

ISBL Apprenticeship Research

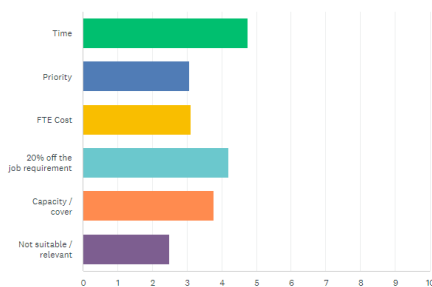
According to government statistics, the number of employees starting apprenticeships in 2022/23 fell by 4.6 per cent compared to the previous year.¹ In conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE), ISBL has recently carried out a survey to find out more about the current apprenticeships available for school business professionals (SBPs), the key barriers to undertaking apprenticeships, and the opportunities that could be further developed to meet employer needs across the sector.

Of the 176 respondents surveyed, the majority identified that they have access to the apprenticeship funding levy (73 per cent) and would consider doing an apprenticeship (71 per cent) or offering this as a development opportunity to staff (88 per cent). So why are more schools and trusts not offering apprenticeship opportunities to staff, or are these opportunities not being utilised by SBPs?

The main barriers to undertaking apprenticeships that were identified in our survey were: (i) time; (ii) the 20 per cent off-the-job requirement, and (iii) capacity/cover, for both personally doing an apprenticeship and covering staff capacity while they undertook one.

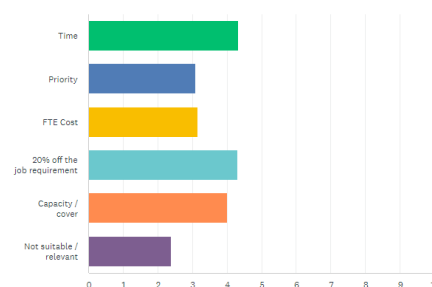
What is the main barrier to you currently doing an apprenticeship? Please rank below (1 being biggest barrier / 6 being the least)

Answered: 172 Skipped: 4



What is the main barrier to you offering an apprenticeship to staff? Please rank below (1 being biggest barrier / 6 being the least)

Answered: 173 Skipped: 3



If schools and trusts want to retain and develop staff, more needs to be done to overcome these barriers. The recent Hays (2023) salary and recruitment trends report² identified that a lack of career progression or career development opportunities are leading causes of employee movement within the education sector. A lack of future development opportunities, in particular, was the main reason given why employees want to leave their current role, after salary. Of significant concern was the fact that the Hays survey identified that over half of employees still say their employer does not discuss their career progression plans with them, either on a termly or an annual basis (see page 27 of the Hays report for more information).

How to overcome these barriers

1. Firstly, SBPs need to have regular performance management conversations with their line managers. As part of the appraisal process, professional development opportunities should be discussed to help support areas for development or meet future priorities. Alongside traditional qualifications, apprenticeship options should be considered. Information on a number of apprenticeship options for SBPs is available to view on the ISBL website: <https://www.isbl.org.uk/apprenticeships>
2. Schools and trusts need to be creating greater capacity to allow SBPs to undertake training and qualifications. In the Hays (2023) survey, only 23 per cent of employers offer hybrid working to business and support staff, yet the number-one factor identified by employees when considering a new role is work-life balance (including flexible working). If schools and trusts can create opportunities to allow SBPs to work more flexibly, including supporting the 20% per cent off-the-job requirement as part of an apprenticeship, staff retention is far more likely to increase.
3. Apprenticeship provision for SBPs needs to be re-evaluated. In the ISBL survey, it was identified that respondents would like to see a mix of levels available from level 3 to level 7 (60 per cent), with both generalist and specialist qualifications available (48 per cent and 52 per cent

respectively) and, in particular, a contextualised finance apprenticeship route (66 per cent). ISBL and DfE will be investigating ways that these findings can be taken forward to increase apprenticeship uptake across the sector and help to reduce the barriers currently preventing these from being undertaken.

Apprenticeships are available at all different levels, from new entrants through to master's degree level. Undertaking an apprenticeship has many benefits for employers – funding is available through the apprenticeship levy to either fully or partially pay for the qualification, the learning is specific and adapted to the needs of the organisation, with many now contextualised for education, and ultimately employers can expand and upskill their workforce.

Footnotes:

¹Gov.UK (2023). Apprenticeships and traineeships. [Online] Available from: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/apprenticeships-and-traineeships>

²Hays plc. (2023). Salary and Recruitment Trends 2023. www.hays.co.uk/salary-guide/education