

Learner inclusion report

2024/25



Foreword

I am delighted to present our third annual Learner Inclusion Report. At Kaplan, we remain committed to expanding access to the professional sector, recognising that equal opportunity and inclusion is essential to driving success and innovation across industries.

Over the past year, we've continued to make progress in reducing gaps in attainment within our programmes. This achievement underscores our dedication to providing opportunities for all learners to thrive and reach

their full potential. While we are proud of the strides we have made, we also acknowledge that there are areas where we can and must continue to improve.

Our journey towards a more inclusive learning environment is ongoing, and we are committed to addressing any challenges head-on.

Stacey Fitzsimmons
Managing Director,
Kaplan Professional Education



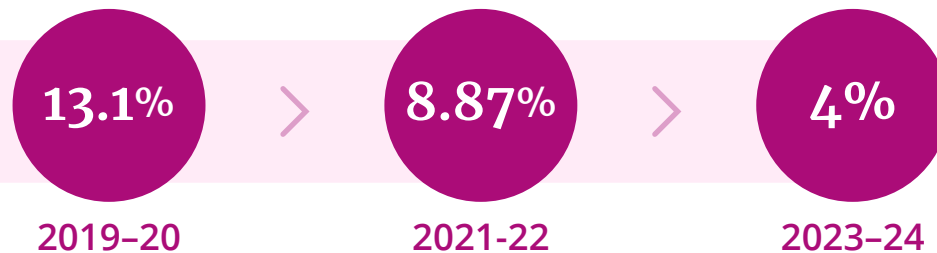
Summary of achievements

Aligned with our objectives, this section of the report highlights key achievements and activities in 2024 that demonstrate our commitment to ensuring all learners have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Striving for equal outcomes

We remain committed to addressing disparities in achievement and continue to take action to reduce gaps across all demographic groups.

- ✓ The achievement gap between apprentices from disadvantaged postcode areas and their peers has decreased from 12.4% in 22/23 to 9% in 23/24.
- ✓ For the past five years, we've consistently closed the achievement gaps between apprentices with and without learning needs/disabilities.



- ✓ Provided training for Talent Coaches and Tutors on supporting learners with inclusion needs. The impact is best seen through the experience of our apprentices. One Level 7 apprentice wrote in August 2024:

“

For someone with a condition like OCD, it isn't easy to open up about one's condition and the challenges associated with it. But not even once did I feel that my Kaplan Talent Coach ever judged me, or saw my issue as a negative, he only ever demonstrated tremendous compassion and understanding at all times. He demonstrated a care and understanding that I have found to be quite rare among others whilst suffering from this condition.



Summary of achievements



- ✓ To combat potential barriers to progression, we launched a successful coaching project for six apprentices from disadvantaged areas. Two Academic Support tutors provided monthly life coaching sessions over six months. Crucially, five out of the six apprentices reported that this support was the deciding factor in them staying on their programme. Feedback from those apprentices includes:

“

The sessions have been great to have a safe space where I can express myself openly and have someone who's not in my workplace to give guidance from an objective perspective.



“



I'd found it difficult to navigate the corporate space. When starting a new job I was not only faced with the job itself but new culture and norms. The additional personal coaching helped me to feel safe and shake imposter syndrome.

Summary of achievements

Inclusion focused events

Expanding our successful Enrichment Weeks to launch National Inclusion Week in September 2024 – through expert-led webinars featuring industry specialists, former apprentices, and thought leaders.

- ✓ **Enrichment Week** equips apprentices with real-world insights to support their career growth and is held three times a year. As well as career insights, the week features webinars to assist different circumstances. For example, we were concerned that some learners from low income backgrounds, in areas of postcode deprivation, may not have the awareness needed about student debt and how to read payslips. We partnered with experts in managing money and ran webinars on pay and understanding payslips, which made a significant difference to learners. As a result, 70% knew how to increase their income, reduce their expenses, and understand financial management and support options.
- ✓ **National Inclusion Week** was introduced in September 2024, following learner feedback asking for greater content for differing learning needs. National Inclusion Week featured sessions on understanding anxiety in neurodiverse learners, overcoming rejection sensitivity in the workplace, and effective communication strategies for neurodiverse individuals. Example webinar sessions for 2024 included Enhancing Learning Strategies for Autism and ADHD, How to cultivate psychological resilience with Neurodiversity, and Leadership Skills for Level 7 Apprentices: Managing Neurodiverse Talent.



Summary of achievements

Impact of Enrichment and Inclusion Weeks

In 2024, we saw a substantial increase in our Enrichment Week webinars and their impact:

- ✓ The number of webinars increased to 62, 14 more than in 2023
- ✓ Nearly 3,923 live attendees participated
- ✓ Over 2,600 recording requests were made, representing a 63% increase compared to the previous years
- ✓ Overall learner confidence rose from an average of 5/10 to 7.7/10 after participation

During September's National Inclusion Week:

- ✓ 477 apprentices signed up
- ✓ 100% of surveyed participants reported an increase in confidence
- ✓ Confidence levels improved from an average of 5/10 before the sessions to 7.6/10 afterwards



Learners commented

“ I was generally aware of what burnout was and general stress relief techniques, but I didn't know the different stages to it. I feel that I learned a lot of the nuances today and received good advice.



