

Testimonials on Level 7 Apprenticeships

Over 400 signatories to the letter to the Chancellor on the defunding of level 7 apprenticeships [sent 11 December 2024] also provided a testimonial on the importance of level 7 apprenticeships.

Contents

- [Testimonials from representative groups](#)

Testimonials from employers, training providers and industry professionals:

- [Health, social care and life sciences sectors](#)
- [Engineering, construction and built environment sectors](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Digital](#)
- [Creative and cultural industries](#)
- [Local government](#)
- [Education sector and training providers](#)
- [Additional sectors](#)

Testimonials from current apprentices:

- [Health, social care and life sciences sectors](#)
- [Engineering, construction and built environment sectors](#)
- [Local government](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Additional sectors](#)

Representative groups

Our universities are involved in delivering a large number of level 7 apprenticeships, across a number of subject areas, which make a significant contribution to the economic development and growth of their respective regions. The impact of this work in growth sector, public services and in the health sector and NHS is a vital component of the impact of universities on skills and growth in our regional economies.

Professor Jackie Dunne, Chair of Cathedrals Group of Universities, Cathedrals Group of Universities

As the voice of the UK's business and management education sector, we believe restricting level 7 apprenticeships is counter to the Government's growth mission and the Industrial Strategy. Level 7 apprenticeships, such as the Senior Leader Apprenticeship, improve management practice and productivity across all 8 sectors identified in the Industrial Strategy, and across health and social care.

We urge the Government to make exemptions for public sector bodies and SMEs to continue to use levy funds for level 7 apprenticeships and allow all levy-paying employers to use the proposed flexible element of their levy budget to spend on level 7 apprenticeships if they choose to. The Government should also stipulate that levy funding should only be spent on verified and regulated training and qualifications and only delivered by providers based in the UK. To pay for all levels apprenticeships up to level 7, for all ages, the Government can close the gap between the levy receipts and the levy budget, which the Office for Budget Responsibility estimates would make available a further £800m in 2024/25.

Flora Hamilton, Chief Executive, Chartered Association of Business Schools

I am signing this letter in support of the continuation of the Level 7 Ecologist Apprenticeship. A thriving ecological sector is essential to achieving the government's environmental targets and supports key industries such as construction, particularly following the implementation of mandatory biodiversity net gain in February 2024. The sector is currently experiencing significant skills and capacity shortages, particularly in senior roles where Level 7 apprenticeships can make a meaningful difference. Without levy funding, most employers in the sector would be unable to fully finance these apprenticeships, making the continuation of this standard critical to upskilling the workforce and meeting growing demand.

Brian Heppenstall, Education and Careers Manager, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management

The Chartered Management Institute (CMI) is concerned that restricting the use of apprenticeship levy funds for Level 7 will have unintended consequences impacting three of the five government missions - economic growth, public sector reform and opportunity for all.

Evidence links management capability to productivity and growth, yet the lack of business investment in management skills remains a significant barrier to achieving key ambitions. According to the latest Employer Skills Survey, only 32% of employers offered management training in 2022. This low level, combined with the pending additional employer cost of increased National Insurance premiums and increases to the national living and minimum wages, makes it less likely that employers will be in a position to invest in employee training.

Contrary to popular myth, CMI data indicate that less than 10% of Level 7 apprentices are in FTSE 350 companies and nearly 60% of all Level 7 Senior Leader apprentices come from the public sector, with 27% specifically from the health sector, and 26% from SMEs.

CMI's independent research findings with Oxford Economics show significant productivity gains associated with management apprenticeships: apprentices qualified in 2019 are projected to add £7bn to the economy by the end of 2029, based on an initial training investment of £2bn - a 300% return on investment.

Petra Wilton, Director of Policy and External Affairs, Chartered Management Institute

Level 7 Apprenticeships are a progression pathway for future creative leaders. 48% of Level 7 apprentices who answered the DfE's Apprenticeship Evaluation in 2023 were first generation students, with one fifth living in the most deprived areas of the country.

Level 7 provides critical skills in leadership and specialist creative expertise that employers actually need. Level 7 fulfils the Government's own Industrial Strategy priorities and, in particular for the Creative Industries, are a vital intervention promoting workforce development, diversity and inclusion.

The Creative Industries are a UK success story. Training and creative education feature heavily as key to the growth of the sector. The sector is mobilising in a monumental way to use apprenticeship provision as its primary source of CPD. With help from a £5.8 million investment in facilities from the OFS, Leicester Media School at De Montfort University has developed apprenticeships level 6 User Experience Professional and level 6 Broadcast Systems Engineer, as well as a level 7 VFX Supervisor standard. Greenwich University has developed a Level 7 Creative Industries Production Management Apprenticeship. Teesside University has 50 apprentices on a Level 7 Curator apprenticeship. There are many more examples across Higher Education where innovative pathways to Level 7 creative leadership are being developed.

Defunding Level 7 now will stifle the opportunity for digital-first creative professionals to continue their upwards progression through 'a well-designed apprenticeship system which could be transformative for the creative sector' as outlined in the APPG for Creative Diversity report.

Sandra Booth, Director of Policy and External Relations, Council for Higher Education Art and Design

Our industrial members cover a wide range of sector, size, location and activity. We have levy paying medium and large companies as well as many small businesses that are exempt. However, across the board they are all seeking skilled engineers, scientists, technicians and rely on strong management and leadership to develop and grow their business. They recruit and develop at all levels and all ages, including Level 7.

We also have University members, who are both providers and receivers of Level 7 Apprenticeships. In addition to the funding gap created by an immigration policy that has vastly reduced the number of overseas students, a decrease in revenue through Level 7 apprenticeships would further worsen this situation. The risk is that reduced capacity for provision would impede the opportunity for potential apprentices from all sectors.

Reducing funding for Level 7 Apprenticeships would lead directly to a reduction in their uptake and provision, perpetuating the leadership and management skills gap and hampering one of the key government missions: Growth.

Steve Brambley, Chief Executive, GAMBICA

We are concerned about the impact that cuts to Level 7 apprenticeships will have on economic growth in London and beyond. Increases in skill levels and high-skill occupations lead to higher productivity and growth. Level 7 apprenticeships are an important route to achieve this and are essential in training the leaders we will need for the future. They will be operating in an increasingly complex economy and will need to navigate technological and digital advances. We urge government to look again at the vital role Level 7 apprenticeships play in developing our public and private sector workforces and reconsider its view.

Jolanta Edwards, Director of Strategy, London Higher

As the Professional Body for Town Planners, the Royal Town Planning Institute is deeply concerned with the proposed Government reforms to the funding of L7 apprenticeships. The Chartered Town Planner degree apprenticeship is an L7 apprenticeship which provides an excellent pipeline of qualified town planners into an already under resourced sector which will be significantly impacted by the suggested funding reforms.

This Government is driving forward a growth strategy and has already identified the key role that planners play in delivering this mission and to remove levy funding will result in the demise of this apprenticeship, cutting off the pipeline of much needed resource in the sector.

In the Autumn Budget it was announced that the Government would support 300 new planners into the planning system. The Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship is a vehicle through which a capacity boost can be delivered. With up to 70% of those studying the Chartered Town Planner apprenticeship working and training in Local Government, without access to levy funding they will not be able to train and enter the planning workforce.

Dr Victoria Hills, Chief Executive, Royal Town Planning Institute

Innovation and creativity are key to advancing science and our knowledge. With the introduction of Level 7 apprenticeships in bioinformatics, research science, and regulatory affairs, we have enabled young career professionals to expand and specialise in their fields and developed our existing workforce, who want to expand and grow as their careers develop.

The employer members of the Science Industry Partnership believe that defunding L7 programmes will harm future talent pipelines and limit options. These standards are niche and small in numbers, with limited but specialised providers who are highly engaged in working with the industry to tailor content; we fear we will lose providers if funding is removed.

Professor Malcolm Skingle CBE, Chair, Science Industry Partnership

TunnelSkills represents the interests of the UK tunnelling industry in the area of skills, training, qualifications and competence. We are currently supporting an industry-led group developing a

Level 7 apprenticeship standard for Tunnel Engineers, a specialised profession within the civil engineering industry which is highly relevant to the UK's current and future infrastructure needs, as the UK's exploitation and development of underground space progresses.

Tunnel Engineering is a standalone occupation, for which a specialised skill set is required. Tunnelling combines engineering disciplines across geotechnical, structural and materials engineering in a manner that other civil engineering streams do not. The development of the standard was initiated because employers identified a lack of employees with the relevant skills in the UK and a lack of training opportunities available for their staff.

To achieve chartered status with any one of a small number of relevant professional bodies, Tunnel Engineers are required to demonstrate sufficient experience and a relevant academic base, which is in the vast majority of cases provided by Level 7 training. Tunnel Engineers typically specialise from general civil engineering at an early stage in their career (at graduate level), although this may happen further on during their career progression. In either case, regardless of age or career progression, Level 7 training provides them with new and relevant skills which they do not possess as more general civil or structural engineers.

We believe that the Level 7 Tunnel Engineer standard should be funded via the apprenticeship levy, so that employers may train the next generation of Tunnel Engineers.

Samantha French, Group Training Officer, TunnelSkills (Trailblazer member)

Employers, training providers and industry professionals

Health, social care and life sciences sectors

They are important to our organisation and our people as an NHS Trust. We often have limited budget to develop our managers and leaders, and the ability to access the Levy to fund and support Level 7 qualifications enables us to develop our leaders of the future.

Wes Streeting states the NHS is broken and suggests NHS managers should be sacked for not listening, so this should be a time that we invest rather than remove opportunities to improve. We have a number of people who have accessed level 7 qualifications at our Trust and to improve the NHS for not just future generations, but for today we must invest in all levels of staff. We shouldn't assume that promotion due to experience in a relevant role equals knowledge, skills and behaviours for senior leadership. If we move forward to regulating 'managers' we need to set standards for them to attain and maintain, this is already mapped out to the level 7 apprenticeship standards set by the CMI. To ensure the values of the NHS persist and expand we must continue to develop staff not only through knowledge, but also through skills and behaviours. This will only happen if apprenticeships are not only continued but expanded.

Karen Uttley, Deputy Chief People Officer, Ashford and St Peters Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships play a critical role in the Primary Care workforce, and Advanced Practice in particular. NHSE Digital Badge qualified Advanced Practitioners provide quality care for patients within a robust nationally agreed governance framework, particularly where there is a shortage of GPs. Without access to Level 7 apprenticeship funding this would not be affordable to Primary Care. Without these apprenticeships, the government strategy of increasing Advanced Practitioner numbers would fall at the first hurdle and add immense pressure on an already 'at risk' major component of the NHS. Over the last three years we have seen a steady increase across BSW Primary Care in uptake of Level 7 Advanced Practice Apprenticeships using transfer of Levy funds, with more planned in future years.

Dr Kevin Foreman, Education Facilitator, BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire Primary Care Training Hub

Level 7 apprenticeships enable staff with potential to achieve leadership, practical and research skills whilst undertaking employment activities. They provide the learner with the opportunity to learn from peers and leaders within the workplace, improving confidence and competence. At the conclusion of their studies they will possess transferable skills suitable for all sectors.

Carole Dale, IUC Lead Clinical Practitioner, BrisDoc Healthcare Services

Level 7 apprenticeship funding is crucial in enabling our General Practice workforce to gain access to academic opportunities, providing 'on the job' learning and creating a standard and level of practice that is considered invaluable in retaining the workforce and delivering on the NHSE frameworks. Without access to this funding, we would significantly reduce the number of individuals becoming NHSE accredited Advanced Practitioners, therefore failing on our pledge to increase these numbers and opening up the window for poor patient care and lack of professional integrity.

Kerri Magnus, Education & Development Lead and Advanced Practice Lead for General Practice, Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire (BNSSG) Primary Care Training Hub

Level 7 apprenticeships are important in our Trust as they are part of our developmental pathways for Nursing, Midwifery & AHPs. They are also vital to Leadership and Management development for both clinical and administrative staff/managers.

Jan Marote, Deputy Director of Education and Head of Faculty of Nursing, Buck Health & Social Care Academy, Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust

Level 7 apprenticeship funding is crucial as it enables individuals to access advanced education and training while remaining in employment, fostering both personal and professional growth. It helps businesses develop highly skilled leaders and specialists, addressing skills gaps and driving innovation. By supporting accessible pathways to Master's-level qualifications, it promotes economic growth, social mobility, and the upskilling of the workforce, ensuring organisations stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market. It also facilitates the upskilling of managers promoted internally and underscores that apprenticeships are available at all levels of the business, emphasizing that learning opportunities are not limited to the younger population.

Catherine Martin, Head of People, Caring Homes Group

L7 apprenticeships are crucial for every sector across the country - whether they are currently being utilised or form part of future plans through Trailblazer. We are proud of our investment in apprenticeships, which we are committed to continue fulfilling. As an organisation, we've witnessed firsthand the positive impact of how apprenticeships support learners to fulfil career aspirations. These resulted from the vast funding changes introduced with the levy in 2017 along with providing employers autonomy of spending and control of their fund. Most importantly, apprenticeships have provided an opportunity for upskilling and career change for learners of every age - not just young people. Whilst there's often a focus of apprenticeships supporting young people, we mustn't forget the huge opportunity they provide for older adults and how these are being positively received.

Mature learners often have financial commitments and dependents resulting in an inability to invest in themselves professionally. Apprenticeships provide a funded opportunity for career growth, regardless of age, combined with protected learning time during working hours. With the ever-increasing National Minimum Wage closing the gap of skilled professionals, it is imperative that the entire work force have opportunities to develop.

We believe the proposed funding changes with L7 apprenticeships will have a catastrophic negative effect on the workforce across every sector and the economy. Within veterinary, we're only just scraping the surface with L7 apprenticeships and had bold ambitions for what the future would hold.

Removing this option crushes our hopes of bringing accessibility and diversity to the profession - a solution we believe was held in L7 apprenticeships.

Gemma Buck, Apprenticeship Programme Manager, CVS (UK) Ltd (Trailblazer chair and Trailblazer member)

Level 7 courses are key to the development of our senior or more experienced staff who may not have access to traditional routes of study. If we were no longer able to offer courses at this level it would have a detrimental effect on our ACP workforce.

Leah O'Beirne, Apprenticeship Lead, Dorset County Hospital (Former apprentice)

The complexity and risk held by NHS services requires a highly skilled and diverse workforce. The development of Advanced Practitioner is one example of where advanced skills and clinical reasoning gained through a Masters' level 7 apprenticeship can improve timely patient care and outcomes.

Rachel Christian-Edwards, Allied Health Professional Lead, Dorset HealthCare NHS Foundation Trust

As a large organisation, we look to grow our own senior leaders for the future. Without the level 7 apprenticeship available we will not have an alternative way of funding these qualifications and therefore have the potential of losing these staff to organisations that have an alternative education budget.

Ruth Sanderson, Apprentice Lead, East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

SNEE Training Hub strongly urge the continuation of the Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practice Apprenticeship programme. This programme is crucial for developing highly skilled professionals who can meet the complex demands of Primary Care. It provides a unique blend of practical experience and advanced theoretical knowledge, ensuring that apprentices are well-prepared to contribute effectively to NHS General Practice patient services. By maintaining this programme, we align with the goals of the Long Term Workforce Plan, which emphasizes the importance of retaining existing talent and bridging skill gaps to ensure a sustainable and capable workforce. The plan highlights the need for expanding advanced clinical practice roles to address current and future healthcare demands. For some practitioners wishing to further their clinical career, the apprenticeship route for Advance Practice is the only suitable option. The apprenticeship route utilises the NHS levy that can often otherwise be underspent and therefore eliminating this apprenticeship will hinder the development of future Advanced Clinical Practitioners, weaken skills sets in future years, and jeopardise NHS England's target growth of Advance Practitioners as part of the Long Term Workforce Plan. This year in our local region, we have had 8 general practice apprentices begin their journey. This enables additional funds to support the learning environment of the AP Trainees, and further supports course retention and completion rates. Therefore, we appeal to decision makers to recognise the immense value of the Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practice Apprenticeship and ensure its preservation for the benefit of all stakeholders, patients and NHS services.

Emma Jones, NHS Apprenticeship Coordinator, Eastern Education Group and Suffolk and North East Essex Training Hub

Level 7 apprenticeships are a critical element of our workforce plans, especially in two areas: Leadership and Advance Practice. Never has it been more critical to grow leaders and advanced roles as we look to transform the care model from an acute model to a community. We see level 7 apprenticeships as a critical enabler.

Rebecca Pulford, Director of Nursing, Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships are important to our business development as we find recruiting qualified individuals problematic in our highly specialised sector. Laboratory technical skills can be taught, but effective leadership and management skills take months or years to develop. As an SME, we do not have the time and resources internally to develop leadership and management skills. Level 7 Apprenticeships provide the essential career development enabling our business to innovate and become more efficient, as well as maximising employee retention.

Chris Wood, Product Specialist – Laboratory and Degree Apprentice Mentor, ESSLAB Ltd

The issue we have with people accessing apprenticeships is not the demand, it's always to do with funding support and backfill for staff to complete them.

Leah Mauck, Practice Development Lead for AHPs, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

To reflect our workforce skills shortages. To enable career progression for registered nurses into specialist roles e.g. District Nursing, Advanced Clinical Practitioner. To support the transition of clinical staff to leadership roles via the L6 and L7 leadership apprenticeships.

Rachael Bish, Apprenticeship and Widening Participation Lead, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

Advanced Practice is a fundamental part of NHS service delivery. L7 apprenticeships allow the progression and development of clinical teams to provide essential care to patients and service users.

Johanna Sundercombe, Trust Lead for Advanced Practice, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships for advanced practice provide an opportunity and access for experienced NHS clinical practitioners from multi-professional backgrounds to upskill to their greatest potential. This supports retention of the most skilled and experienced staff who can develop as innovators leading change and modernisation which is desperately required. Without these opportunities, experienced staff will likely continue to leave the NHS, threatening our provision of service which is so challenged. The apprenticeship tripartite structure provides the assurance for employer, student and university, enabling success and change in service provision to serve the needs of our changing population. Without the level 7 apprenticeship the opportunities will be drastically cut, limiting clinical innovation. Please consider an exception for advanced practice Level 7 apprenticeships.

Susan Durrell MBE, Consultant Physiotherapist, Education Supervisor and One Gloucestershire Advanced Practice Lead, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

It is well documented that the NHS needs to adapt and change to continue to provide healthcare by building a workforce capable of meeting the needs of a population. It is also well documented that there is a lack of sufficient workforce, in number and skill mix. In order to address this imbalance, apprenticeships at level 7 are vital. There are a lot of healthcare staff that work at bands 5 and 6 that are exceptionally knowledgeable in their field of practice but in order to progress their career further, options are limited to management roles which are by definition, predominantly non-clinical. So we end up with losing these staff from clinical face-to-face roles because people want to progress their careers but there is nowhere else for them to go. Do not underestimate how vital level 7 apprenticeships are at addressing this; they retain health care staff, who are experts in their field of practice and want to develop further, and then facilitate expert care provision with increased accessibility for patients, addressing what everyone wants the NHS to be able to do; impact patient experience, service capacity and productivity, and allows us to really transform the way we look after our patients. Removing this is setting the NHS up to fail.

Jemma Baker, Advanced Practitioner, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The post-Graduate L7-MSc/MA Education is critical for nursing staff working in specialist Paediatric ICU areas. Breadth & depth of specialist knowledge & clinical skills are essential to run the services we are nationally responsible for. Therefore, it is essential for staff to develop the necessary analytical & problem-solving skills to navigate the complex decision-making processes that characterise this field of work. L7 education is a key factor for facilitating effective multidisciplinary communication & the provision of excellence in Paediatric Intensive Care.

Joanne E Broadhurst, Nurse Practice Educator - Paediatric ICU, Great Ormond Street Hospital

Removing levy funding for level 7 will have the following effects:

- A rationing on the number of educators we can fund via traditionally paid PGCert programmes. This will limit both the numbers of newly qualified nurses we can recruit and the number of nursing apprenticeships we can support due to the lack of qualified educators to support their development. The educators also provide ongoing support for existing staff not on programmes. A reduction will have a direct adverse impact on patient care as well as student nurse numbers.
- A crippling curtailment of leadership development. There have been several reviews of leadership within the NHS (Messenger, Rose etc) all pointing to the need for leadership development across the NHS at all levels including middle and senior leadership. With a chronic

lack of funding, growing waiting lists, estate repair backlogs etc., it is not conceivable that any NHS or wider public sector organisations facing competing demands, real terms funding cuts and deficits, will be in a position to fund expensive leadership qualifications on anything like the meaningful scale needed and identified by these reviews. Trust will simply not be able to sport more than handfuls of staff on MBA or Masters' programmes.

- A further widening on the gap between private and public sector development offers. Many large private sector organisations will revert to traditional funding of leadership development programmes (MBAs etc) as they did prior to the levy, whereas the NHS will not be able to do this. This will have an effect on both attraction and retention as well as productivity and competent leadership. This is already the case following the removal of funding of the MBA elements from the senior leadership apprenticeship following the Augar review. As a result, many providers charge a top up for this which most public sector organisations cannot afford to fund. This decision should be reversed rather than further restrictions applied.
- Exaggerate inequalities. Without organisational funding via the levy and in the absence of adequate development funds, level 7 programmes will inevitably need to be self-funded. This will disproportionately affect women, who are more likely to be in part-time work and more likely to have caring responsibilities so will find traditional study challenging without the protection of structured off the job learning hours mandated by apprenticeships. It will also have a disproportionate effect on staff from global majority backgrounds who are more likely to be in lower paid positions and less able to self-fund.
- Heavily restrict mid-career and lifelong learning. An original aim of the levy was to provide support for workers in mid-career. This was in recognition of changing skill sets required such as the growth in the needs to be data and digitally literate especially as the retirement age continues to shift. Level 7 apprenticeship provide a key element of this.
- Drop in Maths and English functional skills. The requirement of all those undertaking apprenticeships to undertake functional skills has had the consequence of giving those individuals who did not achieve level 2 in Maths and English another opportunity. Without the apprenticeship hook, this will not happen for staff who would otherwise undertake a level 7 qualification.
- Zero positive impact on the numbers of young and/or junior apprenticeships offered. As stated above, restrictions on level 7 apprenticeship will not result on further levy being directed towards junior roles. It will in fact have the opposite effect.
- Previous restrictions have not yielded benefits. Removal of the MBA and other academic elements from levy funding has not led to organisations redirecting their levy to young and/or junior starters. This decision from the Augar review should be reversed as it cannot be judged as successful rather than compounding this mistake further.
- Harm to the reputation of apprenticeships.

