

"As a long-established organisation within our industry, we have seen first-hand the growing need for highly skilled professionals who possess not only technical expertise but also strong leadership and strategic thinking abilities. This is where the introduction of Level 7 apprenticeships has become invaluable to our business and the wider economy.

Level 7 apprenticeships offer a unique opportunity to develop talent from within, equipping our entry-level employees with master's degree-level skills while allowing them to continue contributing to our business. The balance of academic rigour and on-the-job experience is unmatched, providing practical solutions to real-world challenges and driving innovation in our operations.

We have found that young apprentices who complete Level 7 apprenticeships emerge as well-rounded leaders, with the knowledge and skills to take on senior roles and influence business strategy. These apprentices also support the development of critical areas such as project management, digital transformation, and data analytics, ensuring that our workforce is prepared for the evolving demands of our industry.

Additionally, the financial viability of these programmes, through government funding, has enabled us to invest in high-quality training for our staff without compromising our business operations. This has proven to be a cost-effective way to bridge skills gaps and enhance the long-term growth and sustainability of our company. In conclusion, we strongly support the continuation of Level 7 apprenticeships in the UK. They are vital in meeting the skills needs of businesses, driving productivity, and ensuring the UK remains competitive in a rapidly changing global economy”

Jenny Milton, Practice Manager, Hardcastle Burton

“For our Firm and employees, access to Level 7 apprenticeship funding is imperative. We take on young people at the very start of their careers and the pathways we use support them to grow and develop into effective and valued members of the team. The funding allows us to take on more apprentices and therefore giving more young people a chance at having a career in accountancy that some of them might not otherwise have had.

We take school leavers on and start them on AAT Level 3, but this is always with a plan for them to progress to Level 7. At Level 3 and 4, learners do not possess the skills, knowledge, and behaviours to apply what they have learnt in a very meaningful way in the real world. They can only undertake the more basic work. Level 7 teaches the rules and regulations in much more depth. With tax and accounting standard rules for example, they start their learning on these at the lower levels but these serve as the foundation for Level 7 when real, in depth, actionable knowledge is learnt. Ethics at Level 7 are also taught in the most rounded and actionable way. We do also take on graduates to go directly into Level 7. These employees are also at the beginning of their careers and need funding to be able to study further in career specific learning. Many would not be able to afford to train any further out of the workplace and need to earn while they learn.

The wide range of skills, knowledge and behaviours that are nurtured on the apprenticeship schemes are invaluable in the workplace. Young people who have not previously had jobs, need to be taught how to communicate and behave effectively in a professional workplace. We, of course, guide them through their first years in the workplace very closely but it is essential for their development that this is backed up in a highly managed, highly effective way by the college.

Without funding, we would take on fewer learners. It would likely be less than 50% of the current numbers. Fewer young people would have the opportunity to have access for Level 7 learning. I would also be concerned that if people did AAT levels 3 and 4 and then we or they decided that without funding they would stay at that level, the calibre of trainees that we employ would likely be bored with the tasks that they could be given and either go elsewhere or leave the profession entirely, wasting the funding and effort invested. Young people need goals and aspirations to motivate them and a career at Level 7 can do that. Level 4 does not have the same excitement as an end goal due to the basic nature of the work. The uplift in earning power is also huge and allows people from all backgrounds to achieve great things and much greater earnings in order to build a bright future for themselves and us.”

Heather Rymer, Talent & Early Careers Manager, Leeds Building Society

“From a specific Finance / Financial Services perspective we currently have eight colleagues who are benefiting from development via the Level 7 Standards. The average age of these colleagues is 26 years, with the youngest being 25 years (x3), and the oldest age 31 (x1). Six colleagues are studying Level 7 Accountancy/Taxation and two are studying Level 7 Actuary standard. These colleagues have all joined the Society in fairly entry level roles and a couple of them are graduates. As these colleagues have gained their early level professional experience, they’ve then found their niche in their respective fields and looked for further development, to which these standards have been suited. We encourage the apprentice approach as we’ve seen greater engagement, momentum and progress with the colleagues becoming great ‘all-rounders’ in their fields beyond pure technical knowledge development. This has put them in a great position for progressing their careers, as they are able to demonstrate balancing new learning, often new roles and work/life, which further supports their other transferable skills, such as time management/handling conflicting priorities/working under pressure and resilience.

In 2024, we hired our first x2 'early career' (A-Level students) colleagues in to our Finance team. Both were aged 18 years, one undertaking the Level 3 Assistant Accountant and the other the Level 4 Professional accounting or taxation technician. After a year in, these young colleagues are already asking 'what's next' and they see the Level 7 as an aspirational progression destination, especially when our other colleagues are role modelling this; the new colleagues can see how they've progressed and can aspire to achieve the similar goals.

We absolutely see this route in to the Society as adding value and something we plan to do more of, both in terms of new 'early career' hires, and to support (where appropriate) current colleagues looking for development and growth. This continual learning mind-set supports our culture and develops colleagues in such a supportive way that we absolutely recognise the investment in our time (and management time) adds values in the longer term. We've seen greater retention more broadly from colleagues who have undertaken apprenticeships. For transparency, we have x4 colleagues who are undertaking the Senior Leadership Level 7 standard with a University, we specifically selected these colleagues as high potential future leaders looking to develop their Strategic Leadership skills for future senior roles (the total pool of colleagues in this job range within our Society is 123, so it's certainly not a sheep-dip / doing it for the sake of it approach). In addition to the benefits mentioned above, we've seen great benefit in these colleagues also getting an opportunity to build an external network / share insights and best practice. This is highly valuable for those that are typically in more Senior roles.

Our commitment to enabling colleagues at all levels to complete their apprenticeships, shows that we are absolutely keen to make an investment in their development and to support our future pipelines higher and more senior roles."

Alex Ditalia-Riley, Senior CSU Accountant, Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust

"As an employer of a level 7 Accountancy Apprentice, I've seen first-hand the positive impact of the Level 7 Accountancy Apprenticeship on our organisation and the people we employ. This apprenticeship not only gives learners advanced technical skills, but also helps them develop key abilities like leadership, communication, and problem-solving that go beyond just gaining an Accountancy qualification. These are skills that we don't often see in those who follow a traditional education route outside of the apprenticeship.

We have found the level 7 apprenticeship to be a key stepping stone for those who start at lower levels. It provides a clear path for career progression and gives them a long-term goal and career path to work towards. Many of our employees begin at entry-level roles and see Level 7 as the goal to reach, helping them move into senior positions within our organisation. One of the biggest benefits of the Level 7 apprenticeship is the diversity of people it brings in. It opens the door for people from all sorts of backgrounds, many of whom wouldn't have been able to afford a higher-level qualification otherwise. This means we can attract a more varied and diverse group of individuals, which makes our workforce stronger and more reflective of the population we serve.

