

Patterns and workforce contribution of level 6 AHP apprenticeships in England: insights from national aggregated administrative data

Tanja K. Kleinhappel ¹, Sophie Willis ², Gupteswar Patel ², Ruth Sturdwick ³, Ruth Parker ², Tim Hayes ⁴, Yoann Galharet ¹, Helen McAlinney ⁵, Mark Gussy ¹, Julie Nightingale ⁶, Kate Grafton ²

¹ Lincoln Institute for Rural and Coastal Health, University of Lincoln.
² School of Health and Care Sciences, University of Lincoln.

³ School of Health, Sciences & Society, University of Suffolk.
⁴ School of Allied Health and Social Care, Anglia Ruskin University

⁵ South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board
⁶ Centre for Applied Health & Social Care Research, School of Health and Social Care, Sheffield Hallam University



11,362
apprenticeship starts, 2019/20 to 2024/25

≥ 80%
achievement rate across standards

94%
trained outside their home district

~ 17%
of apprentices reported a learning difficulty or disability

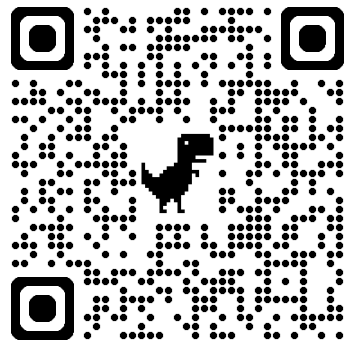
~ 21%
of new ODP registrants via apprenticeships

Background

Level 6 (degree-level) AHP apprenticeships are central to the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, intended to ease shortages, widen participation and strengthen local recruitment. As an alternative to traditional university pathways, they offer another route into practice. Yet national evidence on their scale, achievement and contribution to professional entry remains limited. This is exactly the evidence ICSs, employers and policymakers need for sustainable planning.

Methods

- National DfE apprenticeship data (2019/20 to 2024/25) provided ‘starts’, ‘achievements’ and demographics across 11 AHP standards, with Qualification Achievement Rate (QAR) data used for achievement insights [1].
- Spatial analysis mapped learner home and provider delivery locations at Local Authority District (LAD) level.
- Contribution to profession entry was estimated by aligning achievements with HCPC first-time registrant data (2022 to 2025) [2].
- An [interactive dashboard](#) was built to explore the data by standard, geography and time.



Scan to explore the dashboard

Learner profile

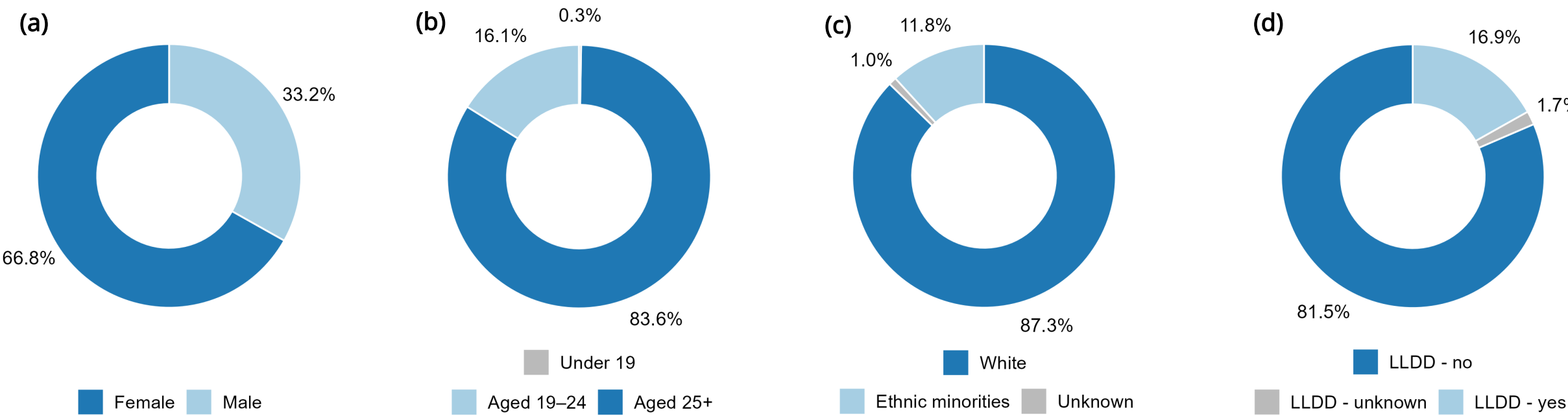


Figure 1. Distribution of apprenticeship starts by key demographic characteristics: (a) sex, (b) age, (c) ethnicity, and (d) learning difficulty or disability (LLDD) status, aggregated across all standards, 2019/20 to 2024/25.

