

Learner inclusion report

2025/26

Foreword

I am immensely proud to present our fourth annual Learner Inclusion Report, covering our progress through 2025 and outlining our strategic priorities for 2026. At Kaplan, expanding access to the financial and professional services sectors remains a core pillar of our mission. True inclusion and equal opportunity are not static goals; they require continuous adaptation, robust data analysis, and an unwavering willingness to address institutional barriers head-on.

The past year has brought exceptional validation of our efforts, with Kaplan celebrating several high-profile industry recognitions, including winning AAT's Large Training Provider of the Year, and seeing our Enrichment & Inclusion Weeks winning Resource of the Year at the PQ awards. However, 2025 also demanded significant strategic resilience. The government's decision to remove Level 7 apprenticeship funding for learners aged 22 and over from 2026 represented a structural shift for our sector. Rather than deterring us, this challenge reinforced our resolve. We have dedicated substantial resources this year to advocating for accessible entry pathways, ensuring that diverse talent continues to have an open door into professional careers.



Stacey Fitzsimmons
Managing Director,
Kaplan Professional Education

disability confident COMMITTED

MULTICULTURAL APPRENTICESHIP & SKILLS ALLIANCE

ACCESS ACCOUNTANCY

Summary of achievements

We are proud to share this summary of our 2025 Learner Inclusion and Equal Opportunities (I&EO) milestones, celebrating the tangible progress we've made in breaking down barriers, empowering diverse voices, and building a truly accessible learning community.

Widening Access & Representation: Championing Social Mobility

Our Inclusion work extends far beyond our immediate classrooms. We actively collaborate with charity partners, industry organisations and our clients to build pathways to employment:

- As proud signatories of **Access Accountancy**, we have made strong progress in our commitments – including appointing a senior champion for social mobility, implementing systematic learner socio-economic background surveying, and engaging in targeted outreach with schools in need of support. We have also amplified our impact through active membership promotion and regular attendance at sector events. To further our impact, we have secured representation across all Access Accountancy working groups (including double representation on one key group), and will be leveraging this insight to guide trustee board decisions.



- To support early-career female talent in financial sectors, we partnered with Women in Banking & Finance (WIBF) to launch a pioneering year-long apprentice membership pilot. Over one year, the five apprentices will gain real-world exposure to financial services through WIBF's network, events, career skills workshops and mentoring.

> "Progress in financial services should be driven by potential, not privilege. By opening up membership to apprentices, we're levelling the playing field from the very start of a career. This pilot with Kaplan ensures that talent and ambition, not background, determine who thrives, while building the foundations of a more diverse leadership pipeline for the future.
>
> **Anna Lane, CEO, WIBF**

Summary of achievements



- To champion inclusion and social mobility in the finance sector, we introduced a joint bursary programme with **AAT**, supporting 6 learners. Designed for aspiring professionals from disadvantaged backgrounds or underrepresented groups, this initiative fully funds AAT Level 2 training while providing bespoke career mentoring and CV building. We want to provide the learners with the “job-ready” skills required to transition into Level 3 apprenticeships.

[Read more]

> “The introduction of the Kaplan and AAT bursary is a powerful step forward in our mission to improve social mobility - not only investing in individual futures but also contributing to a more diverse and inclusive accounting profession. This bursary represents a transformative opportunity for aspiring accountants to overcome financial obstacles and embark on a rewarding professional journey.
>
> **Isla Billett, Product Director – Membership, Commercial and Charity, AAT**

Summary of achievements

- Our ongoing collaboration with **Breaking Barriers** continues to help refugees gain ACCA qualifications and rebuild their careers in the UK. Breaking Barriers recognised our tailored programme as their "Gold Standard" for corporate educational partnership.

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> I believe that without the bursary from Kaplan, I would not have been able to start the ACCA course. Getting this opportunity was unbelievable for me. Honestly, I was so excited. I had to keep checking with the advisers that it was definitely happening. Once I had the meeting with Kaplan, and they told me "we'll be happy to see you on our course", I knew it was really going to happen. It was like some kind of unbelievable dream.
>
> **Tetiana, Bursary Recipient**

> I'm truly grateful to Breaking Barriers for supporting me in obtaining this bursary and to Kaplan for providing such incredible resources through the programme. The high-quality learning materials and guidance have made a huge difference in my ACCA journey and have greatly boosted my confidence while preparing for exams.
>
> **Izatullah, Bursary Recipient**

- To help clients navigate policy changes, we designed and published an SME-specific funding guide. This tool advises smaller firms on how to continue supporting Level 7 apprentices after funding structures change, minimising the risk of reduced opportunities for underrepresented groups. Additionally, we produced a comprehensive inclusion report based on client research to share actionable insights with our network.
- Delivered Bias Awareness Training for employers.

Summary of achievements

✔ Our colleagues volunteered extensively to inspire and prepare the next generation of professionals:

Volunteer Programme	Reach	Key Achievements
RISE Volunteering	35 active volunteers supporting 47 sessions.	Exceeded our annual target of 30 volunteers; many individuals supported multiple online and in-person sessions.
Career Ready Partnership	7 interns placed across our offices for a 4 week paid summer internship and 9 mentors working with local colleges.	We offer this dynamic internship each year. It features hands-on training in business systems and soft skills. Participants then complete rotational department experience to build industry understanding and career readiness. In addition to the internships, we have mentors who mentor an individual for 10 months during the programme, with structured discussion themes and outcomes. We've also delivered workplace visits at Kaplan, and masterclasses at local colleges to young people on the Career Ready programme. Read more
10,000 Interns Foundation	8 interns placed in our Manchester office for a 12 week paid summer internship.	Another annual initiative, the programme offers comprehensive training and departmental rotations, paired with senior leadership mentorship and networking opportunities to foster professional growth and industry insight.
Career Boost	Over 20 volunteers enlisted to support the initiative.	Our free career readiness programme supporting sixth form and college students saw continued uptake. Feedback from one of our sessions demonstrates significant improvements in student career preparedness: Understanding of apprenticeship pathways **rose from an average score of 3.00 to 4.57** *out of* **5** . **100%** **of participants reported learning something valuable:** from CV writing techniques, to a deeper understanding of recruitment processes and they left feeling better equipped to plan their next step. Read more