“ It helped me to realise how to understand myself and how many others have felt how I do, especially surrounding imposter syndrome – there's always someone I can talk to.



External recognition

An external board member remarked:

“ I'm taken by the range of issues you address for apprentices – grief, citizenship, exam fears. I got the sense of the provision being for a fully-rounded human.



Ofsted commented in our 2024 Inspection Report:

“ Apprentices have access to additional learning experiences that develop their broader skills successfully.





- ✓ With a profoundly deaf apprentice as one of our learners, we ran 'Introduction to British Sign Language' webinars for fellow apprentices and line managers to learn the basics of signing and the history of deaf culture. We know how much of a difference this made to our learner, his employer, and other apprentices.

One attendee said:

“

I learned how important facial expressions are when communicating in this language, I now can greet someone in sign language and hope to take this further in the future.



- ✓ Launched our first annual 'Culture Week' across our centres, featuring a range of activities that celebrate different cultures and promotes inclusion. Highlights included posters showcasing global flags, languages, and festivals, and sharing traditions through food, fashion, and music, as well as interactive elements like quizzes and word searches to engage learners and test cultural knowledge.

Summary of achievements

- ✓ Following the success of our first Apprenticeship Awards in 2023, we continued the tradition in 2024, with four new award categories and over 100 nominations. This year's Apprenticeship Advocacy award went to Boma Praise Jumbo, who also became a finalist at the Multicultural Apprenticeship Awards 2024. Boma Praise believes that apprenticeships in the finance industry provide more accessible pathways into the sector. Speaking to us at the awards, she said:

“

Breaking into the industry through an apprenticeship allows you to explore various pathways and roles. I like to think of this as someone opening a door and walking into a room full of more doors. Particularly entry-level apprenticeships are great for individuals who have recently completed their GCSEs. Therefore, this breaks any barriers that suggest you need to go to university or be highly educated to work in finance. Not only this, but apprenticeships break financial barriers as the education is paid for by the organisation. This helps people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to get the education and work experience they need to achieve their dreams and aspirations.

I hope my story encourages anyone who's been told they can't do something because of who they are or the colour of their skin. And I hope my nominations stand as a testament that those words mean nothing.”

[Read the full interview](#)



Summary of achievements

Inclusive resources

- ✓ We continue with our mission to make all our learning materials more inclusive. In 2024 we enabled captions on all videos in the ACA qualification courses, upgraded all video players from V2 to V7 which provides better accessibility features and we introduced a new course template that's assessed against new WCAG standard 2.2. And we continue to strive for more. We initiated a process of collecting more feedback specifically on the inclusivity aspects of our learning materials from user groups across the business and our learner networks.
- ✓ Introduced the capture of preferred names to ensure we support learners' names across our systems, giving learners the ability to detail their title, name, preferred name, pronunciation and pronouns.
- ✓ Amplified Learner Voice: Added a dedicated Learner Voice section to the Learning My Way microsite to promote and facilitate learner feedback.
- ✓ Following insights gathered from direct conversations between our Academic Support team and learners who had failed or deferred, we launched a new module - Starting Your Professional Qualification. This is now available to all learners and provides essential study skills for Professional Qualifications, ensuring all learners can succeed regardless of their educational background.



- ✓ Exam and study anxiety is a common theme among our learners. To help address this, we've increased access to support materials, such as podcasts shared via Academic Support emails to resit students, and introduced mindfulness resources in all our centres, including wordsearches and colouring sheets for use during study breaks to help learners de-stress.

Summary of achievements

- ✓ Our Learn Better podcast series continues to showcase expertise and fresh perspectives from inspirational guest speakers, including firsthand experiences from our learners. This unique blend of insights was one of the reasons the series was named Podcast of the Year at the 2024 PQ Awards.



- ▶ One of our most downloaded episodes in 2024 was Episode 40 – Managing a Diverse Workforce. In this episode Rob, co-founder of the Accounting Influencers Roundtable, shares his extensive knowledge of the accounting industry, talent management, diversity, generational differences, and remote working, drawn from his vast experience.
- ✓ Our blog features a broad collection of articles that foster inclusion and provide valuable support to our learners. Articles published in 2024 include:
 - ▶ [Five ways you can get back into studying as a mature learner](#)
 - ▶ [Mental health expert, Ross McWilliam talks managing stress when studying](#)
 - ▶ [It's never too late to upskill: Sarah Varley's story](#)
 - ▶ [Understanding reasonable adjustments in job interviews: what you can and can't ask for](#)
 - ▶ [Enhancing learning strategies for ADHD and autism](#)
 - ▶ [How to embrace 'ALEC' for Men's Mental Health Month](#)



Summary of achievements



- ✓ In 2024, our popular YouTube series Career Goals gained momentum as a key platform for showcasing positive role models and inspiring career journeys. With a strong focus on learner inclusion, we featured a diverse range of guests, including:
 - ▶ **Uzma Mukhtar** – Shared her journey of moving to the UK without knowing the language or culture, navigating life as a single mother to a child with complex learning needs, and ultimately building a successful career in banking.
 - ▶ **Nana Oduro** – Spoke about the significance of representation and the impact of seeing people of colour in the industry.
 - ▶ **Financielle** – Highlighted the importance of financial literacy for women and empowering them to take control of their finances.
 - ▶ **Sophie Godbold** – Discussed overcoming barriers associated with a non-academic, low-income background and finding success in her current careers.

