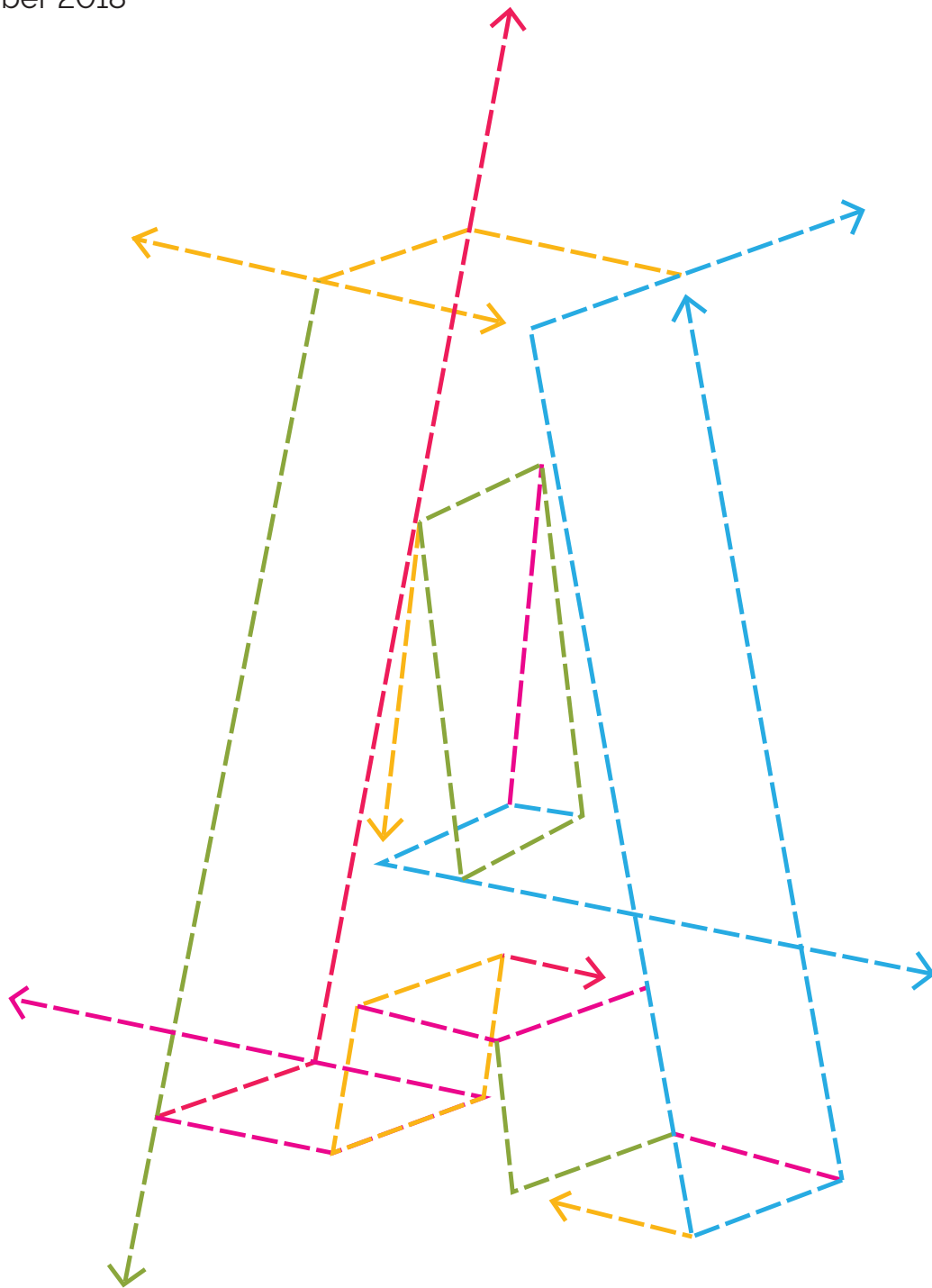




## Review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship

November 2018



# Irish apprenticeship system in 2018



**85%**

MEN UNDER 25 YEARS



**5,500+**

EMPLOYERS

**2%**

WOMEN



**14,953**

APPRENTICES



**2.8%**

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



## Five areas for action 2018–2020

**1** Increase participation in apprenticeship by diverse groups

**2** Launch an online apprenticeship 'jobs market' to increase visibility of opportunities for all potential apprentices

**3** Create new pathways via pre-apprenticeship courses around the country

**4** Promote the bursary incentive with employers

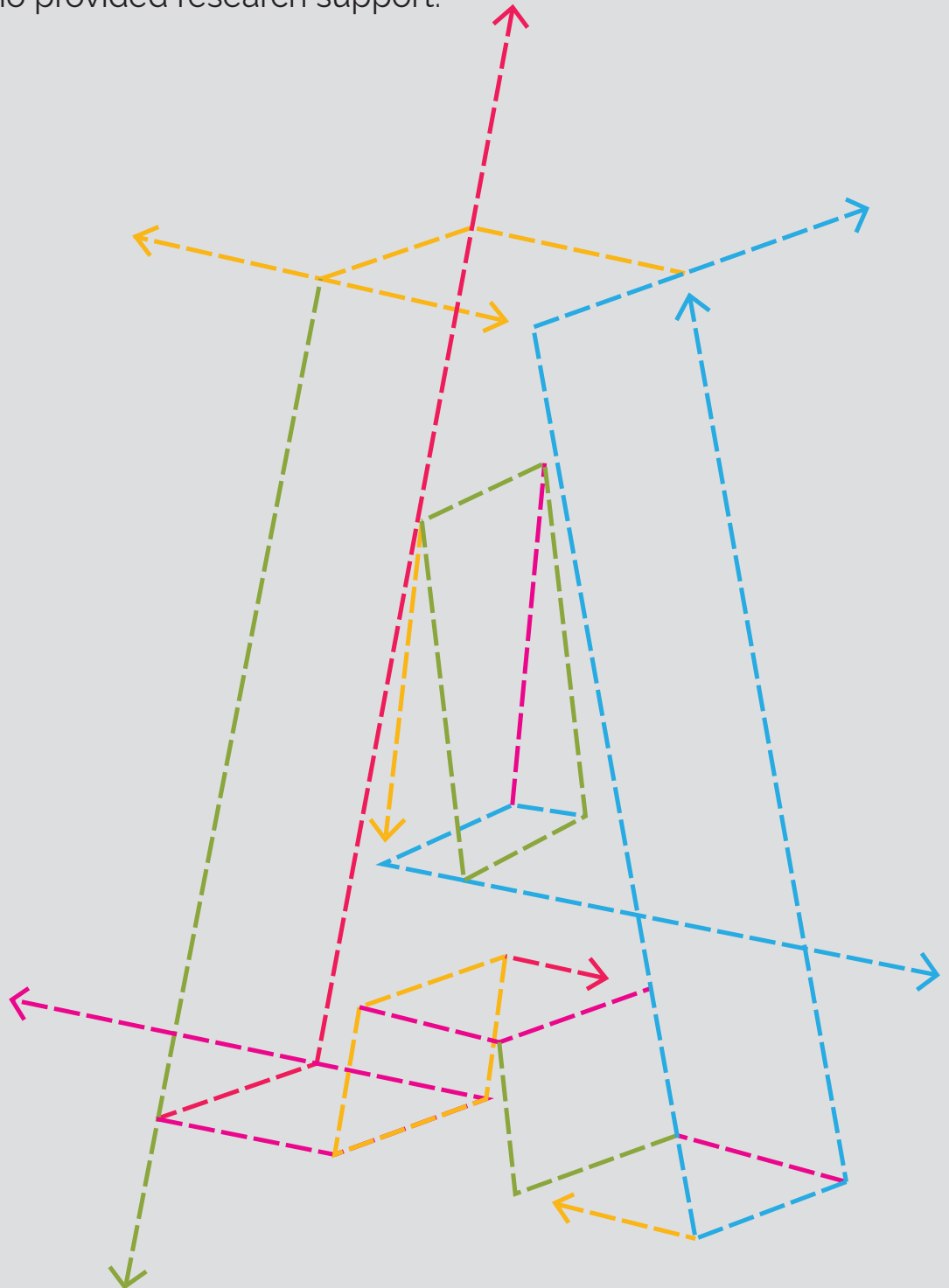
**5** Promote diverse pathways to participation in apprenticeship in the 2018-2020 Generation Apprenticeship campaign