> "These opportunities are, quite literally, life-transforming for them as they begin to think about their careers, and I can see that their time at Kaplan has been an impactful one.
>
> **Nicola Day-Coiley, Partnerships Lead (England), Career Ready**



Accessible & inclusive learning resources

Learning materials should be barrier-free and accessible to every learner. Over the past year, we have made significant technical and structural updates to our learning environments:

- ✓ We upgraded our online learning content to meet Web Content and Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 standards. This involved updating video players and implementing captions across all videos for our major qualifications. Furthermore, we integrated our proprietary AI tool, Robette, to systematically generate descriptive alt text for all platform imagery.
- ✓ We completely refreshed our Linguistic Inclusion Policy across all online and printed materials to ensure clear, unbiased, and supportive language. Additionally, to level the playing field for learners from non-traditional academic backgrounds, we launched dedicated basic study skills content on MyKaplan specifically designed to ease the transition into demanding professional qualifications.
- ✓ Our blog features a broad collection of articles that foster inclusion and provide valuable support to our learners. Articles published in 2025 include:
  - "Deaf people – you can do it" Abbas' apprenticeship journey
  - Five ways AI can support neurodivergent learners
  - Social mobility, security, stability, and skills for life: Malachi Swen



- Professional growth, opportunities, advocacy, and the power of diversity: Praise's story
- Irsa Hussain: How honouring her parents' sacrifices shaped her career
- How Lillie Blackburn is shaping others' lives as well as her own
- Mastering money: Essential financial skills for life
- 10 LGBTQIA+ Professionals shaping finance, data, and tech: Lessons in innovation and inclusion
- Men's mental health: Simple steps for your well-being
- Managing stress and anxiety as a neurodivergent learner

Summary of achievements

- ✔ Our Learn Better podcast series continues to showcase expertise and fresh perspectives:
  - **Ep 45 – Closing the Gap: Race Equity in Education, Dr. Iwi Ugiagbe-Green**
    This episode explores the challenge of differential outcomes for minoritised students in higher education. The conversation unpacks key terms like equity vs. equality and minority vs. minoritised, while also analysing the data that highlights systemic gaps.
  - **Ep 46 – Living and Working with ADHD, Tania Martin**
    We explore the unique strengths neurodivergent individuals bring to a team, the importance of language and labels, and what 'reasonable adjustments' really mean.
  - **Ep 48 – The Transition from Apprentice to Professional, Irsa Hussain**
    Irsa shares her inspiring journey – from an internship with the Social Mobility Foundation to becoming an award-winning apprentice and passionate advocate for diversity in the workplace.



Inclusive delivery & focused learner support

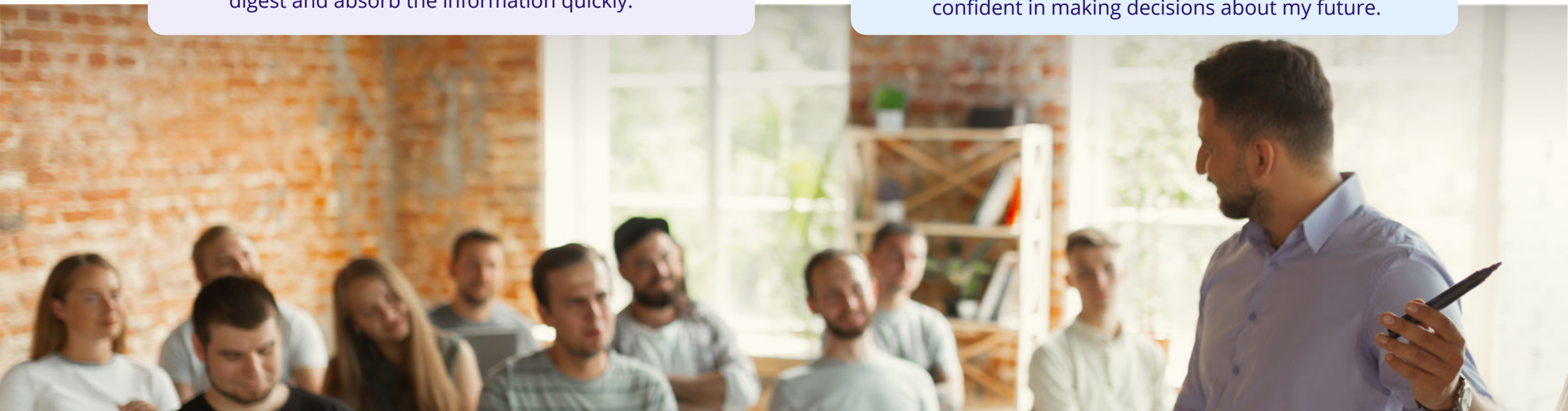
- ✓ To equip our academic delivery teams with the skills to navigate difficult conversations and support students experiencing anxiety, we ran specialised training sessions. The initiative empowers tutors to actively build resilience in our learners, ultimately helping to reduce exam deferrals.
- ✓ Empowering Resit Candidates: We piloted a dedicated cohort-based approach for learners resitting their July Advanced Case Study (CS), AF, and ARF exams. Designed to restore confidence, the programme was a resounding success:
  - **100%** of surveyed participants rated the sessions as helpful, and **88%** stated they would attend similar sessions in the future.
  - As one student shared:

> “ I like how they broke down each difficult topic to digest and absorb the information quickly.