These stories not only inspired our audience but also reinforced the importance of diverse experiences in shaping meaningful careers.

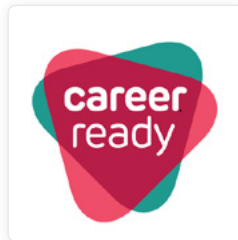
Summary of achievements

Working with clients

- ✓ We ran a series of client interviews to better understand inclusion linked priorities for the coming year.
- ✓ We hosted a client webinar on Social Mobility Day that included promotion of the Multicultural Apprenticeship Alliance and encouraged clients to engage in the work the Alliance does, and consider becoming patrons themselves.

Collaborating with other organisations

- ✓ In 2024, we continued our support for internships with Career Ready and 10,000 Interns programme, increasing the number of mentors within Kaplan who support the programme from seven to nine.
- ✓ We continued our work to provide paid internships for seven individuals. Our comprehensive intern programme ranging from 4 to 12 weeks is designed to give an in-depth understanding of how a leading training provider like Kaplan operates. The programme includes extensive training as well as the opportunity to support and collaborate with departments. We're pleased to report that we now have several interns in full time employment across the business.



- ✓ Through our company volunteering days, we continue to support school outreach programmes with the charity RISE. 2024 was our biggest year yet, supporting almost three times as many sessions in 2024 than we did in 2023, reaching almost 1,500 students. RISE offers students who may not otherwise get this support, opportunities to develop their skills, better understand different career paths, and learn from the volunteers' countless years of accumulated experience.



Summary of achievements

- ✓ Raising awareness of apprenticeships within schools, we developed a free toolkit and career support, in collaboration with our partners, to help students find their best next step. Aimed at year 12 and 13, it offers flexible workshops and informative talks. We plan to expand to other regions in 2025.

“

The focus on the future, thinking, and always pushing for improvement is very valuable. Kaplan really help us to be better at delivering apprenticeships to our colleagues

Sharon Morgan, Lloyds Banking Group



- ✓ We renewed our relationship with charity Breaking Barriers and increased our support for learners studying via this scheme as well as providing ad hoc careers guidance to learners seeking employment and apprenticeships in the UK.
- ✓ Continued patronage of the Multicultural Apprenticeship and Skills Alliance, supporting many of their inclusion initiatives throughout the year.
- ✓ Our partnership with Access Accountancy will help us make a bigger impact. We will now have access to additional tools that enable us to efficiently collect and analyse data to drive meaningful, measurable progress.

“

Kaplan's involvement in our apprenticeship events such as the Festival of Apprenticeships Career Roadshows highlights their unwavering commitment to promoting apprenticeships as a viable pathway for diverse talent. These efforts contribute significantly to improving social mobility and ensuring equal access to career development for underrepresented communities.

Jagdeep Soor, Executive Director, Pathway group
(Parent organisation of Multicultural Apprenticeship and Skills Alliance)



Recognition for our efforts

- ✓ In 2024, we were proud winners of PQ's Private College of the Year and finalists for AAT's Large Training Provider of the Year, and ATA's Diversity and Inclusion award. Each nomination highlighted our commitment to learner inclusion initiatives, reflecting the recognition of our efforts by prestigious industry bodies.



Our learners: demographic information

To establish a baseline of our learner population, we've analysed and reported data as separate segment groups for Kaplan apprentices and as a combined total (Kaplan apprentices and fee payers*).

Methodology

Kaplan fee payer learners data is reported for those who had an active enrollment in the calendar year 2024 and has provided further personal data, which is optional. This was completed by 37%** of all fee payers enrolling on a course in 2024. The values from these learners have then been extrapolated to represent the entirety of the Kaplan fee payer learners population.

Kaplan apprentice data includes anyone who was active on an apprenticeship between 1 January - 31 January of the following year (eg. 2024 apprentice numbers taken from Jan 2025).

The Kaplan estimated total is formed using the extrapolated fee paying data combined with the Kaplan apprentices data. All references to Kaplan learners will be using this value.

Comparison data

Due to the sensitive and protected nature of personal data, it is difficult to gain a full understanding of the wider profile of individuals recruited and working in the professional services sector beyond age and gender - which makes it difficult for us to understand how representative our learner population is. Professional Institutes and clients are unable to share their statistics with us.