If funding for the Level 7 apprenticeship was removed, it would be much harder for us to develop the talented, well-rounded professionals that we have a huge shortage of. Keeping the funding is essential to maintaining a skilled, diverse workforce that can drive the future of our organisation."

Jill Wright, Kirk Newsholme Chartered Accountants

"As a Yorkshire based employer of approximately 70 team members, across two companies, we have always supported the development of trainees into key client handlers within our Audit, Tax, Business Services and Financial Planning teams. For many years now we have put our learners through their training of Level 4 and Level 7 qualifications via Apprenticeships and those trainees have gone on to achieve very highly regarded qualifications, namely – ACA; ACCA; CTA; AAT and ATT. We currently have over 20 learners in our companies and most of these learners will progress right through to achieve their Level 7 qualifications. ese learners have been carefully selected each year from a large pool of applications and the majority have joined us directly from school, having made the decision that the costs of a University route outweighed the benefits of that route. We have an excellent track record of our learners achieving their full qualifications and this is driven by the quality and determination of those learners; the experience and support that they have in the workplace and the quality of teaching they receive from our main training provider, First Intuition.

Our most recent trainee intake (September 2024) consisted of 8 new learners, comprising 7 school leavers and 1 graduate. The development of our business and our success in employing and training our team and servicing our clients is based on our ability to offer training and development at Level 7 in the professional exam routes that we offer. Without the financial support we receive through the levy we would inevitably be more limited in how many new trainees we could fund through their training and hence be restricted in offering as many roles to future young people. The challenges faced by young people these days upon entering the workplace are huge – no jobs are guaranteed – University routes are not guaranteeing better employment or more highly paid roles and those routes are also resulting in huge personal debts.

We work very hard to identify and secure exceptional new recruits and our team expends huge amounts of time in the support of those learners in their development. Training through an apprenticeship is important for all our learners, especially those who join us at age 18/19. The apprenticeship route provides many additional skills that would not be learnt through the technical content of the extremely challenging exams required to achieve the professional qualifications that we train towards. Skills required by qualified accountants, auditors and tax advisors, in the workplace nowadays are so much more comprehensive than years ago.

Our clients naturally expect our team members to be competent in their technical knowledge but they also expect them to interact as well rounded individuals who communicate at the highest levels; manage their time effectively and efficiently; provide general business advice with an understanding of current regional and global issues; fully engage in the importance of integrity and ethics and build trust in their business relationships. These skills take years to master and the diversity of the additional training and development afforded by the Apprenticeship scheme is essential, especially for those young people who have not chosen a university route. Upon completion of Level 7 qualifications within our company our fully qualified and experienced team members become key client handlers, providing support to businesses across our region from new start up ventures to established companies of up to £50 million turnover.

These team members have fantastic career prospects within our firm following their qualifications and those who decide to leave us can also take up extremely career rewarding roles within our sector or within the wider business world. I would welcome anyone to come into our workplace and meet the exceptional accountants, auditors and tax advisors who have trained with us through Apprenticeship programmes – many achieving a Level 7 qualification prior to their 24th birthday. These rounded individuals have developed as a consequence of talent; hard work; support and a rounded training programme combining technical skills and knowledge together with the additional development and behaviours that have arisen from following a rigorous Apprenticeship programme”

Richard Walker, Audit Partner and Head of Audit, Parson Chartered Accountants

“At Parsons Chartered Accountants, we are a firm of near 50 staff, most of whom have completed (or are completing) their accountancy qualification(s) through the apprenticeship scheme (including myself, now Partner). Our learners are extremely varied in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, social background; showing the apprenticeship scheme is both in demand and well suited to a diverse range of people, who we are proud to support through their studies.

Apprenticeships allow our staff to gain valuable, practical experience, through on the job training; complimented by the technical training and exams, serviced by our training providers. The appetite for these apprenticeships has only increased in recent years, following the increased costs of other training mechanisms and/or university, plus improved awareness of the value of the aforementioned on the job and practical experience. Apprenticeships are often now seen as the most efficient and cost effective route of success for trainees (and employers) in their relevant field. The apprenticeship helps to accelerate accountancy trainees earning potential as there is a clear pathway and expectation for the remuneration of suitably qualified staff, which acts as a framework for the market to ensure students are suitably rewarded throughout, and at the end of, their qualification. Upon achieving the ACA qualification, apprentices largely achieve earnings well above the national average with good foundations to drive this much higher dependent on their chosen career pathway, after qualifying.”

Adele Beadle, Early Careers Manager at Hazlewoods

"The level 7 apprenticeship has been a positive experience for both Hazlewoods and our apprentices. Since joining the apprenticeship scheme, we have significantly increased our annual intake of trainee accountant apprentices which has supported our overall growth strategy. We are a large employer within Gloucestershire and our trainee apprentices now make up just under a third of our workforce.

The big advantage we have seen, is the guidance and support that comes with the apprenticeship. Our apprentices and their manager will meet with their FI skills coach every ten weeks to discuss progress, set objectives and keep on track. These meetings are really valuable and a good chance for managers to set objectives regularly rather than waiting for an annual appraisal. The in-person progress reviews are also a great way for apprentices to practice booking meeting rooms and preparing for client meetings. The skills days are another great benefit of the apprenticeship programme. Our apprentices attend courses such as leadership, teamwork, and professional skills. Without the apprenticeship, they may not have been exposed to these skills so early in their careers. The Maths and English assessments are also a positive extra the apprenticeship offers. We have seen knowledge gaps picked up and additional help and resources provided, which may not of been the case outside of the apprenticeship route.

Our apprentices are not only able to put their learning into practice but are also learning and developing important work-related skills such as leadership, communication, and analytical thinking. Due to these skills and enriched apprenticeship programme, the majority of our apprentices will qualify to become exceptional accountants and will progress/fast track their career into more senior roles within our Firm."

Bianca Nelson, Assistant Manager – Learning & Development, Larking Gowen

"The Level 7 Professional Accountant Apprenticeship programme has proven highly valuable in providing our young people with a structured and practical pathway to achieve their ACCA or ICAEW qualifications. This programme allows them to gain real-world experience while advancing their technical skills, blending academic learning with hands-on application. It also offers a cost-effective route to professional accreditation, equipping them with the knowledge and confidence to succeed in the competitive accounting field. Additionally, the apprenticeship fosters strong professional growth, ensuring our trainees develop both the expertise and work ethic needed to thrive in their careers."