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# Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Apprenticeship Council and SOLAS, our thanks to over 100 people who participated in this review of pathways to participation in apprenticeship, and to Elizabeth McSkeane who provided research support.



# 1 Introduction and background to the review

*"Perceptions of apprenticeship among potential apprentices, their families, employers and the wider community need to be quite radically transformed here in Ireland. We need this if apprenticeship is going to become part of the mainstream of our education and training system, an option considered by all learners, regardless of gender, age or background, as a way of establishing and sustaining their chosen career."*

*Quote from review participant, June 2018*

In 2018, Irish apprentices are almost exclusively (85%) young men under 25 years of age. Of 14,953 apprentices completing training in October 2018, just 332 or 2% were women. People with disabilities are also under-represented, comprising 423 or 2.8% of the apprentice population. There are no nationally-collected data on the socio-economic or ethnic background of Irish apprentices.

Following a period of boom and bust in apprenticeship over the past 10 years which mirrored the performance of the Irish economy, apprentice numbers are now growing steadily year-on-year. In 2006 there were 8,306 apprentice registrations, these fell to 1,204 in 2010. In 2018, however, the number of registrations is due to exceed 5,000, growing further in 2019 and 2020.

The growth of apprenticeship numbers is underpinned by a national policy to establish apprenticeship as a major route to skills development in Ireland. The policy followed a 2013 *Review of Apprenticeship Training in Ireland* and was further articulated in 2016 in an *Action Plan to Expand Apprenticeship and Traineeship 2016-2020*. Apprenticeship is proven as an effective way to build the pipeline of talent within industries, and the Irish apprenticeship system has a strong track record in this regard. The Irish economy is growing again, with many industries reporting either current or future shortages of skilled workers. The Government has committed to investing significantly in the expansion of apprenticeship to respond to this need.

By 2020, it is planned that there will be 9,000 registrations onto apprenticeship programmes annually, with 31,000 apprentices accessing this route in the five-year period 2016-2020. Detailed annual targets and supporting actions are set out in the *Action Plan 2016-2020*. In addition to increasing the numbers of apprentices, the number of apprenticeship programmes on offer will expand from 25 to up to 78, into new industry areas and leading to awards from Levels 5 to Level 10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. In 2018, €120m has been allocated by

the State to support apprenticeship provision, and this figure is set to increase year-on-year.

Since 2016, seventeen new apprenticeships have been introduced in industry areas that include financial services; ICT; hospitality; logistics; auctioneering; biopharma and engineering (as of October 2018). These new programmes supplement 25 craft-based apprenticeships in the areas of construction, motor, engineering, and electrical, some of which have been available since the 1970s and others since the 1990s. Apprenticeship in Ireland is underpinned by the 1967 Industrial Training Act which provides a legislative framework, responsibilities and protections for apprentices, employers and training providers. An apprenticeship provides structured on- and off-the-job training of between two and four years duration, of which at least 50% comprises training in the workplace. Apprentices have the status of contracted employees and employers must be formally approved to train apprentices.

Given the scale of the demand and expansion envisaged and the associated investment by the State, it is considered crucial that skills development through apprenticeship becomes a realistic, valued option for the widest possible cohort of young and older citizens in Ireland. Without achieving greater diversity in the apprentice population there is a risk that the ambition for apprenticeship will not be realised, with negative consequences for our economy and society. Apprenticeship needs to be a visible and accessible option for those disadvantaged by social or economic circumstances, women, and people with disabilities.

With reference to all of the above considerations, and the current profile of Irish apprentices, the 2016-2020 *Action Plan* included a commitment to review pathways to participation in apprenticeship in Ireland. The review was carried out during Q1-Q2 2018. This document presents the findings from the review and next steps to support and promote maximum diversity in the Irish apprentice population as it grows to 2020 and beyond.

## Review methodology

Four principal methods were used to complete the review. These were:

- Analysis of the available quantitative data gathered nationally, primarily held in the statutory register of apprentices and associated database held by SOLAS
- A three-month research exercise. The terms of reference were to review the available literature on participation in apprenticeship nationally and internationally; examine patterns of participation in other countries; and identify useful examples of policy and practice which aim to remove barriers to diverse participation.
- A survey and follow-up interviews with a cohort of 48 guidance counsellors at second level and in further education and training and a small group of parents (4) via the National Parents Council.
- Consultation with key stakeholders, including the Apprenticeship Council; Managers of Regional Skills Fora and over 100 people who attended structured meetings, two of which were in a 'Café Dialogue' format and one plenary meeting at which emerging findings from the research exercise were presented.

## Structure of the document

This document is structured into three sections

Following the introduction and background in Section 1, Section 2 describes the current profile of Irish apprentices with reference to the available data and stakeholder feedback, the practical challenges to participation identified, and good examples of practice.

Section 3 draws on the findings from the review to set out five areas for action in the period 2018-2020.