- ✓ Our life coaching initiative targeted learner groups statistically experiencing the lowest achievement rates. The results from our second cohort highlight the programme’s life-changing potential:
  - Before the life coaching, **50%** of participants had actively considered leaving their apprenticeship. By the end of the initiative, **88% (7 out of 8)** of the coached learners were successfully on track with their apprenticeship, with two choosing to continue with the coaching into the next phase.

> “ The coaching encouraged me to achieve personal goals, boosted my confidence, and helped me push forward even when I felt overwhelmed.

> “ It was instrumental in helping me identify and pursue my professional goals... I feel more confident in making decisions about my future.



Summary of achievements

- ✓ Reviewed and improved the information displayed on our website to better support exam candidates with a disability, this is now reviewed on an annual basis.
- ✓ Supported single parents through a new Resilience Programme
- ✓ To accommodate a higher volume of students declaring additional needs, Kaplan expanded the Inclusion Team's staff, capacity, and available resources. This expansion strengthened the team's ability to offer specialised support tailored to individual needs and ensuring the focus was not solely on diagnosis. Consequently, students received enhanced targeted assistance and appropriate reasonable adjustments throughout their programmes and assessments.

> “ I just want to say a huge thank you for all of your support, assistance and patience; you've helped me massively throughout my apprenticeship with my studies and my workplace, I don't think I would've been able to achieve as much as I did without you.

- ✓ We promoted additional learning needs support for learners, including adding digital posters in centres to better promote the Inclusion Team's drop-in sessions.



Industry recognition

In 2025, Kaplan celebrated significant industry validation of our efforts to expand access and champion inclusion. Our commitment to high-quality training and accessible learning environments has been recognised through several prestigious awards, spanning across training provision, resource development, and digital innovation. We're also thrilled that many of our apprentices were recognised for their outstanding contributions.

- ✓ Our annual Enrichment and Inclusion Weeks were named "Study Resource of the Year" at the PQ Awards. These weeks provide our apprentices with vital personal and professional development through webinars led by industry specialists, thought leaders, and alumni. Covering topics ranging from career progression and entrepreneurship skills, to wellbeing and communication strategies for neurodiverse learners, these events are designed to equip apprentices with the confidence to succeed.
- ✓ We also celebrated Kaplan apprentice Malachi Swen, who won "Accountancy Apprentice of the Year". Malachi's resilience, leadership, and dedication to social mobility made him a deserving winner. As a former speaker for our Enrichment Week, his success is a testament to the programme's value. We are honoured to support Malachi and share his story of hard work and commitment to his career.



Read more about our success at the PQ awards

> It was an uplifting occasion, and I'm thrilled for Malachi for his highly deserved award. I'm also delighted that the judges have recognised our Enrichment Week and Inclusion Week provision as they provide significant opportunities for our apprentices' development - the positive impact as a result is outstanding.
>
> **Jenny Pelling, Director of Skills and Strategy, Kaplan**

Summary of achievements



- Kaplan was named “Large Training Provider of the Year” at the prestigious AAT Awards. This accolade reflects our unwavering commitment to high-quality training, which we believe is inseparable from our dedication to Inclusion and equal opportunities. The judges particularly commended our “remarkable institutional resilience” and “data-driven improvement strategy,” noting that these approaches have been instrumental in reducing achievement gaps while maintaining consistently high satisfaction ratings.

  Read more



- One of our apprentices, Niamh Clarke, from PwC, won the Level 4–7 Apprentice of the Year award at the Greater Manchester Apprenticeship and Skills Awards. This outstanding achievement recognises not just her professional excellence, but her remarkable advocacy for neurodiversity in the accounting profession.

  Read more

Summary of achievements

- ✔ Kaplan was awarded “Best Use of Technology in Training” at the Apprenticeship and Training Awards (ATA) for our “Open Question Feedback” initiative. By leveraging Generative AI to provide ACCA learners with immediate, personalised feedback, this tool serves as a key driver for accessibility and inclusion. It ensures that all learners, regardless of their individual learning pace, receive high-quality, instant support, fostering deeper engagement and confidence with complex course material. Read more

- ✔ **We were also recognised with:**
  - **Diversity and Inclusion Award:** National finalist at the ATA (Apprenticeship & Training Awards).
  - **ICT Apprentice of the Year:** Kaplan Apprentice Chloe Auger from C.I.KNOW was Highly Commended at the BCS Awards.



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 Payers data is reported for those who had an active enrolment in the calendar year 2025 and has provided further personal data, which is optional. This was completed by 36%** of all fee payers enrolling on a course in 2025. The values from these learners have then been extrapolated to represent the entirety of the Kaplan Fee Payers learner population.

Kaplan apprentice data includes anyone who was active on an apprenticeship between 1 January–31 January of the following year (eg. 2025 apprentice numbers taken from Jan 2026).

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 the 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 Start.

* 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.

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



a. Age

Total learner population

The 21–24 age bracket remains our largest learner group at 34.6% (unsurprisingly, as this is the starting age for most learners on the programmes we offer). Our focus on diversifying entry pathways is showing preliminary results: the 20 and under age bracket has seen steady year-on-year growth, rising to 9.3%, although our overall growth looks similar to HESA trends, our upward trend has been more consistent. As our starting point was much lower, this steady increase represents a much more significant achievement for us proportionally.