Jonathan Carr ACA, Co-Owner & Director, Gravitate Accounting

"So we are a dynamic firm that do things very different to the norm and as so we really value getting our team in at the start of their careers to train them in the "Gravitate" way while ensuring they get the basic training that Level 3 does through the AAT qualification and our ability to ensure we have the skilled staff at an affordable rate for small SME's the apprenticeship route is key! Although we have a model that rewards experience as well as Qualification we have had all our past AAT apprentices move onto L7 Apprentice to allow for them to continue to push and develop their skills to the professional level to compliment the experience we can provide internally. Without apprenticeship funding we just wouldn't be able to offer L7 qualification to our teams without significant financial burden which will mean that we reduce our recruitment drives at lower apprentice levels as we will have less opportunity to support them through their professional studies. This will be compounded by the fact that we will have to add very strict and financial claw backs in our students contracts that are not covered by apprenticeship which will mean they have to refund personally if they ever leave which although we have perfect retention atm it will be a huge factor to the recruitment market and our team as a whole.

Also our recruitment will swap from new learners leaving school to qualified/experienced staff and changing our approach to the market! The reduction in this will reduce our development and breath of skills that we can enter into the market. The progression in the areas of experience or qualification in the progression is an increase of over 100% on a starting of ACCA/ACA and we currently have over 60% of our staff on a L3/4/7 apprenticeship at present! Our apprentices also learn a lot around the apprenticeship and develop broader skills that we build on as we are very human advice focused business that needs teams to speak to people in other industries and backgrounds that the additional points incorporated by the apprenticeship allow us to build upon instead of starting from starch. We see that our younger team adapt to the modern accountancy world much quicker than older generation of accountants and a change this pivotal will handicap the sector for future development!"

Jenny Milton, Practice Manager, Hardcastle Burton LLP

"The programme has been essential for our employees to progress to a level where they can have successful and fulfilling careers both for themselves and for our business. Without the courses and the funding, many candidates would not have had the opportunity to progress to the level they are at. Without the funding, we would not take on nearly so many trainees and so the opportunity would be taken away from them to have access to their chosen career paths. The knowledge that is gained on the courses is invaluable and always heavily backed up by moulding young people to be effective in their delivery and use of the knowledge they gain."

Martin Garrity, Director, UHY BPR Heaton

"Apprenticeships offer an accessible path to a professional career in Accountancy to a wider talent pool than the standard university route. By learning and training on the job, as well as at college, we can tailor our training to ensure that the apprentice is aware of our organisation and our culture as well as develop the skills of accountancy, audit and tax. By investing time and effort into our apprentices, we believe it improves staff loyalty and retention and offers a chance to upskill other staff who are involved in the training and development of our apprentices"

Stephanie Philistin-Rabaud, HR Advisor, Smailes Goldie

"Apprentices are an integral part of our workforce, as the skills, knowledge and behaviours they learn enable them to make a direct contribution to the Firm's success. Whether this is leadership skills in helping to train new trainees who have joined the firm, business insight to better understand the needs of our Clients and how they operate, to accountancy expertise in ensuring the best possible service for our clients. The level 7 facilitates the development of a well-rounded accountant from which they can launch their accountancy career. Jasmine's achievements have also been recognised by winning 'Professional Service Apprentice of the Year' at the East Yorkshire Apprenticeship Awards. A nod to her valued contribution, dedication and hard-work during her level 7 apprenticeship."

Awarding body voices:

Will Holt, Managing Director of Education & Training, ICAEW, a common qualification earned by level 7 accountancy apprentices

"Continued financial support for the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship is essential to ensure the accounting profession remains accessible, inclusive, and capable of meeting the future demands of the economy. Our data shows that this apprenticeship provides significant value for aspiring accountants, the profession, and the wider economy.

In 2023, 79% of ICAEW's Level 7 accountancy apprentices were aged 24 or under when they started, highlighting the programme as a key entry point for those without industry experience. Our data also shows that the number of school leaver starts has more than doubled since the introduction of the level 7 apprenticeship."

Sarah Beale, Chief Executive, AAT, the most common qualification followed by level 2,3 and 4 accountancy apprentices and a major pipeline to the level 7 standard

"We welcome Skills England's focus on delivering the technical skills employers need, especially their recognition of the critical demand for accounting technicians. However, addressing this shortage isn't just about responding to employers' needs – important though that is. It is also about understanding what attracts people to our profession in the first place and raising the attractiveness of our offer where needed."

"Young people often enter accountancy because they see a great career for themselves, either as Accounting Technicians or as a springboard to other opportunities. Cutting off pathways to higher qualifications, including the level 7 apprenticeship pathway that leads to chartered status, risks limiting the range of futures available - having the effect of deterring more of the very talent we're trying to attract."

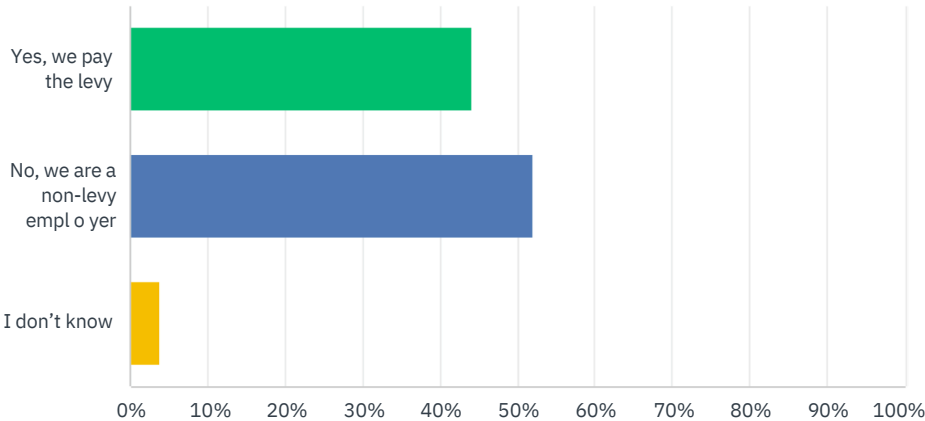
"We look forward to working with Skills England and the new government to ensure accessible progression pathways remain a factor in our profession's ongoing appeal."

Results of survey of employers of accountancy apprentices undertaken from 26 September to 4 October 2024

In some cases, percentages in the main body of the report have been calculated based on survey results excluding 'don't know' responses where appropriate.

Does your business pay the apprenticeship levy?