Andreas Marcou, Associate Director Organisation and Employee Development and Teaching Fellow in Leadership and Management, Great Ormond Street Hospital

Level 7 apprenticeships contribute to lifelong learning and to meeting the increasing demands and acuity of patient care through expert knowledge, behaviours and skills in the NHS. NHS budgets are already stretched and funding these independently will mean lower numbers of skilled workers and not meeting patient or service needs, creating an environment that is totally the opposite of trying to meet NHS targets and the NHS long-term workforce plan and apprenticeship targets in healthcare.

Jesse Manget, Lead Practice Educator for Clinical Apprenticeships, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children

Level 7 apprenticeships are crucial to the Great Ormond Street Hospital Learning Academy for several reasons, impacting both learners and the organisation significantly. For learners, these apprenticeships offer an opportunity to gain enhanced qualifications equivalent to a Masters' degree while working. This combination of practical experience and academic learning is invaluable, allowing apprentices to develop both technical and academic skills essential for their careers. At GOSH, this means nurturing future leaders, nurses, and allied health professionals who are well-equipped to handle the complexities of their roles. The apprenticeships also provide a pathway for career progression, especially for those who might not have the resources to

pursue full-time education. This inclusivity helps in breaking down barriers and promoting social mobility.

From an organisational perspective, level 7 apprenticeships are a strategic investment in talent development. They help GOSH build a skilled and diverse workforce, essential for delivering high-quality patient care. By integrating these apprenticeships into their talent strategy, GOSH ensures a steady pipeline of skilled professionals who can meet future challenges head-on. This is particularly important in the healthcare sector, where there is a constant need for highly trained staff. Additionally, these programmes support the hospital's commitment to continuous improvement and innovation, as employees bring new knowledge and skills directly into their roles.

Overall, level 7 apprenticeships at GOSH Learning Academy foster a culture of learning and development, benefiting both the individuals and the organisation by enhancing skills, promoting career growth, and ensuring high standards of patient care."

Joanna Slater, Head of Academic Education, Great Ormond Street Hospital Learning Academy

The use of the apprenticeship levy for advanced degrees is essential across the public sectors. Funding for CPD is reducing and cost of living pressures on the individual makes accessing this education harder. The evidence base clearly correlates patient outcomes with the education level of healthcare providers. If we are to strive to be a world leader we must have world leading staff.

Vicky Nash, Associate Director of Education and Apprenticeship employer and provider, Great Ormond Street Hospital of Children NHS Foundation Trust.

I have seen a tremendous impact from level 7 apprenticeships in advanced practice at the Great Western Hospital. I myself have been the clinical educator and/or associate supervisor for 9 trainee advanced clinical practitioners over the past 4 years. Within my organization a vast majority of the advanced practice team have completed level 7 apprenticeships to achieve their MSc qualification. Many service improvements have stemmed from the advanced practitioners' leadership, education and research knowledge and skills which were first nurtured in their apprenticeship years. Without this access to level 7 qualifications, the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan will not be able to meet its objectives.

Lucy Moxham, Lead Advanced Clinical Practitioner for Acute Medicine/Advanced Practice Corporate Professional Lead, Great Western Hospital

The Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship is extremely important to our Trust and the NHS as a whole. In particular, it is a route through which many of our staff can obtain NHS Leadership Academy Awards, preparing them well for senior management roles specifically within healthcare. Further to that, in line with Agenda for Change, many roles Band 7 upwards require a postgraduate qualification (or equivalent experience) and thus L7 apprenticeships have been crucial in offering this opportunity to staff who are looking to progress but may not be in a financial position to do so. More personally to our Trust, we use the Level 7 SLA as a means to attract external talent through our Management Training Scheme which supports people in joining the workforce.

Maisy Lane, Talent Partner, Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 Apprenticeships help SMEs fund training for higher level skills where they otherwise might not, which then supports growth and productivity. We should be providing funding for PhD level apprenticeships as well rather than defunding at Level 7. If the UK Government really wants growth and productivity, we need to support SMEs to provide more and higher level training across all age groups. Higher level skills are critical in many industries but especially in healthcare and the IT sector. It might be more reasonable to have a sliding scale of employers funding apprentices based on turnover/profitability as well as the levy.

Emonn Swanton, Managing Director, Heales Health Services Ltd

We are able to upskill incredibly talented people, who for multiple reasons would not be financially able to do the course or who couldn't afford to give up work in order to get the qualification.

Claire Nicholls MCIPD, HR Manager, Hinckley and Bosworth Medical Alliance Ltd

The level 7 apprenticeships are part of our recruitment and retention initiatives and work alongside the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and NHS Long Term Plan to ensure our patients receive high quality of care and that we have the right people with the right skills in the right roles. They facilitate diversity across the workforce and improve patient safety through leadership and career development, while being able to receive supervision while working. We need to ensure we can provide good careers and support social mobility. As an anchor organisation, Level 7 apprenticeships improve accessibility to development for all our people, not just for people who are in a position to fund education themselves.

Diana Comerford, Deputy Head of People Development, Homerton Healthcare

Level 7 apprenticeships are widely used within the NHS to provide opportunities for development and growth to those who may not have access to higher level development. They form a large part of workforce planning and the development of our people.

Joanne Fisher, Apprentice Lead, Homerton Healthcare

The level 7 apprenticeships for managers and healthcare professionals are critical to further develop staff skills. There are numerous reports about the standard of leadership skills in the NHS and the apprenticeship has transformed the number of people who access this development. The Advanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship upskills professionals to work autonomously managing caseloads. This is essential to operationalise community healthcare.

Sharon Proberts, Head of Learning, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

The Level 7 Apprenticeship is an indispensable opportunity for professionals looking to advance their expertise and leadership capabilities. By combining hands-on experience with academic learning, it equips individuals with the strategic skills needed to drive innovation and excellence in their field.

Offering pathways for career progression demonstrates a commitment to staff development, increasing job satisfaction and retention rates within the NHS workforce. Level 7 apprenticeships directly contribute to improving patient outcomes and the quality of care provided across the NHS.

These programmes not only enhance personal career growth, but also deliver significant value to organisations by fostering highly skilled leaders who can tackle complex challenges with confidence.

Lovenne Brown, Apprenticeship Team Lead, Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

The Senior Leader (health) apprenticeship is important to educate senior managers and clinicians engaged in the health and healthcare sector as the programme strengthens the quality of management within the NHS. Here at the Trust where I am based, we have many senior leaders/managers who benefit from this type of programme and demand has been high for this apprenticeship over the last few years. My organisation has recently merged with Hounslow & Richmond Community Trust doubling the number in senior management. The Senior Leader level 7 programme also encourages and boosts recruitment and retention which is currently a hot topic within the NHS as we are trying to keep our existing senior management within the NHS sector alongside newly employed senior managers.

Jemma-Louise Ford, Apprenticeship Manager, Kingston & Richmond NHS Foundation Trust

If LGT are not able to use the levy to fund level 7 apprenticeships, we would see:

1. A dramatic decrease in level 7 uptake and therefore a decrease in impact improvements for individuals and the Trust
2. The Advanced Clinical Practice apprenticeship is now embedded in the ACP Trust strategy; without this funding it would critically affect the ACP development strategy. We only use the ACP apprenticeship for recruited band 7 ACPs.

3. Reliance on CPD funding which is only for clinical staff leaving non-clinical staff disadvantaged.
4. Individuals, particularly on the Senior Leader programme, often obtain promotions whilst on programme – this is likely to be stifled.
5. If we wish to continue to improve our NHS leaders, stopping the level 7 apprenticeship seems counter productive.

Alice Long, Apprenticeship Lead, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

Extremely important to advance in clinical care improving patient health and care. Without funding and support there is no way that majority of staff could afford to progress and improve the NHS making compromise on patient care.

Steve Faulkner, Enhanced Clinical Practitioner and Paramedic, Medvivo

We utilize the Advanced Clinical Practitioner apprenticeship to train our clinical staff in the out of hours setting. Having the ACP role ensures that we can equip our teams with the skills and experience to make clinical decisions, to keep patients safe. In many situations we can keep patients out of hospital. Our practitioners need this level of education to help them manage risk. If we were unable to use our levy pot as an organisation, we would not be able to meet the growing health care needs of our community. Our staff are not in a position to fund a full MSc, seen now as the gold standard for advanced practice. As an organization, the growing health care costs mean funding for Masters' programmes will be difficult to meet.

Anna Neary, Head of Education and Clinical development and Consultant Practitioner, Medvivo

To meet workforce transformation needs in Ophthalmology, upskilling staff to an MSc level 7 is essential to meet capacity and demand.

Hannah Stewart, Head of Orthoptic and Optometry Services, NHS

Level 7 apprenticeships are critical to our continuing professional development offer for the delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. Of specific importance are clinical programmes e.g. Advanced Clinical Practice, District Nursing and Specialist Community Public Health Nurse. The clinical level 7 programmes support recruitment and retention of the workforce and improve and enhance quality of care. Exclusion of Level 7 pre-registration Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional programmes will not achieve the increase workforce ambitions of the long-term workforce plan and would restrict the career opportunities offered and recruitment to programmes from a diverse pool of applicants.

Specialist Leadership Level 7 Apprenticeships such as the Anderson Senior leader programme will enable senior leadership development to meet the expectation to reform the NHS. Senior leadership programmes will equip the workforce to achieve transformative change of the health and care system. We would endorse the inclusion of Level 7 programmes for the non-clinical NHS workforce to ensure the service demands keep pace with clinical requirements specifically to enable the digital transformation of care to meet future service provision.

With current financial pressures within the health and care system, it is critical that NHS Trusts are able to utilise the apprenticeship levy to provide high quality level 7 education and protect the need to ringfence funding for education.

Rachael Corser, Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board

It is a great opportunity to bring together experience with theory, which escalates learning using multiple learning tools and ways of learning.

Esther Kuria, Nurse Consultant Gynaecology, NHS Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships are important to us as the ACP Apprenticeship provides an essential pathway to develop highly skilled clinicians who can deliver expert care, reduce service gaps, and improve patient outcomes. It aligns closely with the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan's emphasis on sustainable workforce growth and advanced roles in clinical practice.

The apprenticeship levy funding for level 7 programmes, including the ACP, represents a significant investment in our future workforce. However, without this funding, we face several challenges that could compromise both our workforce strategy and our ability to deliver high-quality care.

Key Risks of Defunding Level 7 Apprenticeships:

1. Workforce Development Delays

Defunding will hinder the progression of skilled practitioners into advanced roles, perpetuating reliance on overburdened staff and locum arrangements, increasing costs, and reducing continuity of care.

2. Service Delivery Challenges

ACPs are pivotal in responding to rising patient demands in areas such as emergency care, specialty services, and frailty management. Without these roles, service delivery will be strained, leading to delays in care and unmet service targets.

3. Reputational and Strategic Impact

Inability to utilise apprenticeship levy funding efficiently could damage trust in our commitment to innovation and workforce development, eroding confidence among staff, partners, and stakeholders.

4. Retention and Morale

A supported pathway for ACPs contributes to career satisfaction and retention. Defunding risks alienating potential candidates and exacerbating recruitment challenges.

We are fully committed to ensuring ACP apprentices receive the support they need, including:

- Embedding protected learning time into workforce planning.
- Establishing robust supervision frameworks led by experienced clinical educators.

Hannah Stawrowski, Head of Apprenticeships, North Bristol NHS Trust

The level 7 apprenticeship programme provides us with the development opportunities for our future senior staff team within the organisation. With there being no alternative funding available we will see staff leaving the sector for other organisations that are able to support their career development.

Michael Lomas, Apprenticeship Business Manager, Northamptonshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

As an NHS Trust, we have very little funding to develop the skills of our staff; therefore we rely upon the levy to provide this opportunity for development. We believe this should be available for all our staff, not just entry level staff. We have many staff who join the NHS in an entry level role and, through the utilisation of the levy, we have been able to develop and upskill those staff to senior positions. This can be developing a non-registered clinical support worker into a registered clinical professional, or developing an administrator into a manager.

Since the change to apprenticeships in 2017 we have utilised the following Level 7 apprenticeships within the Trust:

- **Accountancy or Taxation Professional:** Many of these staff have developed through the use of apprenticeships from Level 3. This gives us the accounts for the future.
- **Advanced Clinical Practitioner:** Due to the issues around recruitment of medical staff, these are an essential part of providing both physical and mental care to NHS patients and are based on the four pillars of advanced practice: clinical practice, leadership, education and research.
- **Clinical Associate Psychologist:** These individuals were either recruited direct from university, to be given their first role in the NHS, or were developed from existing staff who previously held a degree. This role was a new role created to support Clinical Psychologists, as there is a shortage in the NHS.
- **Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist:** With the continuing digitalisation of the NHS processes and the introduction of AI, it is important we have these specialists in place to drive forward the digital agenda.
- **District Nurse:** This is a vital role within our Community Care Group, these staff support vulnerable individuals in the community who are unable to visit their GP practice for treatment.

- **Senior Leader:** This apprenticeship has enabled senior leaders to work more strategically. We often have clinicians and nursing staff who are promoted, but have had little, if no, formal management training. This standard is not merely about gaining a Masters', in fact many of our learners have opted to undertake the standard without the Masters', but including the NHS Leadership Academy's Rosalind Franklin Programme, which supports staff to become outstanding innovators and leaders to help them improve services for people and communities.
- **Senior People Professional:** This apprenticeship is to improve people practices in organisations to drive organisational performance and effectiveness.
- **Systems Thinking Practitioner:** This apprenticeship helps leaders to work together across the ICS boundaries.

Removal of the Level 7 apprenticeships would have a huge impact on the services we deliver and the NHS as a whole. Funding for NHS training and development has been consistently reduced over the years and the only money we now receive is the apprenticeship levy, CPD funding and NHSE (METP). Many of the courses above would be ineligible for METP or CPD funding due to being non-clinical.

The apprenticeship levy should be available to support and develop all staff in the NHS regardless of role, as stated in:

- The NHS People Promise - "We are always learning"
- The NHS Constitution - "To provide all staff with personal development, access to appropriate education and training for their jobs, and line management support to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan - "We want to create an environment where staff are supported in their careers and where there is equality of access to learning and development opportunities."

Debbie Morris, Apprenticeship Programme Lead and Apprenticeship Ambassador, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

We are training Advanced Clinical Practitioners in the Emergency Dept via the apprenticeship route. This is extremely valuable for building a sustainable work force in ED.

Charlotte Tickle, Consultant Nurse Practitioner and ACP Apprentice Supervisor, OUH NHS foundation Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships are crucial for NHS organisations like ours. They support the development of advanced clinical skills and create competent clinical leaders across the NHS. Apprenticeships allow us to develop career pathways and access to the qualifications and skills we so badly need. It recruits, retains and develop healthcare professionals.

Britta Klinck, Chief Nursing Officer, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships are critical to our continuing professional development offer for the delivery of the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. Of specific importance are clinical programmes e.g. Advanced Clinical Practice, District Nursing and Specialist Community Public Health Nurse. The clinical level 7 programmes support recruitment and retention of the workforce and improve and enhance quality of care. Exclusion of Level 7 pre-registration Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional programmes will not achieve the increase workforce ambitions of the LTWP and would restrict the career opportunities offered and recruitment to programmes from a diverse pool of applicants.

Specialist Leadership Level 7 Apprenticeships, such as the Anderson Senior Leader programme, will enable senior leadership development to meet the expectation to reform the NHS. Senior leadership programmes will equip the workforce to achieve transformative change of the health and care system. We would endorse the inclusion of level 7 programmes for the non-clinical NHS workforce to ensure the service demands keep pace with clinical requirements specifically to enable the digital transformation of care to meet future service provision.

With current financial pressures within the health and care system, it is critical that NHS Trusts are able to utilise the apprenticeship levy to provide high quality level 7 education and protect the need to ringfence funding for education.

Rebecca Elsworth, Head of Learning and Development, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust

Working in the NHS where every penny needs to be accounted for in terms of patient benefit, it is hard to separate out funds for staff to undertake training despite the known benefits of doing so. The ability to use the apprenticeship levy for appropriate training is fundamental to help train and retain our staff in what is known to be a highly pressured environment. For too long staff have been asked to take on more and more complex and demanding work. Being able to train staff in leadership brings back so much more to the trust.

Tracy McAteer, Head of Operations, OCPH, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (Former apprentice)

Leadership in the NHS is key. While many of our staff start their career with a primary degree in pharmacy or science, they need the opportunity for a master's level management/leadership qualification to combine the professional role with exemplary leadership. If the public sector is to achieve the gains required, then the NHS needs access to level 7 courses to support staff development for senior roles. The apprenticeship levy changed this and made access to MSc / MA clearer for everyone to see and apply for. It provided equity of access and the potential for a wide range of staff to feel this was an option for them. We know that promoting diversity in higher banded roles in the NHS is closely monitored and this is an enabler. After a relatively short time in place, if implemented the withdrawal will have a negative effect on NHS leadership.

Michelle Taylor-Siddons, Associate Director of Pharmacy, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

We are trying to grow and retain our nursing workforce. Part of this includes supporting the ongoing development of our nurses. The apprenticeship route for Level 7 in health and social care provides a vital support in achieving this. We have supported over fifty nurses using this model and they have found this to be invaluable.

Maggie Grainger, Head of Nursing for Education and Development and lead on Advanced Practice, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Pennine Care NSH Foundation Trust would like to advocate for the continuation of funding for the level 7 apprenticeship, a programme of vital importance to the development of a strong and effective workforce that is able to lead large and complex programmes, departments, services of care in the NHS. This programme represents a strategic investment in the future of our economy, workforce, and public services and will help build an NHS fit for the future.

Discontinuing the senior leader level 7 apprenticeship would risk halting progress and limit opportunities for clinical and non-clinical individuals to upskill and retrain, and for us as an organisation to continually improve and develop. In today's fast-changing healthcare environment, ensuring we develop the skills within our organisation means we are able to respond effectively to the challenges we face and the opportunities available to deliver cost-effective, value for money, better patient care. This will ensure we can deliver and support the government's ambitious plans for the NHS.

Alison Walker-Smith, Apprenticeship Manager, Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust

Level 7 Apprenticeships play a key role in the career pathway development of colleagues in my organisation. They offer people who are unable to gain a degree through the traditional route an option to achieve a degree by working their way up using the apprenticeship standards. Many of my degree colleagues have achieved this through completion of level 2, level 3, level 5/6 and ultimately level 7. Removing the funding for this turns the level 7 into an elitist qualification, making higher level education unachievable for many people. It also impacts our People Plan objective to create our own talent. We require senior leaders to hold a level 7 and have used the

level 2 - 7 pathway of apprenticeship qualifications to widen participation within our organisation and 'Grow our Own' talent.

Kerrie Heath, Career Development Specialist, Priory Group (Former apprentice, Trailblazer member and AAN Multi Region Employer Member)

This provides the funding for roles such as Advanced Care Practitioner that as a GP surgery, we would not be in a position to fund. These roles are part of the General Practice Forward View to improve patient access but are generally in short supply in Primary Care.

Steve Sharpe, Practice Manager, Rothschild House Group

They mean the same as any other apprenticeship. They are vital in training staff to be competent and to grow and develop, thus offering the best service for our patients and communities. Our Director of Medicine and Chief Medical Officer may be brilliant doctors, but the reason they are in those roles is due to their leadership skills – skills that have been taught. Why throw those opportunities away?

As a large NHS Trust, we spend approximately 50% of our levy. Defunding level 7 will mean that we use even less of it; it will not be replaced by level 2 or 3 instead. Entry level apprenticeships are still jobs and require vacancies to become apprenticeships. Getting rid of level 7 will not increase the number of entry level job vacancies available.

Mr Paul Marijetic, Head of Apprenticeships, Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Developing the workforce is very important in the NHS as staff retention is difficult, which is due to the more attractive salaries that are available in the private sector.

Annette Preece, Apprenticeship Officer, Royal Surrey Foundation Trust

Both clinical and non-clinical Level 7 apprenticeships are essential for supporting the vital workforce requirements within the Trust. Often leaders in clinical areas have come into a leadership role from a clinical background and require further training to ensure proficient, supportive and safe management skills within their areas of expertise. If we lose the apprenticeship funding for level 7 programmes, we will see a reduction in specialist ACP roles, which will have a direct impact on both patients and clinical services within practice. In turn this will affect patient care and runs the risk of losing leaders to organisations that better support career development. Level 7 leadership programmes provide essential pathways within the NHS to help support and develop both the leaders of today and the aspiring young leaders of tomorrow.

Isabel Brookes, Career Progression & Apprenticeship Lead, Royal Surrey NHS Foundation Trust

With ever increasing pressure on the NHS the last few years have seen incredible developments in Advanced Practice through NHS England funding and support. Part of this is the Level 7 Advanced Practice apprenticeship schemes which are only now just beginning to come to fruition in General Practice and the wider system. If these apprenticeships were to be lost, then future cohorts of potential trainees and their employers are unlikely to be able to meet the costs of developing staff to this highly skilled level, thus impacting on current and future patient care, service delivery. This risks undermining the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan.

Catherine Hayden, Advanced Practice and Allied Health Professional Education Lead and Paramedic Practitioner (General Practice), Somerset Training Hub

The level 7 has enabled staff to become our future leaders and through this we have retained staff. There are very limited funds within NHS Trusts to support staff progression, therefore the apprenticeship pathway is essential for our future development.

Adrienne Clark, Apprenticeship Manager, South Tyneside & NHS Foundation Trust

Advanced Practice and funding of the level 7 degree apprenticeship is essential in allowing services to continue their drive towards meeting the ambitions of the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) and the Darzi report. The LTP and Darzi report specifically document the strong desire to

advance the ambulance profession, through increased education and development to support patients closer to home.

Funding level 7 degree apprenticeships from the government levy instils the ability of us as a Trust to train the next generation of senior clinicians within our service. Advanced Practitioners have demonstrated their key capabilities of driving see and treat rates, managing patients in their own homes, negating the need for a patient to attend a hospital. Our Advanced Practitioners are also responsible for driving our hear and treat rates, meaning more patients are managed over the phone, without the need for an ambulance to attend in the first place and in ensuring the patient receives the right care first time.