Growth is concentrated in a few large professions

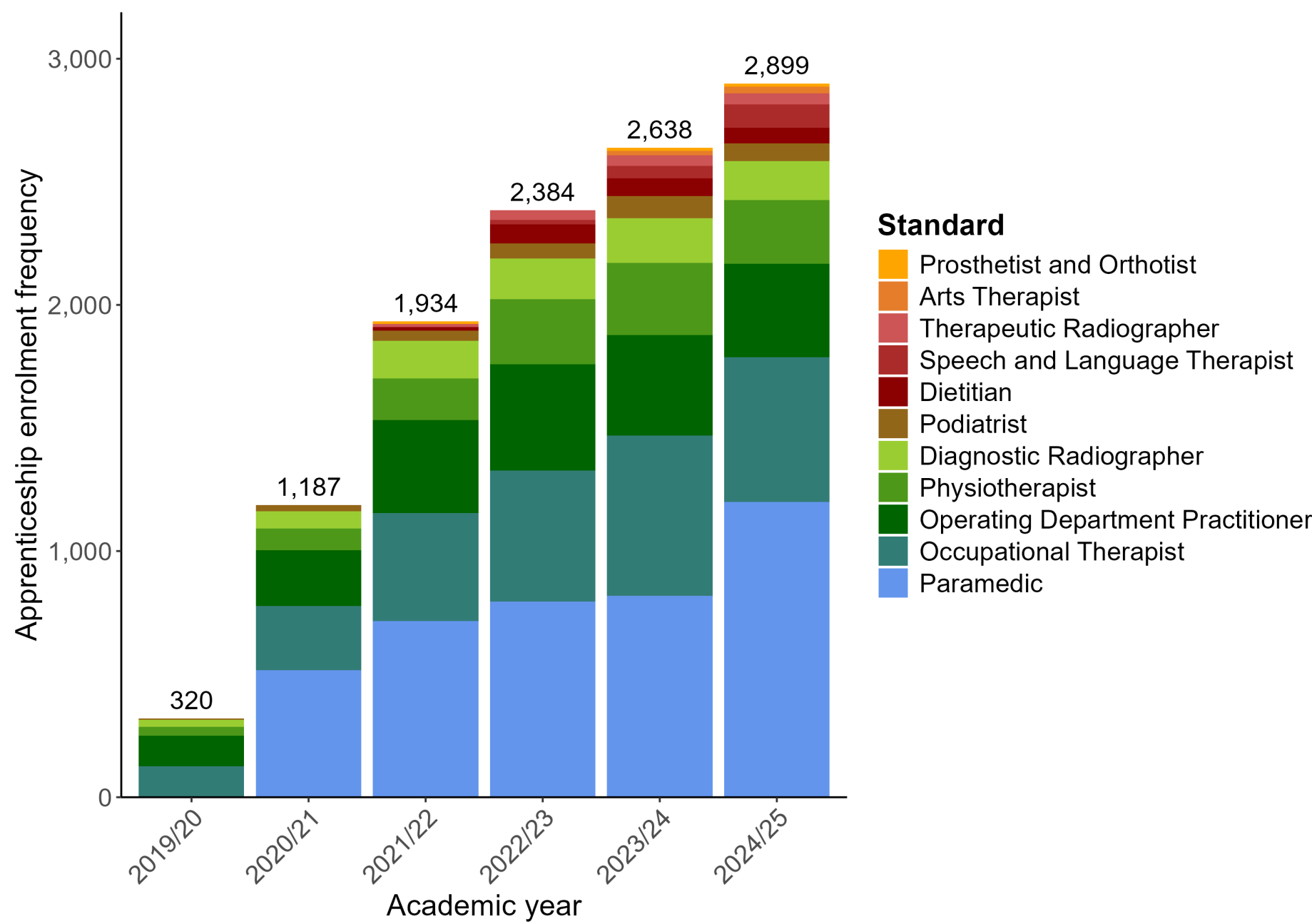


Figure 2. Apprenticeship starts by standard and academic year, England, 2019/20 to 2024/25.