## 2 Irish apprentices in 2018 – profile and practice

As set out in the introduction to this document, comprehensive national data are available on the age and gender of the Irish apprentice population, recorded as part of the statutory registration of apprentices. Some information is also available on apprentices with a disability, based on a self-declaration at the time of registration. There are no systematic data collected on the socio-economic or ethnic background of apprentices. Information is collected at registration on the education qualifications of apprentices; data on the apprentice population since 2014 indicate that 73% have a Leaving Certificate as their highest level of previous education, while 23% have a Junior Certificate. 2% stated primary level as their highest level of previous education and will likely have received recognition of prior experience and learning in order to become apprentices. The remaining 2% had a mix of other qualifications which included the UK GCSEs, A Levels and third level education. Given the established link in general between socio-economic and ethnic background and educational participation and attainment, the terms of reference of the review included consideration of socio-economic and ethnic factors in so far as was possible through the research exercise and in consultation with key stakeholders.

In this section of the document, the analysis and findings from the review with regard to the socio-economic and ethnic background of apprentices are presented, followed by those for female apprentices and for apprentices with disabilities.

### Socio-economic and ethnic background of Irish apprentices

The socio-economic and ethnic background of Irish apprentices was discussed in each of the three consultation sessions with stakeholders. Notwithstanding the lack of nationally-collected data, contributors noted that, in their experience, while apprentices are a mixed group there a significant minority who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Both employers and education and training providers cited experience of apprentices who were heavily reliant on their apprentice salary, particular financial challenges experienced when they were required to live away from home while doing some of their off-the-job training, and in some cases, lower levels of previous educational attainment which seemed to be linked to a poor school experience or their family circumstances. It was also noted by some participants that they had experience of apprentices dropping out of their training due to socio-economic factors, such as lack of sufficient finance, home

circumstances, and physical or mental health difficulties.

Regarding apprentices from ethnic minorities, there were few known cases of migrant apprentices cited, although it was noted that this would likely change over the coming years as more young people from migrant backgrounds exit the school system. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there were no instances recorded of language challenges with migrant apprentices; it was noted that adequate language skills would be a prerequisite for employers before they decided to employ an apprentice. Review participants commended, however, the commitment to inclusion of people from ethnic minorities in national education and training provision as part of the *2017 Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future*.

The participation of members of the Irish Traveller community in apprenticeship was also discussed, however there were no examples cited by review participants of apprentices with a Traveller background. The commitments in the 2017-2020 *National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy* were noted, and a proposal that additional practical steps would be taken to promote and open up apprenticeship opportunities for members of the Traveller community.

The research exercise for the review did not uncover any significant studies dealing with participation in apprenticeship in Ireland on socio-economic or ethnic grounds. Internationally, the differing models and status of apprenticeships mean that examples of policy and practice are not always directly comparable. For example, routes to apprenticeship in countries such as Germany, Austria and Switzerland begin within the second level system, and in these countries, apprenticeship has traditionally had a higher status than has been the case in Ireland. Pathways to apprenticeships in these countries, and associated barriers arising, are likely, as a result, to be quite different to this country. A recently adopted (March 2018) EU Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships has a criterion, however, emphasising the importance of career guidance, mentoring and learning support for apprentices both before and during their apprenticeship.

In the UK and in Australia, the research evidence suggests that perspectives on apprenticeship have traditionally been broadly similar to those in this country. Apprenticeship is a post-secondary option, alongside progression to academic higher education, the latter of which dominates the post-secondary landscape. Similar to Ireland, over the past five years new policies are being implemented in both the UK and

Australia to grow apprenticeship as a major route to skills development and careers. As the policies in these countries have been implemented there have been similar concerns documented about who accesses apprenticeship and the impact of exclusion of particular groups. In the UK for example, the Learning and Work Institute has noted the potential of investment in apprenticeship for the country's economy and society but has also warned that the impact of groups disadvantaged by socio-economic circumstances who do not access apprenticeship opportunities 'reinforces inequality, limits opportunity and limits employers' pool of talent' (Learning and Work Institute, 2017, p.4). In Australia, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research has pointed out the key role of apprenticeship in meeting twenty-first century skills needs such as Industry 4.0 and the need to ensure that the widest possible pool of young and older people are considering this route to their careers (Loveder, 2017).

As the UK has scaled up apprenticeship provision over the past two years a range of steps have been taken to support wider participation in apprenticeship. The UK Department of Education and Education and Skills Funding Agency has introduced financial and other supports for apprentices disadvantaged by social and economic circumstances and for employers and training providers who take on such apprentices. From this August, young apprentices aged 16-24 years who have been in the UK Local Authority care system are receiving a once-off bursary of £1,000 to help them transition into work and their apprenticeship. There are additional Government supports for employers and training providers of apprentices who have a Local Authority Education, Health and Care Plan. Such Plans are developed for young people from birth up to 25 years who have particular education needs.

In Australia, new pre-apprenticeship options have been developed in order to promote wider access to apprenticeship, in particular through a scheme that enables young people to start an apprenticeship while in their final year of school. The apprenticeship training is completed on a part-time basis with both on- and off-the-job elements and leads to a formal award. On exiting from school, the apprentice can continue with the apprenticeship or progress to higher education.

### **Practical challenges for Irish apprentices disadvantaged by socio-economic and ethnic circumstances**

Participants in the review spoke in some detail of their experience of particular socio-economic challenges for apprentices. These included the impact of poverty, of homelessness, of generational unemployment, of

structural and attitudinal barriers, of geography and the lack of transport options in rural areas of Ireland, and of the lack of contacts and networks which can be so crucial to securing an apprenticeship with an employer. Examples were cited of the tendency for apprentices to follow fathers, uncles and other family members into apprenticeship, in some cases the family business, and the challenge for young people lacking such contacts to make the necessary connections with employers. It was noted that this particular challenge affects males as well as females, disadvantaging young men and women for whom an apprenticeship could be the stepping stone to transformed life and career prospects.

A lack of information and guidance was also believed to disadvantage some prospective apprentices, particularly where they have neither a family member or contact within their community who can assist them in researching apprenticeship options, how and where to apply for an apprenticeship position with an employer, and how the apprenticeship system works. In this instance, guidance services within the school setting become really important.

A number of stakeholder participants also referenced their experience of apprentices from lower socio-economic backgrounds tending to have lower self-confidence than their more affluent peers, particularly in the first year of their apprenticeship, with associated difficulties in successfully completing their training, and in some cases experience of apprentices dropping out.

### **Good examples of practice**

Contributors to the review identified a range of good examples of policies and practice used to support apprentices who are disadvantaged due to socio-economic circumstances. Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) draw on educational inclusion policies to provide additional learning, guidance and pastoral supports for apprentices, and employers endeavour to support apprentices financially and through additional coaching and mentoring. Once in training, the apprentice's first year is believed to be the most critical.