There is ample evidence within our trust of the value Advanced Practitioners are able to afford quality assurance and governance within both their own teams and trust wide. Without continued levy support of level 7 apprenticeships, patient care and quality will suffer, pressure on system partners (hospitals, GP, out of hours providers) will increase and there will be a significant staff retention issue through not providing career development.

In short, the NHS is in crisis, and pressure mounts year on year. The funding of level 7 development via the levy is vital for continued growth and sustainability. Without it, the NHS would be much worse off.

Ross Bate, Head of Advanced Practice, South Western Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust

In Healthcare Science we have been using the level 7 research scientist apprenticeship to access a leadership, management and research route for our staff in biomedical science. Until this was in place we have had no way to support staff with MSc level qualifications to access higher band managerial and leadership routes. The use of this as an apprenticeship has now seen more of our staff staying in service as they can access the higher paid jobs and see a clear career progression route. We had been struggling to fill band seven vacancies, and we were working towards embedding the quality around qualifications into the progression pathway and HR requirements at this level. We anticipate a fall back to pre-apprenticeship numbers with the withdrawal of this apprenticeship and face workforce pipeline blocks as we cannot progress our staff due to lack of funding of academic opportunities. To maintain the quality of staffing and services at laboratories and across the NHS we need to have access to higher qualifications to offer a place to stay and train, retain and reform the way we work.

Jemma Lenton, Education and training lead and Trailblazer chair for BMS level 6, South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw Pathology

As someone working within the NHS, I strongly believe that Level 7 apprenticeships are pivotal to the development of our workforce. These programmes equip our senior staff and managers with advanced qualifications that directly enhance their leadership capabilities and decision-making skills, which are essential in a high-pressure, patient-centred environment.

In our organisation, the impact of these apprenticeships has been transformational. By offering senior team members access to structured learning while allowing them to continue their roles, we create a dynamic blend of academic knowledge and practical application. This not only ensures their growth but also fosters innovation and improved service delivery across our teams. Investing in our workforce through these apprenticeships has enabled us to build a pipeline of skilled, confident leaders who can adapt to the evolving demands of the healthcare sector. Moreover, this approach has proven effective in promoting staff retention and job satisfaction, as employees feel valued and supported in their career development.

Level 7 apprenticeships are crucial in addressing the current and future challenges within the NHS. They empower our managers with the tools to lead effectively and ensure that our teams are well-equipped to deliver the highest standards of care. For our organisation, these programmes represent not just an investment in individuals but in the overall quality of care we provide to our patients.

Hardip Dosanjh, Apprenticeship and Early Careers Manager, St Georges NHS Trust University Hospital

Level 7 apprenticeships are an essential to our charity and enable us to offer professional healthcare and leadership skills development that would otherwise need to be funded by taking funds directly from delivery of palliative care which we cannot afford to do. Removing this

opportunity means we are unable to provide opportunity to drive inclusion and develop our talented staff.

Nerin Swanton, Learning and Development Manager, Sue Ryder

Advanced practice at level 7 through the apprentice route provides staff with the knowledge and skills we require in a MH Trust at this level and helps retain senior staff.

Anita Green, Director of Nursing Research, Education and Development, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

Some of the level 7 courses (e.g. ACP) are critical to the vital redesign of the NHS workforce. Without them we will be limited in our options for improving access to high quality specialist care for our communities.

Sarah Dexter-Smith, Joint Executive Director of People and Culture, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust

Apprenticeships form an essential part of our workforce planning for Occupational Therapy at the Great Western Hospital. As an under recruited profession and a non-university town, recruitment has always been a challenge for us. Investing in, and home growing our assistant staff provides a crucial pipeline of qualified clinicians for our teams. Apprenticeships enable our staff the opportunity to obtain their degree whilst working, which provides a benefit both for the student as well as the team they are working in. They bring the most up to date practice, whilst we help them to learn how it can be embedded in the workplace. Apprenticeships are vital for our profession and is noticeable how much better prepared for independent practice our staff are that follow this route.

Louise White, Acute Therapies Lead, The Great Western Hospital

I cannot stress enough how much, both professionally and from a social mobility perspective, I have been able to benefit from a levy-funded apprenticeship. The universality of the levy also meant I was able to transfer my programme and complete it alongside my new job. Requiring employers to fund these programmes would have likely meant I would not have been able to take up employment elsewhere and continue the programme. I also would not have gotten my new role as CIPD level 7 was a key part of the role and there was no route financially for me to afford to do this without the apprenticeship levy. The levy for level 7 programmes is a key driver of social mobility.

Hashim Din, Head of OD, Wellbeing and Inclusion, The Rotherham Foundation Hospital Trust (Former apprentice)

Level 7 apprenticeships are an integral part of our workforce plan. They support skills gaps in our organisation and help with hard to fill vacancies. We already have a shortage of workers in the NHS and removing these apprenticeships will make it even worse. Level 7 apprenticeships currently make up 20% of our overall apprenticeship numbers at the Trust. Our most popular apprenticeship across all levels is the Advanced Clinical Practitioner level 7. Removing these apprenticeships will make a critical impact on our workforce and patients. Please reconsider the proposal to remove level 7 apprenticeships.

Graham Travis, Apprenticeship Manager, the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

As an ACP Lead who spent 10 years completing the academic qualifications due to challenges with funding and module availability, I understand firsthand the difficulties of achieving this qualification without the support of apprenticeships. Apprenticeships provide a vital pathway for ACPs, ensuring they gain not only practical experience but also academic and professional recognition. Unlike traditional modular routes, apprenticeships blend theory and practice throughout, making learning immediately relevant and applicable to the workplace. This allows ACPs to directly apply their knowledge to patient care, boosting their confidence, competence, and overall clinical effectiveness.

By offering Level 7 apprenticeship opportunities, healthcare providers can support the career development of skilled professionals, increasing retention rates and reducing turnover— a costly issue that can disrupt patient care. Apprenticeships provide a practical and efficient way to

develop highly skilled practitioners who are equipped to meet the evolving demands of the healthcare system.

Lucy Fairchild, Joint Lead ACP for Surgery, Universities Hospital Sussex NHS Foundation Trust

At University Hospital Derby & Burton, we have witnessed substantial benefits from the implementation of the Level 7 apprenticeship levy, particularly in the training and development of multiprofessional Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACPs). These apprenticeships have been instrumental in attracting highly skilled individuals committed to advancing their careers within the healthcare sector. The structured training and development provided through these programmes have significantly enhanced the competencies of our staff, thereby improving the quality of care we deliver to our patients.

The deferral of Level 7 apprenticeships would have a profoundly negative impact on our ability to sustain and expand a skilled workforce of ACPs. It would curtail opportunities for professional development and could potentially result in a shortage of qualified personnel in critical areas. The apprenticeship levy has been pivotal in supporting our efforts to implement the NHS 10-year plan, which aims to transform healthcare delivery through the development of a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.

We earnestly urge you to reconsider any plans to defer Level 7 apprenticeships and to continue endorsing this essential pathway for professional growth and development. Your support is crucial in ensuring that we can continue to meet the healthcare needs of our population with a well-trained and competent workforce, in alignment with the goals of the NHS 10-Year Plan.

Christopher Smalley, Associate Director Advanced Practice, University Hospital Derby & Burton

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital to the career development and retention of our staff and align with the Long-Term Workforce Plan.

Lisa McManus, Associate Director of Education, University Hospitals Dorset

Level 7 apprenticeships are not just for leadership and managerial roles, they are also used as a route into nursing. Due to apprenticeship rules regarding prior learning, there are support workers who are not eligible for level 5 and 6 nursing programmes and therefore complete a level 7 pathway to become nurses. In a time where the long-term plan aims to grow the workforce through apprenticeships, nursing programmes should be ring-fenced and promoted rather than disregarded.

Stephanie Davey, Practice Education Facilitator, West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust

Response from a current L7 apprentice:

“There is very little support and funding for managers to develop compared to other staff groups. Removing this is only taking away tools for managers to develop and support the health service. The Darzi report says implementing major improvement to the health service requires investment in high-quality leaders.

The apprenticeship makes you confront your assumptions and consider the challenges in the public sector and how we can work as a system: matrix management, systems thinking, and how policy filters down. We need people who think of the bigger picture.

My experience has been invaluable. I met and networked with colleagues internal and externally, learned a lot about reflective practice and developing teams and resource management. It has meant I stayed in the Trust for much longer than I would have otherwise. It helped me act up into the GM role from Service Management as I could demonstrate my development and learning.”

As told to Hannah Francis, Apprenticeship Advisor, Whittington Health NHS Trust

Apprenticeships are important for all ages and stages of a career to provide academic advancement and opportunity.

Emma George, Assistant Chief Nurse, York and Scarborough Hospitals

Provides opportunity for development, support and growth for education.

Anonymous

Apprenticeship training is more effective than classroom-based training only as it is a realistic work life experience for most people. Most people who have done apprenticeships are more productive than those who are coming from the classroom. Less time is used training them as they already have on the job experience.

Anonymous

These apprenticeships are vital to provide the advanced training that equips practitioners with the clinical skills that enables them to perform complex assessments, diagnostics and treatments of patients with diverse needs. They help to build a skilled diverse workforce to meet ever increasing demands of the healthcare system. Advanced Clinical Practitioners can take on roles that were traditionally held by physicians, this can improve access to healthcare services thus alleviating some pressures on our doctors and other healthcare professionals.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are extremely important in developing our workforce. It enables us to develop our senior staff and allows them to feel more confident in their role. Ensuring that they develop the leadership and managerial skills that are required to support the workforce they lead and manage. This in turn allows the junior workforce to feel more supported and understood which will lead to better retention within the Trust.

Anonymous

Health care apprenticeships have transformed the landscape in relation to skills development in healthcare – opening access to those that might not have had the opportunity without the funding support – thus widening access and offering tangible pipelines into professions and learning development/career progression for existing practitioners.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital in supporting the continued development of our workforce, enabling participants to add value through their studies in the breakthrough of clinical trials, bringing vital drugs to patients faster.

Anonymous

As an NHS Trust we have found the Level 7 Senior Leaders Apprenticeship invaluable to the strategic development of our senior leaders. The NHS is currently in a place where excellent leadership and management is essential to support staff and the organisation through these turbulent times. This apprenticeship offers credibility for our senior leaders and differs from traditional learning and development programmes as the emphasis is very much on the translation of knowledge, skills and behaviours back into the workplace to have a real impact, through the portfolio of evidence presented at end point assessment.

A level 7 leadership apprenticeship can significantly enhance patient care by fostering the development of effective, compassionate and skilled leaders through: improved decision making, team management, promoting a culture of continuous improvement, mentoring, enhancing emotional intelligence and improving policy implementation.

The NHS is being asked to work more efficiently and the financial priorities should be on providing good patient care. If money is required to train people through the non-apprenticeship route, then a choice would need to be made on where to direct funding, and compromises made. By continuing to offer the Level 7 Senior Leaders Apprenticeship it will safeguard the ongoing development of our senior leaders to excel and create a healthcare environment where patients receive safe, more effective and compassionate care.

Anonymous

They provide a brilliant way to offer team advancement and training in a professional environment. We have used the apprenticeship approach on several occasions and have always been impressed with the results at the end of the process.

Anonymous

We have many level 7 apprentices (65%) especially on senior leadership courses, CIPD equivalent, Data and Technology etc; we encourage all employees of all ages to take on apprenticeships which are meaningful to support their development and help our business thrive to be successful in the UK economy.

Many of the level 6 and below standards to not offer needed skills and stretch for our employees and our funding pot will be wasted even more than it is already if this badly considered change is forced through.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships offer people the opportunity to complete a level of qualification which might have been unattainable to them previously. It makes sense for there to be a full suite of qualifications and levels delivered as apprenticeships, as this makes them more attractive.

Anonymous

L7 apprenticeships are an important pipeline into the AHP Workforce and enables those who already have a degree in an unrelated subject to complete a master's degree join the Allied Health Professions. Utilising level 7's support widening participation and those changing careers.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are critical to our continuing professional development offer for the delivery of the NHS long-term workforce plan. Of specific importance are clinical programmes e.g. Advanced Clinical Practice, District Nursing and Specialist Community Public Health Nurse. The clinical level 7 programmes support recruitment and retention of the workforce and improve and enhance quality of care. Exclusion of Level 7 pre-registration Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professional programmes will not achieve the increase workforce ambitions of the long-term workforce plan and would restrict the career opportunities offered and recruitment to programmes from a diverse pool of applicants.

Specialist Leadership Level 7 Apprenticeships such as the Anderson Senior Leader Programme will enable senior leadership development to meet the expectation to reform the NHS. Senior leadership programmes will equip the workforce to achieve transformative change of the health and care system. We would endorse the inclusion of level 7 programmes for the non-clinical NHS workforce to ensure the service demands keep pace with clinical requirements specifically to enable the digital transformation of care to meet future service provision.

With current financial pressures within the health and care system it is critical that NHS trusts are able to utilise the apprenticeship levy to provide high quality level 7 education and protect the need to ringfence funding for education.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are essential to the development and retention of skilled nurses within many specialties. Without the incentive of adequate salary while training (and working) nurses are moving regularly out of NHS services into private, pharma, or non-Health Care areas. We need these skilled nurses within the NHS particularly where decreasing resources increasingly compromises good patient care. Stopping support for these is disastrously short sighted. As someone who had to fight for funding each step of the way through a Master's (many years ago) and now leads a team of eight specialist nurses, I have decades of experience in both self-development, service development and staff development. Services will fail. Patient care will fail. I find it extraordinary this funding cut is being considered at all.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are important to QVH as they provide a level of qualification to develop our leaders and specialists of the future.

Anonymous

Having had two level 7 apprenticeships in my office in the last two years, I appreciate the value of this level of apprenticeship in terms of staff development and retention of talent.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are integral to developing our NHS professionals with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to be effective leaders. Many NHS leaders start as skilled clinical professionals who enter into management posts with limited leadership training, the level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship is integral to building those higher leadership and management skills and if they were no longer funded by the levy, NHS trusts would not have the finances to develop these staff. Senior leadership roles specify the Level 7 as an essential criterion so these talented staff would not be able to progress and would not have means to self-fund. Also, the Advanced Clinical Practitioner role is vital to the emergency department in our trust and this needs to stay as a funded apprenticeship to enable these and future ACP staff to continue their valuable roles. The loss of the Level 7 apprenticeships would have a massive effect on the retention of staff because development opportunities is a major reason that staff stay in the NHS, if this were to stop, we would risk losing vital expertise.

Anonymous

Part of career progression, making a competent and confident and skilled workforce.

Anonymous

It is impossible for experienced professionals to progress within organisations to advanced practice level without apprenticeships. Apprenticeships enable skills knowledge and development further than a master's degree in advanced practice. We have several apprentices in our team at level 7 and they contribute to the workload whilst developing their skills.

Anonymous

The level 7 apprenticeships are instrumental in developing our staff and giving them the skills to progress in their career pathway.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships offer a key progression route for colleagues within Health and Care. They provide opportunities to widen participation to colleagues that have progressed through the organisation through experience rather than academic routes and for those that might not be able to reach their potential otherwise. They enable colleagues to develop their leadership skills and clinical skills. I believe this is a shortsighted step which constrains the levy usage further.

Anonymous

Access to apprenticeship training at all levels is crucial for delivering the long-term workforce plan in order to train, retain and reform current NHS practice.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships have enabled nurses paramedics and other allied health professionals to develop advanced skills. This has supported the development of advanced practice roles, enhancing the team around the patient, and ensuring the best possible care for patients, whilst also encouraging valued dedicated staff to stay and develop in the NHS.

Anonymous

Whose levy is it anyway? Level 7 apprenticeship programmes are key to attracting, developing and retaining a skilled workforce. Like other NHS Trusts, we absolutely could not fund these outside of the levy. The programmes were developed for a reason, and because of a need by NHS employers. We also support and encourage foundation, and Level 2/3 programmes; they are not mutually exclusive. Level 7 uptake counts for a very small percentage of new starts. Introducing further limitations is not helpful and will impact on our clinical, non-clinical and leadership expertise and the reasoning behind this proposal does not add up.

It is imperative we keep the progression opportunities open to allow our current and future workforce to enhance their social mobility in the same way as their predecessors. Based in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire with high deprivation, we are focussed on 'Growing our Own' to

ensure the local population has meaningful career opportunities, now and in the future.

Anonymous

The Level 7 apprenticeship program has proven to be a valuable standard of learning that not only provides support for managers and leaders, but also enables a wider range of staff members to access training and development opportunities. Removing this standard would have a detrimental impact on staff members who are seeking to enhance their skills and advance within the organisation.

Anonymous

Engineering, construction and built environment sectors

I personally am heavily involved in the L7 apprenticeship, as an assistant professor at the University of Nottingham where I am a studio lead in the first year of the L7 course, at my previous practice where we had 3 employees on the L7 course, and as part of my current company where we have 1 employee on the L7 course and potentially 2 employees looking to pursue this route.

As a small young practice of only 15 people and only 3 years old, the apprenticeship funding allows employees to continue working, earning a living, at the same practice after their placement year, removing the initial issue of the time and resource spent by the practice training up a graduate for them to then leave one year later. If this funding is withdrawn, we would not be able to financially host apprentices paying the full training costs. Even with the levy, there is a financial implication with the paid time towards studying that we must agree to in the university contract. We are also an employer with high morals that values their staff, and we pay a full-time competitive salary to apprentices like any other employee.

This is a serious issue that will massively impact the industry. The apprenticeship has been a welcome change to the architectural educational process – positive for both students and employers. If the levy funding is removed, it will feel like we are taking a step back in the profession and I worry that more students will not pursue a career in architecture.

Leah Bingham-Frost, Project Architect, 24/Three, Assistant Professor at University of Nottingham

Level 7 Apprenticeships must be protected. They are very important to us as an organisation as it allows us to further develop talented individuals that may not otherwise have the means to fund higher level qualifications. Student fees, accommodation cost and general cost of living puts fledgling professionals under immense pressure. It is already wholly unnecessary and taking away the funding for level 7 is further exacerbating the problem. We should be protecting the future of our country, not hindering it.

Lee Richardson, Operations Director and Architect, 3BM Limited, Apprenticeship mentor and advocate

Level 7 apprenticeships were essential to my journey to becoming an architect. They provided a unique opportunity to combine practical experience with academic learning, equipping me with the skills and confidence to excel in my profession. Unlike traditional postgraduate routes, this apprenticeship allowed me to earn a salary while studying, which was vital in supporting myself financially.

Affordability is a critical factor that makes Level 7 apprenticeships so valuable. For many, the high cost of postgraduate education can be a significant barrier, particularly for individuals from underrepresented or less privileged backgrounds. This pathway eliminates that obstacle, offering a route to professional qualification without the burden of substantial debt. It ensures that talent and determination, rather than financial means, determine success.

These apprenticeships also play a crucial role in increasing diversity within industries like architecture, which have historically struggled with inclusion. By providing access to higher education and professional opportunities, they empower individuals who might otherwise be excluded. For me, this meant not only acquiring technical skills but also building professional networks and receiving mentorship that shaped my career trajectory.

The combination of academic rigor, workplace learning, and financial accessibility makes Level 7 apprenticeships an indispensable tool for fostering social mobility and addressing skills gaps in

critical industries. My experience demonstrated their power to transform lives and careers, and I am a strong advocate for their continued support and expansion. They represent a modern, inclusive, and impactful approach to higher education and professional development.

Wiktoria Skarbek, Architect, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (Former apprentice)

Allford Hall Monaghan Morris is proud to be one of the trailblazer practices that helped to create the Architectural Apprenticeship Standard. We currently employ nine apprentices across our London and Bristol offices. We fully support the Architectural Apprenticeship at Level 7 and recognise the benefits of the programme to the built environment, to the industry, and to those who wish to qualify as architects.

We urge the Government to reconsider the proposed defunding of this important pathway to professional registration.

1. The Levy Funding Model Supports Widening Participation

The reduction or removal of funding via the Apprenticeships Levy will result in fewer apprenticeship places.

Typical costs associated with the study of architecture are significant - the apprenticeship 'earn and learn' model offsets the impact of this and supports access from a much wider pool of candidates.

2. Level 7 Apprenticeship Positive Impact

More than 800 people have undertaken the Level 7 apprenticeship since its commencement in 2018.

At AHMM the apprentices are highly engaged in practice life and key contributors to major projects alongside achieving academic excellence - the learning model provides the optimal conditions for those with talent and ambition to thrive.

3. Qualification Is a Requirement to Practice

Architecture is an exceptional case. A 'master's' / Level 7 qualification is a required part of the qualification pathway and has been acknowledged as such in the Student Loan framework. It therefore is not the case that those typically undertaking Level 7 are already well qualified. The subject requires a longer duration of study in comparison to many other courses.

4. A Changing Industry

The Level 7 Apprenticeship enables candidates to develop the required knowledge, skills and behaviours within the 'real-world' conditions of architectural practice.

This is essential at a time of change in the industry as it responds to challenges such as the Climate Emergency.

Ian Pollard, Senior Architect, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (Apprenticeship Coordinator)

We are a very small practice (<5) and have for the last four years taken on recent graduates as employees. This has been great for the practice, and good for me as practice owner in giving something back to the profession. It is not without its pitfalls, however, one of those being that staff leave after a year to continue their education in working towards qualification.

Having explored Level 7 Apprenticeships with one of our employees (who decided against it due to losing face-to-face teaching because of Covid), we made future staff aware we were prepared to support them with this route to qualification. One of our employees has just started his Apprenticeship having been with us for 9 months. I think it is fair to say that he is not from a privileged background and is pleased to be able to work whilst studying towards qualification as an architect.

I'm equally impressed that as a small practice, we have help in funding in the form of the levy, allowing us to give young staff the well-rounded experience we have become known for. We also have some continuity in staffing, which is both good for the practice and great for staff as they can see a project through from inception to completion.

Without the assistance of the levy we would certainly not be in a position to offer this as a route to qualification within the practice.

Allister Godfrey, Director, Allister Godfrey Architects (First-time employer of level 7 apprentice)

They open doors to those who do not see university as an option to them, they can widen diversity and ensure that no talent is missed. They provide all-round education both academic and practical in one go, what you learn, you practice on the job.

