

Minister for Employability and Training

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Dear James

Thank you for your letter of 29 March, following the Education and Skills Committee session on 14 March, where I provided evidence on the progress of the Scottish Government's Developing the Young Workforce programme and other related matters. My response covers the issues as they are raised in your letter, which I hope is helpful.

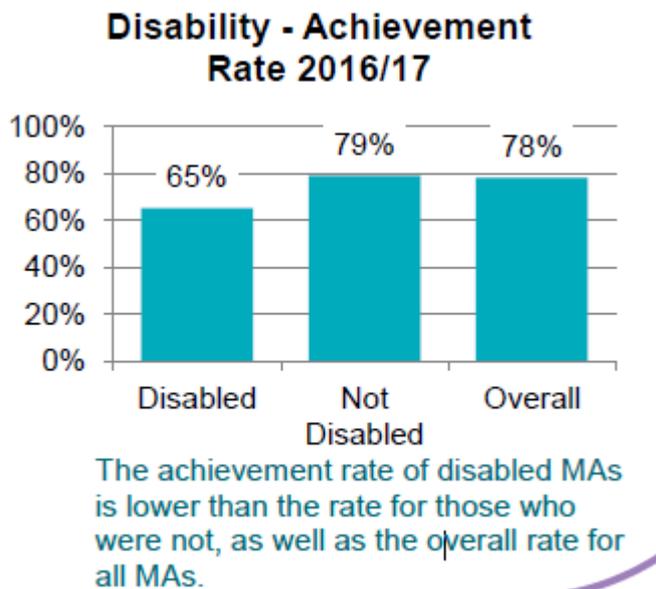
Modern Apprenticeships

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) categorises apprentices according to whether they self-identify as having an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty. The most recent, 2017/18, published quarterly statistics (published on 13 February 2018) show that, as at 29 December 2017, there were 1,946 Modern Apprenticeship starts who self-identified as having an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty. This equates to 10.9% of all known Modern Apprenticeship starts. This reflects an increasing trajectory over recent years: an increase from 8.6% in 2016/17 and 3.9% in 2015/16. The increase from 2015/16 to 2016/17 is a result of improved data collection from SDS. The latest increase, 2016/17 to December 2017 shows a more accurate reflection of progress in this area. The figures for the entire 2017/18 period will be issued when this data becomes available.

These figures highlight the improvements that have been made in the self-reporting of a disability, in part a result of the support that SDS has given to providers. They also reflect the progress made by SDS with the implementation of its Equalities Action Plan.

Additionally, in April 2017, we introduced an enhanced contribution rate to provide young disabled people and those with experience of care up to the age of 29, with the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding for their chosen Frameworks.

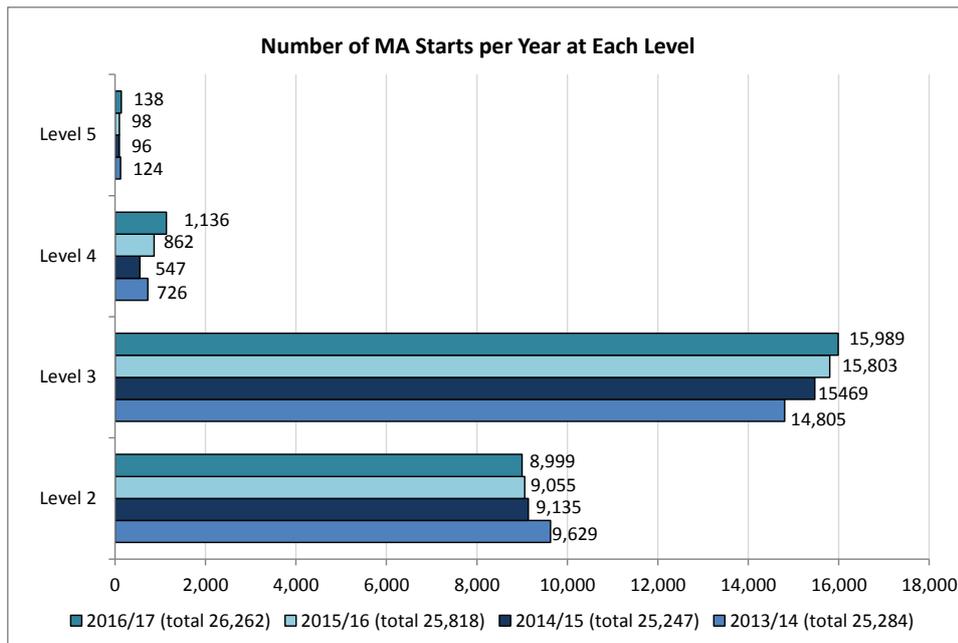
I recognise, however, that there is still work to do. The table below shows the achievement rate of Modern Apprentices with a reported disability compared to those registered as non-disabled.