A number of good examples of practice were cited in the area of information and guidance for prospective apprentices, including services provided by ETBs and IoTs around the country. On the employer side, the example of the approach used by the ESB was referenced. The ESB advertises widely its apprenticeship vacancies and includes accessible information on how to make an application, and what to expect in the screening and recruitment process. It was



noted that developing such a comprehensive approach might not be feasible for a smaller company; however the example was used to underline the need for more widely-accessible information on apprenticeship vacancies.

The potential of expanded pre-apprenticeship options was highlighted by numerous review contributors. There are a growing number of pre-apprenticeship courses on offer around the country, including in Education and Training Boards (ETBs). One such course, in Galway and Roscommon ETB, aims to provide learners with the skills and knowledge foundation required to secure an apprenticeship in construction. As well as technical skills and knowledge, learners are provided with information, guidance and in so far as possible, assistance in making contact with employers, including via a work placement experience. A pre-apprenticeship course in Dublin and Dun Laoghaire ETB is designed explicitly for early school leavers who have not achieved the minimum entry standard of the Junior Certificate. The course includes guidance and a work placement. ETBs and SOLAS are currently working to implement the PLC review recommendation of 500 pre-apprenticeship places in PLC colleges which will provide enhanced access to apprenticeship for under-represented groups.

In 2017 a pilot pre-apprenticeship course was launched in the Dublin Institute of Technology, with the first cohort of learners completing their 10-week course by the end of 2017. An initial evaluation of the DIT pilot programme concluded that the course had demonstrated success in reaching young people who, to-date, had been excluded from participation in apprenticeship due to socio-economic and ethnic barriers. Of 16 learners who started the course, 13 completed, with over half of this group expected to progress to an apprenticeship. Review contributors believed that the learning from the pre-apprenticeship initiatives in further and higher education and the provision of 500 pre-apprenticeship places in PLC colleges would make a significant positive contribution to expanding apprenticeship pathways.

## Women in apprenticeship

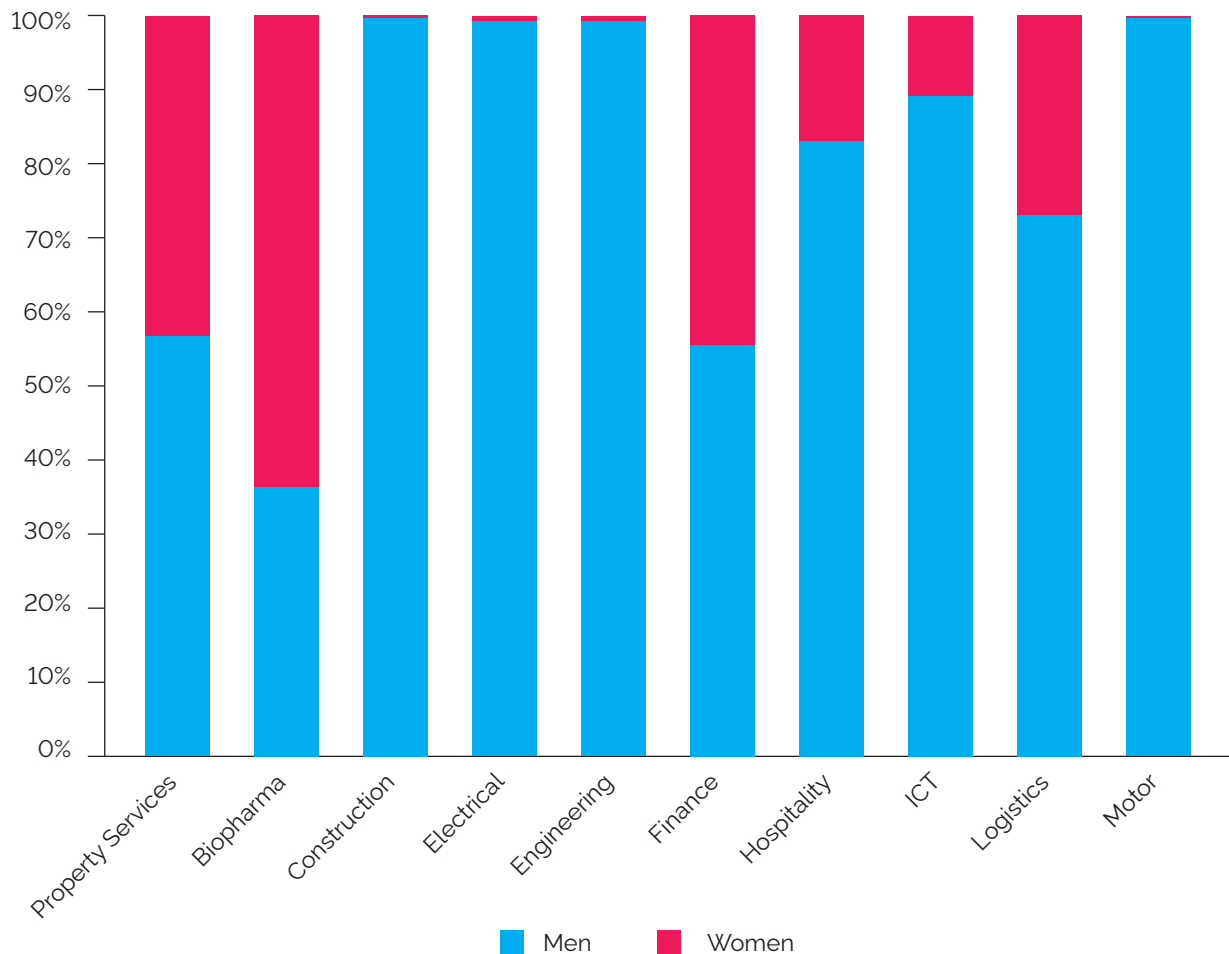
The nationally gathered data on the Irish apprentice population record a very small percentage (2%) of participating women. There are, however, some notable differences in participation across the ten industry grouping of apprenticeships which were operational as of October 2018.<sup>1</sup> These groupings are construction; electrical; engineering; motor; hospitality; finance; ICT; logistics; biopharma; and property services.

The spread of women apprentices across the ten groupings is set out in Figure 1 overleaf. In five of the ten, women are hardly represented at all. Construction comprises eight apprenticeship programmes which collectively had an apprentice population of 3,572 in October 2018, of whom only twelve, or 0.3% of the total were women. The proportion of female participation in the motor sector was similar, with just eleven female apprentices out of an overall population of 2,443. Representation in the seven electrical apprenticeship programmes is slightly better, where 0.8% or 51 apprentices out of a total cohort 6,216 were women. The rate of female participation in the engineering sector was the same as electrical, at 0.8%.

Women are more strongly represented in the hospitality (Commis Chef and Chef de Partie) apprenticeships, where twenty-two (17%) of apprentices are women, and in finance, where female participation, at 44.5%, was approaching parity.

<sup>1</sup> Two new ICT apprenticeships had no registered apprentices as of May 2018.