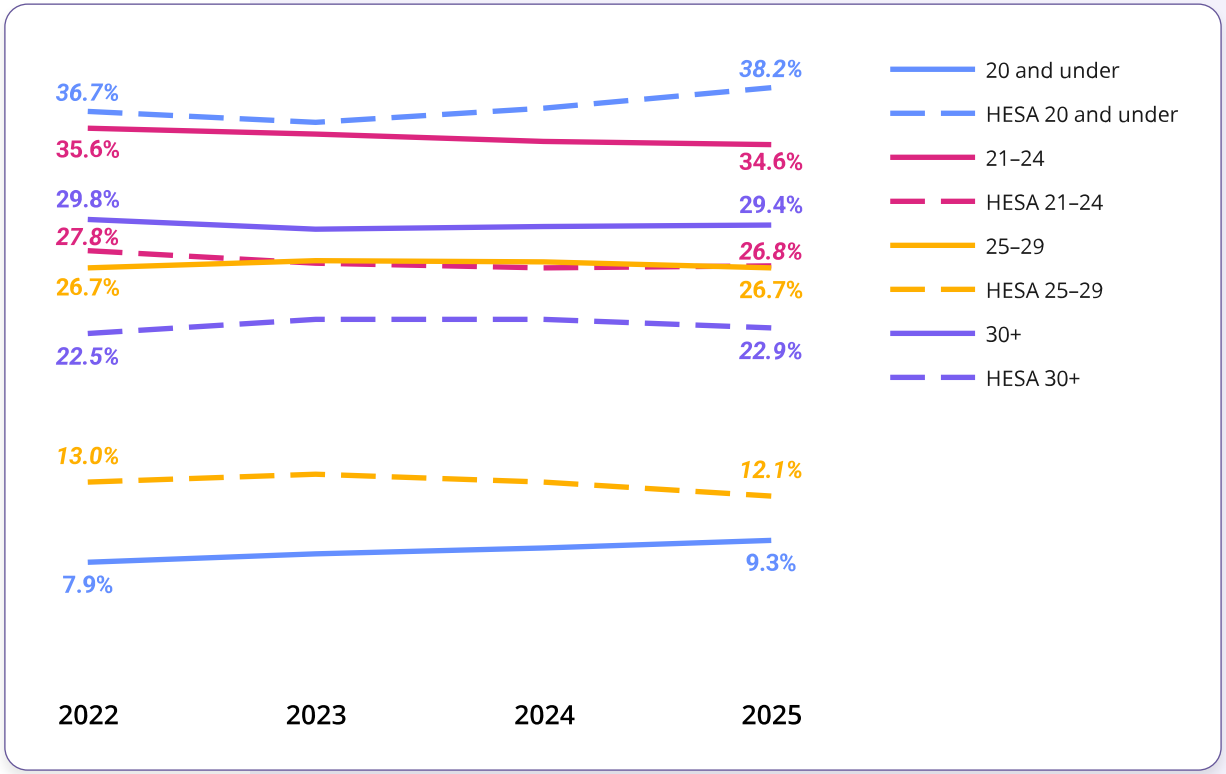


Figure 1: Total Kaplan learner population by age

a. Age

Apprentice learner population

The 19–24 age bracket remains our largest apprentice group, primarily driven by enrolments on Level 7 programmes. While Kaplan remains underrepresented in the under-19 category compared to national averages (a reflection of the sectors we support), our 2025 performance remains strong, relative to previous years.

Although our under-19 demographic shifted from 5.6% to 5.2% YoY, this 7.1% relative decline aligns with a broader 4.4% downturn in national apprenticeship data, suggesting that movement is influenced by external demographic shifts. Crucially, representation remains significantly higher than the 4.0% recorded in 2022.

While these fluctuations are mirrored across the apprenticeship landscape, we remain committed to diversifying entry pathways. Apprenticeships offer a vital alternative to traditional routes, providing young people with essential work opportunity, a salary, and the professional behaviours required to thrive. For all learners, but perhaps young learners most noticeably, apprenticeships are often life-changing, facilitating a seamless transition from education into a long-term career.