Maria Glynn, Associate, HR Projects Manager, BDP (Trailblazer member and Trade and Agriculture Commission member)

Working with Level 6 apprentices in engineering many of them aspire to achieve Chartership with a professional body - this is generally not possible without Level 7 academic qualifications. By discontinuing Level 7 apprenticeships, you are disadvantaging graduating apprentices who may not financially be in a position to undertake a traditional Master's degree. Essentially we are tuning being a Chartered Engineer into an elitist achievement, which the professional bodies have worked hard to rectify over the last few years.

Cate Anthony, Assistant Professor, British Tunnelling Society (Trailblazer member)

We have been striving for many years to set standards of competence in the Tunnelling Industry and in accordance with the need to verify competence (from the Grenfell Enquiry) a lot of time and trouble has been invested voluntarily in the L7 apprenticeship. This qualification is quite unique embracing as it does civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical and digital engineering. Tunnelling companies particularly SMEs do not make the profits to make significant investments and that is why this needs to remain with the current apprenticeship arrangements.

Robert L Ibell, Past Chair, British Tunnelling Society (Trailblazer member and Chair of CITB Technical Reference Group)

As a small organisation (Architectural company with less than 10 employees), the apprenticeship route to qualification is critical to our ability to retain valued members of staff and provide 'on the job' training whilst they undertake their academic endeavours.

Paul Mapstone, Director, BRL Design Group Ltd

We are currently developing a Level 7 apprenticeship standard for Tunnel Engineers, a specialised profession within the civil engineering industry which is highly relevant to the UK's current and future infrastructure needs, as the UK's exploitation and development of underground space progresses.

Tunnel Engineering is a standalone occupation, for which a specialised skill set is required. Tunnelling combines engineering disciplines across geotechnical, structural and materials engineering in a manner that other civil engineering streams do not. The development of the standard was initiated because employers identified a lack of employees with the relevant skills in the UK and a lack of training opportunities available for their staff.

To achieve chartered status with any one of a small number of relevant professional bodies, Tunnel Engineers are required to demonstrate sufficient experience and a relevant academic base, which is in the vast majority of cases provided by Level 7 training.

Tunnel Engineers typically specialise from general civil engineering at an early stage in their career (at graduate level), although this may happen further on during their career progression. In either case, regardless of age or career progression, Level 7 training provides them with new and relevant skills which they do not possess as more general civil or structural engineers.

We believe that the Level 7 Tunnel Engineer standard should be funded via the apprenticeship levy, so that employers may train the next generation of Tunnel Engineers.

Dr Eyre Hover, Principal Engineering Consultant, CECL Global (Co-Chair of Trailblazer Group for Level 7 Tunnel Engineer)

It's an opportunity to retrain staff for the needs of the UK Economy. In particular, planning has a great focus with Government at the moment to help reboot National GDP, solve our housing crisis and further nature recovery. Consequently this move could shatter the Governments aspirations.

Mark Kelly, UK Planning & Permitting Officer, Cemex UK Operations Ltd

We as an SME have benefited greatly by tapping into and supporting young talent.
Paul Rogers, Director, Senior Architect, CMS Architects Ltd

It is an important initiative that will provide the UK tunnelling/underground construction industry with well-developed, skilled and focused individuals. The L7 offers a structured training programme that can bridge the skill gap.
Sotirios Psomas, Director, COWI (Trailblazer Member)

We currently have an apprentice working with us and gaining invaluable experience on the job whilst learning at Oxford Brookes. This would not be possible without funding and therefore make future apprenticeship unviable if funding were removed.
Duncan Cryer, Architect and Director, Cryer & Coe Architects

Integral part of skills and management development programme.
Russell Patmore, Truck Sales Director, DAF Trucks Limited

Level 7 Apprenticeships are fundamental to our business in pipelining the skills we need to deliver NetZero projects for our clients in the Utilities and Infrastructure space. There is a skills shortage with gaps which can be addressed at the right academic level required to deliver client requirements through level 7 apprenticeships. L7 apprenticeships with the right accreditations allow us to develop talent with the chartered membership level status the clients need in tenders to secure long-term frameworks to deliver critical projects for UK infrastructure in line with ambitious NetZero goals.
Joanna Middleton, Head of Talent Acquisition, Dalcour Maclaren

Apprenticeships are important to us, as the 3-year period gives us time to justify investment in time and training that goes in hand with their formal training. Without these courses we are unlikely to risk taking on unqualified staff, where we could risk losing them after a year, and therefore are likely to invest less in training.
Mark Longworth, Director, DP Architects

Level 7 apprenticeships are vitally important as a vehicle for mature students to improve their strategic and academic knowledge and apply these skills into the workplace to drive efficiency and business growth.
Craig Watt, Director, Dyer & Butler Ltd (Former apprentice)

Training for architecture is a long process and puts a large debt onto the student and as such we are seeing a decline in numbers moving forward to full qualification. The level 7 apprenticeships have become an essential tool for the students to complete their studies with the benefit of gaining valuable knowledge from the workplace whilst not burdening themselves with additional debt.
Russell Wilks, Director, Eric Cole Ltd

As Chair of the Architecture Trailblazer, I am writing to confirm that we and all members of the Architecture Trailblazer fully support the L7 Architecture Apprenticeship programme and wish to ensure that its funding is not withdrawn.

The number of L7 Architecture Apprentices is steadily growing, and we are beginning to see positive impacts resulting from his scheme, not only within our business but across the wider architecture industry. The L7 Architecture Apprenticeship program is essential for candidates aspiring to become fully qualified architects in the UK, as it leads to mandatory qualifications (Part 2 and Part 3), necessary for registration with the Architects Registration Board (ARB). Any reduction in funding allocation would significantly impact accessibility to this vital program and, consequently, to the profession itself.

We look forward to your support in maintaining the integrity and accessibility of the L7 Architecture Apprenticeship program.

Peter Garstecki, Education Manager, Associate Partner, Foster + Partners (Chair of the Architecture Trailblazer)

We appreciate that we have a skills shortage in the industry and if large / medium infrastructure projects in this country are to continue, with people to working in those industries created as a result of these projects, then we need to invest in the next generation for ourselves as a nation, and not rely on other nations.

Robert Norman, Stakeholder Manager, Galliford Try

Our apprentice is called Emily and is undertaking her L7 Architecture apprenticeship at Nottingham University. She is hugely driven and we were very pleased to support her in undertaking an apprenticeship with us. We are a smaller company and therefore were able to draw down levy funding to help us to assist Emily in her journey, if the funding had not been available then I am afraid to say that we would not have been able to support Emily and pay the full training costs.

I am worried that Architecture as a profession is facing an increasing problem, with prohibitively expensive university costs, I am worried that from an economic viewpoint that Architecture could become unviable for many.

This is why we were so enthusiastic about the apprenticeship route. At the end of her training Emily is going to be a fantastic Architect, I have no doubt that her contribution to the profession will be great. We need to be encouraging people into Architecture from all walks of life, all these fantastically talented, but financially strained individuals should have a route to practice. If the L7 apprenticeships become financially unworkable, then there are going to be countless young individuals who will not pursue the profession.

I do hope the government can rally to keep this as a viable route to learning. For smaller practices whilst the initial cash contribution is lower, the time we can give apprentices to develop their skills and produce diligent, highly qualified professionals is great.

Ben Richard Hills, Director, Gibberd Architects Limited

GO! Southampton is the city's Business Improvement District. We work with, and support, hundreds of businesses to grow and we actively engage with partners to make the city a better place to live, work and visit.

Level 7 apprenticeships have enabled our team's Director of Placemaking to develop the professional skills, knowledge and network to deliver a much improved city centre, working closely with the city council's economic growth and planning departments. Without this apprenticeship support, the delivery of growth and improvement would be delayed or reduced considerably, slowing the city's economic prosperity.

Stephen Manion, Executive Director, GO! Southampton

Architecture and the part architects play in the development of our built environment are critical to our economy and the well-being of UK citizens. The route to qualification however is long and expensive and this is reducing diversity - and the talent pool - in the architectural profession. It is essential to have a route to qualification that is affordable, and apprenticeships provide this. It is therefore vital Level 7 architecture apprenticeships are maintained.

Nigel Ostime, Consultant, Hawkins Brown Architecture Ltd

As a recently established studio in South-East England, we have directly benefitted from having a Level 7 apprentice within our team. Our candidate has offered invaluable input to the early-stage designs of our projects, has allowed us to evolve wider practice thinking in the SEN education field, through the collaborative research work with University of Nottingham, and offers us the continuity of continued work force, unlike the current RIBA Stage 1 placement, which evokes the need for a continual interview + hiring process.

The apprenticeship scheme, we consider, is the first positive move, endorsed by the RIBA, in making architecture accessible - revoking apprenticeship support would be a backwards step, and highly short sighted.

Mark Ellson, Director, Holmes Miller

L7 apprenticeships help provide the bridge to becoming a Chartered Engineer. If STEM is so important to UK PLC, defunding L7s will curtail the number of engineers within the UK, pushing the UK even further behind other OECD countries.

Julian Webber, Head of Talent, HORIBA MIRA Ltd

Level 7 apprentices are helping us fill a skills shortage within our industry. We typically hire new staff who have completed a Master's level degree in our area of expertise (Ground Engineering). Over the previous 5-10 years numbers of candidates completing these courses through the normal (non-apprentice) route has dwindled and now there are very few UK-based students each year. As such the L7 apprenticeship has been a welcome new stream through which to hire and train new staff.

Jake Bennett, Associate Director of Ground Engineering, Jacobs

Level 7 apprenticeships are a vital option in our aspiration for equity in postgraduate education in England. As such please can you increase the apprenticeships budget in line with the cost of funding level 7 apprenticeships in growth-driving sectors like ground engineering.

Thomas Berry, Chief Geologist (Europe), Jacobs

It makes professional qualifications more accessible to people, especially those who come from less wealthy back grounds.

Daniel Wadsworth, Director, Jessop and Cook Architects

As an employer committed to developing talent through apprenticeships, internships, and experiential hires, we deeply value continued self-development through a combination of on-the-job training, mentoring, and self-directed learning. Additionally, we recognise the importance of academic education in expanding horizons and introducing individuals to the latest industry best practices.

Level 7 apprenticeships are particularly impactful for individuals with significant professional experience but who may not have engaged in academic study for some time. These programs bridge that gap, enabling our managers to access cutting-edge education from local universities while connecting with peers from other businesses undertaking similar development pathways. This integration of practical experience and academic insight drives innovation and growth both within our organization and the broader business ecosystem.

As a company, we compete in the global export market, with over 90% of our portfolio delivered internationally. This demands exceptional skills, adaptability, and expertise from our teams. The training provided through Level 7 apprenticeships equips our staff with these critical capabilities while fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange that benefits local academia and businesses. This creates a multiplier effect, enhancing regional economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness—outcomes aligned with the government's vision for a stronger, more skilled workforce.

However, without the financial support for these apprenticeships, we would be unable to offer these opportunities beyond allocating time for development. In an intensely competitive market, reduced access to such programs would significantly impact our competitive advantage and long-term sustainability. Ensuring ongoing funding for Level 7 apprenticeships is not only vital for individual and organisational growth but also for maintaining the economic benefits these skilled professionals bring to local and national productivity, enabling the UK to remain competitive on the world stage.

Ben Swann, VP & General Manager, L3Harris Commercial Aviation Training Systems

Apprenticeships present a great opportunity to attract more diverse, talented young people to the Architectural profession by providing more accessible routes to qualification and employment. Architecture makes a major contribution to the UK's balance of payments, as one of the country's most valuable creative exports. London has the greatest concentration of international and UK architects in the World. 67 per cent (£2.2bn) of the £3.6bn annual income from all UK chartered architects' practices is generated in London. Over 30 per cent of the world's largest and most renowned architects 'Top 100' practices, and 57 per cent of all UK architectural staff, are based in London.

Government should not underestimate the importance of the creative industries, which contributed 124.6Bn in 2022, accounting for 5.7% of UK GVA. The Architectural profession is at the heart of this success, with leading architectural practices in the UK, widely acknowledged for their design excellence, both nationally and internationally. London is THE global hub for Architecture and international architectural services, and we need a pipeline of diverse talent from all walks of life to retain this unique position as a world leader: Architecture Apprentices are key to delivering our future economic prosperity and creative success.

Valerie Owen OBE, Managing Director, Le Vaillant Owen Consultancy Ltd, Past Master Architects' Liver Company and Past Chair RIBA London Region

Our architectural practice, as practices around the country, and the industry in general, need to help develop young people into architects, to develop the profession and support the construction industry.

British architects are renowned across the world and we need to continue to support the development and education of our youth. Our practice has currently a number of Level 7 architectural apprentices who provide a valuable contribution to our workings, without which current running and well-being of the practice would be much poorer.

A skill shortage would exist otherwise, leading to the practices production and workload to suffer. Looking to the future, their development at this crucial stage of their training with continuous real life practice experience, aids to produce a well-rounded and very employable graduate, ready to majorly contribute to the country's skill pool.

George Godsman, Director, Lyons Sleeman Hoare Architects, Apprentice Mentor

As an employment mentor, I have seen first-hand the benefits from part time study whilst working in practice. Without government funding, I feel practices would not take on new students.

Adam Harris, Architect, Lyons+Sleeman+Hoare Architects, RIBA, ARB Employment Mentor

We firmly believe halting funding for Level 7 apprenticeships will damage us in the following ways:

- **Business impact:** Level 7 apprenticeships are critical for filling skills gaps in both leadership and management as well as key professional roles that are critical within our organisation. They promote diversity and social mobility, offering a route for career progression into senior roles. Removing level 7 funding would mean we are unable to offer upskilling into senior roles and we would be at greater risk of losing key talent.
- **Economic value:** The learning gained by our people undertaking these apprenticeships benefits our business and in turn, the economy. This does not stop with our level 7 learners – it cascades down through the departments they are responsible for. These apprenticeships then significantly drive innovation and productivity, enabling us to lead through change and adopt new technologies that benefit our customers and the communities they serve.
- **Misconceptions about entry-level apprenticeships:** Scrapping Level 7 funding will not automatically create more entry-level apprenticeships. Entry-level colleagues take 6–12 months to become productive, and in tight markets, businesses are reluctant to carry the cost of a non-productive workforce. Not being able to use funds for Level 7 apprenticeships does not mean we would then fund more early career programmes instead, unless of course the use of the levy funds usage rules change concurrently and allow businesses to use them to fund these early career colleagues' employment costs

Simon Pocock, L&D Consultant, Marshalls plc

The protected title of "architect" is already a difficult enough milestone to achieve, with a minimum of seven years to obtain such a prestigious title. In not having the apprenticeship funded, this is only more likely to have a negative impact on the numbers of people progressing and achieving their professional qualification.

One of the biggest issues with our profession is that many people who don't become architects are still allowed to practice freely with extremely limited governance. Giving people wider options

of routes will lead to more people obtaining the title, and subsequently improve the quality and governance of our professional output.

Matthew Poore, Architect & Teaching Fellow, Method Studio Architecture Ltd. & University of Lincoln

The apprenticeship system has allowed us to offer a pathway for postgraduates to qualify as Architects. This has allowed highly motivated and talented staff members to progress when they would have otherwise struggled to self-finance the additional two-year Master's degree that is required.

Simon Baker, Director/Owner, Nash Baker Architects

Students typically have spent 3 years in college and after a year in practice traditionally they returned to study for further 2 years. It is important that we train high quality architects and 1 year in practice is not enough. We are happy to provide training while they study under apprenticeship as the student does not get burdened with debt.

Nick Carroll, Managing Director, Nick Carroll Architects

We have been utilising the opportunity with level 7 apprenticeships to upskill and re-skill. This helps us to optimise transferable skills into new opportunities where development supports career enhancement and growth for people that may miss out otherwise.

Kelly Kibler, Head of Learning & Performance, Octavius Infrastructure Ltd (Trailblazer member)

Supports our staff mobility and the prospects of up-skilling, re-skilling and re-training for new careers. Our staff body of Architects are hugely grateful for the financial support the Levy brings to support Level 7 studies, to help them become fully qualified without the threat of signing long term training agreements or having the financial constraints of more student fees to contend with.

Geoffrey M Hughes, Learning and Development Business Partner, Pick Everard (Former apprentice)

There is very little regulation in our profession, which works within the construction industry, so creating a career and qualification pathway for land surveyors to follow is of utmost importance. Being able to offer the opportunity of a level 7 qualification to our team means we become more desirable as an employer and can pledge our commitment to employing experts in our profession. There are too many 'land surveyors' in an unregulated area of industry where millions of pounds can be at stake, should work be done by uneducated or unqualified people.

Lucy Powers, Director and Co-Owner, PowersUK Ltd (Co-chair of the L3/L6/L7 Geospatial Apprenticeships Employer Trailblazer Group)

At Ridge, we highly value Level 7 apprenticeships as a key part of our talent development strategy for architecture and planning. These programs offer a unique combination of academic learning and practical, on-the-job experience, allowing our employees to develop advanced skills while contributing directly to our business.

Level 7 apprenticeships provide clear pathways for entry into a career and progression, particularly in specialised fields where higher qualifications are essential, such as architecture. The potential change to remove levy funding for these apprenticeships would significantly impact our ability to offer them. This could lead to fewer opportunities for local people to advance within the industry, and ultimately, leading to a skill shortage of required personnel that is crucial to long-term growth within the industry.

In architecture, where a master's degree is required for professional qualification, removing funding would especially disadvantage those from less well-off backgrounds. Level 7 apprenticeships provide a vital, accessible route to obtaining these qualifications. If this change goes ahead, it could make architectural education and career progression more exclusive, limiting diversity in the profession.

Graham Blackburn, Partner – Architect, Ridge & Partners

This is such an important gateway to the town planning profession. To remove the funding from the levy would severely limit the level of interest, diversity, and numbers of individuals embarking on an exciting and rewarding career in planning.

Nick Stafford, Partner, Ridge & Partners LLP

Apprenticeships are an absolutely vital means to attract, train and maintain committed people within our industry, especially in hugely challenging times.

Apprenticeships offer a unique and highly motivated means of training as real world experience is gained day to day meaning the person hugely benefits through experience plus university training and support.

I trained part time (over 30 years ago), and I know how vital it is to encourage people to commit to higher levels of education to further improve the real world we live and work within. Many other careers are simpler, maybe financially more rewarding or less time-consuming, but architecture is a jewel and must be preserved and promoted to the younger generations.

The apprenticeship route is absolutely perfect.

Robert Allerton, Architect, Robert Allerton Architects

Scott Brownrigg took a leading role in the architecture apprenticeship trailblazer group and have invested a huge amount of time and effort in setting up and supporting both Level 6 and Level 7 Apprenticeships.

Like many practices involved, this investment in time reflects our commitment to supporting the next generation as a whole, supporting the vital pipeline of skills needed to make our built environment well designed, safe, sustainable and inclusive, and widening opportunities for careers in the industry.

Alternative routes to qualification - particularly including the Level 7 Apprenticeship scheme - are vital to sustaining the profession and ensuring that a wide range of voices and experiences can influence our built environment.

One of the main reasons we invested time and effort into establishing architectural apprenticeships was to address a high dropout rate, which seemed to have the biggest impact on individuals already under-represented in the profession.

Since the apprenticeship scheme was established, we have seen a huge demand from students wanting to learn through this route. Not only because it offers a far more financially viable alternative but also because they need and want a different learning experience which offers access to direct support and expertise from within the industry

As a profession, we need the opportunity to continually improve and expand this route for the benefit of the next generation. It would be hugely disappointing- to us as committed employers and to the apprentices themselves - to lose this important programme which we know has been critical to some students being able to stay in the profession and is needed to sustain a pipeline of qualified technical staff and valuable professional career paths for young people that have a really positive impact on people and planet"

Helen Taylor, Director of Practice, Scott Brownrigg (Trailblazer sub-lead)

I have the pleasure of having 1 level 6 and 3 level 7 apprentices in my team. I am also a level 6 mentor for an apprentice at LSBU, who this year was voted the WCCA best level 6 architecture apprentice in the country.

I feel very honoured to be working with such dedicated and bright minds who apply themselves over and above their traditionally educated peers. It takes a special person to be an architectural apprentice and in turn produces great architects that would not be in practice if it were not for the scheme.

Ross McWatt, Project Director, Scott Brownrigg

The architectural apprenticeship pathway, encompassing both Level 6 and Level 7 programs, serves as an outstanding route for aspiring architects and a strategic mechanism for firms to cultivate and develop talent within their organisations.

By offering a comprehensive and integrated approach to architectural education, it has significantly enhanced accessibility for a broader and more diverse range of individuals.

Redirecting funding away from Level 7 apprenticeships would have profound consequences, potentially preventing many from affording a complete architectural education. Such a shift would undermine the substantial progress made in expanding inclusivity within the field and represent a regrettable setback in the effort to democratise access to the profession.

Rob Cullen, Project Director, Scott Brownrigg

We are currently developing a Level 7 apprenticeship standard for Tunnel Engineers, a specialised profession within the civil engineering industry which is highly relevant to the UK's current and future infrastructure needs, as the UK's exploitation and development of underground space progresses.

Tunnel Engineering is a standalone occupation, for which a specialised skill set is required. Tunnelling combines engineering disciplines across geotechnical, structural, mechanical, electrical and materials engineering in a manner that other civil engineering streams do not. The development of the standard was initiated because employers identified a lack of employees with the relevant skills in the UK and a lack of training opportunities available for their staff.

We believe that the Level 7 Tunnel Engineer standard should be funded via the apprenticeship levy, so that employers may train the next generation of Tunnel Engineers.

Were this course available to me as a young engineer I'd have taken it on, to me the benefits are hugely obvious to those people starting out, or currently working, in the UK/Worldwide tunnelling environment. The UK has long produced many world class tunnel professionals, with this course the UK will maintain that strength and depth as a force of technical capability in this global industry.

Dean Mulligan, Engineer, Tunnels & Civils, SCS Railways - HS2 (Trailblazer co-chair)

For employers in the built environment, access and progression to level 7 apprenticeship programmes enables us to attract, develop and retain talent, and in doing so improves the diversity of workforce and apprentice intake.

These apprenticeships support with highly specialist occupations that have been difficult to attract new talent to. They also provide critical skills that are in demand for the delivery of the built and natural environment that we need to deliver for the future of the UK, and the people that live and work within it.

Simply put, with ever increasing regulatory demands, the drive for net-zero and carbon reduction, and improving biodiversity, we need to ensure we have the talent and competence needed to deliver at these higher levels.