An increasing numbers of disabled people take-up an apprenticeship, but we must do more to increase that number further still. We will work with SDS and employers to do more to enable disabled people to better sustain and achieve their apprenticeship.

The table below provides the detail of the most recent MA starts. You will note that the 2016/17 figure of 8,999 level 2 MA starts is a slight decrease from 9,055 in 2015/16. However, the overall number of MA starts **increased by 978** on the baseline figure. This reflects the increasing priority placed on providing more opportunities at higher skill levels. You will also see from the table that the number of people taking-up MAs at level 3 continues to increase.

The changes in proportion of MA starts at Level 2, Level 3 and above, reflect our desire to ensure that more starts are focussed on the latter, whilst still recognising the value of the former. The target is for 20,000 out of a total of 30,000 MA starts to be at this level by 2021, two thirds of the overall total.



Industry influence

Evidence from Education Scotland, tells us that there is variation in the engagement of schools with industry. This was a key finding of Sir Ian Wood's Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce and an important factor of the Developing Young Workforce (DYW) programme.

This variation reflects the history of the school, its geography, demography and local and regional labour market conditions. In some schools and authorities, there is evidence of strategic level engagement with employers. This can involve schools using an understanding of the SDS Regional Skills Assessments to inform curriculum choices as part of the planning of progression pathways with their local college within a region. Many schools actively involve SDS careers staff as part of their School Partnership Agreement (SPA) to help learners develop their career management skills (CMS) and to provide a focus on appropriate career pathways. In the vast majority of schools there is evidence of employer engagement involving one-off career fairs and work experience opportunities.

The introduction of industry recognised qualifications, such as the new Foundation Apprenticeship, which is now available within schools across all local authorities, is one of our key DYW programme commitments and is designed to increase the employer presence and industry influence within schools.

This is also why we established the employer-led DYW Regional groups so that more strategic partnerships can develop between schools and employers and ensure a greater breadth of opportunities are available to all school pupils.

The DYW regional groups build on, and work alongside, the existing SDS school partnership agreements. At the outset, the groups have increased the number of employer engagements within schools. This is in part through the roll out of the

online digital platform, [Marketplace](#) - a digital meeting place for businesses and education to engage in planned activity and allow businesses to become more involved the school curriculum and school experience. Over 300 employers have registered with Marketplace since its launch in 2017.

Building on this initial engagement, the groups aim to support cultural change in how employers engage with education, including:

- Supporting more young people into employment;
- Producing a broader range of employment opportunities for young people in school;
- Enabling permanent behavioral change among the employer and education communities; and
- Creating a sustainable industry-led infrastructure.

These groups are cohered nationally by the DYW National Group, chaired by Rob Woodward.

We believe this network, although still evolving, is a key underpinning of sustainable industry-education partnerships. In recognising the importance of these partnerships, the Scottish Government will continue to offer financial support to the network until 2021, beyond the initial commitment made to support each group financially for a three year period.

In acknowledging the progress made since DYW commenced, we are mindful of the significant challenges that remain, particularly for our most disadvantaged learners. Long term change will only come from fully embedding the DYW approach within and across the wider education system, alongside improved employer engagement. This will be a key focus of our work for the remainder of the implementation of this important programme and will sit alongside the conclusions of our Learner Journey Review, once published.

I have responded to the additional questions provided in the attached annex. I hope you find this information useful.

JAMIE HEPBURN