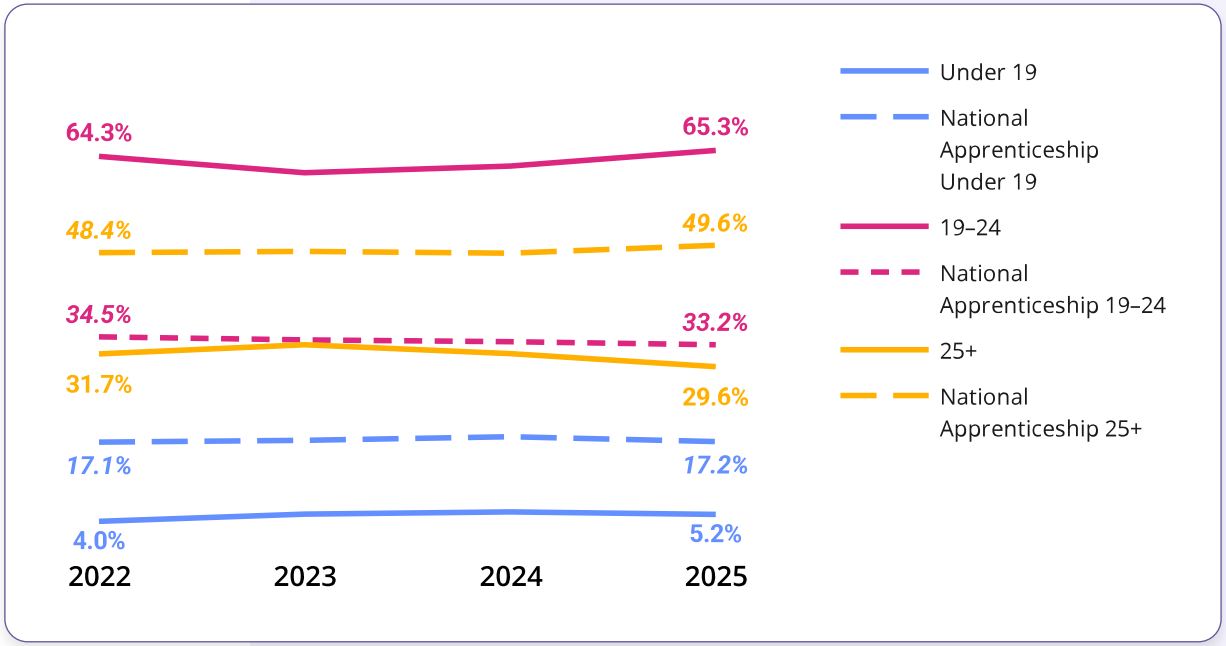


Figure 2: Kaplan Apprentice learner population by age

b. Ethnicity

Total learner population

Our Asian learner population has maintained its high level of representation, holding steady at 20.1% and consistently above the HESA baseline, which has now risen to 14.4%. However, the modest growth we saw last year among Black learners has unfortunately reversed, dipping from 4.4% back down to 4.0%, however the national baseline has continued to climb to 9.3%. We continue to encourage applications from Black learners and support their progression. Our commitments to initiatives such as our partnership with the 10,000 Interns Foundation, the Black Apprentice Network, Career Ready and many others are designed to promote opportunities to underrepresented groups.

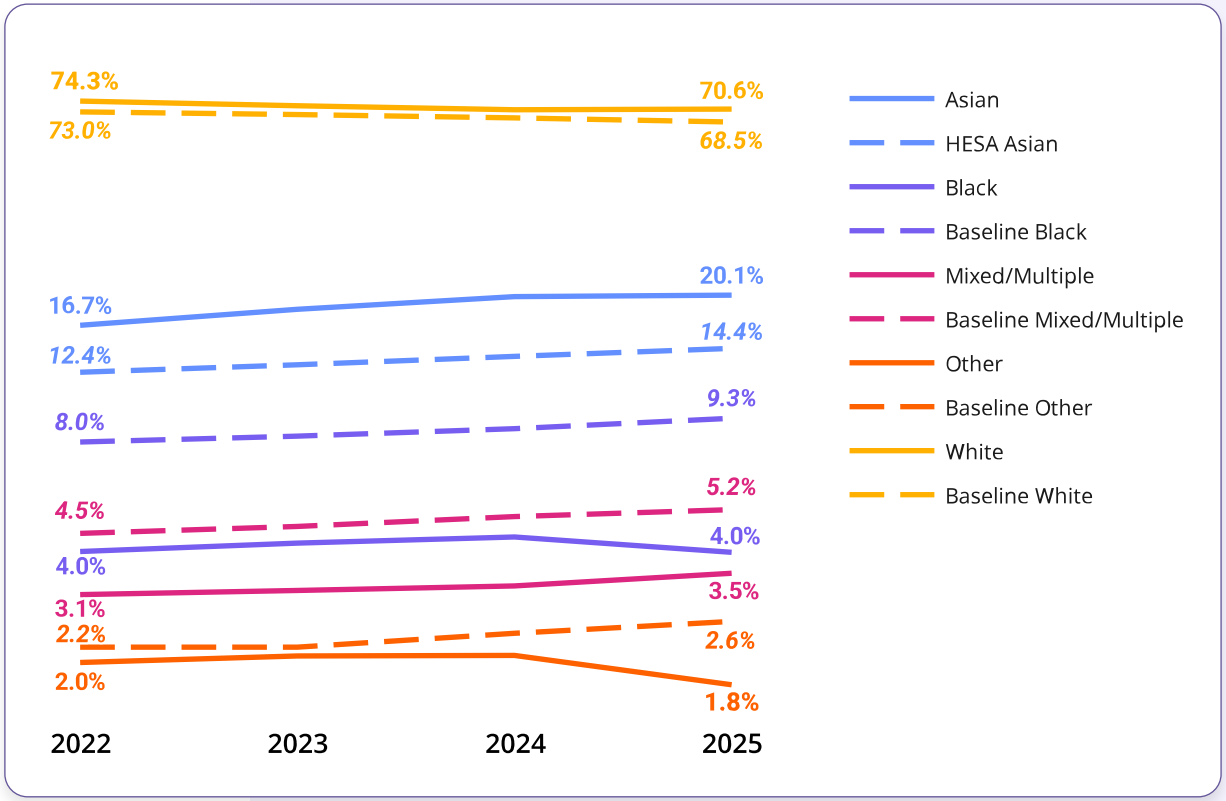


Figure 3: Total Kaplan learner population by ethnicity

b. Ethnicity

Apprentice learner population

Kaplan's apprentice ethnicity profile is steadily diversifying. We continue to see exceptionally strong Asian student representation, consistently outperforming baseline data. Meanwhile, the proportion of White students has declined from 75.0% in 2022 to 71.5% in 2025, remaining below the contracting national baseline.