In order to assess inclusion amongst our learner population, we've selected a number of different external data sources to compare against. This includes the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and National Apprenticeship Starts for the academic year 2023/24.

* fee payers are defined as learners that pay for the course themselves or are funded by their employer. Apprentices are fully or part funded by the government.

** 34% of fee payers answered the disability question, questions on ethnicity and gender had a higher response rate.

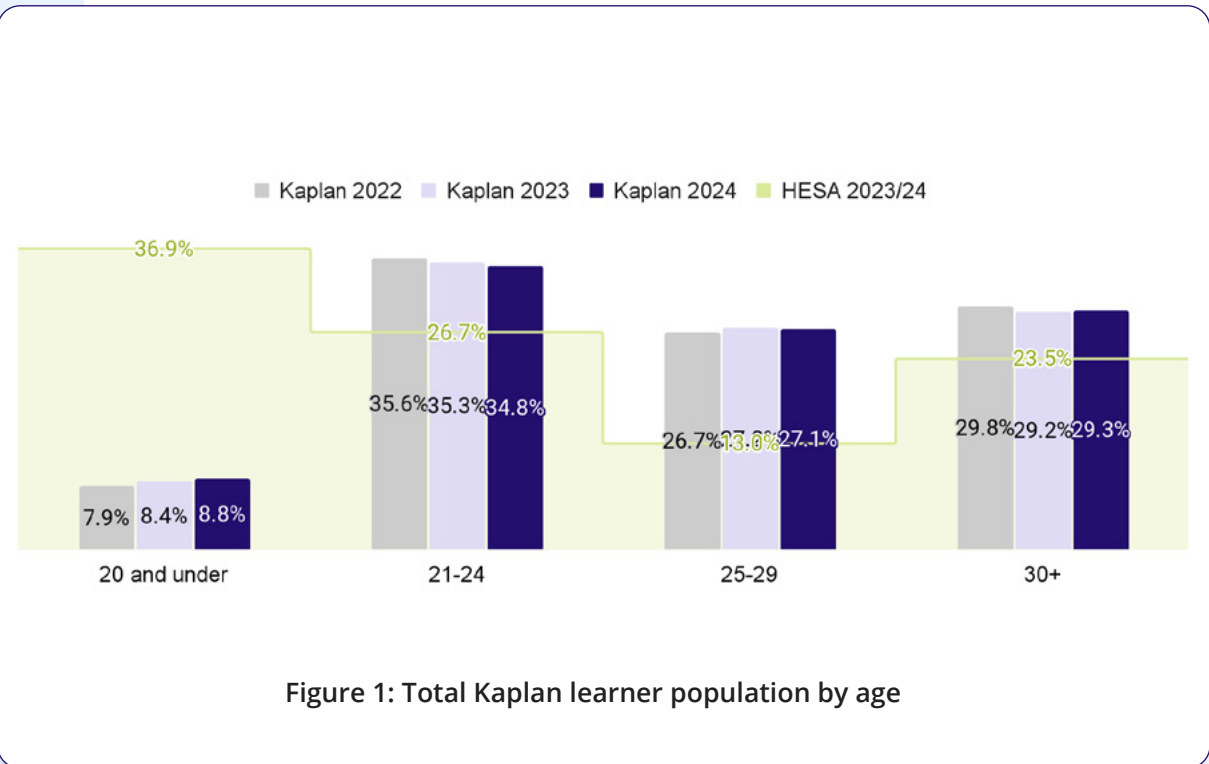


Our learners: equality information

a. Age

Total learner population

The largest proportion of Kaplan learners continues to be the 21-24 aged bracket containing 34.8% of learners. However, this has continued to fall for the second year running. Kaplan's least represented age bracket, 20 and under, has steadily increased to 8.8% of learners this year. Whilst we have seen an overall reduction in fee payers from 2023's data to 2024, we have seen a small increase in those who are enrolling as an apprentice. Representation across all age groups saw a minimal fluctuation of only 1% compared to the previous year. The 21-24 age group is the most frequently represented, which is expected, as it is the typical starting age for most learners. We see a higher percentage for the 30+ aged bracket than those at 25-29 which is likely due to those developing their career skills or reskilling in another area as they progress their careers.



Our learners: equality information

a. Age

Apprentice learner population

The largest proportion of Kaplan apprentices continues to fall within the 19–24 age bracket, primarily due to the majority of our learners being enrolled in Level 7 programmes.

While Kaplan remains underrepresented in the under-19 category compared to national apprenticeship data (a reflection of the wider availability of lower-level apprenticeships aimed at school and college leavers), we have seen encouraging growth in this area. Since 2022, the proportion of under-19 apprentices has increased by 1.6 percentage points, representing a 40% uplift over two years.

This upward trend is important. Apprenticeships offer young people an alternative path to success, providing the opportunity to gain real work experience, earn a salary and build the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to thrive in future careers. For under-19s in particular, this route can be life-changing, helping them transition smoothly from education to employment and start building a career much earlier than traditional routes.

