

### **Three in five do not pursue apprenticeships because they cannot find one, say UCAS and Sutton Trust**

Creating more high-quality apprenticeships across the UK could help meet soaring demand while tackling talent shortages, according to a new UCAS and Sutton Trust report released today (6 July).

The report, *'Where Next: What influences the choices of would-be apprentices?'*, published jointly by UCAS and the Sutton Trust, reveals the choices and barriers students face on the journey to an apprenticeship, such as when discovering, applying for and entering a role.

The new research finds a significant proportion of students do not pursue an apprenticeship because of issues in accessing opportunities. Three in five (61%) former applicants did not pursue an apprenticeship because they could not find one in their preferred location while one in three (35%) students previously interested in studying an apprenticeship said they were prevented from doing so due to a lack of roles in their desired career.

This comes amid a significant growth in demand for apprenticeships, with 40% of all UCAS undergraduate applicants now interested in an apprenticeship role – about 430,000 potential apprentices – with projections that interest [could surge to over half a million](#) by the end of the decade as part of the [Journey to a Million](#). While the Apprenticeship Levy has doubled the funding available for apprenticeships since its implementation in 2017, to £2.5 billion each year, 99.6 % of this was spent in 2021-22. This means the system is under significant pressure without enough apprenticeship opportunities to meet demand.

In February, [it was announced](#) that UCAS will improve how applicants access apprenticeships by putting opportunities side-by-side with traditional undergraduate degrees from this autumn, with the ability to apply through UCAS from 2024. UCAS' work with employers shows the demand from industry for apprentices remains enormous, and this service will enable employers to connect with the UK's talent pool of students and graduates.

The UCAS-Sutton Trust report also reveals how apprenticeship talent could be bolstered by improving awareness and aspiration among learners at a young age –

particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Previous UCAS research has shown how [one in three students](#) consider university as early as primary school, yet this new report finds this figure is less than 5% for apprenticeships – roughly one student in the average primary school class.

UCAS and the Sutton Trust set out how the entire apprenticeship journey could be enhanced – from achieving parity in the way young people explore and connect to apprenticeship opportunities, to expanding apprenticeship provision to ensure an increase in applicants does not result in an increase in ‘wasted talent’. This will also help to tackle shortages in occupations, such as medicine, and the wider skills gap across the UK.

**UCAS Chief Executive Clare Marchant said:**

“Apprenticeships will play a key role in unlocking the challenge presented by growing demand for higher education over the remainder of the decade. As demand increases, students will need to be fully aware of the full range of post-secondary options – including undergraduate study and apprenticeships – and understand that there are many pathways to that dream career.

“Our new report highlights two main areas of opportunity – increasing the supply of apprenticeships and helping students, particularly those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, access this pathway.

“Employers and sector bodies can work with UCAS to drive up supply as well as better awareness and accessibility of apprenticeship roles to ensure we don’t miss out on a significant economic opportunity.”

**Sir Peter Lampl, Founder and Chairman of the Sutton Trust and Chairman of the Education Endowment Foundation, said:**

“Higher and degree level apprenticeships enable young people to earn while they learn, come out with no debt, and develop skills that the marketplace wants.

“The big problem with apprenticeships is not the lack of demand by young people but the derisory level of supply which is available.

“The increased supply of apprenticeships has to be the focus of putting apprenticeships on the map so as to unleash their potential for low- and middle-income students.”

[Read the full report: 'Where Next: What influences the choices of would-be apprentices?'](#)

## **Ends**

For more information, please contact UCAS Press Office at [communications@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:communications@ucas.ac.uk) which is monitored regularly.

## **About UCAS**

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is an independent charity, and the UK's shared admissions service for higher education.

Our services support young people making post-18 choices, as well as mature learners, by providing information, advice, and guidance to inspire and facilitate educational progression to university, college or a degree apprenticeship.

UCAS supports nearly 1.5 million people to explore their next steps each year across the full range of post-secondary destinations. As part of this, we manage almost three million applications, from around 700,000 people each year, for full-time undergraduate courses at over 380 universities and colleges across the UK.

We also provide a wide range of research, consultancy and advisory services to schools, colleges, careers services, professional bodies, and employers, including apprenticeships.

We're a successful and fast-growing organisation, which helps hundreds of thousands of people every year. We're committed to delivering a first-class service to all our customers — they're at the heart of everything we do.

## **About the Sutton Trust**

Social mobility in Britain has stagnated. The opportunities open to a child from a disadvantaged background today are strongly linked to how much their parents earn. Since 1997 and under the leadership of our founder, Sir Peter Lampl, the Sutton Trust has worked to address this. We fight for social mobility from birth to the workplace so that every young person – no matter who their parents are, what school they go to, or where they live – has the chance to succeed in life.

- **Our programmes** support 10,000 young people each year, helping them to realise their aspirations.
- **Our agenda-setting research** identifies the root causes of low social mobility and promotes effective solutions through education and employment.
- **Our policy work** keeps social mobility at the top of the national agenda and affects systemic change by influencing decision makers.
- **Our alumni community** brings together everyone who has been through our programmes since 1997, so they can create connections, access support and inspire change.

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