Representation among Black students has grown encouragingly from 2.1% to 3.3%, though it remains slightly behind the rising baseline of 4.6%. Mixed/ Multiple heritage representation has also expanded to 4.0%, staying ahead of baseline growth, while the Other category remains stable. Together, these trends confirm our progressive diversification.

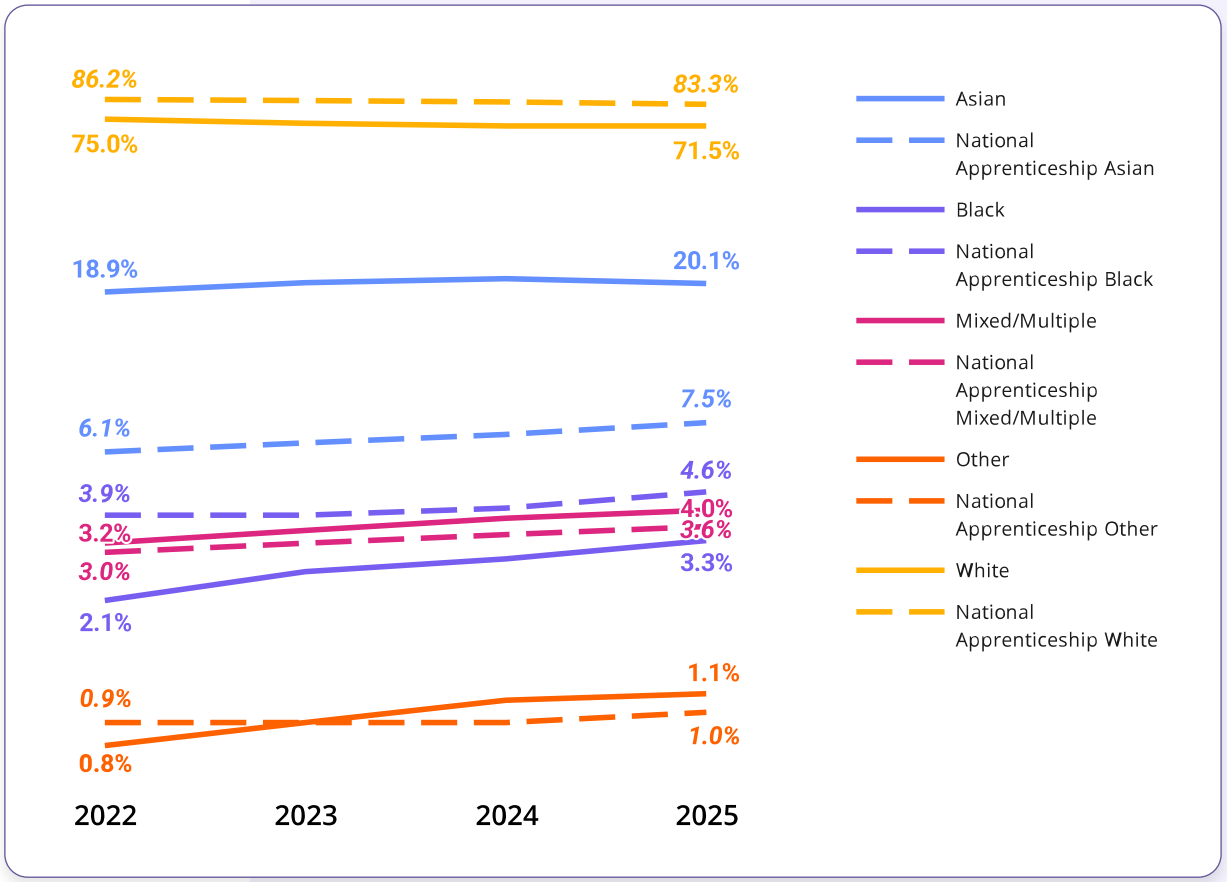


Figure 4: Kaplan apprentice learner population by ethnicity

c. Sex

Total learner population

Continuing the trend first observed last year, where our gender split shifted to 51% male and 49% female, our 2025 data shows this movement has progressed further to 52.8% male and 47.2% female. This marks a notable change from 2022/2023, when female learners formed the majority.

Apprentice learner population

Kaplan has a higher proportion of male apprentices compared to national apprenticeship data (52.8% vs 43.9%) and this gap has continued to grow. This highlights the importance of our commitment to supporting female talent entering the industry, with our partnership with Women in Banking & Finance (WIBF) remaining a crucial component.