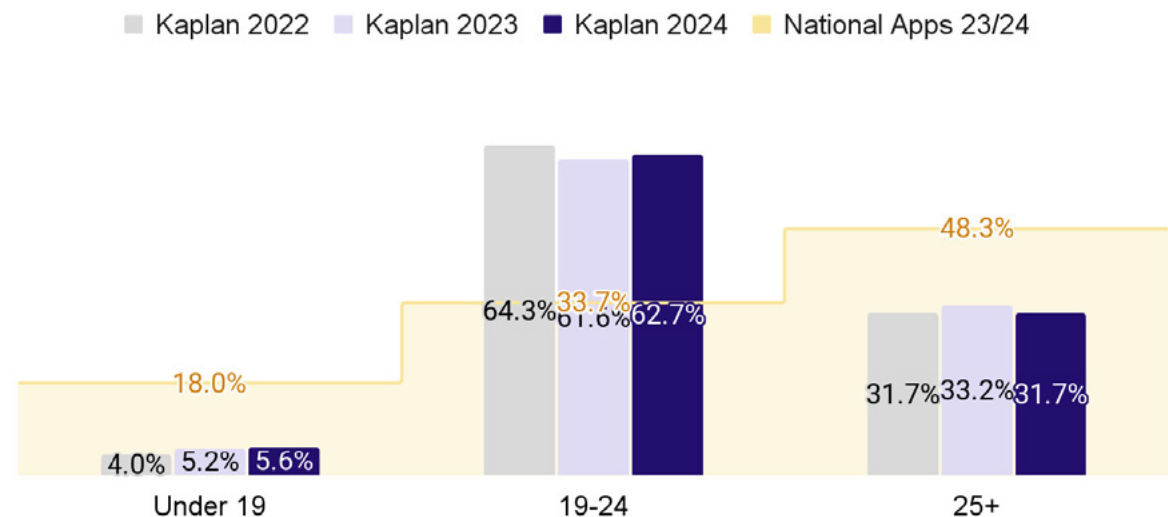


Figure 2: Kaplan Apprentice learner population by age

Our learners: equality information

b. Ethnicity

Total learner population

Kaplan continues to see the proportion of Asian learners increase further to 20% of the overall learner population, which is a 1.6 percentage point increase from the previous year. This remains comfortably above the HESA baseline of 13.7%. There is also growth in the number of Black learners, although it is still around half the level seen nationally (4.4% Kaplan vs 8.7% HESA).

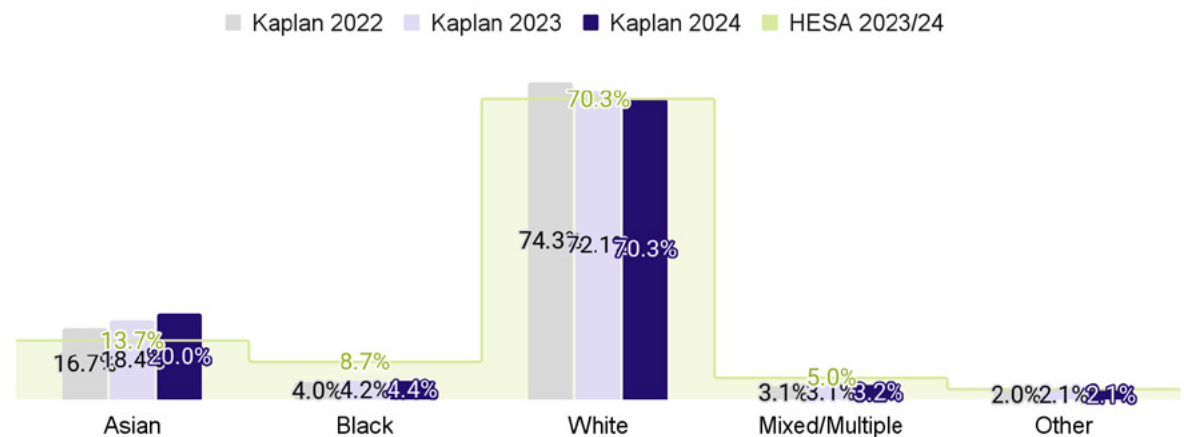


Figure 3: Total Kaplan learner population by ethnicity

Our learners: equality information

b. Ethnicity

Apprentice learner population

We are pleased to report continued growth in apprentice volumes across all ethnic minority groups. Representation within the Asian and Mixed ethnic groups is above that reported by National Apprenticeship Starts.

We acknowledge, however, that representation from the Black ethnic group remains below national levels. It's important to note that the national data also highlights broader underrepresentation of Black individuals in apprenticeships compared to the wider population. A survey by Youth Employment UK found that 33% of Black respondents had never had apprenticeships discussed with them, compared with 13% of White respondents.*

We are therefore encouraged to see steady progress, with our Black learner population increasing by 0.8 percentage points since 2022 - equating to a 38% rise. While this is a positive step forward, we recognise that continued progress requires collective effort. Our partnerships with employers remain essential to driving lasting change and ensuring equitable access for all.