Caroline Sudworth, Director, Technical Apprenticeship Consortium (TAC), Trailblazer group lead for (10 occupations) covering civil engineering, building services engineering, transport planning and environmental practitioner

L7 apprenticeship was fundamental to my career prospects and goals. Other routes to becoming a qualified architect would not have been viable.

Joseph Royle, Architect, TTSP (Trailblazer member)

Level 7 apprenticeships allow for the training and retention of highly motivated junior members of staff. They enable entry into the profession for those from non-traditional backgrounds and contribute to the widening diversity of the workforce. The opportunity to work and study allows apprentices to gain valuable professional experience whilst deepening their academic studies, an arrangement which is beneficial not just to them but also to their employers.

Laura Gerada, Director, Williams-Architects

It enables students from non-wealthy backgrounds to access careers which typically involve long university courses i.e. Architecture. You cannot become an Architect without passing your Part 2 and 3, it isn't a master's course for the sake of it.

Rupert Wolstenholme, Director, Wolstenholme Ltd

We need to see routes for upskilling across all levels to address the skills shortages in industry. Employers should also be afforded various options/opportunities for using the apprenticeship levy.

Louise Beamish, Director, Acoustics, WSP (Trailblazer Chair for Environmental Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship)

Level 7 apprenticeships are incredibly important to myself and businesses as they are a key step in our development, learning and sponsorship journey for many employees. We offer specific levels and pathways as part of succession planning, performance, promotion and careers journeys which have level 7 apprenticeships intrinsically linked.

Edward Locke, Careers Manager, YTL Group UK (Trailblazer member)

The development of people in the field of engineering is paramount to the success of the country and future generations.

Anonymous

Level 7 Apprenticeships are crucial to widening participation and access to the Architecture profession. It is mandatory to undertake three different higher education qualifications in order to qualify as an Architect: undergraduate degree, master's and a professional qualification. In all, this totals a minimum of 6 years of university study. For many young people this is a financial barrier, not just because of the outlay for course fees but also because of the delay in earning. The Level 07 Apprenticeship allows students to earn while they study, as well as gain invaluable real-world experience that both grounds and enriches their university learning. Architects design for people and the whole diverse range that encompasses. We therefore need the architecture profession to be made up of a diverse range of people, with a broad range of backgrounds and experiences. Cutting the Level 7 Apprenticeship may prevent some from accessing the profession entirely and will severely impact those students who can afford to pursue Architecture as a career path, changing the shape of the Architecture profession.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital to the growth and innovation of our industry. These advanced programmes, covering fields such as architecture, geotechnical engineering, sustainability, town planning, and digital technology, equip apprentices with the high-level skills and knowledge necessary to tackle complex challenges and drive progress.

We have seen firsthand the transformative impact of these apprenticeships. Our apprentices bring fresh perspectives and cutting-edge expertise, contributing significantly to our projects and enhancing our ability to deliver exceptional results. They are integral to our talent pipeline, ensuring we have a steady flow of skilled professionals ready to step into key roles and lead our future initiatives.

Removing levy funding for these apprenticeships would be a significant setback. The financial support provided by the levy is crucial for maintaining the quality and accessibility of our apprenticeship programmes. Without it, we would struggle to offer the same level of training and development opportunities, potentially reducing the number of apprentices we can support. This would not only hinder our ability to innovate and grow but also impact the broader industry by limiting the availability of highly skilled professionals.

Continued levy funding is essential to sustaining the success of Level 7 apprenticeships. It ensures that we can continue to invest in the next generation of industry leaders, driving forward our commitment to excellence and innovation. Removing this funding would jeopardize the future of our workforce and the advancements we strive to achieve.

Anonymous

Level 7 Apprenticeships are crucial to widening participation and access to the Architecture profession. It is mandatory to undertake three different higher education qualifications in order to qualify as an Architect: undergraduate degree, master's and a professional qualification. In all, this totals a minimum of 6 years of university study. For many young people this is a financial barrier, not just because of the outlay for course fees but also because of the delay in earning. The Level 7 Apprenticeship allows students to earn while they study, as well as gain invaluable real-world experience that both grounds and enriches their university learning. Architects design for people and the whole diverse range that encompasses. We therefore need the architecture profession to be made up of a diverse range of people, with a broad range of

backgrounds and experiences. Cutting the Level 7 Apprenticeship may prevent some from accessing the profession entirely and will severely impact those students who can afford to pursue Architecture as a career path, changing the shape of the Architecture profession.

Anonymous

Level 7 Apprenticeships in Architecture provide an important collaborative 'real world' learning experience for students. As the employer, we invest significant time in supporting our apprentices in the work-place as well as paying them a salary for the working time and the academic time (non-chargeable). If funding were removed, quite simply, it would not be economically viable for us to employ and support an apprentice and we would be forced to remove the role.

Anonymous

The architecture qualification journey is long and expensive. It can be impossible for those from lower income households to complete the qualification journey. The use of apprentices enables us to support individuals who would otherwise be unable to qualify. Removing the L7 would halt any progress made in diversifying the industry.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships provide an excellent opportunity for career progression and skill development. It allows individuals to combine work experience with academic study, enabling them to apply theory directly to real life examples at work. This approach accelerates learning and enhances problem-solving abilities. Apprenticeships offer a valuable pathway for individuals from all backgrounds to access higher education and career advancement. Defunding level 7 apprenticeships would limit future generations access to these invaluable opportunities, hindering their potential and negatively impacting both individuals and businesses.

Anonymous

We currently employ three L7 Architectural Apprentices. The traditional route for qualification is becoming harder and harder as the course is so long and the university / living costs extremely high. Students are selecting the L7 routes more and more often. If we as a practice need to incur additional costs in future this could jeopardise the scheme for them and us. We lose out, the profession loses out, and architects of the future may never become architects, leaving a huge skills gap in years to come.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprentices are important to the future of our business and profession; this route allows those that may otherwise not have the means, to study for the profession.

Anonymous

As a mentor and member of the inaugural trail blazer group I have seen the positive impact of the Level 7 Apprenticeship first hand. When we started the process we were faced with some very stark numbers in terms of conversion from people starting architecture education to becoming registered architects. At the time this was as low as 7%. A major contributing factor to this the fact that when university training is completed registration does not follow.

Many find it difficult to take that final step to registration.

Diversity is very low due to the low retention rates for women and people from non-traditional backgrounds in the profession. The main benefit for us as an employer that the Level 7 Apprenticeship includes the professional registration. It cannot be completed without meeting all criteria for registration. Unlike a master's course which finishes short of these requirements because it does not include the required practice based learning. Losing level 7 Apprenticeships would mean a large step back for the profession in terms of encouraging diversity and social mobility.

Our first two apprentices who are now architects were both female and neither would be qualified now without this route to becoming an architect. Architect is a protected title that requires registration by law. Completing Level 7 or the meeting the current Part 3 requirements are the only option to become registered.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprentices are a really valuable asset to our workforce in terms of contributing to our projects and enabling us to help train the next generation of architects.

Anonymous

To put it simply, I would not be an Architect without the Level 7 Apprenticeship. I would have struggled to afford the costs of the traditional course. Added to this, I would not have the experience I do it. I finished the course and qualified as an Architect at the end of 2023, with 4 years experience in the industry behind me. I am now taking design roles on projects as well as working as a BIM Lead, which I would have not been able to do without the apprenticeship. The architectural industry is unfortunately an expensive profession to be part of and it would be sad to see others not get the chance I have been given to build a career as an architect for the future.

Anonymous

We currently have 4 Level 7 architectural apprentices working in our practice and highly value their input and skills. If the apprenticeship route was not an option for their further education then they would have needed to leave our employment to return to full time study for two years which would have an obvious impact on loss of their skills and needing to re-recruit.

Anonymous

To qualify as an architect is a long and expensive process for the student. The Level 7 apprenticeship allows the student to achieve the qualification while remaining in work and not taking on more student debt. Receiving this knowledge on the job we believe, is more important than spending 3 more years at university.

Anonymous

Manufacturing

Level 7 apprenticeships allow us develop the next generation of senior leaders, to ensure they are ready for the challenges they will face when their time comes to step up.

Gone are the days of throwing people in at the deep end to see who sinks and who swims.

These days, its more about succession planning and preparing colleagues to be ready whenever the opportunity arrives, keeping them on a path of lifelong continual learning. This is a direct benefit to the individual, or business and society as a whole.

David Ineson, Marketing Director, Endress+Hauser Ltd, Former apprentice

As a small business we are currently investing in level 6 apprentices which is a significant commitment to developing young talent within our industry. In the absence of level 7 funding, I am concerned that exceptional talent potential will be curtailed when our current and future apprentices reach the end of their level 6. This will also limit our ability to offer level 7 to our more experienced employees who may wish to develop their careers within our business.

Richard Day, Managing Director, Essex Scientific Laboratory Supplies Limited

While we have not yet recruited a Level 7 apprentice, we have been engaged in supporting the University of Hertfordshire in developing their offers for degree apprenticeships in Civil Engineering. We see this as a key route for addressing the ongoing skills shortage within our sector and in helping us grow as an SME and local employer for the university.

Neil Abbott, Director, GSS Piling Limited

MBDA UK utilises the apprenticeship levy as a key part of its Talent Development Strategy not only for its Early Careers Apprentices at levels 3-6, but also for a growing cohort of Experienced Apprentices at levels 3-7.

The Level 7 Masters opportunity is particularly important to our business to allow us to further develop key roles vital to the security of our nation. MBDA UK would encourage this government to ensure that L7 Apprenticeships are expanded rather than potentially reduced and also that levy paying companies such as ours, are affording the opportunity to utilise the levy to support Technical, Management and Leadership Development Programmes that we run via external

partners that currently cannot be funded via the levy.

Andrew Marchant, Early Careers Programmes Lead, MBDA UK Limited

I am currently enrolled on a Level 7 MBA in Senior Leadership which is giving me the opportunity to expand the skillset and knowledge to further my career. It also has been an enriching experience which I would otherwise not have had access to without the financial support of this employer/government funded initiative.

Mike Bottomley, Regional Operations Manager, Rubix UK Ltd

We currently have a number of employees, across our 9 sites in the UK, participating on L7 courses and a some of these are well into the UoN L7 programme. Our apprentices have been welcomed into the university and receive a world class level of support and training, from which our business and employees are seeing real benefit.

We see a huge benefit for our business with respect to upskilling, career progression, employee retention and employee engagement. We have used the L7 qualification as a stepping stone from Technician to Engineering grades, enabling us to develop new engineers with our own DNA already part of their skill set.

We have invested in a state-of-the-art R&D facility in the Midlands. The L7 degree apprenticeship enables us to re-invest the apprenticeship levy into growing our engineering capacity and capability.

Philip Langley, Strategic Development, ZF Automotive UK Limited

Advanced vocational training is essential for the growth of niche scientific fields. Simply put, traditional university education does not equip graduates with the skills needed for the types of work needed in the modern age.

Anonymous

Encouraging people to join an organisation and build a career whilst achieving a recognised qualification, will allow people who may be new to leadership roles or had not had opportunity to study to gain a qualification focussed on the role.

Anonymous

The level 7 apprenticeship helps to enforce why leadership is critical to project success. It teaches the often un-taught softer skills such as how to pre-empt negative human reaction to change, which ultimately helps projects run more smoothly without delay and avoids build-up of costs due to indecision - two problems affecting all projects.

Anonymous

To support the development of our employees and give choices on their future education.

Anonymous

Digital

We have a highly skilled workforce, who in order to develop and grow, find Level 7 courses are a natural next step. To remove this from the levy will result in us being forced to pay into a fund that we cannot utilise to the fullest extent either financially or in the best way for our team.

Sam Blount, Head of Operations, Advancing Analytics Limited

This level of qualification is crucial to increasing the knowledge, skill and qualifications of our employees across the business from engineering, sales and senior management for our business sector, it also helps to improve the individual academic qualification level and improve our country's skills gaps for residents.

Amelia Whitlock, HR Business Partner, Festo

As a startup and associated company of Ordnance Survey, we are leveraging the funding to turn one of our employees into a deep-tech-oriented role. Without this funding, we will be struggling to earn the formal credibility and adapt to the new AI-led world. This is a game-changer (or game-saver actually!) for us to stay ahead of the industry with our original founding team. We are now

working with LNER, National Express using the skills the level 7 apprenticeship has given to our apprentice. I would really suggest the government not to kill SMEs' route to becoming more useful to the economy, especially when they spend days and nights on making it happen.

Andre Wang, CEO, Moonbility

Level 7 apprenticeships have enabled our company to take great early career people and accelerate them to be amazing in areas such as accounting, engineering and leadership, and solving big problems in the UK space sector. Without the levy we would never have been able to fund this.

Carl Andersen, Head of Learning and Development, Viasat

Any aid to training that helps to bridge the skills gap has to be supported. Apprenticeships are an ideal way for industry to get the skilled employee they need, while allowing the apprentice to gain academic qualifications while earning and learning on the job.

Anonymous

Creative and cultural industries

The L7 Library, Information and Knowledge Management Professional apprenticeship is of real importance to the Bodleian Libraries. We see it as an opportunity to create career pathways in our organisation by recruiting and upskilling existing staff and increasing diversity in our organisation.

Laura How, Chief Operating Officer, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

The L7 Library, Information and Knowledge Management Professional apprenticeship is of real importance to the Bodleian Libraries. We see it as an opportunity to create career pathways in our organisation by recruiting and upskilling existing staff and increasing diversity in our organisation. Barriers we currently face include:

- Difficulty in filling posts that would fit with the Level 7 apprenticeship;
- Financial barriers to people funding a Masters to become a qualified librarian (they usually have to self-fund);
- Financial barriers to people coming to work in Oxford, which is an expensive city;
- A lack of career progression for staff from lower grade posts to qualified positions;
- Difficulty encouraging people from diverse backgrounds into qualified positions as currently we are selecting from a pool of qualified librarians who mostly identify as white.

The L7 apprenticeship would help as it would allow us to remove the financial barriers which are currently preventing staff from becoming qualified and enable more career progression opportunities in our organisation.

Offering the Level 7 would be an exciting development opportunity for someone and enable us to fill posts that we are struggling to fill. We would also be able to interview a more diverse pool of candidates as getting the library qualification forms a part of the role and we would not require prior qualifications, therefore a broader range of people could come and work for us.

The L7 apprenticeship is about offering more opportunities in our profession and without it I fear the profession may stagnate.

Emma Sullivan, Learning and Development Librarian, Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford (Trailblazer Co-Chair for Level 7 Library, Information and Knowledge Management Professional)

At Suffolk Libraries we support apprenticeships at all levels, but we are keen to ensure investment and support for a Level 7 option in public libraries remains.

Access to this type of career development allows talented and driven colleagues the opportunity to advance in their career where previously more traditional routes to professionalisation may have been closed to them or unattainable.

Support for a Level 7 apprenticeship will allow us to retain talent, add to our culture of investing in our people, and ultimately, ensure our communities receive high quality services created by trained professionals.

Krystal Vittles, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Suffolk Libraries IPS Ltd (Trailblazer member)

I personally graduated from university with a considerable level of debt and a basic knowledge of how to apply my degree in a work environment. A Level 7 Apprenticeship provides the exact opposite - a better financial standing on completion of the apprenticeship and hands-on experience of how to apply higher education learning in a workplace environment.

We have apprentices currently at our practice who are gaining excellent skillsets, far beyond what could be achieved through a university degree on its own. We are a small business and for us to solely fund these would not be possible. My view is that the government should be funding far more apprenticeships to develop a highly skilled workforce rather than cutting funding.

Mark Slater, Managing Director, WWA Studios

I am a member of a Level 7 Library, Information and Knowledge Management Professional apprenticeship Trailblazer group as an employer representative, helping develop the standard so that it meets our current and future skills needs across public, private and third sectors and as an employer planning to use the apprenticeship. My organisation would do this both to create new staff roles, and for upskilling existing staff into higher-level professional roles to create new employment opportunities.

A key driver for the development of this apprenticeship is to widen access to the information professions by creating an alternative route to the vocational masters degree in librarianship. Sector workforce mapping^[1] by the library and archives associations (CILIP and ARA) demonstrates a lack of diversity in our sector with less than 5% of the workforce of non-white ethnicity, and also that higher earnings correlate with holding the professional (master's) qualification.

Employers can no longer afford to fund master's-level training for staff as we did in the past as fees for the courses are typically £10,000-£13,000 in England. The Level 7 apprenticeship is an ideal solution, providing both a job and a nationally recognised qualification with parity with existing vocational qualifications at no cost to the apprentice. Removing this route of funding professional education and training removes this route to widen access and ensure a diverse, highly skilled workforce.

Anonymous

Local government

As an Authority, similar to nationwide trends, we are experiencing ongoing recruitment difficulties in some services, the other issue is our older age profile, the only way to address these issues is to effectively succession plan and invest in the workforce for the future. We have committed to a planned training and development program including level 7 apprenticeships to develop our Senior Officers.

Mary Abraham, Head of HR and Equalities, Amber Valley Borough Council

The proposed changes to L7 funding will have a profound impact on our already severely stretched Council finances and force us into a position where we will struggle to meet staff development needs in some areas and be unable to attract talent and grow our workforce in others, notably Chartered Town Planners of whom there is a national skills shortage.

Denise England, Apprenticeship Coordinator, Bath and North East Somerset Council

Level 7 apprenticeships support our community by giving them the opportunity to work and upskill themselves which may not be financially viable in this current climate. Level 7 apprenticeships are used as part of our succession planning and supporting colleagues to progress their career. In turn this opens up more entry level vacancies as colleagues progress. Specifically in Planning, recruiting experienced planners is a national challenge and the level 7 apprenticeship gives the opportunity for the council to look at people with non-planning degrees that can get the groundings in the complexities of planning whilst working. It would have a significant impact if these apprenticeships are to be defunded.

Jo Lowe, Talent Advisor, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council

Level 7 apprenticeships enable us to create a talent pipeline in hard-to-recruit areas like law and planning. They enable us to develop our staff and retain them in the organisation, allowing those

who have been unable to afford to go to university to gain professional qualifications. As a local authority with an increasingly restricted budget we simply do not have money to fund such qualifications outside of the Levy, so the removal of L7 Levy funding would shut off this access to professional careers.

Karen Arnold, Apprenticeship & Development Coordinator, Buckinghamshire Council

As a borough council they are fundamental to us being able to support and develop our people at a time where the focus for candidates and employees is development opportunities and when we can't offer high salaries and compete with the private sector to be able to utilise the levy for these, generally more senior and higher level qualifications allows us to continue to attract high calibre candidates and engage and motivate our employees. To remove the level 7 from the Levy would put us and other councils at a huge disadvantage. Removing this does not mean more money is spent at the lower end, removing this does not mean more organisations recruit entry level candidates, it means they will struggle to maintain a professional career pathway. If you want to encourage the use of lower apprenticeships then mandate the number that have to be hired each year, that way more focus is on these roles and a proper thought out career path can be developed which focuses here, but don't remove the use for level 7.

Stacie Young, People Professional, Dacorum Borough Council

L7 apprenticeships allow our staff to aspire for top level qualifications, that will improve their practice whilst working in high level and demanding roles. I feel that the option of studying for L7 qualifications separately to their full time roles would be very off putting for anyone wanting to better themselves given the additional demands on their work/life balance. This would also be one less opportunity for employers to utilise their levy funds.

Daniel Turner, Workforce Development Officer, Doncaster Council

As a local authority, we struggle to spend our apprenticeship levy on lower level apprenticeships. What we need most (and struggle to recruit) is planners, lawyers and accountants. We can't compete with the private sector on pay but we can offer apprenticeships in these areas. Removing the L7 apprenticeship will make it really hard for us to find the funding for L7 courses (from increasingly cut budgets) whilst paying a levy we can't use.

Jo Gage, OD & Engagement Manager, Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Horsham District Council find the Level 7 Town Planning apprenticeship invaluable in being able to professionally train career starters in planning. It has been incredibly successful at Horsham and has enabled us to recruit and retain staff in hard to fill roles, as well as providing succession planning. The loss of the funded level 7 route would put the ability to fill hard to fill roles into jeopardy.

Emma Parkes, Head of Development and Building Control, Horsham District Council

This apprenticeship provides a unique opportunity to upskill existing experience and skills to a formal Masters qualification. In particular, University of West London, recognises and values leadership experience and skills gained in Industry without a previous formal qualification (e.g. undergraduate degree) and offers a Level 7 Apprenticeship leading to a MBA post graduate certification. This provides an exceptionally unique path for personal and professional development, which without the funding of the Apprenticeship levy would not be possible.

Sabhia Malik, Head of ICT Enterprise Systems, London Borough of Hackney

I'm from a working-class background and grew up on a council estate. I went to inner London state schools. I went to work at 16 and did not have the chance to obtain a degree at school age. This has been a hurdle for me in recent years trying to break through the glass ceiling into senior management where degrees are expected as minimum requirements for most roles. The apprenticeship scheme has given me the chance to obtain a nationally recognised qualification, receive some fantastic training and mentoring and has given me huge confidence at work to speak with (now qualified) opinions.

I'm confident this will also aid me in future promotion prospects when I feel ready to move on.

I honestly cannot speak highly enough of the apprenticeship scheme in giving me - at 43 years of age - the chance to rectify this disadvantage and obtain a substation qualification.

Our organisation, like many, does not have the money to send employees on this course otherwise so if the funding was cut it would see an end to senior management development and the knock-on benefits to other employees and the residents we serve.

Chris McAvoy, Head of Community Safety and Enforcement, London Borough of Havering (Former apprentice)

It is not easy to build the capacity and infrastructure required to successfully deliver level 7 apprenticeships. We have only recently achieved this and just as we are reaping the business benefits of growing our own talent and hiring new apprentices at level 7 (accountancy and planning) the funding is being withdrawn. As a local authority under extreme financial controls and yet still a large levy-payer, this move seems to undermine the apprenticeship system and make it harder for us to utilise levy funds. Fundamentally, we will not be able to offer new opportunities or invest in our staff. This does not seem to tally with the Government's growth agenda.

Anthony Ristic, Learning and Development Consultant (Early Careers), London Borough of Lambeth

Lambeth Council spends a significant proportion of levy funding on L7 apprenticeships - the vast majority in the Built Environment, a sector where we are heavily focused on broadening access and opportunity. There is significant labour market inequality in this sector, particularly at higher grades.

