

The apprenticeships programme: follow up Transcript

Title: Phil Hyde, Audit Manager, National Audit Office

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An apprenticeship is a job with training attached. Apprenticeships can be undertaken by new recruits or by existing employees, across a range of sectors and at different levels.

The Department for Education is responsible for the success of the apprenticeships programme in England.

Our main findings were that the number of apprenticeships starts in 2017/18 was 26% lower than the number in 2015/16. As a result, government is very unlikely to reach its targets of 3 million new starts by March 2020.

The programme is evolving towards better quality apprenticeships which is clearly a good thing. But government hasn't so far demonstrated clearly the impact of the programme on productivity, which is one of its key aims.

Evidence on the quality of training is mixed. In its most recent inspections, Ofsted rated a greater proportion of providers as 'outstanding' or 'good'. But in 2016/17, some 27% of providers fell below minimum standards in terms of the proportion of learners who successfully achieve their apprenticeships.

We also found that the average cost of training an apprentice under a new standard is around double what was originally expected. This means that when the programme converts entirely to the new standards the overall cost of the programme is likely to increase. There are things government could do about this, they could limit the number of new starts or reduce the amount of government funding for certain apprenticeships. But the available measures are likely to damage confidence in the programme.

Our recommendations are that the Department for Education and the Treasury should determine how spending should be treated, and how budgets should be set, to secure the financial viability of the programme.

We also recommend that the Department for Education spells out more clearly the impact that the programme is having on productivity, and what kind of impact would constitute success in the future.

For more information read our [report online](#).