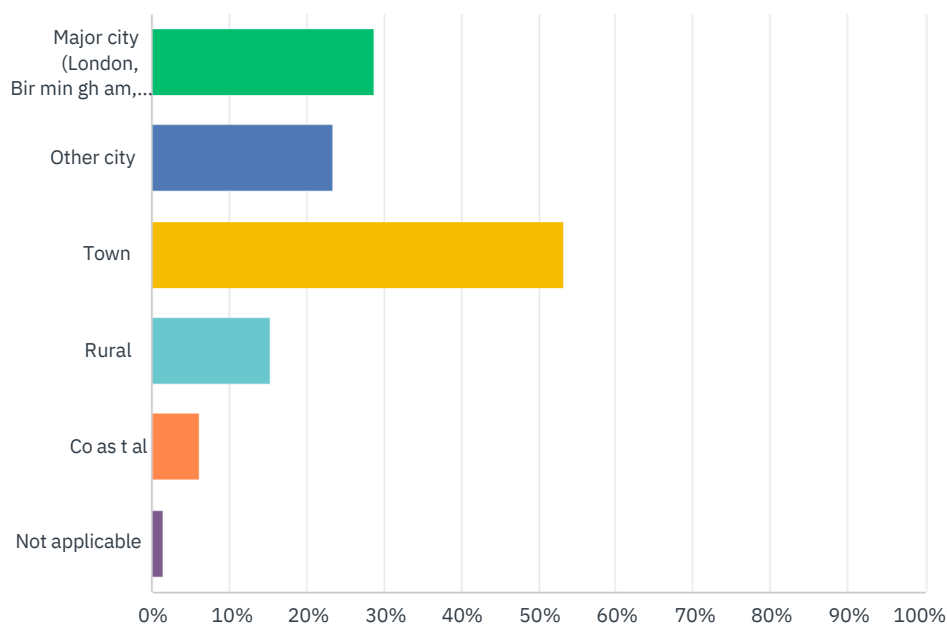
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes, we pay the levy		44.23%	92
No, we are a non-levy employer		51.92%	108
I don't know		3.85%	8
TOTAL			208

How would you categorise the location(s) of the UK office(s) of your organisation? Select all that apply.

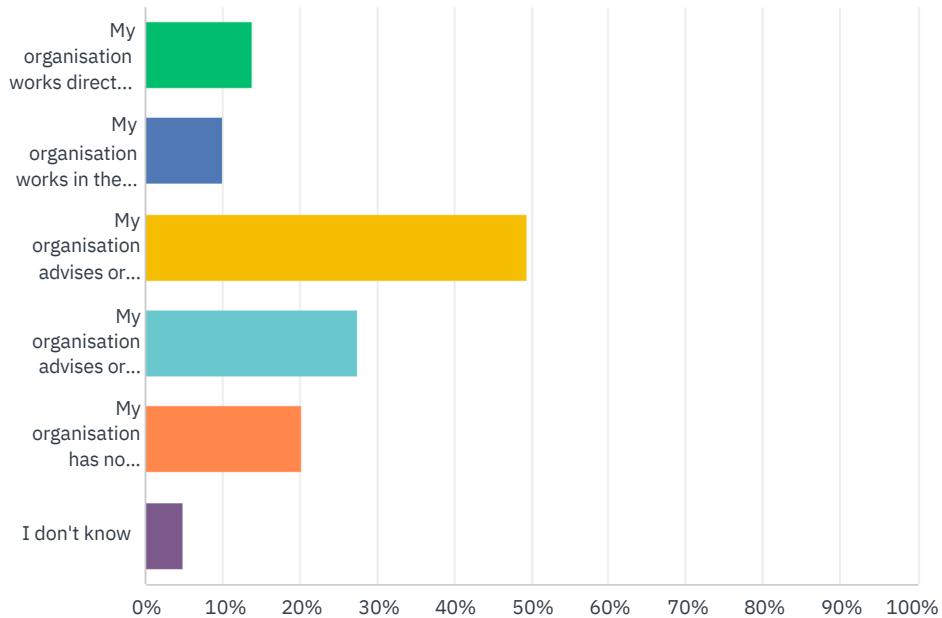
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ANSWER CHOICES	Major city (London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle or Bristol)	RESPONSES
		28.85% 60
	Other city	23.56% 49
	Town	53.37% 111
	Ru ra l	15.38% 32
	Coas t al	6.25% 13
	Not applicable	1.44% 3
Total Respondents: 208		

The government has identified four priority sectors (Digital, Life Sciences, House Building & Construction and Green). How would you describe the involvement of your organisation in these sectors? Select all that apply.

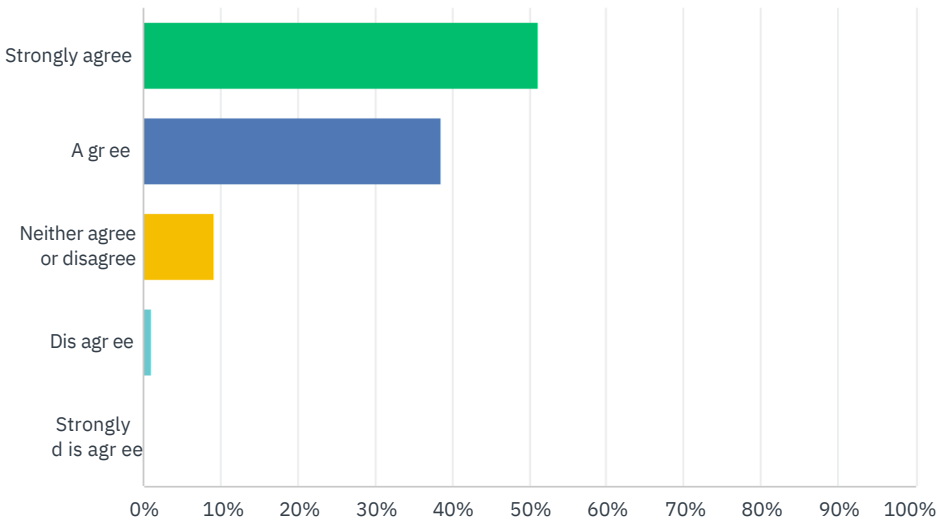
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
My organisation works directly in one or more of the four priority sectors	13.94% 29
My organisation works in the supply chain of one or more of the four priority sectors	10.10% 21
My organisation advises or provides professional services to one or more of the four priority sectors	49.52% 103
My organisation advises or provides professional services to the supply chain of one or more of the four priority sectors	27.40% 57
My organisation has no involvement in any of the four priority sectors	20.19% 42
I don't know	4.81% 10
Total Respondents: 208	

Do you agree that there is currently a lack of experienced, qualified accountants?