Recruitment is national, but 94% train out of area

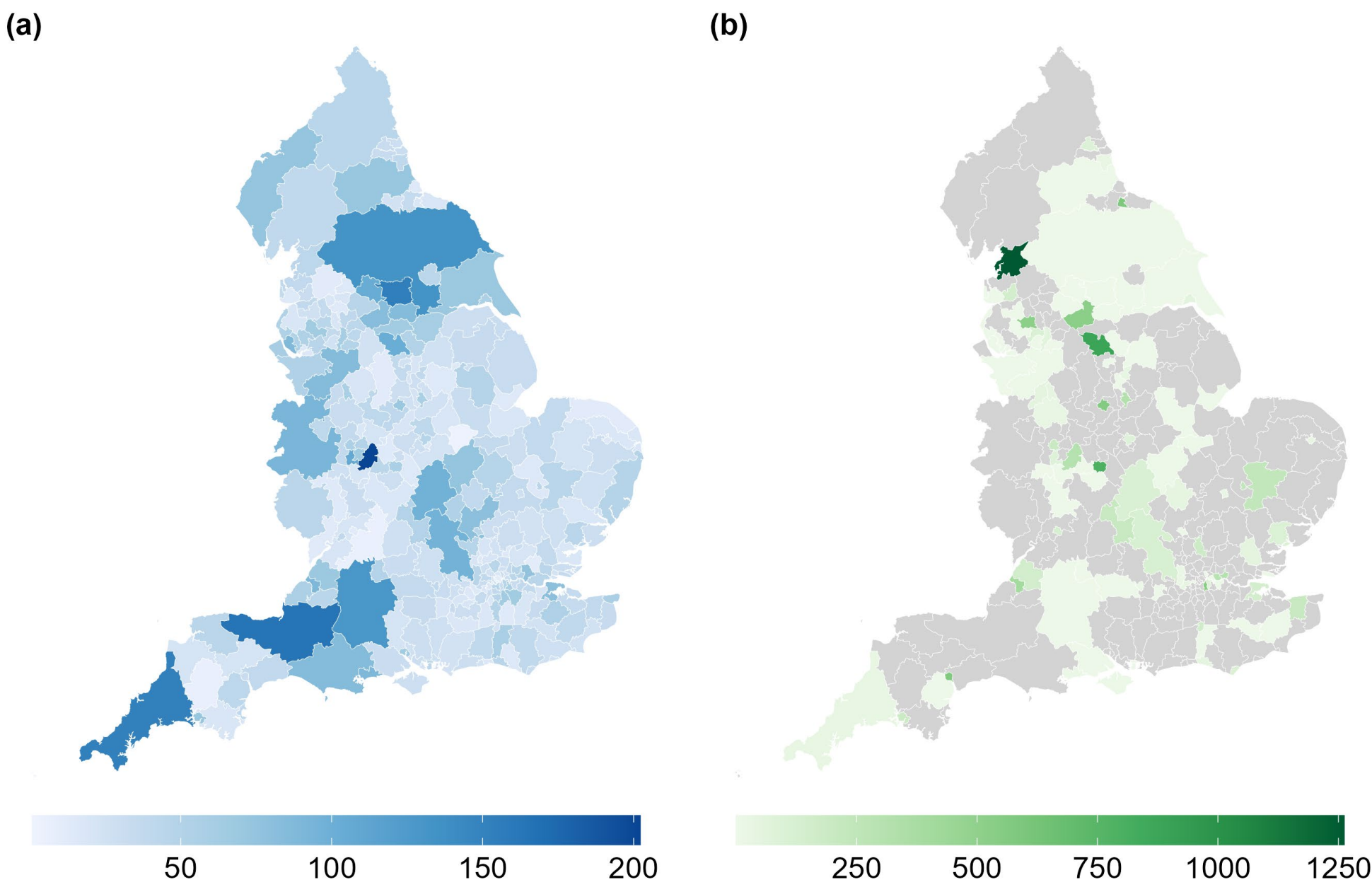


Figure 3. Apprenticeship starts by (a) learner home LAD and by (b) delivery (provider) LAD, England, 2019/20 to 2024/25.

HCPC: From one in five new registrants to fewer than one in fifty

Profession	HCPC first-time registrants (n)	Apprenticeship achievements (n)	Estimated contribution (%)
Diagnostic Radiographers	5,945	301	5.1
Dietitians	2,230	38	1.7
Occupational Therapists	8,385	700	8.4
Operating Department Practitioners	3,165	659	20.8
Paramedics	11,480	1,614	14.1
Physiotherapists	13,765	244	1.8
Podiatrists and Chiropodists	1,070	64	6.0
Prosthetists and Orthotists	130	10	7.7
Therapeutic Radiographers	1,130	13	1.2

Table 1. Total estimated contribution of apprenticeship achievers to HCPC first-time registrants by profession, 2022 to 2025

Conclusions

- Growing, high-completion route, but uneven across professions.
- 94% train out of area due to a lack of local programmes, straining local pipeline planning for ICSs and employers.
- Widening participation, with mature entrants and high disability disclosure.
- New national estimates, plus an interactive dashboard for local planning.

References

- Department for Education. (2025). Apprenticeships and traineeships statistics: 2024-25. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships/2024-25>
- Health and Care Professions Council. (2025). HCPC first-time registrant dataset. <https://www.hcpc-uk.org/data/the-register/register-over-time-by-characteristics/>