We would be unable to continue this L7 offer through our current Learning and Development budget, which is significantly less than our levy contribution, and has to cover a significant proportion of mandatory training. Dropping L7 apprenticeships will be unfavourable with other public sector bodies, particularly the NHS, as it would be for many private sector businesses committing to developing a high skilled workforce. Locally, both universities within Lambeth have substantial L7 levy related income.

We believe the government's growth mission rightly has a strong emphasis on 'good jobs', which tend to require higher skills levels. Removing level 7 apprenticeships from the Growth and Skills Levy would be detrimental to this.

Matt Blades, Director Economy, Culture & Skills, London Borough of Lambeth

The professional development offered by Level 7 provides advanced training and skills development in a range of specialised fields which not only helps individuals progress in their careers and gain expertise in their chosen profession, but also helps us to fill critical skills gaps and hard to fill roles in the council all at no extra cost and at a time of severe funding challenges. The Social Worker Degree; Chartered Town Planner, Accountancy Professional are just three apprenticeships that contribute to helping us fill critical roles and support succession planning. we use these programmes to address skills shortages and ensure a steady supply of qualified professionals in crucial areas. The Social Worker Degree for example provides a pipeline of professionals who help us to support and safeguard families in the borough. As an employer, we value the combination of academic qualifications and practical experience that our apprentices bring to the table. The Programmes we offer also provide a more inclusive route into professions, allowing individuals from diverse backgrounds to access higher education and professional opportunities they might not have otherwise considered. They provide a practical and accessible pathway to higher education and professional success for individuals, while also supporting the needs of local authorities and contributing to economic growth.

Iona Jackson-Benjamin, Head of Talent, London Borough of Newham

The level 7 courses are helping our staff upskill and improve their skills in the sector they are working in. They also help boost the competence of staff at work.

Madu Ramnauth, Apprenticeship Lead, London Borough Barnet

As a sector, local government often lags behind in terms of being able to use data science, particularly spatial data science, to help provide evidence for better decision-making. This

apprenticeship has allowed us to partner with UCL to bring in a set of skills that is new to the council. I don't believe we could have recruited to this particular position without the apprenticeship and I feel it would be a serious mistake to defund it, if Britain actually wants to encourage new talent to work in the public sector.

Douglas Plumer, Data, Analytics and Performance Lead, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The Level 7 Planning Apprenticeship Degree is proving extremely valuable for upskilling graduates into Planners and is our quickest means of filling this skills gap as a local authority. It has enabled us to start our own Planning Academy to get people into planning who do not have an undergraduate degree in the subject. We have 7 planning apprentices at Milton Keynes City Council currently and would like to see this as a route we can utilise in the future alongside the Government supported Pathways to Planning programme.

Olivia Drury, Planning Projects Manager, Milton Keynes City Council

We are a council moving to unitary status. Demands on staff are now higher than previously and many need to develop to level 7 status. This is a requirement being put onto them by their employer. As you know, public councils have huge deficits in their budgets already - this will significantly cause issues or stop people's career growth. I am one of those members of staff needing to complete level 7 to maintain my role. I cannot afford such costs and will need to find new employment once restructure of my area commences. If this goes through it will leave people with children and bills to pay unemployed!

Vicky Wheatley, Learning and Development Manager, North Northamptonshire Council

Over the past four to five years, Rother District Council has supported/is supporting nine individuals through level 7 apprenticeships to gain an MSc in Town Planning together with professional membership to the Royal Town Planning Institute. Given the lack of funding to councils, it is essential that we can offer this route to people starting out in this sector as it has become increasingly difficult for us to recruit in more senior roles. Training and retaining our own planning officers is so important, and the apprenticeship route is key to this.

Matthew Worsley, Development Management Team Leader, Rother District Council

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital to both individual growth and organisational success. For me personally, participating in a Level 7 apprenticeship has enhanced my strategic and leadership skills, enabling me to drive meaningful change in my organisation. The blend of academic rigor and practical application has been invaluable, allowing me to implement cost-saving initiatives and improve operational efficiency, directly contributing to organisational goals.

These programmes are also critical for addressing broader challenges, such as skills shortages and social mobility. By providing opportunities to professionals from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, they foster inclusion and help build a highly skilled workforce. In my experience, they fill a critical gap in sectors like healthcare and public services, where budgets for training and development are often limited.

Moreover, Level 7 apprenticeships deliver excellent value for money. They maximise the potential of the apprenticeship levy, ensuring investment in upskilling the workforce and boosting productivity. Removing funding for these programs would risk halting progress on key priorities, such as economic growth, workforce resilience, and social equality.

I strongly believe that Level 7 apprenticeships are a cornerstone of professional development and organisational innovation, and I urge policymakers to continue supporting them.

Donna Hesabi, Procurement Manager, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

As a District Council passionate about developing our workforce and with a strong 'Grow our own' ethos, we strongly support the continuation of Government Funding for Level 7 apprenticeships. These advanced apprenticeships are crucial for developing a highly skilled workforce, essential for our economy's growth and competitiveness.

Level 7 apprenticeships uniquely blend practical experience and academic learning, equipping apprentices with the expertise needed to excel. By integrating on-the-job training with advanced theoretical knowledge, these programs ensure apprentices are proficient and capable of driving innovation within their industries.

A significant benefit of Level 7 apprenticeships is their ability to address skills shortages in critical sectors, such as planning. They provide a pathway for individuals to gain high-level qualifications while working, bridging the gap between education and employment.

Moreover, Level 7 apprenticeships contribute to social mobility by offering opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to advance their careers without the financial burden of traditional higher education. This inclusivity fosters a more diverse and dynamic workforce, benefiting both employers and the broader economy.

Local councils lack the financial resources to fund these valuable programs. Therefore, it is imperative that the government utilises the apprenticeship levy to support Level 7 apprenticeships. This ensures these programs remain accessible and sustainable, allowing councils to continue offering high-quality training without compromising their budgets.

In conclusion, maintaining Level 7 apprenticeships is vital for fostering a skilled, innovative, and inclusive workforce. We urge the government to continue supporting these programs to ensure our economy remains competitive and resilient.

Wendy Newton-May, Learning and Development Officer, Wealden District Council

Important that we promote apprentice opportunities for the whole work force. Supports career pathways for planning roles for instance, where there are skills shortages and a shortage of professionals. Enables investment in all staff irrespective of age and also provides succession planning for experienced to step into roles which without this level of training and qualification would be out of reach to those who haven't attended university in earlier years. Employees qualified to level 7 straight from university do not necessarily have the experience needed.

Wendy Canham, Head of Service, HR & OD, West Suffolk Council

These apprenticeships play a crucial role in developing our workforce and driving innovation within our Local Authority and Wiltshire residents. Firstly, Level 7 apprenticeships bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application. They provide individuals with advanced skills and knowledge that are essential in today's rapidly changing job market. Removing these apprenticeships would limit opportunities for talented individuals to gain hands-on experience while earning a recognised qualification.

Furthermore, it provides an alternative to the traditional route to university to access Level 7 qualifications. Moreover, these apprenticeships contribute significantly to organisational growth. Companies that invest in Level 7 apprenticeships benefit from a skilled workforce that can tackle complex challenges and lead initiatives.

This investment not only enhances employee retention but also promotes a culture of continuous learning and development. We have many staff that were newly recruited into the organisation using L2/L3 apprenticeships, who have moved into their substantive roles and continued with higher level apprenticeships. An example of where we have successfully recruited an under 25 apprentice and provided a clear career map utilising apprenticeships to get her qualified to a Chartered Accountant.

One of our apprentices was recruited onto L3 AAT apprenticeship in 2017, on successful completion of her apprenticeship she moved into her substantive job role. She then completed her Level 4 Professional Accounting or Taxation Technician and has now moved onto the final stage of the career map to complete her Level 7 Accountancy or Taxation Professional Apprenticeship to become a Chartered Accountant within the Council.

By including a Level 7 apprenticeship within our career mapping to our roles within the Council, it allows us to recruit apprentices and support them to build work based skills alongside their academic qualifications. These apprentices often act as mentors to new staff.

As you are aware, Level 7 apprenticeships play a crucial role in bridging the skills gap in our economy. Many industries, such as Planning rely heavily on these apprenticeships to cultivate a skilled workforce. Removing these opportunities would not only hinder the development of talent but also impact the overall productivity and innovation within these sectors. We heavily rely on the Level 7 Chartered Town Planning apprenticeship within our Council. Due to there being a national recruitment challenge within the Planning sector and by utilising the apprenticeship it allows us to recruit new, young talent enabling them to access higher education and gain the crucial real-life work experience alongside studying.

Furthermore, it allows us to put apprenticeship recruits who haven't previously gained a degree but have work experience to undertake the apprenticeship while building their skills. Within our maintained schools we utilise a range of apprenticeships from L2 – L7, the L7 Senior Leaders is used to support Headteachers to improve their skills and gain enhanced leadership skills and to improve their strategic thinking this is essential for driving school improvement and achieving long term goals. It also allows them to gain mandatory qualifications.

By removing the L7 apprenticeship it will prevent schools being able to utilise this ring-fenced money for their training with resources being taken away from other budgets. The current labour market presents numerous challenges in filling high-level roles. Level 7 apprenticeships offer a viable solution by allowing individuals to gain hands-on experience while simultaneously earning a qualification. This dual approach ensures that businesses can nurture talent tailored to their specific needs, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness. Additionally, eliminating Level 7 apprenticeships could hinder diversity in the workplace.

Kathryn Partington, OD Consultant – Apprenticeship, Wiltshire Council

L7 qualifications most often help us to fill hard to recruit to roles such as building surveyors, environmental health, care home managers, solicitors, finance. They also allow our staff to develop into managerial positions, which naturally leads to progression and movement within the Council. L7's are not always used to upskill our current staff but we also recruit to these posts outside of the organisation, oftentimes applicants just need relevant experience or GCSE's/A-Levels depending on the providers requirements. It's important to highlight that when some fields may have good numbers of qualified staff, with the smaller salaries Local Government can offer compared with big corporate companies, offering these L7's is at times the only way to fill those posts and then we can do our utmost to retain that talent we have trained.

Frankly, organisations are not spending their levy funds, if it were able to be used on salaries then so many more employers would seize the opportunity that the levy provides but when organisations particularly local authorities are strapped for cash, limiting the number of L7's available will only result in less levy funds being utilised by employers. Most have enough in their pot to offer all levels - the Level 7 isn't taking opportunities away from young people.

Anonymous

The proposed changes will have a major impact on local authorities having well trained, professionally qualified staff working in many of our service areas. We currently use L7 Apprenticeships to recruit new staff in areas such as finance and legal, areas in which we struggle to recruit qualified staff. These apprenticeships offer us an opportunity to grow our own and ensure we have a pipeline of talent in our workforce.

The apprenticeship route offers the opportunity for those unable to go to university for financial reasons to study a professional qualification while earning, and also to gain valuable on the job and life skills. The cost of an accounting professional qualification or a solicitor qualification is prohibitive for many individuals if an employer does not support financially and access to this via the levy is the only way public authorities can fund these routes.

Anonymous

Our organisation is committed to robust succession planning, which is critical for long-term growth and success. We strategically utilise the levy budget across all levels of apprenticeship programmes, including the Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship. However, without the opportunity to invest in leadership development at the senior level, our ability to build capacity at the entry level will be severely limited, hindering career progression and overall organisational growth.

The Level 7 apprenticeship plays a pivotal role not only in filling hard-to-recruit roles but also in nurturing the next generation of exceptional leaders. By fostering talent at higher levels, we are not just addressing immediate skills gaps but are also ensuring that we are creating visionary, adaptable leaders for the future—leaders who can drive innovation and steer the organisation toward success in the 21st century.

Without a balanced investment across all levels, our succession plan will fail to achieve its full potential, and we risk stalling the development of our workforce. Ensuring access to higher-level apprenticeships is a vital step in empowering both current and future generations of leaders within our organisation.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are important as they help recruit into the planning sector, a sector which is in desperate need of new entries to support the growth ambitions that we have as an organisation, region and country. They also help to retain staff who wish to undertake further training. The apprentices that we have in the team bring a huge amount of value and increase the team's capacity.

Anonymous

At our Council, level 7 apprenticeships support the development and upskilling of our staff at a senior level - including social workers, planners and senior managers (MBA programme). They are critical to developing future leadership talent in an affordable way.

Anonymous

Here within Oxfordshire we do see requests for Apprenticeship levy transfer support from SMEs and charities looking to upskill staff members to a Level 7 Apprenticeship. Without the ability to tap into the Apprenticeship levy funding these businesses would not be able to afford to further their staff's development.

Anonymous

Education sector and training providers

It is a progression from our level 5 apprenticeship. It ensures our leaders are fully adept within their roles, particularly for those who have moved up through the organisation due to promotion.

Rebecca Philbrook, Head of Higher Education and Professional Studies, Abingdon and Witney College

Level 7 is an important level of study for solicitors. With the new SQE the results are already showing that the examination is difficult and as a result there is a requirement for studying at this level prior to sitting the exam. The removal of the levy is most likely to impact small high street firms which predominately employ students from lower income families, and the students who most need the support of tuition but least likely to be able to afford it. Removing this levy is therefore in direct contradiction to the SRA's aims of implementing the SQE.

Pauline Hall, Senior Lecturer, Anglia Ruskin University

I am assisting the course director in creating a Graduate Solicitor Apprenticeship course for which we have interest from local firms who would want their students trained by us.

We wish to provide inclusive opportunities for our students to be able to pursue careers in the industry which will otherwise be dominated, once again, by those who can afford to privately fund their route to qualification.

We have alumni who are Partners in local firms as well as newly qualified solicitors and trainees. The misuse of funding has not been a factor in this pool of local talent and recruitment will be massively impacted if the levy funding is withdrawn as this will push the industry back towards the elitism from which we were aiming to progress.

Catriona Walker, Senior Lecturer, Anglia Ruskin University

As a librarian and learning and development professional the Level 7 Library, Information and Knowledge Manager apprenticeship is an exciting development and many academic institutions will be planning to use their levy to fund this inclusive route into the profession which will help

diversify the workforce. I am Chair of my professional body CILIP's Academic and Research Libraries Group.

Sarah Elsegood, Academic Services Manager Anglia Ruskin University (Former CILIP Pathways End Point Assessor)

The Skills England report, the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, and potential cuts to level 7 funding present conflicting priorities. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan emphasises the need for a highly skilled workforce to meet future healthcare demands, advocating for increased training and education, including advanced apprenticeships. However, potential cuts to level 7 funding undermine this goal within and beyond the NHS.

It would limit opportunities for advanced training, which is crucial for addressing skill shortages and supporting the nation's economic competitiveness. These cuts would also have a significant impact on social mobility, particularly in sectors supported by SMEs or those which do not naturally attract people from lower socio economic groups. The Skills England report highlights the importance of continuous professional development and advanced skills to maintain a competitive and effective workforce. Reducing funding for level 7 apprenticeships contradicts this by restricting access to higher-level qualifications, essential, in particular for local government and the NHS's strategic goals.

While the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan and Skills England report call for enhanced training and skill development, potential cuts to level 7 funding would hinder these objectives, creating a misalignment in workforce development strategies. It is difficult to understand the rationale for cutting level 7 apprenticeships in the context of a large percentage of unspent apprenticeship levy.

Dr Cliona O'Dunlaing, Dean of ARU School of Apprenticeships, Anglia Ruskin University

Level 7 apprenticeships play a transformative role in bridging the gap between academic excellence and real-world application. These advanced programmes empower individuals to pursue postgraduate-level qualifications while gaining invaluable workplace experience, fostering a dual benefit for learners and employers alike.

For Higher Education institutions such as ARU, Level 7 apprenticeships are a pivotal means of fostering collaboration with industry. By delivering tailored, skills-focused education, institutions remain at the forefront of workforce development, equipping professionals with the expertise required to meet the evolving demands of their fields. Apprenticeships also enhance inclusivity by providing a debt-free pathway to postgraduate education, opening opportunities to a broader demographic of learners.

Real-life success stories illustrate their impact. For example, legal professionals undertaking Solicitor Apprenticeships at Level 7 combine academic learning with hands-on legal practice, graduating as fully qualified solicitors while simultaneously advancing their employers' objectives. Similarly, senior leaders in healthcare and finance have leveraged apprenticeship frameworks to address sector-specific challenges, driving innovation and delivering measurable organisational improvements.

By nurturing well-rounded professionals with both theoretical knowledge and practical experience, Level 7 apprenticeships support the long-term objectives of learners, employers, and society. For Higher Education institutions, they represent a forward-thinking commitment to producing graduates who are not only academically accomplished but also equipped to make an immediate impact in their professions. These programmes are a testament to the power of education to transform lives and industries.

Sohinpreet Kaur Alg-Nijjar, Senior Lecturer in Law, Anglia Ruskin University (Solicitor)

As the CEO of Apex 360 Ltd, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact apprenticeships has had on our organisation. I believe that the Level 7 apprenticeships are vital for developing the next generation of leaders who can navigate complex challenges and drive growth in small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Defunding these apprenticeships would limit access to essential upskilling opportunities, particularly for SMEs that rely on them to remain competitive. Investing in high-level skills is not

just an expense but a strategic move that fuels long-term economic resilience and workforce sustainability.

I urge policymakers to consider the broader economic benefits of retaining funding for Level 7 apprenticeships, ensuring businesses like ours can continue to thrive and contribute to the UK's growth agenda.

Stewart Hunt, Director, Apex 360 Ltd

These apprenticeships are the most effective way to train solicitors who can learn whilst earning money doing a job relevant to their studies and their future careers. Without this option, many of the students who attend our widening participation university, will be forced to self-fund SQE courses whilst supporting themselves financially in jobs in retail/hospitality/etc which will not support their future careers and which mean they will have an extra 2 years following passing SQE2 to get QWE. The effect will be that the solicitor route will remain largely elitist, with those who have existing familial networks and financial support rising to the top faster than any others. Social mobility in the legal profession will, effectively, be stifled.

Sarah Calder, Associate Professor and Director of ARU Law Clinic, Anglia Ruskin University

The level 7 apprenticeship provision delivered by our institution has significantly supported our local NHS trusts, enabling them to meet their own skills improvement agenda by upskilling leaders and managers across multiple departments. Level 7 apprenticeships have additionally supported our local authorities and small local businesses to train, develop and grow. We have seen examples where level 7 apprentices have then invested in younger people, employing them into their businesses as apprentices at levels 3 and 4; something they would not have done without the positive impact of their own level 7 apprenticeship journeys.

Jane Fletcher, Head of Apprenticeships, Bishop Grosseteste University

Our charity sees lots of interest in Level 7 apprenticeships for aspiring architects as it is a valuable way for young people to access the qualification, especially those where traditional higher education is not suitable. The apprenticeship option supports young people from underrepresented and lower socio-economic backgrounds and is helping to diversify the industry.

Hermione Penny, Senior Programme Partnership Manager, Blueprint for All

BNU offers L7 apprenticeships for key businesses such as the NHS, TfL and IT employers. Without the L7 apprenticeship funding the majority of these learners would not have had the opportunity to study at this level & progress their careers. BNU is committed to providing opportunities for under-represented groups such as ethnic minority senior leaders in the NHS or women in STEM careers.

Alex Morrison, Reporting and Compliance Manager, Buckinghamshire New University

Level 7 apprenticeships are as critical to workforce development as lower level standards. They provide opportunities for ongoing CPD for senior colleagues looking to expand their skills sets and/or have them recognised. Organisations need effective leadership, expertise and direction from the top to thrive and grow their sectors effectively.

With most L&D budgets reduced or non-existent due to the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, employers will be unable to fund further expansion of skills, knowledge and behaviours. Once again it will be only those employers with additional funds that can invest in skills creating a divide and limited participation for those working for the NHS and other public sector organisations.

For example, the Senior Leader L7, standard has been invaluable in providing learners with a skills set that is up to date and that can deal with challenging economic and financial demands of the current economy. These knowledge, skills and behaviours are then demonstrated through the way that Leadership is imparted and organisations managed to success.

Priti Kharbanda, Head of Apprenticeships, Buckinghamshire New University

SNEE Training Hub strongly urge the continuation of the Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practice Apprenticeship program. This program is crucial for developing highly skilled professionals who can meet the complex demands of Primary Care. It provides a unique blend of practical

experience and advanced theoretical knowledge, ensuring that apprentices are well-prepared to contribute effectively to NHS General Practice patient services.

By maintaining this program, we align with the goals of the Long-Term Workforce Plan, which emphasizes the importance of retaining existing talent and bridging skill gaps to ensure a sustainable and capable workforce. The plan highlights the need for expanding advanced clinical practice roles to address current and future healthcare demands.

For some practitioners wishing to further their clinical career, the apprenticeship route for Advance Practice is the only suitable option. The apprenticeship route utilises the NHS levy that can often otherwise be underspent and therefore eliminating this apprenticeship will hinder the development of future Advanced Clinical Practitioner's, weaken skills sets in future years, and jeopardise NHS England's target growth of Advance Practitioners as part of The-Long term Workforce Plan.

This year in our local region, we have had 8 general practice apprentices begin their journey, this enables additional funds to support the learning environment of the AP Trainees, and further supports course retention and completion rates. Therefore, we appeal to the decision-makers to recognise the immense value of the Level 7 Advanced Clinical Practice Apprenticeship and ensure its preservation for the benefit of all stakeholders, patients and NHS services.

Emma Jones, NHS Apprenticeship Coordinator, Eastern Education Group and Suffolk and North East Essex Training Hub

As a Health Sciences University we are very aware of the impact of this decision on the delivery of the healthcare workforce required for the future of the NHS. L7 apprenticeships are critical to the recruitment and retention of the health and care workforce and the delivery of the LTWP.

Advanced Clinical Practice and Enhanced Clinical practice provide a career framework for healthcare professionals as well as being central to the delivery of patient care.

Level 7 provision is primarily attached to the higher levels skills associated with clinical assessment, reasoning and thinking, which are vital to patient assessment, diagnosis and management. In addition to clinical skills, L7 apprenticeships see people develop their capability in research, leadership and education, contributing to future healthcare delivery. People working in these roles are dealing with complex patient caseloads with unique advanced skill sets.

Recruitment into NHS careers is already incredibly difficult, this decision will further impact that scenario in an increasingly challenging environment.

Dr Claire Nadaf, Head of Academic Enterprise and Engagement, Health Sciences University

ICE supported the development of L7 apprenticeships in Geotechnical Engineering and Tunnelling Engineering believing them to offer several benefits to individuals and organisations, and the development of society as a whole.