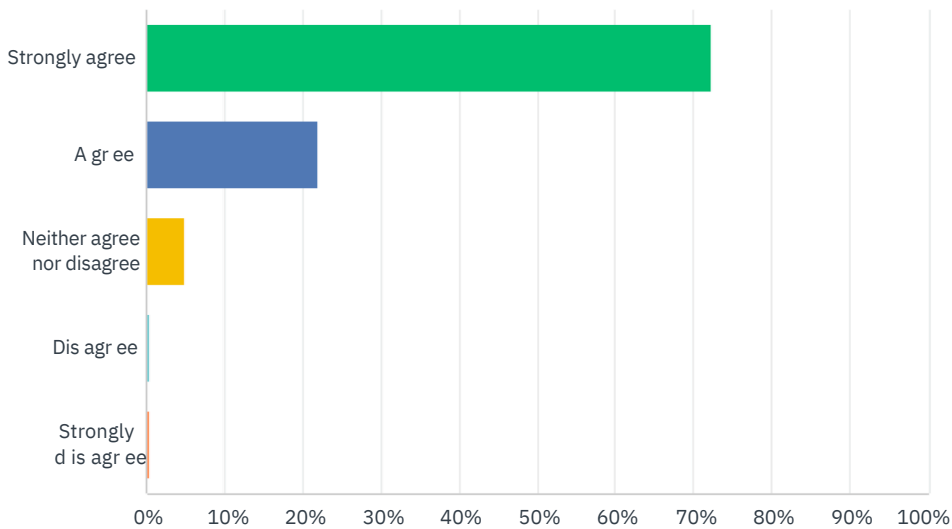
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	51.22%	105
A g r e e	38.54%	79
Neither agree or disagree	9.27%	19
Di s agree	0.98%	2
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
TOTAL		205

Is supporting new accountancy trainees under apprenticeships an important way to address the lack of experienced qualified accountants?

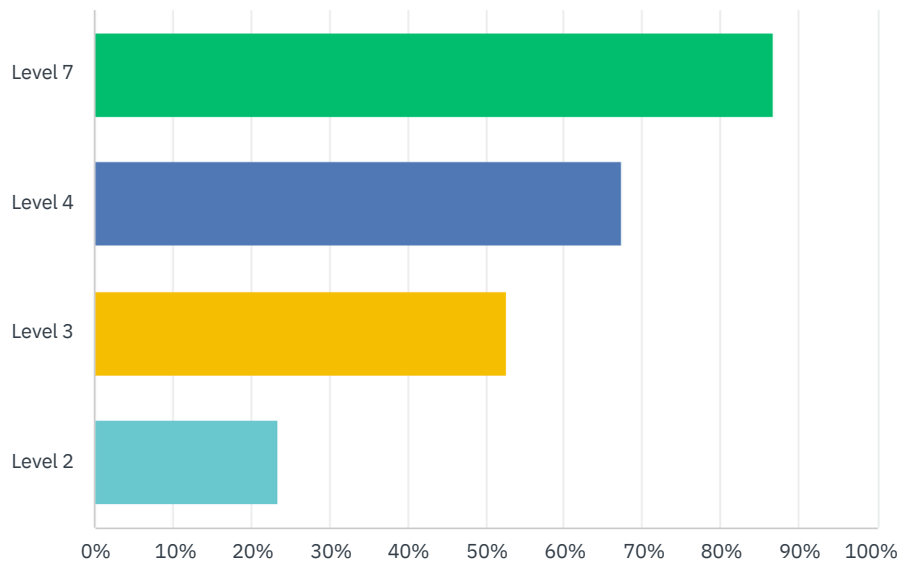
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	72.20%	148
Agree	21.95%	45
Neither agree nor disagree	4.88%	10
Disagree	0.49%	1
Strongly disagree	0.49%	1
TOTAL		205

Which accountancy apprenticeships does your organisation currently support at different levels? Please select all that apply

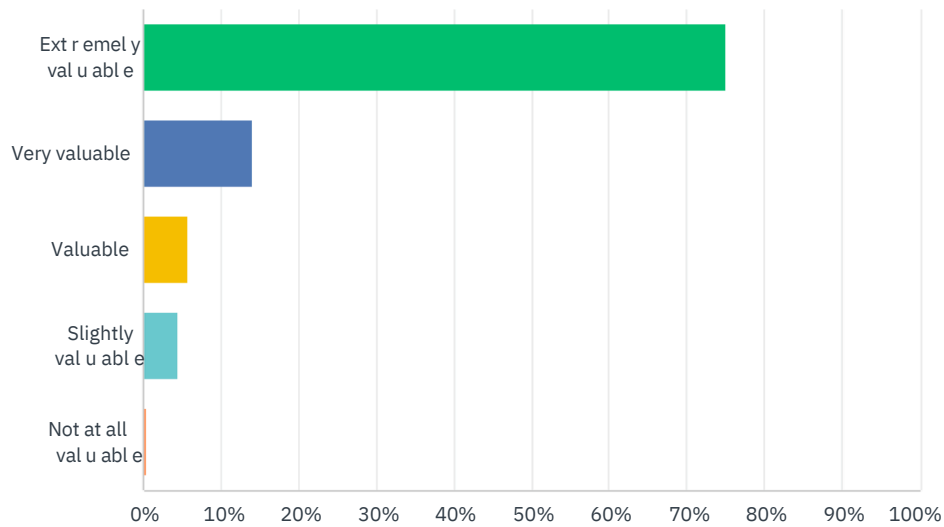
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ANSWER	CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Level 7		86.83%	178
Level 4		67.32%	138
Level 3		52.68%	108
Level 2		23.41%	48
Total Respondents: 205			

Generally, how valuable do you consider accountancy apprenticeships as a way to develop talent in your organisation?

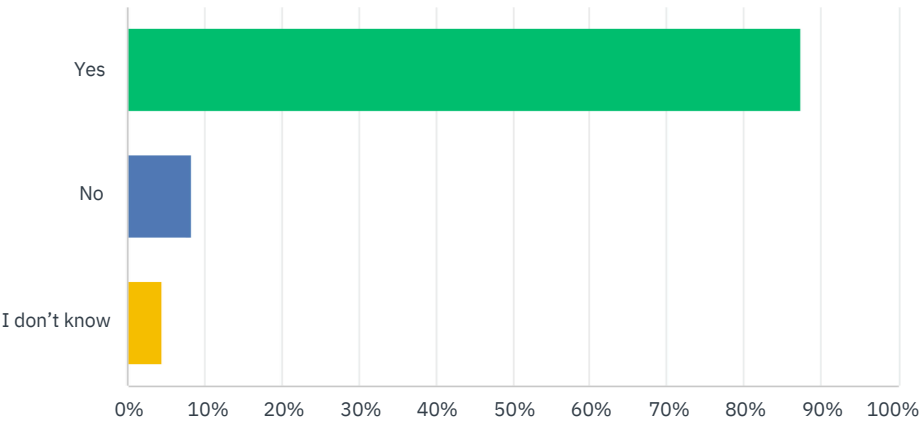
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely valuable	75.12%	154
Very valuable	14.15%	29
Valuable	5.85%	12
Slightly valuable	4.39%	9
Not at all valuable	0.49%	1
TOTAL		205

Generally speaking, when apprentices progress to higher levels, do you tend to recruit to backfill roles at a lower level?