Figure 1 Participation in apprenticeships by gender and industry grouping



Examining the number of women within individual apprenticeships, in fourteen of the forty-two programmes available there were no female participants.

**Apprenticeship programmes with no female apprentices in 2018**

Brick and Stone laying, Plastering, Stonecutting & Stonemasonry in Construction; Construction Plant Fitting, Heavy Vehicle Mechanics and Vehicle Body Repair in Motor; Industrial Electrical Engineering, Farriery, Industrial Insulation, Manufacturing Engineering, Polymer Processing Technology, Sheet Metalworking, Toolmaking, Network Engineering Associate

For the majority of other apprenticeships where there are female apprentices, in most cases the actual number of women in the group is in single figures and the participation rate rarely exceeds 1% of the total cohort.

The one sector with a gender balance approaching parity is finance, an area which was introduced to the national apprenticeship system in 2016. Women

comprise 44.5% of apprentices across the four new programmes. In one of these, the Accounting Technician apprenticeship, at 60% participation, women outnumber men. The rate of female participation in the Insurance Practice apprenticeship is lower but is still reasonably balanced, with women apprentices as 38% of the total cohort. In both of the International Financial Services apprenticeships, leading to awards at Level 6 and Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications, the rate of female participation is 19% and 28.5% respectively.

**Some commentary on the data on female apprentices**

Perhaps the most notable finding from the above data is the difference between participation rates of women in craft-based apprenticeships and apprenticeships in the newly-introduced finance sector. This is not surprising, however, as there is a strong correlation between the participation of females in particular apprenticeships and the industries they serve. Traditionally and currently, the vast majority of workers in the construction, electrical, engineering and motor sectors are male, whereas there is more of a gender balance in the finance industry. This is a reality not just in Ireland but in many developed countries around the world.

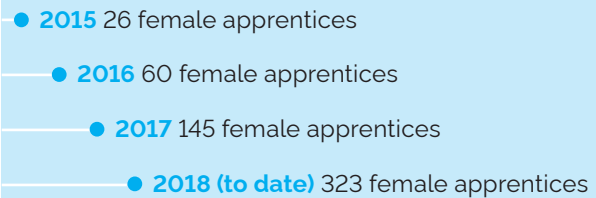
At consultation sessions and in follow up interviews as part of this review, stakeholders were asked for their views about the current gender and breakdown of female apprentices across apprenticeships and industry sectors. The question was asked as to whether a strategy to promote female participation in apprenticeship should proactively attempt to change the status quo in sectors that are overwhelmingly male-dominated, or instead focus on apprentice numbers in finance and other forthcoming apprenticeships in areas such as healthcare, hairdressing, and retail which tend to have significant numbers of female workers. Participating stakeholders were of the view that opportunities for women need to be promoted across the full suite of apprenticeships, and targets should be introduced for each industry grouping. Three main reasons were presented for this. Firstly, there is a pragmatic economic need. Skills shortages have emerged in all areas, and women, who corresponded to over half the population in Ireland (Census 2016) are needed to be part of the pipeline of skilled workers. If the number of female construction apprentices was to rise to 20% of the apprentice population for example, this would equate to a further 714 in the skills pipeline.

Secondly, and with evidence nationally and internationally cited to support this point, a lack of gender diversity in any industry leads to a significant loss of agility, creativity and innovation. Women and men contribute different strengths and skills in a workplace, and any industry with its future prosperity in mind needs to be committed to achieving gender diversity. Industries who don't do this are 'seriously missing a trick' and, it was argued, are putting their long-term sustainability at risk.

Thirdly, end users of a service or product suffer if there is a lack of gender diversity. The UK example of The Women's Trust initiative was cited by one participant in the review, where female plumbers and electricians are trained expressly to provide services to families who are survivors of domestic violence and abuse, where the prospect of an unknown male worker entering the family home can cause additional fear and trauma. This is quite a pointed example, but it served to illustrate the benefits of gender diversity when people need to access core services in their homes.

### Challenges to gender diversity

Practical challenges to achieving greater gender diversity in apprenticeship were identified by review participants and in the research. It was noted that there is a significant informal dimension to how employers take on apprentices. It can be through word of mouth and even within families. A woman who is interested



in doing an apprenticeship might not know where to start if she does not have the contacts to initiate a conversation with an employer. It was noted that Education and Training Boards do a lot of work to promote apprenticeship opportunities and to link prospective apprentices up with employers, however it was argued that a lot more resources and dedicated promotion of opportunities are needed to support women.

The important role of schools at second level in promoting apprenticeship opportunities was raised, and in particular the role of guidance counsellors. While it was acknowledged that there is lots of excellent practice in guidance at second level, some participants referred to experiences of young women at school being told that 'apprenticeship is not for girls' and some leaving school believing that apprenticeship was only open to boys. In other cases, it was reported that apprenticeship overall was being presented as a less attractive option that, say going the academic route to third level. The perverse effect of the media-reported school league tables was also mentioned, where there is no recognition or value accorded to students who choose an apprenticeship route.

The prevailing attitudes of employers were also discussed. Do employers in sufficient numbers see the benefits of taking on women apprentices? Is there still a dominant view that women do not have the physical strength and stamina for certain types of skilled work? Given that it is an employer who takes on an apprentice in the first instance, it was the view of some review participants that the overall views and attitudes of particular industries would need to change in order to have the desired impact on gender diversity in apprenticeship.

### Good examples of practice

Good examples of practice in promoting gender diversity were highlighted by review participants. These included recruitment strategies for apprentices by employers which explicitly state that female applicants were welcome, and steps to champion female workers and apprentice ambassadors as part of the recruitment

campaign. Several employers stated that they were seeking to fill a minimum quota of female apprentices as part of their annual intake. Subsequent steps to welcome and support female apprentices were described as crucial, it was noted that it wasn't enough just to get females into a programme, in order to retain them it was vital to review and adapt a company's ways of working so that female apprentices could thrive, feel like they belonged, and get the most out of their training and career preparation. Promotion of gender diversity via the national Generation Apprenticeship campaign was also cited, including media coverage in 2018 of a female plumber on RTE Radio 1 and three female electrician apprentices on two separate occasions on TV3.

The employer bursary which is funded through SOLAS was also discussed. This bursary, which has been in place since 1990, provides a payment of €2,666 to an employer of a female apprentice over the duration of her training. Although the bursary is in principle considered to be a positive initiative, it was noted that it did not seem to have made any significant difference to the rate of female participation over the past ten years. Furthermore there seemed to be a lack of awareness of the bursary among employers, where to access it, who it was for, how much it was.