Firstly, filling skills gaps with Level 7 apprenticeships. The continued support of these programmes will help address skill shortages in specific industries, particularly in engineering in the specialist areas of Geotechnical and Tunnel Engineering.

Secondly, the advancement of skills development. L7 apprenticeships provide opportunities to acquire advanced skills and expertise in fields such as higher-level technical areas, leadership, and management, making apprentices more valuable contributors to the workforce.

These apprenticeships offer real-world, hands-on experience at a high level, ensuring that learners can apply theoretical knowledge in professional engineering settings.

Finally, business growth and innovation are key to the prosperity of employers and for UK plc.

Employers can develop apprentices with skills that are directly aligned with their business needs.

This ensures that the workforce is well-equipped for the challenges of the modern economy.

Apprentices at this level are often involved in strategic and complex tasks, helping businesses improve productivity, innovate, and stay competitive.

Investing in apprenticeships encourages loyalty. Those who are trained within a company often stay longer, reducing turnover and recruitment costs.

Richard Davis, Apprenticeship Manager, Institution of Civil Engineers (Trailblazer member and Member of the Technical Apprenticeship Consortium)

The provision of level 7 apprenticeships is key to the delivery of the Government's five missions and economic growth.

Any industrial strategy must include the enhancement of leadership and management skills, the lack of which is a longstanding drag on national productivity. The skills that employers require are commonly at level 7 and removing the opportunity for employers to use the Levy to fund level 7 skills would serve to perpetuate this skill gap.

For example, at Middlesex University 92% of our current Senior Leader apprenticeship intake are from public sector employers, primarily the NHS. The delivery of effective public services requires the funding of level 7 apprenticeships including Advanced Clinical Practitioners, Doctors and yes Senior Leaders. Employers will not prioritise the development much needed level 7 skills unless this is supported through the Levy and the under-investment in skills development by UK employers will not be addressed.

As co-chair of the Higher Education (HE) Employer Trailblazer Group, I know that the skills needs of employers in this sector are primarily at level 7, for example, the Academic Professional apprenticeship standard. The removal of the opportunity for HE employers to use their Levy to develop the level 7 skills they need, will close the door on a key means to invest in staff and impede strategic planning at a time of financial crisis for the sector.

Professor Darryll Bravenboer, Director of Apprenticeships, Middlesex University (Co-chair of the Higher Education Employer Trailblazer Group)

All Apprenticeships are important and an all age, all level service is what our customers need and want.

Paul Wright, Director, Moore Networking

I care for the SLHA programme and it is difficult to put into words how impactful it is. I haven't yet seen a fat cat banker or anyone else that I thought didn't deserve to be on the programme. I see ordinary middle managers enter the programme, many of whom have never been to university before, and over two years I see them blossom. They gain new knowledge, develop new skills and most importantly gain in confidence and self-assurance.

If we want growth and increased productivity, then the SLHA is a wise investment that pays great dividends.

Dr Alistair Bowden, SLHA Programme Leader, Newcastle Business School

Level 7 Apprenticeships are quickly being established as the dominant mode for postgraduate training in Town Planning and the core route to Chartered Status for professional planners. Given the urgent national need for qualified planners the Level 7 qualification is clearly the fastest and most effective way to respond, in turn supporting the growth and development agendas to which the Government is explicitly committed.

Professor Dave Valler, Professor of Spatial Planning, Oxford Brookes University

The notion that L7 apprenticeships only benefit older, already high earning employees, is incorrect and we fear that our employer partners will be suffering the consequences of blanket defunding, if not carefully reconsidered.

We would like to draw attention to the fact that UK HE institutions, including ours, heavily focus on the development of high-level programmes in support of Life and Health Science, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, defined by the government as 'Economic Priority Sectors'. Highly successful programmes such as Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Chartered Town Planner, Architect, District Nurse and Community Nurse Specialist Practitioner and Senior Leader, are meeting specific sector demands and to be clear, many of our current participants are below the age of 25 and early in their careers.

The proposed blanket defunding of all L7 will simply lead to higher costs for our employer partners, who are predominantly operating in construction, engineering, and the NHS, thus creating a paradox with the government's 'Economic Priority Sectors'.

It is assumed that employers do not promote lower levels, in favour of L7. Feedback however shows us that this is untrue. Where possible our employers already maximise lower-level opportunities, yet the L7 fill specific needs and are vital to increasing productivity.

Blanket defunding of the L7 and forcing additional costs to existing levy obligations, will therefore create a serious risk of significantly reduced participation, and in fact contrary to the desired outcome, will widen the national skills gap in the future.

Quintijn Vermeulen, Head of UK Partnerships and Apprenticeships, Oxford Brookes University (Former apprentice) and Gina Dalton, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education, Oxford Brookes University

We have just developed an excellent PG R&D Engineer level 7 apprenticeship, to support particularly both industry and public sector in the area of Engineering and Computing (including AI), to support further staff development and digital transformation of the region and the country. Removing this funding will have detrimental effect on digital transformation and our position in the world.

Gordana Collier, Head of School of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, Oxford Brookes University (Professional body accreditor)

I have firsthand experience in using the opportunity provided by level 7 apprenticeship to develop my skills into taking up a specialist role in cyber security. It has provided me with the skill set to broaden my knowledge in the subject and also provided with the on-the-job training where I was able to practically apply my new knowledge in a real-world scenario. All this was possible with no additional cost to my organization except for the time I spent on off the job learning which they saw as an investment and is paying back dividends to date.

On my side, with a family to feed and struggling with funding and spare time for further education this level 7 apprenticeship was the perfect opportunity. I did my apprenticeship during the pandemic and this was the best investment of my time as I managed to complete my Msc with a Distinction.

I was well recognised by my organisation and I worked as an apprenticeship champion to get others involved. As a result, our organisation managed to offer two more apprenticeships in cyber security.

Liyanage Wickramasekara, Information Security Officer, Queen Mary University of London (Former apprentice)

Highlights: apprentices are equivalent to Uni; supports young people to access qualifications from a wide range of backgrounds that can't afford Uni; level 7 supports progression routes (LLL), as well as entry to the more traditional professions; gives young people a choice between Uni and apprenticeship.

When Unis are struggling for funding, the removal of level 7 would add to that burden. People's jobs are changing and we need to retrain and re-skill at all levels.

Philip Marsh, CEO, S&B Automotive Academy

The UK's high-skill economy needs security and stability to provide Level 7 skills, especially in STEM. Increasing instability will harm productivity and opportunity. It is vitally important that the full range of education and training remains available from Levels 1 to 8.

Dr Gareth Neighbour, Academic, The Open University

At the University of Manchester, we have seen the transformative impact of Level 7 apprenticeships across sectors, particularly within the NHS. These programmes equip leaders with essential skills to navigate complex challenges, directly enhancing organisational performance and service delivery.

In healthcare, the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (EGA) Senior Leader Apprenticeship has been pivotal in preparing managers to meet the increasing demands of a post-Covid environment. Over 65% of recent graduates from the EGA's standard pathway (now transitioned to apprenticeship-only delivery by the NHS Leadership Academy) were promoted shortly after completing the programme. This highlights the programme's effectiveness in tackling systemic challenges such as digital transformation, staff wellbeing, and managing rapid change. Demand remains high, with our apprenticeship programmes being consistently oversubscribed.

Beyond healthcare, Level 7 apprenticeships are vital for SMEs, which often lack the resources to independently fund leadership development. These programmes empower SMEs to innovate, scale, and compete globally, addressing the UK's productivity challenges.

Our flagship Women in Leadership programme, delivered for Equans, a heavily male-dominated global business, has also achieved remarkable results. 45% of women who participated in the programme were promoted to senior positions as a result, demonstrating the programme's power to enable career progression and drive organisational performance. Additionally, almost 50% of our apprentices are the first in their families to pursue degree-level qualifications, showcasing the role these apprenticeships play in promoting social mobility.

Shifting more costs to employers risks reducing participation and widening the leadership skills gap. Level 7 apprenticeships are not just educational opportunities – they are strategic imperatives for cultivating resilient leaders, enhancing productivity, and ensuring an equitable workforce.

Dr Ania de Berg, Director of Apprenticeships, The University of Manchester

Level 7 apprenticeships are crucial at the University, both for bringing in new staff at a graduate level, and for upskilling existing staff. Particularly with changes to immigration legislation, we need to be able to grow our own talent to go into our senior roles, and one of the mechanisms for doing so is through level 7 apprenticeships. Currently, 14% of apprenticeships within the University are level 7, in a wide range of disciplines.

Jasmine Morassi, Apprenticeships Manager, The University of Oxford (Former apprentice and Apprentice Ambassador for the South East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network)

It is critical to build skills, knowledge and behaviours so we can deliver the best outcomes for the stakeholders. Please don't take away the funding as working on the floor it's so important that the country has the calibre of leaders to deliver the best business outcomes.

Nazia Shabbir, Senior Manager, Treehouse Nursery

As the Director of Disruptive Learning at University Academy 92 (UA92), I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of Level 7 apprenticeships in addressing critical skills shortages and advancing economic growth. Our apprenticeship programmes, are designed with industry alignment, delivering high-demand skills to employers while empowering learners to contribute meaningfully to their organisations from day one. These programmes are not just about qualifications; they foster innovation, drive enterprise value, and promote social mobility by opening doors to individuals from underrepresented backgrounds.

The withdrawal of Levy funding for Level 7 apprenticeships would significantly hinder this progress. Level 7 programmes are a critical pathway for upskilling senior leaders, enabling businesses to navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving digital landscape. At UA92, we have seen how these apprenticeships enhance organisational resilience and competitiveness, particularly in sectors like technology, cloud, and senior leadership.

Over the past two years, UA92's apprenticeships have delivered exceptional outcomes, including a 100% pass rates, with distinctions for nearly half of our apprentices. Our commitment to excellence and innovation has been recognised through multiple awards, yet these achievements hinge on robust funding mechanisms.

Removing funding for Level 7 apprenticeships risks stifling talent development, particularly for regions like Greater Manchester, where we've seen these programmes act as a cornerstone of economic regeneration. I urge the Government to reconsider, ensuring these vital opportunities continue to bolster the UK workforce and economy.

Aaron Saxton, Director of Disruptive Learning, University Academy 92 (UA92)

I have seen the significant positive impact that Level 7 apprenticeships have had on my organisation. These apprenticeships provide a well-rounded blend of practical experience and academic rigour, creating a comprehensive learning pathway that surpasses what is typically gained through a purely academic Level 7 route. This balanced approach equips apprentices with not only theoretical knowledge but also the critical real-world skills required to excel in professional environments.

Furthermore, Level 7 apprenticeships are instrumental in enhancing the credibility of the apprenticeship brand. They demonstrate that apprenticeships are a credible and respected alternative to traditional postgraduate education, appealing to a broader range of talent and enabling access to high-level qualifications without exclusive reliance on academic institutions. In my organisation, these apprenticeships have supported the development of future leaders, fostering innovation and resilience while bridging the gap between academic achievement and industry-specific expertise. This has contributed to both personal growth for the apprentices and tangible benefits for the organisation, including improved performance, retention, and the cultivation of a pipeline of highly skilled professionals.

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital not only for the individuals undertaking them but also for organisations and the wider economy, driving progress and highlighting the value of lifelong learning.

Dr Nick Mapletoft, Principal & CEO, University Centre Quayside (UCQ)

The Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship (SLA) has proven to be a transformative programme, equipping leaders with essential skills, knowledge, and behaviours to navigate today's complex and challenging business environment. It fosters critical thinking, resilience, and adaptability, empowering leaders to inspire innovation, efficiencies and growth within their organisations, allowing participants to refine their leadership approach, addressing real-world challenges with confidence and purpose.

Participants emphasise the SLA's impact on their day-to-day roles, enabling them to lead with agility and engage teams through collaboration and positivity. The programme equips leaders to coach, mentor, and challenge their teams, cultivating a workplace culture where employees feel valued and heard. Such an approach is vital in an era defined by rapid change and post-pandemic market shifts.

The SLA's benefits extend beyond individual development. By fostering strategic insight and sustainable success, it positions UK businesses to compete globally and drives national growth. Leaders trained through this programme are better prepared to align with organisational goals, ensuring long-term resilience and innovation.

The decision to discontinue the SLA risks undermining future leadership development and weakening the UK's competitive edge. Leaders with first-hand experience of the SLA urge the government to reconsider this decision, highlighting the programme's critical role in shaping effective, forward-thinking leaders and ensuring the sustained success of UK businesses. Maintaining the SLA is essential for empowering leaders and securing a thriving economic future for the nation.

Michelle Elliott, Vice Principal, University Centre Quayside

As a senior leader within a provider of higher and degree level apprenticeships, and as someone who has held senior leadership roles within commercial organisations ranging from SMEs through to Fortune 500 giants, I have seen directly the positive impact of Level 7 apprenticeships on the performance of senior leaders, as well as the damage to productivity created by incompetent management and leadership. The knowledge and skills required to undertake the role of a senior manager or leader are not picked up through osmosis, and the frameworks, tools and models necessary to excel in this professional occupation must be purposefully studied and, where possible, applied to real world challenges and opportunities that exist in the workplace. The Level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship programme provides a practical solution to the challenges of up skilling senior managers and leaders capable of driving productivity in their organisations.

Stuart Cameron, Managing Director, University Centre Quayside

UCL's Level 7 Degree Apprenticeships are designed around the university's established research strengths and experience in delivering higher-level professional programmes and the translation, application and impact of the university's expertise in addressing real-world, real-time challenges. Degree Apprenticeships provide the opportunity to build on the university's partnerships with major employers and whole sectors, to deliver the kind of transformative, long-term interventions needed to address their changing workforce needs.

Norbert Pachler, UCL Lead: Degree Apprenticeships, University College London

Level 7 apprenticeships are pivotal for the UK's industries (in particular the creative, cultural, heritage and art industries). Apprenticeships offer advanced and specialised in work training that addresses skill gaps, promotes professional development, and supports individuals career advancement. Apprenticeship programmes are vital for developing high-level skills needed for senior roles that align with specific industry needs. They enhance career progression which also fosters a diverse and inclusive workforce.

The proposed levy cut to Level 7 apprenticeships will lead to significant skill shortages, hinder Creative Industry growth (which has a target of +£50B by 2030 with 1M new workers), and limit access to advanced training, particularly for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. A cut to the apprenticeship levy, such as the one proposed would have far-reaching negative consequences, including an economic impact and reduced opportunities for highly skilled professionals, and will undermine the planned growth and the UK's innovation potential.

Professor Kieren Reed, Professor of Fine Art, UCL Slade School of Fine Art

The UCL Senior Leader (Health) Apprenticeship (SLA) is a part-time on-line programme run by the UCL Global Business School for Health (UCL GBSH) that positions busy professionals at the forefront of healthcare leadership.

Candidates gain world-class specialist business education in the health sector while working. This programme integrates the crucial leadership skills, knowledge and behaviours acknowledged by the Senior Leader (Health) Apprenticeship themes across the initial 12 months. The additional second year focuses on enhancing leadership qualities and academic skills, culminating with the opportunity of enrolling onto the full Executive MBA Health. Each module is crafted to develop critical skills and knowledge to prepare candidates for advanced leadership roles in healthcare. Dedicated individual and group tutorial support is designed for current and aspiring leaders in the health sector who want to make a difference. The SLA is specifically designed to upskill leaders facing complex workforce challenges and it equips participants with practical advanced skills they can apply in their everyday job. This programme is exceptionally beneficial for participants' professional development, as well as being valuable for employers choosing to support and empower their staff through lifelong learning.

At GBSH, we recognise that continuing professional development is necessary to uplift staff striving to improve their career prospects, gain specialised insight into healthcare management, and create a positive impact to society. UCL is undoubtedly a powerhouse for education, which also includes programmes like the SLA.

Professor Nora Colton, Director and Professor of Leadership and Management for Healthcare, UCL Global Business School for Health

The MSc Clinical Associate in Psychology (CAP) apprenticeship programme at UCL represents a vital pathway in addressing the UK's critical mental health workforce challenges. With approximately 1 in 4 adults experiencing mental health problems annually, and NHS mental health services facing severe staffing shortages, this programme offers an innovative solution. The CAP apprenticeship delivers multiple benefits: it supports the NHS Long Term Plan's commitment to expanding mental health services, creates sustainable workforce solutions, and promotes social mobility by enabling diverse candidates to enter the psychology profession while earning. The programme specifically targets care for individuals with Severe Mental Illness, aligning with NHS priorities to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.

Our track record demonstrates success: UCL has trained 150 CAPs now working across eight London Trusts, with over 90% retention after two years. These practitioners effectively reduce waiting times and improve access to psychological interventions in community mental health teams.

Withdrawing funding would undermine these achievements and contradict government objectives in mental health service improvement, workforce development, and widening participation in higher education. The CAP apprenticeship represents a strategic investment in our healthcare system, delivering tangible benefits that far outweigh its costs.

Dr Ciarán O'Driscoll, Programme Director: MSc Clinical Associate in Psychology (Adult Mental Health) Apprenticeship, University College London

We have 6 level 7 apprenticeships at UCL and they form an important part of our strategy to open access to the university, and in my area (medicine/health), provide NHS workers a Masters education where funding has been drastically reduced. My department runs an MSc in Optometry and Ophthalmology in partnership with Moorfields Eye Hospital which develops a pipeline of Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACP) locally and nationally for nurses, optometrists and orthoptists - to help prevent the nation going blind. Most Trusts will not send staff on non-apprenticeship funded courses (like the NHSE funding options) as it is too expensive, they may prioritise on or two places but the apprenticeship funding enables wider engagement and enables workforces planning. We have an incredibly diverse workforce in London and it provides an equality of opportunity that would not be possible if NHS staff had to self fund to enable skill development and career progression.

Professor Michele Russell, Director of Education, University College London (Former Trailblazer member for Academic Practice and Nursing)

Having developed the first pharmacy-specific Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) MSc programme in the UK, we were on track to develop an apprenticeship ACP programme to enable better integration of the ACP training pathway as an incentive for employers - particularly in the NHS - to help develop and retain staff members in a way that was affordable to the employer as well as the pharmacist but to the benefit of patient and population health outcomes.

We have also been exploring similar pathways for Pharmacy Technicians as there are currently no Level 6 credit-bearing pathways to enable them to access post-graduate training and develop to the highest level of their potential competency.

With the removal of funding towards Level 7 apprenticeships, it is unlikely that the pharmacy profession will have the appetite to fully embrace a key NHS component that will, ultimately, undermine the NHS and wider pharmacy workforce. This is, quite frankly, a disaster.

Timothy Rennie, MBE, Director of Taught Postgraduate Programmes (Pharmacy), University of Bath

The current landscape in the NHS highlights the need for Advanced Clinical Practitioners and the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan reiterates this desperate need. The apprenticeship pathway offers regulated healthcare professionals the opportunity to train in a supportive and collaborative way with the HEIs working with employers to ensure that the training is in line with service provision requirements.

The structure, governance and requirements of the apprenticeship programme are vital to ensure high quality clinicians who meet the needs of the locality as well as meeting national standards.

These national requirements are supporting the ACP programmes to generate a nationally recognised level of practice and provide a standardisation which, without this, means ACP programmes can vary significantly across the country. Considering the conversations around regulation and concerns around quality and varying levels of advanced practice, the risk of removing the apprenticeship pathway for ACPs is significant for the healthcare system.

In relation to meeting the training numbers in advanced practice, removing the apprenticeship will significantly impact the number of students who can be supported in practice to complete this training - meaning that the ability to meet NHS workforce plan requests and this again, will be detrimental to our patients.

Please consider the concerns you receive, maintaining the apprenticeship route for ACPs is critical to the recovery of the healthcare system.

Terri Walsh, Senior Lecturer in Advanced Clinical Practice, University of Derby Terri Walsh

In our institution we run both an apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship version of our level 7 Advanced Clinical Practitioner training programme. From direct experience of recruiting to, leading on, and supporting trainees through these programmes I have found the apprenticeship route to be particularly robust.

The infrastructure as well as funding requirements ensure that apprentices have a clear job plan and support from their employer throughout their training and upon completion of their course. In a sector where funding is limited, and release from clinical work is difficult to secure, the apprenticeship provides a framework to effectively and efficiently support the development of

qualified, experienced health professionals. A higher proportion of people that have started their Advanced Practitioner training through the apprenticeship route have progressed to successfully completing their programme due to the structured and regular support that is required and provided.

In the NHS long term workforce plan, as well as a burgeoning amount of research in this field, it has been identified how Advanced Practitioners can play a vital role in transforming health services to meet the needs of patients by working in responsive, innovative, multi-disciplinary teams. The Advanced Practitioner role provides a desirable route for highly skilled and experienced health care professionals to be recruited and retained within the NHS workforce. In the context where there are a large number of vacancies and increasing numbers of staff looking to leave and retire, the development of Advanced Practitioner roles provides an opportunity to address staff shortages and gaps in health services. My PhD research provides a picture of the current experiences of people in or training to be in Advanced Practice roles and endorses the impact that they can make (I can provide further detail of my research if requested or you can read a summary within the International Journal for Advancing Practice).

Removal of the level 7 apprenticeship funding would reduce the funds available to NHS employers to develop Advanced Practitioner roles and potentially stall their ability to meet the expectations of the NHS Long term workforce plan.

Dr Vikki-Jo Scott, Senior Lecturer and Advanced Clinical Practice Programme Lead and Researcher, University of Essex

There is a real shortage of the senior/principal ecologists required by the industry, a situation exacerbated by the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain. The L7 Ecologist Apprenticeship enables employers to address this situation by developing their existing workforce to address this situation.

Professor Debbie Bartlett, Professor of Environmental Conservation, University of Greenwich (Trailblazer member)

I see the huge impact of Level 7 apprenticeships daily - 80% of my learners are public sector, and 60% are NHS and the learners and employers testify powerfully to the dramatic improvement in their leadership and management skills through the programme. This is an education they are clear they could not afford to undertake without their employer's financial support and apprenticeship structure.

These Level 7s are a force for good in the social mobility strategy, given that a quarter of those level 7 Management apprentices joined with no prior degree qualification – and even 1 in 10 with no prior qualifications at all – yet the apprenticeships delivered progression at 5 times the rate of equivalent non-apprenticeships. Employers have worked hard to support the SLA through the work on the trailblazer, and this will sting, they are voting with their feet to say apprenticeships should be all-age, all-level.