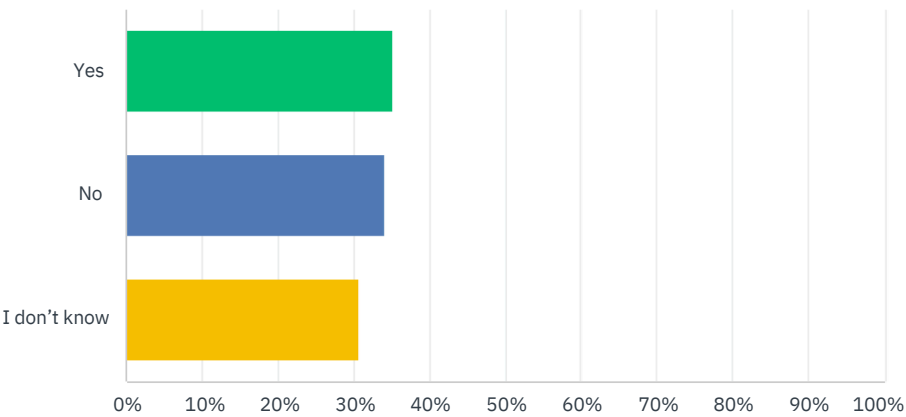
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		87.32%	179
No		8.29%	17
I don't know		4.39%	9
TOTAL			205

Currently apprenticeship programmes must last at least a year which has limited uptake of the Level 2 accountancy standard. The government are considering introducing shorter duration apprenticeships. If the Level 2 apprenticeship was available over a shorter period (for example 6 months) would your organisation be more likely to use them?

Answered: 205 Skipped: 27

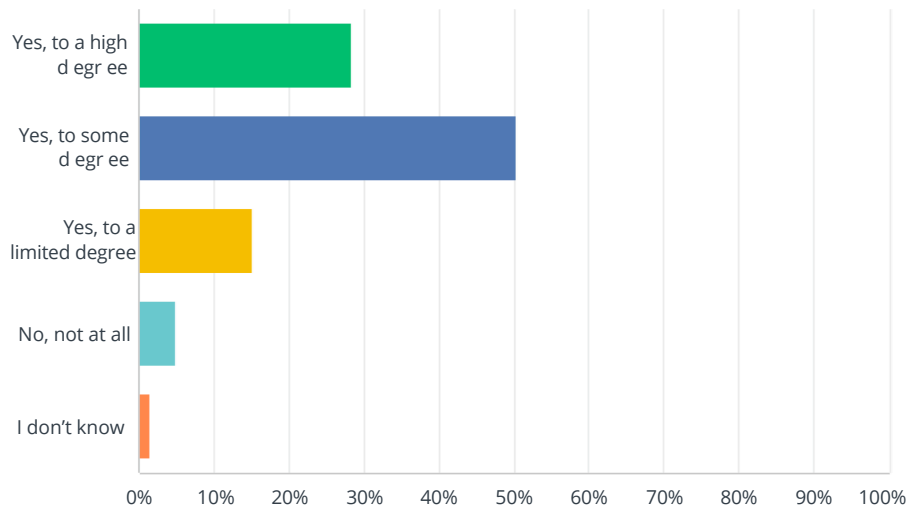


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.12%	72
No	34.15%	70
I don't know	30.73%	62
TOTAL		20

5

Generally, do you feel that your newly recruited trainees lack appropriate employability skills and behaviours for the workplace when they start?

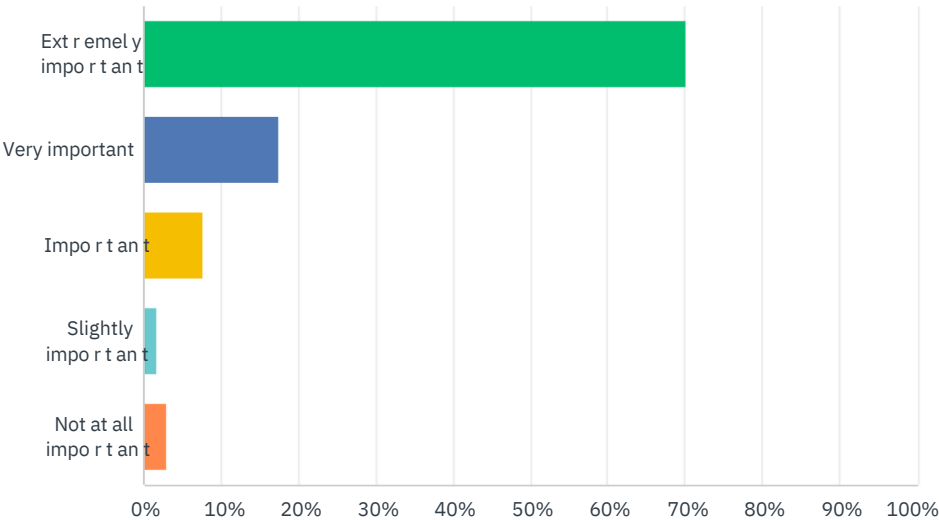
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, to a high degree	28.29%	58
Yes, to some degree	50.24%	103
Yes, to a limited degree	15.12%	31
No, not at all	4.88%	10
I don't know	1.46%	3
TOTAL		205

How important is the Level 7 apprenticeship as a way to develop talent in your organisation?

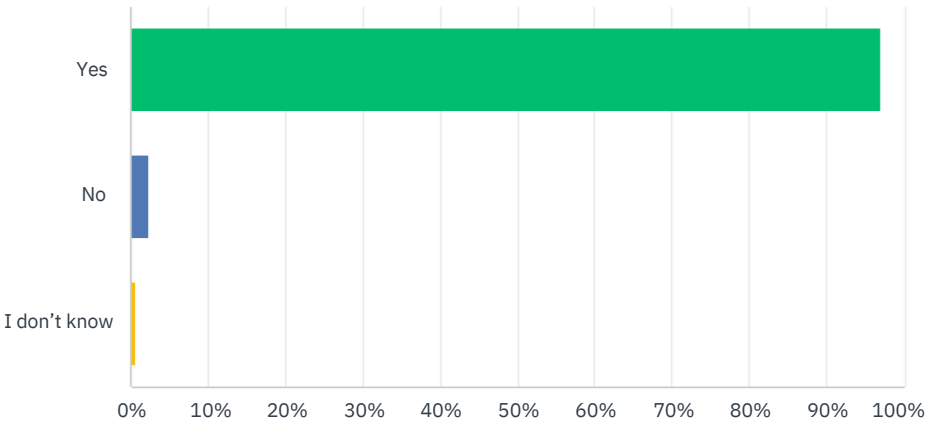
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely important	70.18%	120
Very important	17.54%	30
I m port ant	7.60%	13
Slightly important	1.75%	3
Not at all important	2.92%	5
TOTAL		171

Do you find that Level 7 apprentices add value in the workplace?