*Report of the commission on Race & Ethnic Disparities, published April 2021

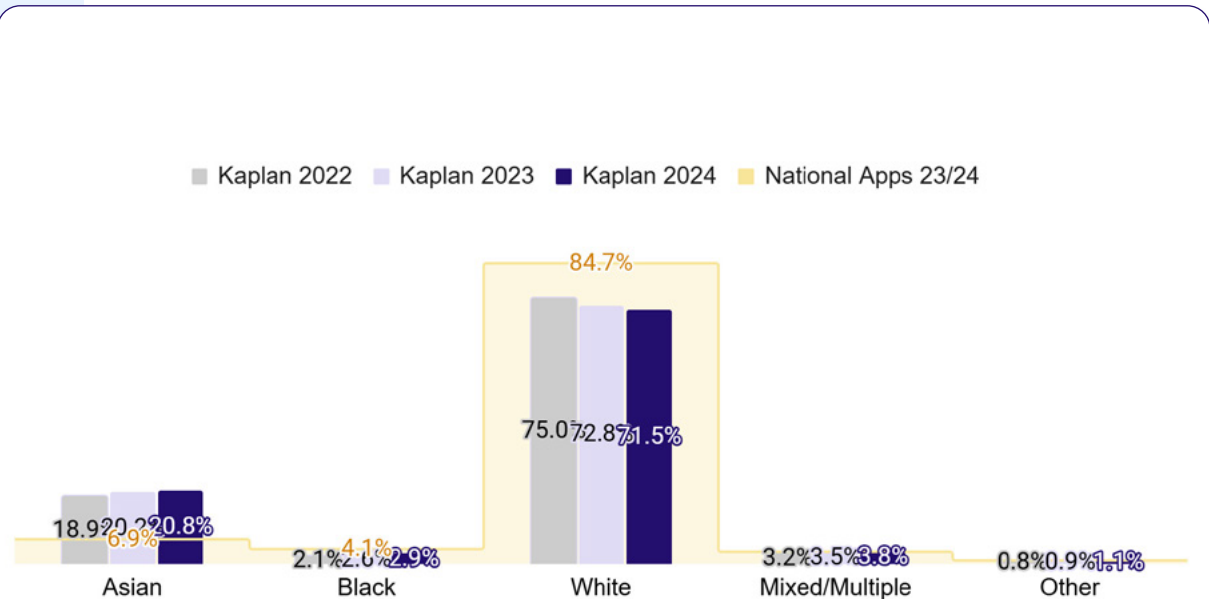


Figure 4: Kaplan apprentice learner population by ethnicity

Our learners: equality information

c. Sex

Total learner population

For the first time since reporting our learner population in 2022, we've seen a shift in the gender split of Kaplan learners, reversing what we saw in 2023 to have slightly more male than female learners (51% to 49% male/female split). This is in contrast to the national picture from the HESA data, where there are 56.9% female learners and 43.1% male learners.

The overall HESA baseline has fallen in the previous year for female learners by 2.3% which matches the trend we see when it comes to the slight reduction in female learners. In contrast to this, we see the HESA baseline figure for males also increasing 2.3% overall which correlates with the trend we see with Kaplan's total learner population for 2024.

Apprentice learner population

Kaplan has a higher proportion of male apprentices compared to national apprenticeship data (59.7% vs 51.2%) and this gap has continued to grow. This disparity highlights the potential need for targeted efforts to attract more female learners into apprenticeships.