### Apprentices with disabilities

Some data on the number of people with disabilities taking part in current apprenticeship programmes are available nationally. The data are gathered as part of the formal registration of apprentices. In the registration form that they complete, prospective apprentices are asked whether they have a disability, and if so, to indicate what that disability is. In the live population of 14,953 apprentices as of October 2018, a total of 423 had declared one or more disabilities. This equates to 2.8% of the full cohort of apprentices across all programmes. A majority of these, 273 apprentices, or 64.5% of the total, identified themselves as having dyslexia. A further 10% identified other disabilities related to learning, while 28% did not specify what disability they had. Physical, hearing or visual disabilities were very much in the minority, indeed almost all of the disabilities declared by apprentices fall into the category of specific learning disabilities, including dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, ADD and ADHD.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Within the live population of October 2018, just 35 apprentices declared a physical, hearing or visual disability.

Figure 2 Apprentices with Disabilities by industry grouping

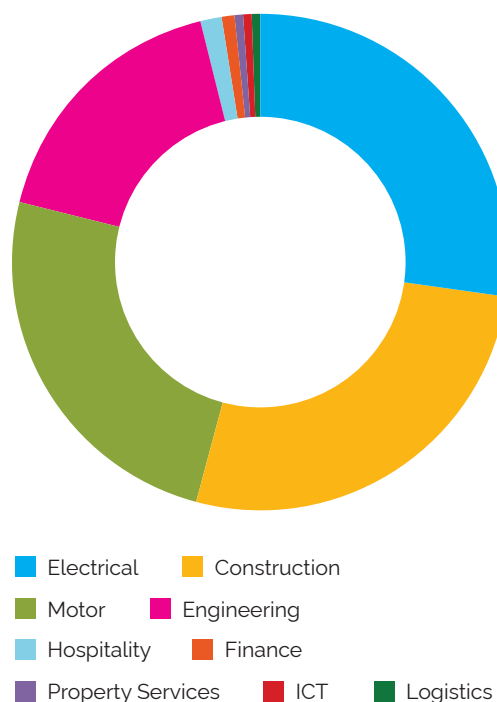
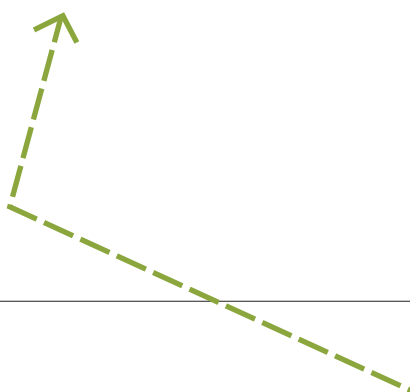


Figure 2 shows the distribution of apprentices who declared a disability across sectors: the largest numbers on programmes in the electrical and construction sectors, 97 and 96 apprentices respectively. This is closely followed by 88 apprentices on motor-related apprenticeships. 61 engineering apprentices declared a disability, with five in the hospitality sector, three in financial services, two in both Auctioneering and ICT, and one in Logistics.

Apprentices who declare a disability are contacted by their training advisor in the Education and Training Board (ETB) where they have registered. Their needs are discussed, however no formal assessment of needs takes place. Learning and/or other supports and accommodations are put in place where required. The ETB also liaises with the employer to ensure that the apprentice has any necessary supports.



The figure of 2.8% of apprentices with a disability is low in comparison to other post-secondary education and training provision. For example, based on higher education access data (HEA), 10% of new entrants to higher education in declare a disability. Similar to the apprentice population, the majority of students with a disability in higher education have a specific learning disability. According to the 2016 Census, within the overall population in Ireland who have disabilities, 13.5% of the population identified as having one or more of seven categories of disability. Of this 13.5%, a quarter identified as having a specific learning disability. Even allowing for people who are unable to work due to a disability, this indicates that people with disabilities are significantly under-represented in the population of 2018 apprentices.

### **Some commentary on the data on apprentices with disabilities**

In considering the participation of people with disabilities in apprenticeship, participants in the review referred frequently to its work-based element and the role of employers. Given that an apprentice must be employed in the first instance, the perspectives and attitudes of employers are crucial when it comes to accommodating an apprentice with a disability and whether a disability is, in effect, a barrier to employment. It was not possible to carry out a survey of the attitudes of employers who take on apprentices as part of this review; however, related research in Ireland by bodies that include the National Disability Authority and the Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) were noted as well as international research by bodies that include the university of Maastricht and the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities.

A 2017 survey of public attitudes to disability in Ireland by the National Disability Authority found that 67% of respondents, or over two out of three people, do not believe that people with disabilities have equal opportunities in terms of employment. It was also noted that this belief had not changed significantly from previous surveys in 2011 and in 2006. Research by the Irish organisation AHEAD has documented the widespread concern felt by many when it comes to disclosing a disability to a prospective employer, in particular the possible negative effects. For this reason, where a disability is not visible, many choose not to disclose. This reality is not particular to Ireland, with a range of European and other international literature documenting similar challenges for people with disabilities who want and need to enter the workforce. The European Association of Service Providers for

Persons with Disabilities has done extensive work in this area, documenting what would appear to be widespread non-disclosure of disabilities among European workers and job seekers.

When it comes to apprenticeship, it was the view of participants in the review that the situation is no different to that of the overall employment environment in Ireland. This may explain the low numbers of apprentices declaring a disability and it was suggested that the figures may be masking a higher number of apprentices who have decided that notwithstanding the struggles they may have in successfully completing their training, it is safer for their careers and immediate training prospects not to disclose a disability.