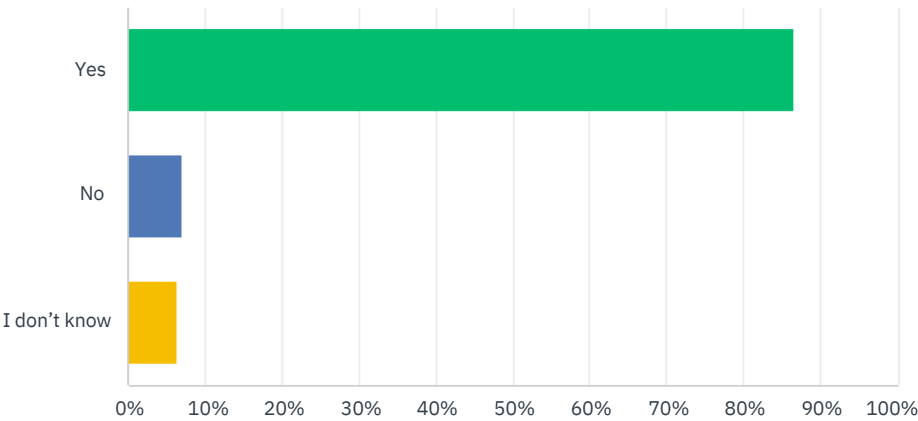
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ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes		97.08%	166
No		2.34%	4
I don't know		0.58%	1
TOTAL			171

Generally speaking, do you have ambitions for entry-level apprentices at Levels 2, 3 or 4 to ultimately progress to a Level 7 apprenticeship programme?

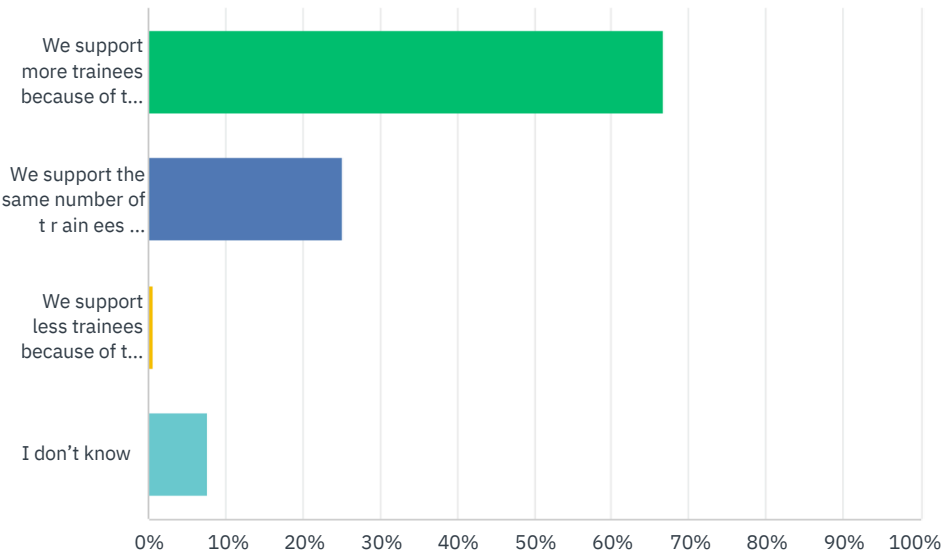
Answered: 171 Skipped: 61



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	86.55%	148
No	7.02%	12
I don't know	6.43%	11
TOTAL		171

How has the availability of the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship affected the volume of trainees you support?

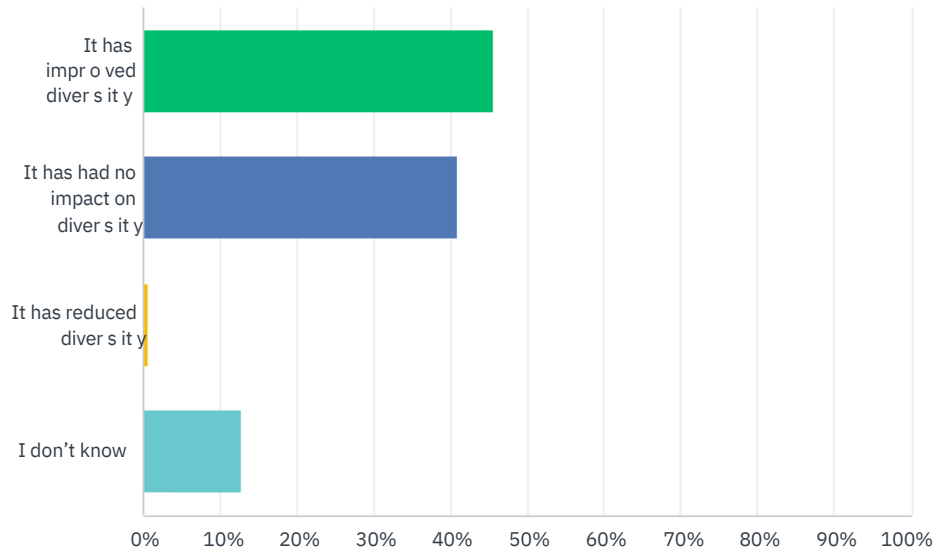
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
We support more trainees because of the Level 7 apprenticeship	66.67%	114
We support the same number of trainees regardless of the Level 7 apprenticeship	25.15%	43
We support less trainees because of the Level 7 apprenticeship	0.58%	1
I don't know	7.60%	13
TOTAL		171

How has the availability of the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship affected the diversity (age, social mobility, economic background, educational needs, etc.) of trainees you support?

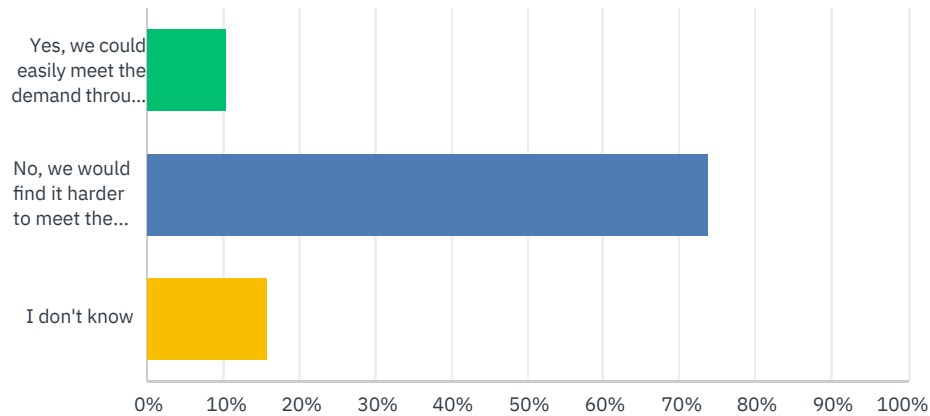
Answered: 171 Skipped: 61



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
It has improved diversity	45.61%	78
It has had no impact on diversity	40.94%	70
It has reduced diversity	0.58%	1
I don't know	12.87%	22
TOTAL		171

If the Level 7 accountancy apprenticeship were no longer available, would your organisation be able to provide enough roles to meet the demand for high-level accountancy skills?