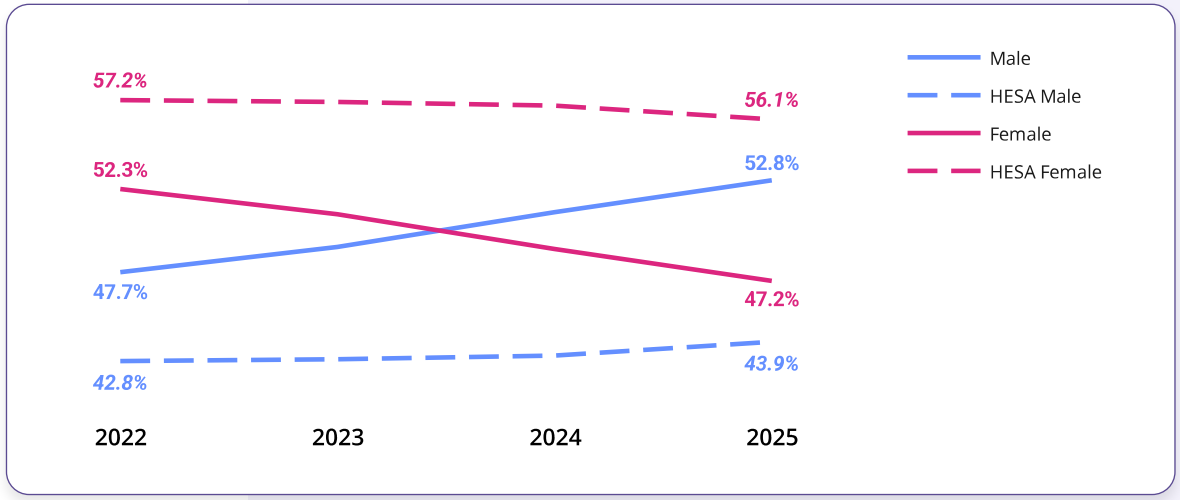


Figure 5: Total Kaplan learner population by sex

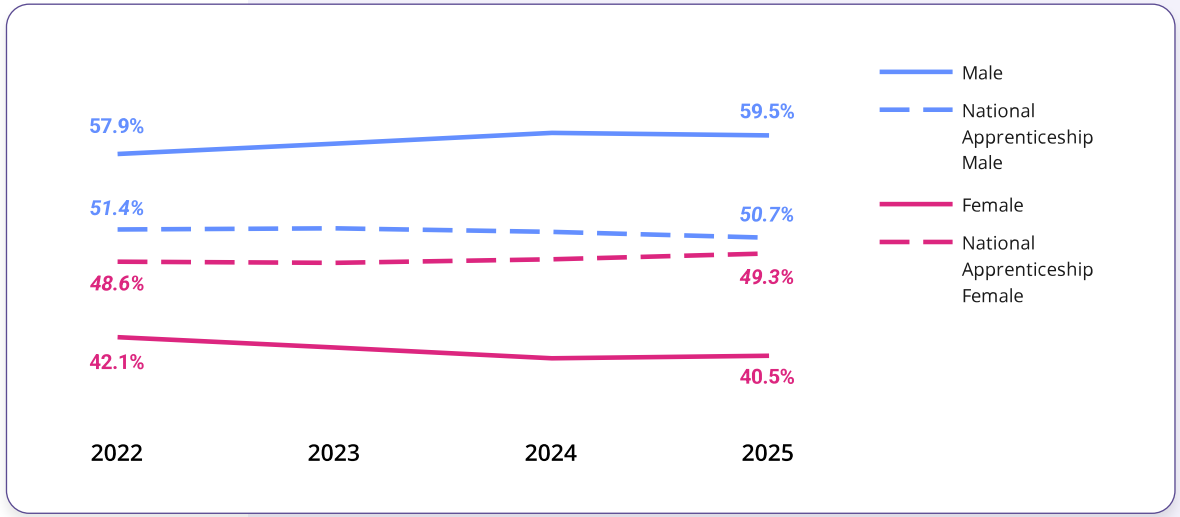


Figure 6: Kaplan apprentice learner population by sex

d. Disability

Total learner population

Our disability representation has demonstrated steady year-on-year growth, more than doubling from 4.2% in 2022 to 9.2% in 2025, with 2024 - 2025 seeing the sharpest growth. While the HESA baseline has also risen, climbing from 15.8% to 19.1% over the same period, our accelerated growth rate has enabled us to begin closing the representation gap.

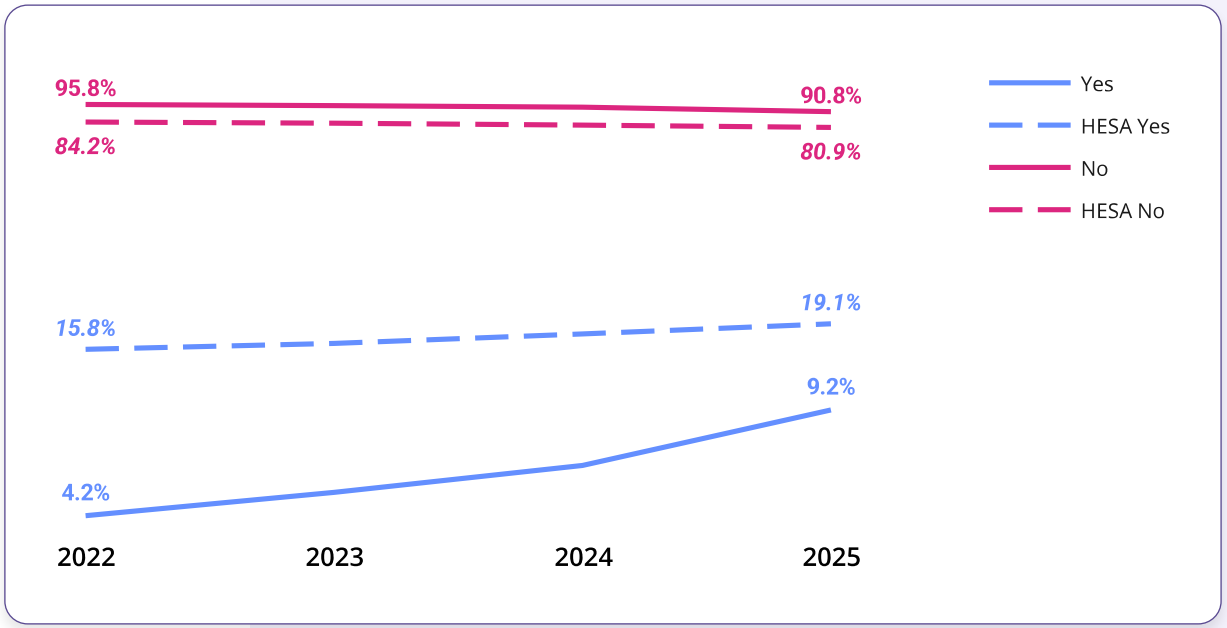


Figure 7: Total Kaplan learner population by disability

d. Disability

Apprentice learner population

Between 2022 and 2025 we've seen a strong, consistent upward trend in the representation of individuals reporting a disability, ultimately closing and surpassing the gap to the National Apprenticeship Starts figure. In 2022, our proportion stood at 8.3%, notably trailing the baseline of 12.9%, by 2025, our representation reached 16.8%, successfully overtaking the baseline of 16.1% for the first time during this four-year period, highlighting significant and steady progress in inclusion.