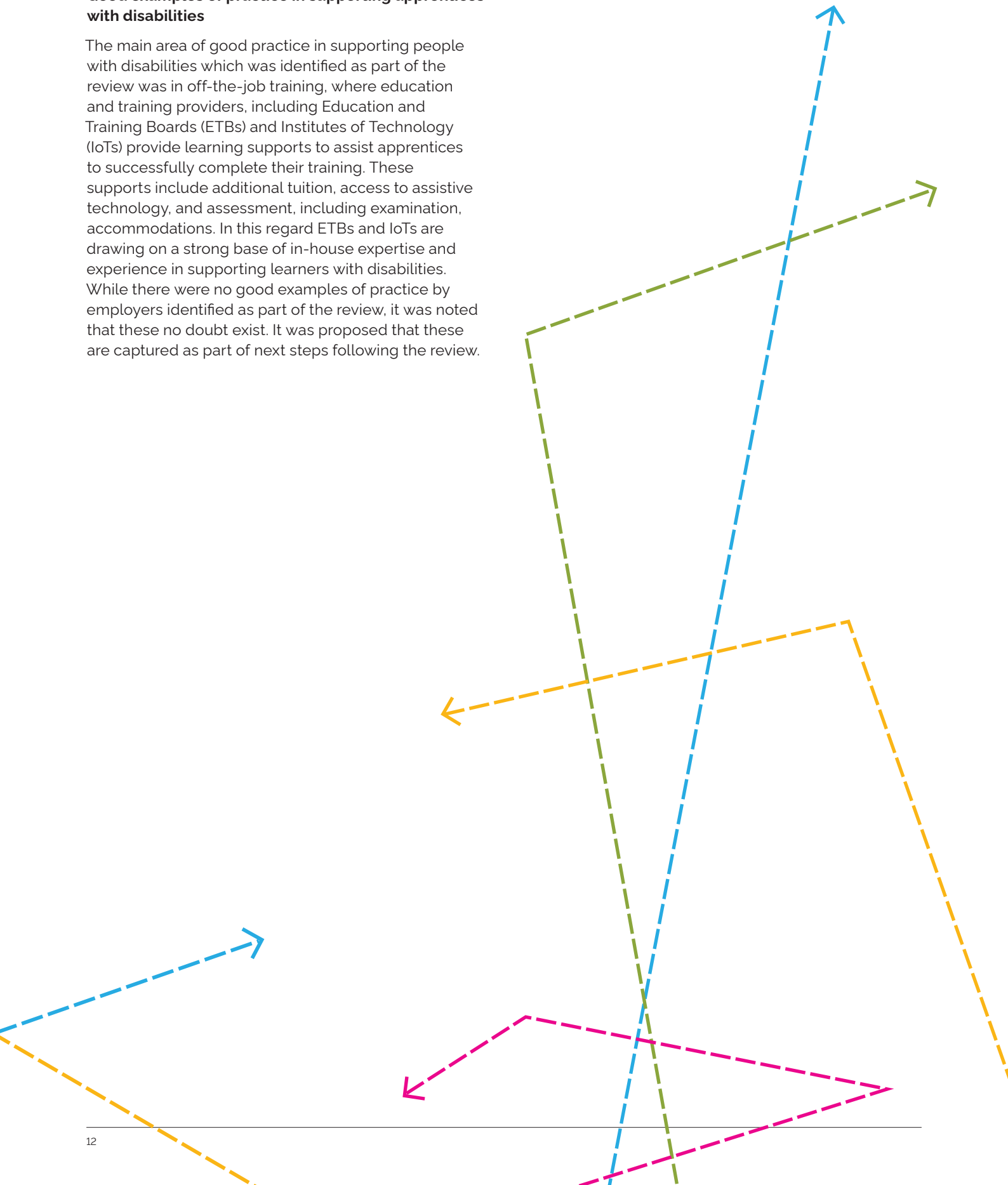
### **Challenges to inclusion of people with disabilities**

In considering the challenges to tackling under-representation of people with disabilities in apprenticeship, as well as the observations on the overall employment climate and attitudes towards people with disabilities, the lack of apprentices with a declared physical disability was noted by review participants. The significant manual element to many apprenticeships, particularly in the construction, electrical, motor and engineering areas was highlighted as a practical barrier to accommodating apprentices who might for example have mobility issues, or have a visual or hearing impairment.

Outcomes from the 'Willing, Able, Mentoring (WAM)' initiative introduced by AHEAD with Irish employers were cited, where employers in a range of industry areas, including engineering, have successfully adapted their workplaces and work practices to enable people with disabilities to become valued members of their workforce. While it was acknowledged that there may no doubt be some practical barriers to a person with a disability successfully completing apprenticeship training in a particular field, apprenticeships must be an option for people with disabilities in Ireland.

### **Good examples of practice in supporting apprentices with disabilities**

The main area of good practice in supporting people with disabilities which was identified as part of the review was in off-the-job training, where education and training providers, including Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Institutes of Technology (IoTs) provide learning supports to assist apprentices to successfully complete their training. These supports include additional tuition, access to assistive technology, and assessment, including examination, accommodations. In this regard ETBs and IoTs are drawing on a strong base of in-house expertise and experience in supporting learners with disabilities. While there were no good examples of practice by employers identified as part of the review, it was noted that these no doubt exist. It was proposed that these are captured as part of next steps following the review.



## 3 Five areas for action

Notwithstanding the gaps in data on the profile of Irish apprentices, this review has shown that there are significant groups of Irish people currently under-represented in the national apprenticeship system. Women are under-represented, as are people with disabilities. There is a need to develop a better picture of the socio-economic and ethnic profile of apprentices, in order to develop a better understanding of participation on these grounds. The feedback from review participants, who included employers, industry representatives, education and training providers, current apprentices, people who went through the apprenticeship system, and representatives of organisations promoting equality for diverse groups, is that we all need to work proactively to achieve much greater diversity in our apprentice population. This is important for both our society and economy.

Drawing on the findings from the review, five areas for action have been identified, with associated steps. It is intended that work to implement these will begin immediately following publication of the review. SOLAS will lead implementation of the actions, working closely with apprenticeship partners and stakeholders, in particular employers, education and training providers, and apprentices themselves. The five areas for action, and component steps for each, are as follows:

### 1 Increase participation in apprenticeship by diverse groups

- Incorporate the national Census questions on disability and ethnicity into apprentice registration as a means of gathering more robust data on participation
- Develop proxy indicators to gather information on the socio-economic background of apprentices
- Set annual targets for diverse participation in apprenticeship
- Aim to have 600 female apprentices by 2019 and 1,000 by 2020
- Set a baseline for disability and socio-economic targets in 2019, with targets for 2020 and thereafter
- Increase practical supports for apprentices from under-represented groups, working with training providers, consortia and employer representative groups

### 2 Launch an online apprenticeship 'jobs market' to increase visibility of opportunities for all potential apprentices

- Develop a national online mechanism for employers to advertise apprenticeship opportunities and prospective apprentices to register interest and/or apply
- Encourage employers to promote opportunities equally
- Create user-friendly support materials and contacts for employers and prospective apprentices
- Create a diversity badge and qualifying criteria to be awarded to employers demonstrating good examples of practice

### 3 Create new pathways via pre-apprenticeship courses around the country

- 500 places on pre-apprenticeship courses to be available by Q3 2019
- Comprehensive information available on pre-apprenticeship courses via [www.fetchcourses.ie](http://www.fetchcourses.ie)
- Courses clearly promote opportunity for target groups
- Provision and progression reported annually via the PLSS database
- Impact evaluation carried out in 2020

### 4 Promote the bursary incentive with employers

- Promote the bursary incentive with employers as part of the Generation Apprenticeship campaign
- Consider extending the employer bursary to apprenticeships which have <20% females
- Examine options to extend the bursary scheme to include people with disabilities
- Carry out an impact evaluation in 2022

### 5 Promote diverse pathways to participation in apprenticeship in the 2018-2020 Generation Apprenticeship campaign

- Incorporate the Pathways targets and goals into Generation Apprenticeship
- Support materials and advice provided to employers, apprenticeship consortia, education and training providers
- Pathways goals are showcased and promoted as part of the promotional campaign
- First cohort of employers receive their diversity badge in 2019.