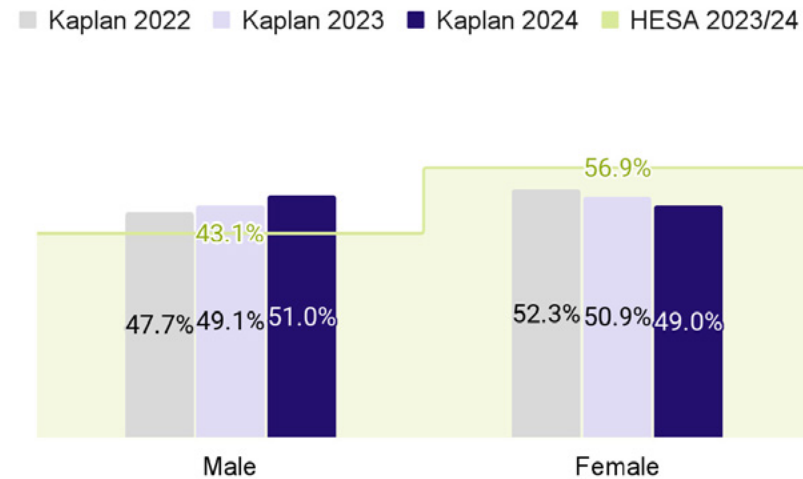


Figure 5: Total Kaplan learner population by sex

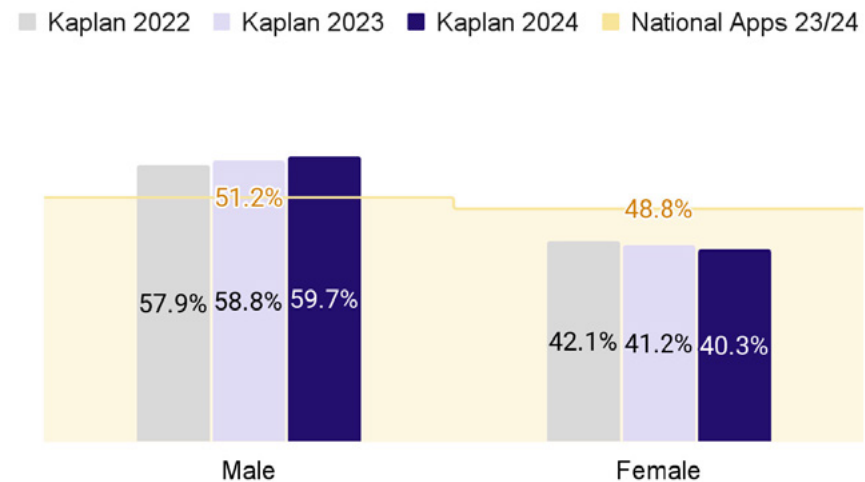


Figure 6: Kaplan apprentice learner population by sex

Our learners: equality information

d. Disability

Total learner population

Although considerably below the national proportion of learners with disabilities (17.7%), Kaplan has seen significant growth from 5.0% to 6.1% of learners reporting a disability between 2023 to 2024. This represents a 10% uplift compared with the previous year, moving Kaplan closer to the national level of representation. Notably, Kaplan saw an increase at a time when the HESA baseline dropped from the previous year.

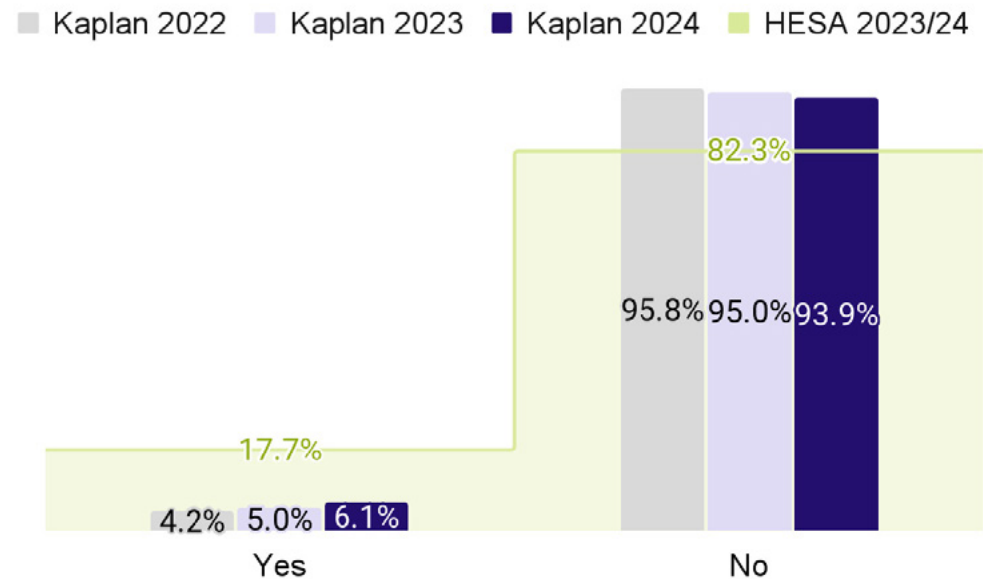


Figure 7: Total Kaplan learner population by disability

Our learners: equality information

d. Disability

Apprentice learner population

In 2024, 13% of Kaplan's apprentice learner population reported a disability, bringing us closer in line with the National Apprenticeship Starts figure of 15.3%. While we still slightly underrepresent learners with disabilities, the increase from 8.3% in 2022 to 13% represents a significant 57% growth.

The higher proportion of apprentices who declare a disability, compared to the overall learning population, may be attributed to their eligibility for additional funding. This increase also reflects the positive impact of our continuous efforts to enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of both our classroom and online learning environments. We are committed to ensuring that the support we provide effectively addresses the diverse needs of all learners.