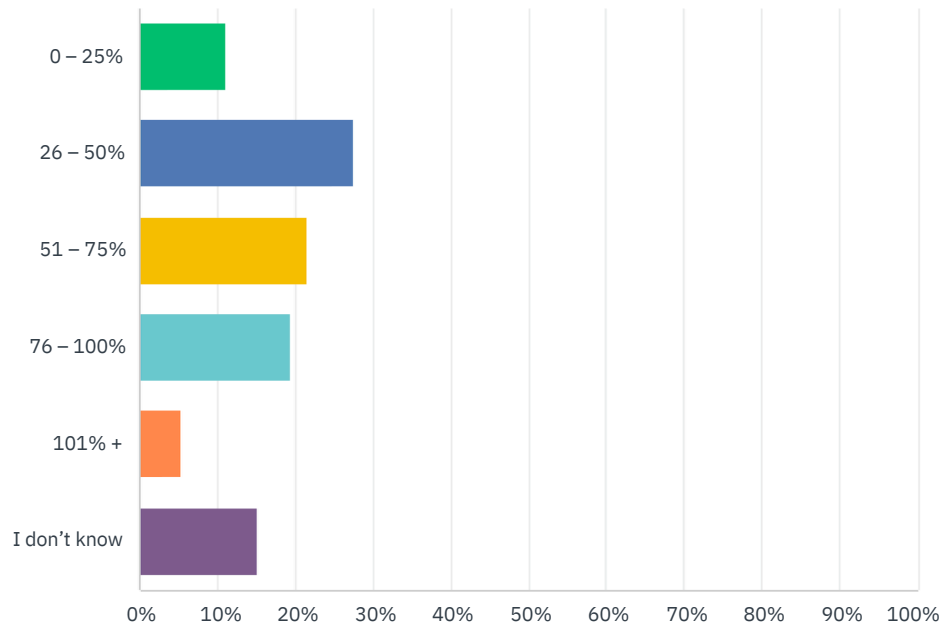
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, we could easily meet the demand through other means	10.53%	18
No, we would find it harder to meet the demand	73.68%	126
I don't know	15.79%	27
TOTAL		171

From starting a Level 7 apprenticeship through to completing it, approximately what uplift in salary would you expect an apprentice to achieve?

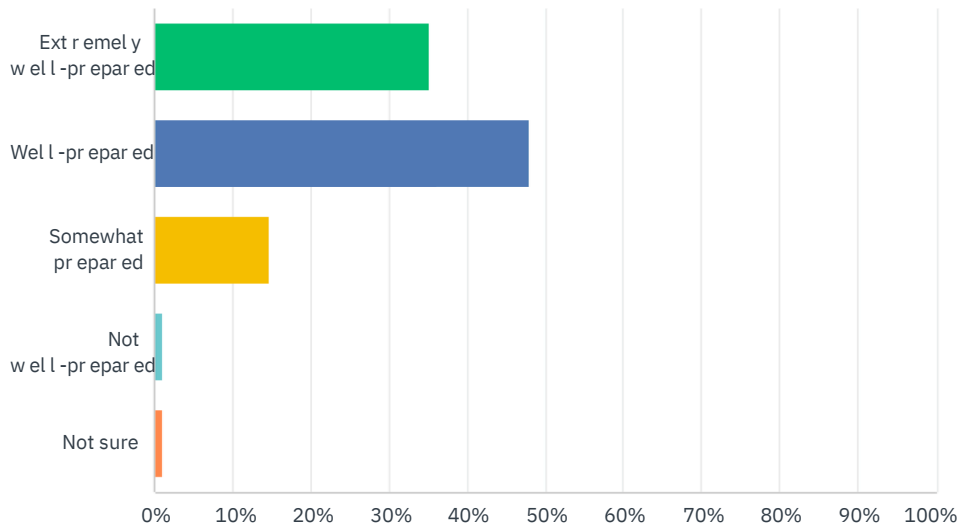
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0 – 25%	11.11%	19
26 – 50%	27.49%	47
51 – 75%	21.64%	37
76 – 100%	19.30%	33
101% +	5.26%	9
I don't know	15.20%	26
TOTAL		171

How well-prepared do you feel apprentices are for handling the responsibilities of higher-level roles after completing their Level 7 apprenticeship?

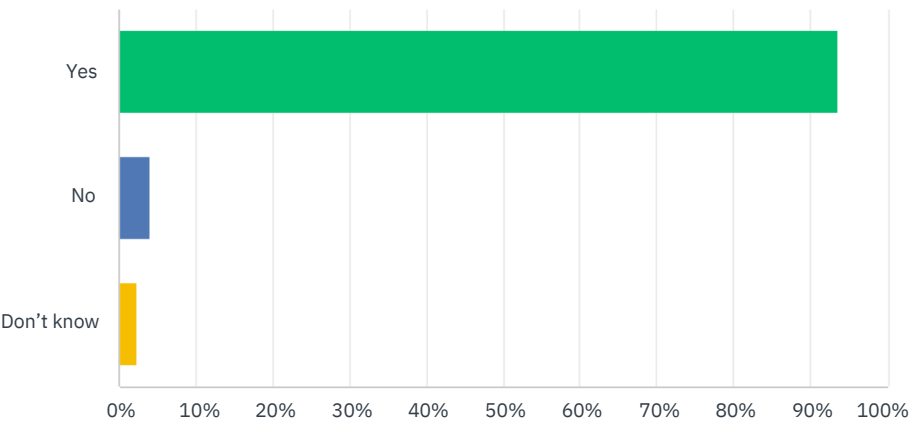
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ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely well-prepared	35.09%	60
Well-prepared	47.95%	82
Somewhat prepared	14.62%	25
Not well-prepared	1.17%	2
Not sure	1.17%	2
TOTAL		171

Would you recommend the Level 7 apprenticeship as a way for other organisations to develop accountancy talent?

Answered: 171 Skipped: 61



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	93.57%	160
No	4.09%	7
Don't know	2.34%	4
TOTAL		171

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