The rise in apprentice declarations of additional needs reflects enhanced awareness alongside updated data collection methods and refined procedures. These ensure apprentices are identified at the earliest opportunity to receive timely support. Key contributing factors include:

- Heightened awareness across teams driven by targeted training, guidance, and resources.
- Enhanced referral mechanisms that streamline access to assistance.
- Greater learner understanding of the support systems available to them.
- Stronger collaboration and liaison with both internal and external teams.

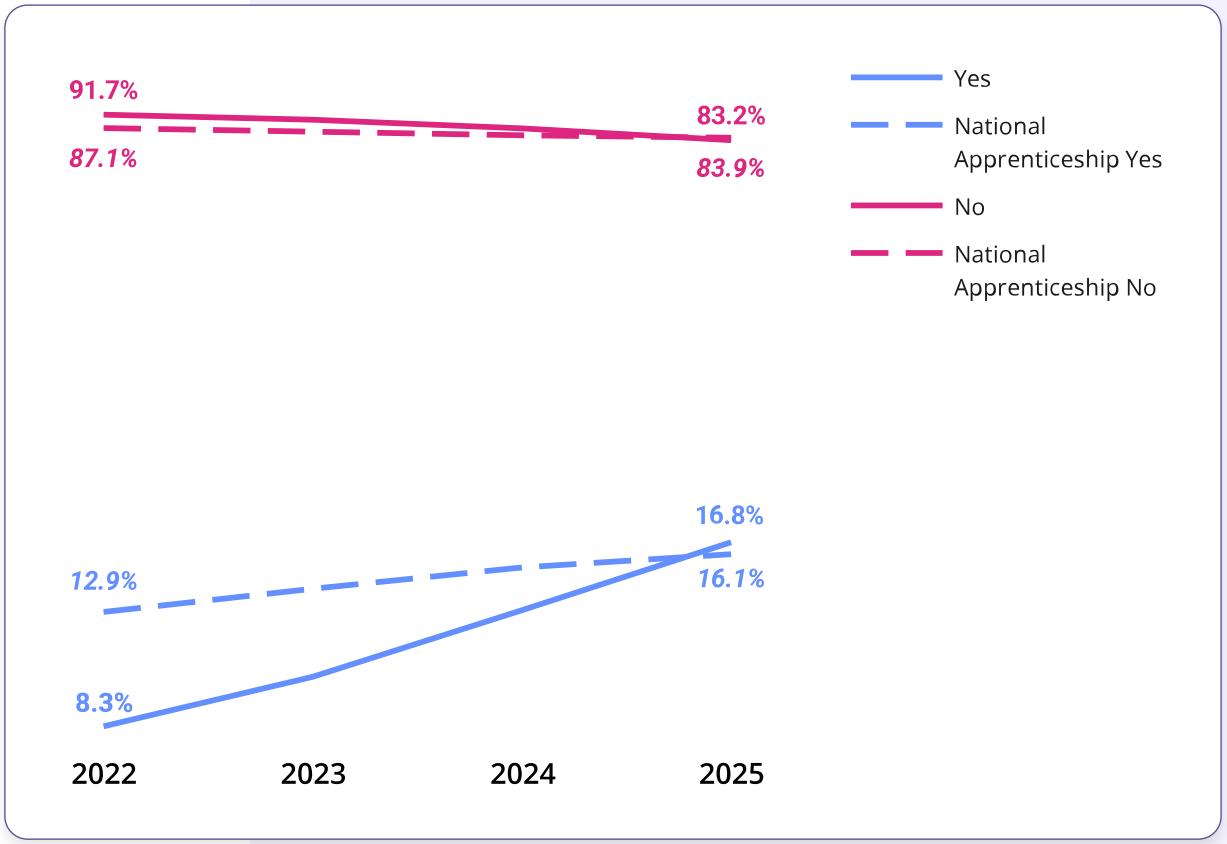


Figure 8: Kaplan Apprentice learner population by disability

Looking ahead

Our 2026 Inclusion and Equal Opportunities (I&EO) strategy focuses on leveraging data-driven insights to improve learner participation and progression, automating accessibility processes, and fostering strategic external partnerships to reduce achievement gaps.

- **Data-Driven Attraction:** Strengthen external partnerships and expand the Career Boost programme to increase apprenticeship diversity, while using data to identify and address barriers to achievement.
- **Accessibility & Content Standards:** Automate Accessible Learning Needs (ALN) processes and establish best practice standards for Inclusion & Equal Opportunity in digital learning, including AI-model integration.
- **Improved Learner Outcomes:** Implement targeted support for progression, including a cohorted approach to resit support, tutor-led resilience training, and peer-to-peer mentoring.
- **Strategic External Engagement:** Conduct research on the impact of Level 7 apprenticeship funding removal, formalise partnerships with social mobility organisations, and publish a white paper demonstrating the efficacy of inclusion strategies.