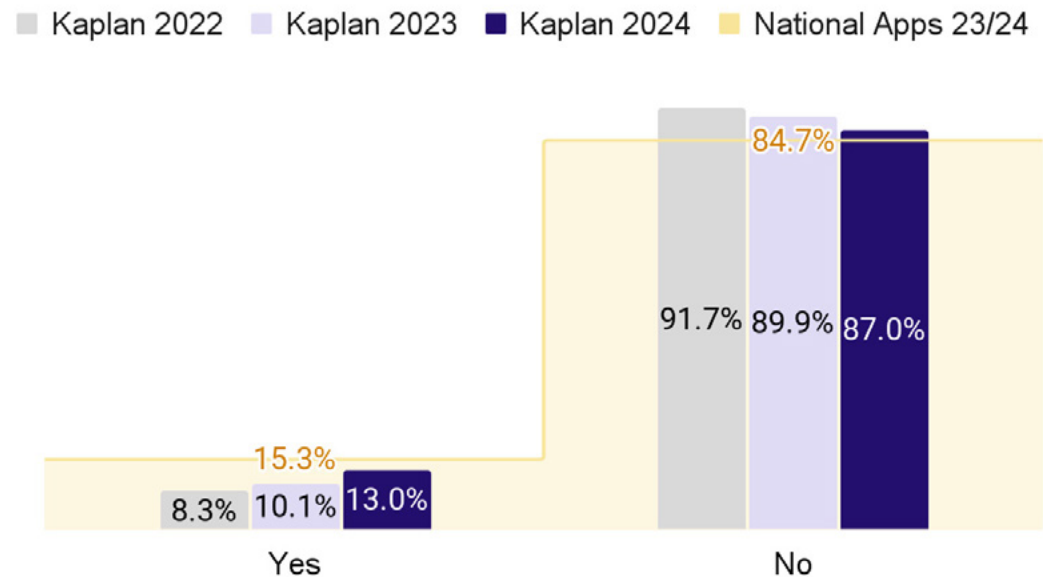


Figure 8: Kaplan Apprentice learner population by disability

Looking ahead

We take pride in the significant steps we have made toward our learner inclusion priorities at Kaplan.

In 2025, as workplaces and education continue to evolve - with the rise of AI, and an increasing focus on social mobility we ensure our focus and commitments evolve too.

There is no denying that the recent government decision to remove Level 7 apprenticeship funding for learners aged 22 and over from January 2026 will present a significant challenge for young people from diverse backgrounds seeking to enter the financial and professional services sectors. However, this only strengthens our determination to widen access. Now, more than ever, we are committed to breaking down barriers, championing apprenticeships, and working harder to ensure that opportunities remain open to all. We will continue to advocate for accessible routes into the sector and drive meaningful change.



Looking ahead

Our goals for 2025 include:

Using insights to drive improvements

- ✓ Continue to use our own data and broader societal demographics to identify learners that might be adversely affected by underrepresentation, or underachievement. We'll establish reasoning and drive forward change where required.
- ✓ Investigate the link between deferrals and specific learner demographics, offering targeted support where needed. We will encourage deferred learners to rebook exams and provide targeted mental health support, including pre-exam centre visits to reduce anxiety.



Widening participation

- ✓ We are committed to increasing inclusivity for apprenticeship candidates by removing barriers and creating equal opportunities. Our goal is to ensure that learners from all backgrounds can develop their careers through apprenticeships. We will support clients in achieving this by promoting the use of inclusive language in job descriptions and by facilitating hiring decisions based on skills, rather than solely on education or experience.
- ✓ Further develop, strengthen and expand partnerships with key external organisations such as Access Accountancy, the Sutton Trust, Movement to Work, and the Prince's Trust to develop initiatives that promote wider access and inclusion within the profession.
- ✓ Raising awareness of apprenticeships and continuing to provide free, tailored career boost support sessions to schools, broadening our geographical reach.
- ✓ Use our platforms to celebrate successes and champion learner inclusion through the power of positive role models.
- ✓ Enhance our collaboration with the Breaking Barriers ACCA sponsorship programme to optimise learner support, including closer monitoring and targeting support.
- ✓ Launch a joint bursary scheme with AAT to support six unemployed learners in completing AAT Level 2 and developing job-ready skills, helping them secure future apprenticeship opportunities.

Looking ahead

Collaboration with clients

- ✓ To help our clients better understand the importance of learner inclusion and how they can positively impact outcomes and retention, we will organise initiatives aimed at sharing knowledge, raising awareness, and fostering collaboration.
- ✓ We'll host a client webinar to highlight the impact of learner inclusion on outcomes and retention. Afterward, we'll share anonymised research findings to raise awareness of common learner inclusion challenges and the support Kaplan offers in recruitment and retention.
- ✓ Provide specific SME firm advice on how they can continue to support apprentices post funding changes for Level 7 apprenticeships.
- ✓ Produce bias awareness and inclusion content for employers.
- ✓ Champion the work of the Multicultural Apprenticeship and Skills Alliance, and introduce two clients to join as patrons.
- ✓ Explore how tutors can help build resilience in learners and develop best practice across our faculty and Academic support teams.
- ✓ Support single parents through a new resilience programme.
- ✓ Promoting additional learning needs support for learners, including adding posters and leaflets in centres to better promote the Inclusion team's drop-in sessions.

Inclusive learning experiences

- ✓ Review and improve the information displayed on our website to better support exam candidates with a disability.
- ✓ Deliver monthly life coaching sessions to ten apprentices to help them keep on track with achieving their apprenticeships.