# Appendix 1

## Contributors to the review

Contributors to the review included:

**Accounting Technicians Ireland**

**Apprenticeship Council**

**Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD)**

**CDS Metalwork**

**Connect Union**

**Construction Industry Federation (CIF)**

**Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection**

**Disability Federation Ireland**

**DPS Engineering**

**Dublin City Council**

**Dublin Institute of Technology**

**Dublin Northwest Area Partnership**

**Education and Training Boards and Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)**

**Empowering People in Care (EPIC)**

**Event Haus**

**FastTrack into Technology (FIT)**

**Geological Survey Ireland**

**Grangegorman Employment**

**Higher Education Authority (HEA)**

**Irish Refugee Council**

**iSkill**

**KC Commercials**

**Leargas**

**Merchants Quay**

**Migrant Family Support Service**

**National Disability Authority**

**National Women's Council of Ireland**

**Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)**

**Regional Skills Fora Managers**

**South County Dublin Partnership**

**St Vincent de Paul**

**Teagasc**

**Technological Higher Education Association (THEA)**

**Transgender Equality Network**

**WALK Disability Group**

# Appendix 2

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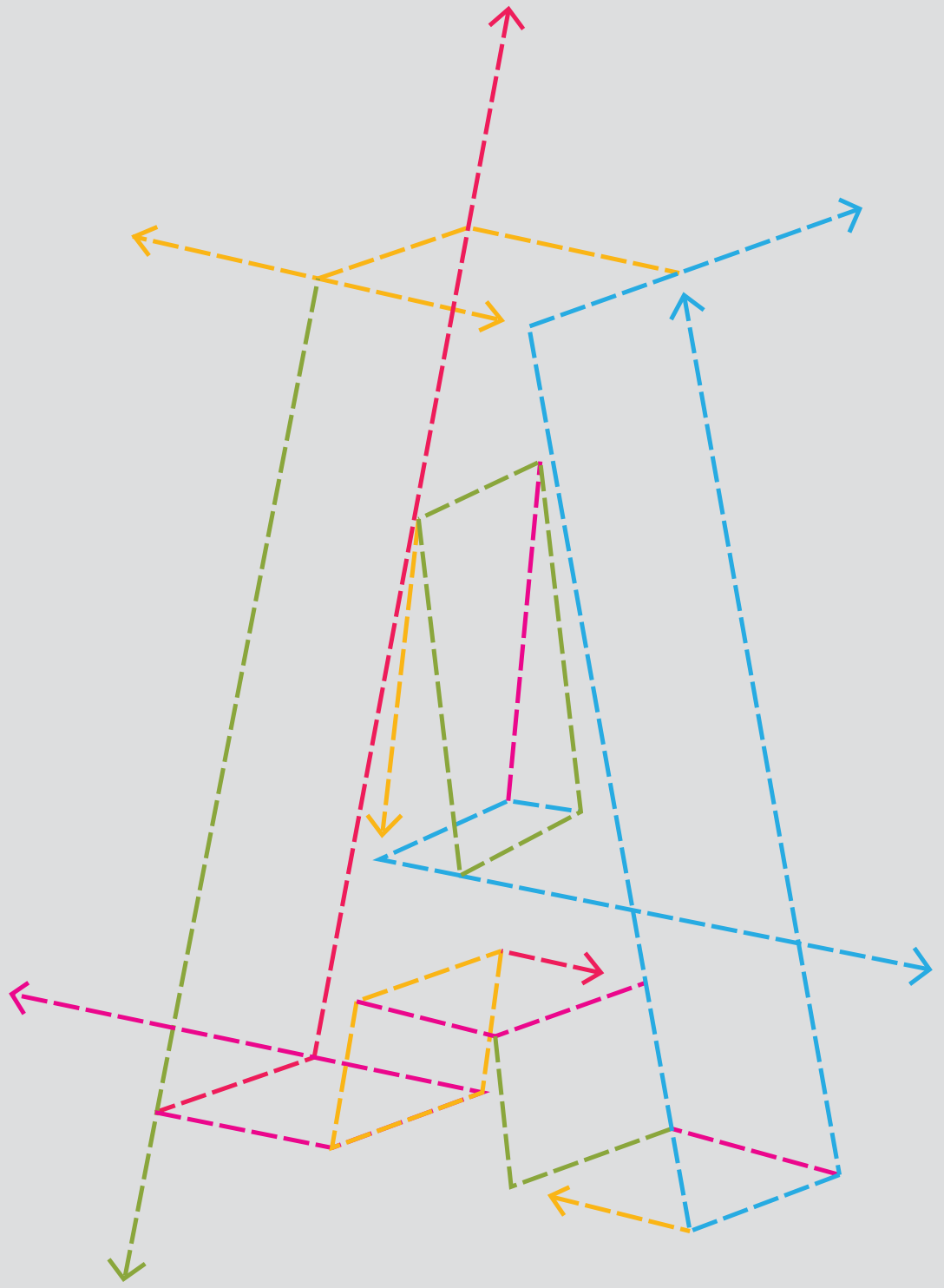
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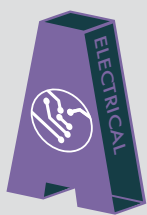
# Apprenticeships by industry group as of October 2018



- Brick and Stonelaying L6
- Carpentry and Joinery L6
- Painting and Decorating L6
- Plastering L6
- Plumbing L6
- Stonecutting and Stonemasonry L6
- Wood Manufacturing and Finishing L6



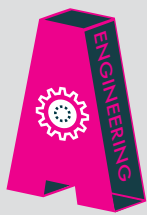
- Network Engineer Associate L6
- Software Development Associate L6



- Aircraft Mechanics L6
- Electrical L6
- Electrical Instrumentation L6
- Electronic Security Systems L6
- Instrumentation L6
- Refrigeration and Air Conditioning L6



- Logistics Associate L6



- Farriery L6
- Industrial Electrical Engineering L7
- Industrial Insulation L6
- Manufacturing Engineering L7
- Manufacturing Technology L6
- Mechanical Automation and Maintenance Fitting L6
- Metal Fabrication L6
- Pipefitting L6
- Polymer Processing Technology L7
- Sheet Metalworking L6
- Toolmaking L6



- Laboratory Analyst L7
- Laboratory Technician L6



- Agricultural Mechanics L6
- Construction Plant Fitting L6
- Heavy Vehicle Mechanics L6
- Motor Mechanics L6
- Vehicle Body Repairs L6



- Accounting Technician L6
- Insurance Practice L8
- International Financial Services Associate L6
- International Financial Services Specialist L8

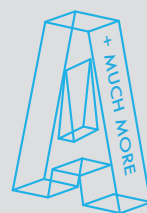


- Auctioneering and Property Services L6



- Commis Chef L6
- Chef de Partie L7

- Butchery



and more in development.