Rebecca Jones, Principal Lecturer and Tesco Coach Consultant, University of Hertfordshire

Using our levy for level 7 provision makes it possible for senior managers to further develop their skills, and why shouldn't they? Especially with people needing to work for longer, so it's crucial there able to keep their skills current enabling them to make a valuable contribution to the workplace. We have a levy we cannot and will not ever fully utilise, therefore we should be able to use it where it's needed. Take away level 7's and your stopping people from progressing into the senior managers we need, who will help to lead and navigate our institution in an ever-changing business landscape.

Tara Bishop, Employee Apprenticeship Lead, University of Hertfordshire

Level 7 apprenticeships play a pivotal role in addressing educational and workforce challenges. They bridge skills gaps, providing flexible, advanced training for professionals, equipping them with the necessary skills and expertise to make employers competitive in a global market. They enhance productivity, combining practical experience with academic learning, enabling professionals to apply their knowledge in the workplace immediately. They increase educational accessibility, lifelong learning, career progression and ultimately social mobility, all of which boosts the economy.

Mark Davies, Deputy Head of Professional Placements, Timetabling & Awards, University of Sunderland

In 2007 I delivered the Level 7 NVQ in Business Administration as a pilot delivered by ILM to support the development of Degree Apprenticeships. This followed research I had carried out and developed into a paper to support the widening of opportunities for those who had not had the opportunity to gain a degree level qualification.

Apprenticeships in Construction and Engineering were offered at HND level, with many of my school peers (who were mainly male) enabled to study at a higher level at no cost. I felt that the opportunity to do so should be shared across a diverse range of subjects to support degree level learning at no cost to the individual in other sectors.

This culminated in the pilot of the NVQ Level 7 in Business Administration. A vocational MBA 120 credit equivalent enabling students to top-up to the MBA using the dissertation entry route. I feel that reduction of funding for the SLA and level 7 qualifications is possible but the withdrawal of funding would be a retrograde step, especially in the north east region where salaries are lower than national levels and the opportunity to study, therefore withdrawn. Then there is the impact on the business.

My research to date proves that degree apprenticeships have a significant impact on productivity, business development, business sustainability and improving employment prospects. This is not the time to remove this advantage from UK businesses, more support in education and development of employee potential and capacity is needed, not less. I implore you to retain funding to enable this qualification, and others at level 7, to be retained as part of the funded UK curriculum.

Maria Parker, Senior Lecturer in Management and Leadership, University of Sunderland

Level 7 apprenticeships are essential in providing the 'missing link' that connects the 'knowledge' of applicable theories, concepts and frameworks to 'practice' in real time to support both the employee and the organisation. This qualification provides an opportunity for the organisation and individual to continuously develop. Thus, a collaboration with the government that actively addresses the current skill shortages in the UK, and the closure of local businesses who are lacking the required knowledge to get through these turbulent times. These apprenticeships are essential for future growth and opportunity.

Dr Joanne Rush, Senior Lecturer/Programme Leader in Higher Education, University of Sunderland

The Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP & ACP (CC)) DA programmes offer incredible value to the UK healthcare system. Tackling NHS workforce challenges while enhancing patient care, by allowing healthcare professionals to gain advanced clinical skills while continuing in their roles, these apprenticeships ensure that learning is relevant and immediately applicable. As Arnie noted, the level 7 DA model attracts a diverse range of applicants—those who might not have considered the traditional university route—which helps broaden the talent pool. By helping staff and community members access training, we can create a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve, leading to better care outcomes.

The ACP programmes are crafted collaboratively by universities and employers, focusing on the specific skills and knowledge needed for roles like ACP. Warwick Medical School's ACP programme stands out due to its recent accreditation by the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine. This endorsement adds a layer of credibility and rigor to the training, ensuring that apprentices are meeting the high standards required for roles in critical care settings. Accreditation from such a recognised body further strengthens the apprenticeship's value by aligning it with the latest clinical guidelines and practices in intensive care medicine, making it a sought-after qualification for both healthcare professionals and employers.

Laura Yetton, Programmes Manager, University of Warwick

They support onward career progression for professionals in all job roles at senior level, to both stay in company or progress successfully onwards. This supports upskilling; recruitment and retention of those roles where talent is challenging to locate, and maintain.

Jackie Whitehouse, Head of Work Based & Professional Learning, University of Warwick

Level 7 apprenticeships play a substantial role in upskilling workers within our stretched public sector workforce in health and social care, using standards such as Advanced Clinical Practitioner (nurses, paramedics etc.). Furthermore, level 7 apprenticeships play a role in social mobility, allowing people with limited academic background to achieve a higher level degree, advancing their careers. Many of our level 7 apprentices would have no opportunity to progress without these opportunities.

Dr Sam Hardy, Director of Flexible and Online Learning, University of Warwick

My sector of interest is tunnelling and therefore my particular concern relates to the proposed L7 Standard "Tunnel Engineer". Exploitation of underground space will become increasingly important to societies around the world; indeed, tunnelling is the fastest growing infrastructure sector. Historically the UK has led the world in this field and British Engineers have been responsible for the design and construction of many major underground projects across the world. Unfortunately, this position is fast declining and in recent years we have seen an influx of continental European companies delivering projects such as Crossrail, HS2 and Thames Tideway. There is no reason to believe that this trend will not continue until ultimately the UK will have no tunnelling industry.

No bespoke course currently exists in the UK which teaches the specialist subject of tunnelling and the 26 companies of the trailblazer group are testament to the desire to rectify this situation as quickly as possible. The Tunnel Engineer apprenticeship would be one step towards rebuilding UK capability and I would strongly encourage the UK Government to support this.

Professor Colin M Eddie, Professor of Practice, University of Warwick, (Managing Director CECL-Global and Trailblazer Group member)

I have been involved in delivering L7 apprenticeship degrees since 2019, at a couple of institutions. These programmes are extremely valuable opportunities for companies to upskill their workforce and the apprentices develop and contribute significantly to their workplace and the educational institution throughout this journey. Upon completion of their that contribute to our society during and after completion of their degree.

Dr Thomas Madsen, Head of Subject in Computing, University of West London

The University of West London has delivered level 7 apprenticeship training to nearly 400 apprentices. The demographics of these apprentices tell an important story:

- 44% are aged 25-36, indicating a strong uptake and engagement by those seeking to upskill within their organisation. There is a strong desire to progress to the next level of responsibility in what will be a life-long journey of knowledge and skills improvement.
- 55% are from minority groups, demonstrating strong diversity and widened participation.
- 56% are female, indicating a contrast to the national trend for apprenticeship recruitment which is male dominated.
- 34% are from areas of multiple deprivation, indicating a hugely positive impact on social mobility.
- 48% are from public sector and health organisations, showing just how important this route is for sectors that are generally underfunded in terms of their learning and development budgets.

UWL's level 7 apprentices have enjoyed some outstanding successes. 98% of Senior Leader apprentices achieved an overall grade of Distinction We strongly believe the level 7 provides a critical professional development and progression route and we know this has had a major impact on those in the workplace who have never had the chance to experience higher education.

The majority of employers we work with already recruit level 2/3 entry level apprentices to their organisations as well as level 6 and level 7, and those in the public sector will not have other sources of funding for level 7 should this funding be removed.

Janet Rowson, Director of Apprenticeships, University of West London

From my own personal experience in dealing with the SLA course, it is very evident what impact this has on the apprentices in terms of a wider understanding of the business environment and developing a new range of new skills and knowledge. Their work with us has improved their capabilities and assisted them in gaining promotions and offering more to their role. The apprentices are able to contribute to their employers growth which will assist the governments strategy of expanding the UK economy.

Karl Bolton, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader for SLA, University of West London

I am a Professor of law in the HEI sector. Also, I trained as a solicitor and have worked in private practice in the City and also in industry. As part of my work in the law, I have also shadowed judges in the District Court, High Court, Court of Appeal and Supreme Court in the UK.

In my view, The GSA would be invaluable for our university faculty but also for students and industry alike. By offering a debt-free route to qualification, it enables talented individuals from diverse backgrounds to enter the legal field, enriching the profession with varied perspectives.

I have been in the law for over 25 years and have seen people (mainly) from affluent financial and educational backgrounds succeed in the law: the GSA, however, provides an opportunity for those who do not come from such backgrounds to also succeed and to contribute successfully their skills and experience to legal practice and to help maintain the rule of law.

At this time, perhaps more so than ever, this is vital. Going forward, I do hope that the Government will maintain funding at the requisite level for the GSA.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are important in health care for increasing skill levels in advanced level occupations such as specialist nurses and public health employers. They lead to employment and productivity, particularly as patient expectations are higher than ever.

Education and training clinical staff and managers in the NHS is important to keep knowledge, skills and behaviours to meet the demands of patients and their families/carers. It is also integral for professional development and high order thinking in an ever-changing environment. We have a proven track record of success in level 7 apprenticeships in health care and it would limit opportunities for advanced education and skills, which are essential in this industry.

Anonymous

Additional sectors

As a property consultancy we need to ensure our employees are highly skilled in a relevant area such as town planning, where there is a significant shortage of qualified candidates. The apprenticeship levy has allowed us to up-skill recent graduates as well as existing employees to have the necessary level of education in this area. Losing this route will have a significant impact both to our workforce and the opportunities we are able to offer to young people and older workers looking to re-skill.

Emma Gray, Head of HR, Bidwells (Former apprentice)

Level 7 apprenticeships provide a vocational path to higher level roles, rather than the usual academic route. Vocational experience is extremely valuable to organisations as people coming through these routes have wider practical experience than those who follow an academic route.

Steven Ward, Director, Pre-Sales, Emerson (Former apprentice)

Completing a Level 7 Leadership apprenticeship last year was a transformative experience for me, both personally and professionally. While I already held a bachelor's degree in motorsport engineering, I found that my formal education had reached its limit in terms of advancing my career. I sought an opportunity to make a greater impact at work, enhance my capabilities, and cultivate a high-performing team within my organisation.

This apprenticeship provided exactly that. Through an intensive programme of learning, feedback, and practical application, I was able to lead my team effectively, transforming it into a cohesive, high-functioning unit. The outcomes have been remarkable—not only has workplace efficiency improved, but my company has also recognised these achievements through pay rises for both myself and my team members. These improvements are critical in today's economic climate, where enhancing productivity is a national priority.

Importantly, this progress was made possible by the financial support available through government-funded apprenticeships. Without it, my company would not have been able to invest in my development. Instead of fostering internal growth and promoting from within, we might have been forced to hire additional staff, which often dilutes efficiency.

Continued support for apprenticeships is vital. These programmes don't just benefit individuals—they drive business success, reduce turnover, and promote engagement and career development, combating trends like quiet quitting. Investing in people, even those well into their careers, yields tangible benefits for companies, employees, and society at large.

John Farn-Ramsay, Principal Engineer Vehicle Dynamics, Group Lotus PLC (Former apprentice)

It's a great way for small business to grow with bright, young and affordable talent. This scheme will help many small companies move from the 19% Corp Tax threshold to the 25% Corp Tax threshold (AKA help grow the economy). It will also generate taxable income for the universities. A triple win for small business, Universities and government. With UK economic growth being stifled for so long, this is a no brainer.

Serdar Osman, Director, Handpicked Recruitment Ltd

At PA Consulting, we are deeply committed to fostering talent and developing the next generation of consulting and transformation leaders. Level 7 apprenticeships play a crucial role in this vision, enabling us to attract and nurture diverse, high-calibre consulting professionals who bring fresh perspectives and new thinking to our business.

The apprenticeship levy funding has been instrumental in providing equitable access to advanced professional qualifications, allowing individuals from all backgrounds to progress in their careers without financial barriers. This aligns with our core values of inclusion and excellence, while also meeting the demands of our clients for skilled and innovative thinking consultants who can tackle our clients most complex challenges.

Alexandra McNicol, Learning & Development Lead for Delivery Capability, PA Consulting

Apprenticeships are very important. They provide a great framework for students to learn on and off the job, and gives them a career worth pursuing.

Jennie Gillam, Director, Red Fish Accountancy Ltd, Founder

Outside of London, regional law firms such as ours are experiencing severe difficulties in recruiting and retaining skilled lawyers. This limits growth and in turn leads inevitably to clients turning to larger big city firms with the higher fees. As a small niche firm in the South West, we have successfully taken on a school leaver and a graduate on a Solicitor Level 7 apprenticeship. We have made a firm 6 year commitment to these young people to help mentor and support them on their journey to becoming a solicitor. Already, a few months in post, they are already making valuable a contribution to the way the firm operates and to our clients.

The apprenticeship programme, as we see it, has the combined effect of generating the skills we need in our firm but also retaining the skills and workforce within our community. Many of the candidates applying for positions have parents who did not attend university and are perhaps sceptical of the benefits of education over taking paid employment now. It's a fair supposition that many will not choose skills over wages and will therefore lose out in the end. The apprenticeship scheme allows for both and has enabled smaller local law firms like ours to nurture the talent which otherwise it could not afford to do. It would be disappointing to make hasty changes to this now.

Kevin Cole, Finance & HR Administration Manager, Reeves James Limited

I myself have a Level 7 which allowed me to become Chartered. It is vital to business such as the one I work for that we can still have access to our Levy to fund continued learning and to ensure that our employees can attain professional standards which they then can transfer across into the workplace to ensure a professionally run business.

Anonymous

I'm a global head of learning and development at a tech consultancy and directly responsible for managing our apprenticeship programmes.

I am therefore acutely aware of the vital role Level 7 apprenticeships play in developing advanced skills within the workforce and ensuring these apprenticeships remain accessible is vital for maintaining a highly skilled workforce. This is particularly important in the sectors we operate, such as engineering, healthcare, and technology.

I'm a current level 7 apprentice undertaking a senior leadership award at Durham University Business School, which has been invaluable in building my capabilities. My increased knowledge and skills in strategy and leadership have directly led to enhanced opportunities for progression within my workplace, where women are seriously underrepresented in senior roles.

I agree with the need to reform the apprenticeship levy but this is the wrong approach. I have not met a single person in L&D, apprenticeship training providers, or universities who agrees with this approach. Where was the government consultation.

Anonymous

Our organisation pays a lot of money into the levy fund and there are very few apprenticeship programmes our staff can actually take advantage of, making it difficult to actually spend what's been paid in. It's important to provide a career pathway for all staff and that includes higher levels so we are able to meet our values of being inclusive and avoid the glass ceiling perception.

The L7 MBA, CIPD, CIMA/ACCA and other relevant L7 programmes enables our back-office staff to access apprenticeship programmes if they wish. I feel there should be more 'relevant' L7 programmes available, not less - so this fund which is based on a % of all staff salaries, is available for all our staff not just a proportion.

One would anticipate if funding for L7 apprenticeships is to be withdrawn that the apprenticeship levy fee % will be reduced to recognise only a proportion of the workforce can take advantage of an apprenticeship programme.

It would be more helpful to remove the barriers to learners wanting to do apprenticeships, like forcing functional skills - it's one thing being assessed at having adequate English and Maths to undertake any qualification; but to force someone who has managed through life to work without GCSEs or 'O' levels actually makes apprenticeships less inclusive rather than more inclusive.

Anonymous

We have enrolled 78 apprentices in Level 7 programs, with 68 pursuing a Senior Leader Level 7 apprenticeship. This program covers essential topics such as Inspiring Leadership, Talent Management, Creating a High-Performance Culture, and Coaching and Mentoring. The senior leaders educated through this apprenticeship will significantly impact the development of skills and the success of colleagues at all levels within our organization, particularly those in early careers.

If we educate our early-career colleagues well but have them managed by leaders lacking depth in leadership capability, we cannot expect their ongoing development over multiple years. We need senior leaders who model learning and understand the experience of pursuing a professional qualification to foster a skilled organization. Additionally, we utilize the Level 7 apprenticeship for our actuarial graduates who are early in their careers.

Currently, we are not fully utilizing a substantial portion of our apprenticeship levy. We value the ability to determine where the skills gained through these apprenticeships can best support our organization and the industry. Discontinuing the Level 7 apprenticeship would hinder our investment in a skilled workforce. The majority of our early-career colleagues have benefited from an apprenticeship. Redirecting resources solely to early-career or less advanced qualifications would restrict our ability to create a skilled workforce. We believe it is crucial to maintain and expand our Level 7 offerings to ensure a capable leadership pipeline for the future who will focus further on skills development.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are important because they provide an advanced route to develop high-level skills in fields like management, leadership, and specialised technical areas. They offer a

direct pathway from education into the workforce, combining practical experience with academic learning,

For us as employers, Level 7 apprenticeships help develop a highly skilled workforce tailored to our needs, ensuring employees are equipped to handle complex tasks and leadership roles.

They also support succession planning and can reduce skills shortages

For apprentices, these programs open doors to higher-paying, senior roles and provide an opportunity to earn while learning. This combination of practical training and qualifications offers significant career growth potential, addressing the demand for highly qualified professionals in today's competitive job market.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships provide an excellent opportunity for career progression and skill development. It allows individuals to combine work experience with academic study, enabling them to apply theory directly to real life examples at work.

This approach accelerates learning and enhances problem-solving abilities. Apprenticeships offer a valuable pathway for individuals from all backgrounds to access higher education and career advancement. Defunding level 7 apprenticeships would limit future generations access to these invaluable opportunities, hindering their potential and negatively impacting both individuals and businesses.

Anonymous

Current apprentices

Health, social care and life sciences sectors

The Level 7 apprenticeship is integral to developing and building future leaders like myself. I work in an NHS trust as a Service manager at 8a banding. I find this apprenticeship a real leverage to continue with my own career development and progression within the Trust. I am aspiring to become a senior leader within my organisation, so completing the level 7 apprenticeship will undoubtedly help me with my career progression. This this programme is providing me with academic knowledge and theory to link to my everyday practice. This programme has already boosted my confidence and is widening my understanding of what leadership is and should be. Looking into the future, this programme is only going to attract more leaders as it is funded via apprenticeship levy which is almost the only way to gain a formal qualification when in full time employment. This programme is very popular and attractive to leaders at 8a level and above because of that. The NHS trusts and organisations offering level 7 apprenticeships will therefore benefit by attracting and retaining talent through such programmes.

Lucie Tulejova, Service Manager Acute Medicine & Older People Services, Barts Health NHS Trust

This programme is important because it will help develop future senior leaders to drive respective organisations to meet national and local targets, sustained performance and service delivery.

Lincoln Cordner, Ward Manager, Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

As part of my professional development, my apprenticeship is equipping me with advanced skills and knowledge to effectively function as a Primary Care Network (PCN) Manager. I am enhancing my ability to lead and support nursing teams across the network, fostering collaboration among multidisciplinary teams to ensure high-quality, patient-centred care. Through strategic planning, I am contributing to the development of PCN objectives aligned with NHS priorities, while monitoring performance metrics to identify and implement improvements in patient care delivery. Additionally, I am gaining expertise in managing resources efficiently, overseeing compliance with clinical protocols, and ensuring professional standards are upheld. My role also involves mentoring and supporting the professional growth of nursing staff and apprentices, promoting evidence-based practices. Engaging with stakeholders, including local authorities and NHS Trusts, I work to enhance integrated care and address patient feedback to drive service improvements. This experience is proving invaluable in preparing me to meet the demands of PCN management effectively.

Ornela Mckenzie, Primary Care Network Manager, Bromley Healthcare

The Level 7 apprenticeship is important to me as I am undergoing the training myself, and I can see the full benefits of the apprenticeship for future leaders. I feel this is an area that is considerably undervalued and under resourced in the public sector.

Mandeep Rauli, Director of Operations and Superintendent, CW Medicines Ltd

The Senior Leader Apprenticeship I am undertaking is important to me and my organisation for many reasons, including creating the next set of leaders in the business to continue our work, innovate solutions in primary healthcare to create a healthier population, and encourage ethical leadership that drives benefit for the economy and society. Without this, I believe that a leadership and innovation skills gap would exist in the UK, which would drive un-competitiveness on the world stage and puts our long-term future in jeopardy.

Stuart Wilcock, Head of Architecture, Doctor Care Anywhere PLC

Undertaking a level 7 apprenticeship has enabled me to advance my career in the NHS and is giving me the leadership and advanced skills I need for my role in District Nursing. It means I can study whilst I work in the job that I love. The Government want more District Nurses to provide care out of hospitals, apprenticeships for the DNSPQ programme are a key part of achieving this.

Lucy Howard, Senior Community Nurse and DNSPQ Apprenticeship student, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

I am a current 1st year level 7 apprentice and I have always wanted to pursue a career in advanced practice. Clinical progression in a non-managerial direction is very difficult to come across in the NHS, which is a point of contention for many clinical staff who feel their skills are wasted as they progress into purely leadership and administrative roles. These opportunities should be available in order to retain staff, improve morale and improve the quality of patient care with robust development frameworks in line with the long-term NHS plan.

Daniel Powell, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

I am undertaking a course at present to gain my Specialist Practitioner role in District nursing and through the apprenticeship scheme, have the opportunity to progress in my career. There is a lack of nurses with this qualification. These apprenticeships are important to the organisation as well as opportunities for nurses.

Pam Klus, Specialist Practitioner District Nurse Student, Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust

The apprenticeship has enabled me to study and use my new skills whilst working. I am also producing a portfolio of evidence to show employers my skills. The apprenticeship offers a good support network from the university and other apprentices. It has also enabled me to network with other clinicians in similar areas.

Cath Kimmins, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner Great Western Hospital

The apprenticeship has afforded me the opportunity to do my Masters' in advanced clinical practice. This has been my dream since working in the NHS and this programme has enabled me as a professional from an ethnic minority to gain access to such a programme. During this programme, I have been able to carry out supervised audits that have been published and write case studies that have and will continue to impact clinical practice. A lot of clinicians like me and from similar background look forward to same opportunity that I have enjoyed and it would be really helpful to keep it going particularly since we want a very inclusive and diverse NHS workforce.

Temitope Olemu, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Great Western NHS Foundation Trust

Pursuing the Senior Leader Apprenticeship has been a journey of personal growth and empowerment for me. As someone who didn't have the opportunity to attend university, this programme has allowed me to develop advanced leadership skills while balancing work and

family life. Studying alongside raising children and maintaining my career has been challenging but immensely rewarding. It's a testament to the flexibility and accessibility of apprenticeships that I've been able to achieve this.

For people like me, who took non-traditional educational routes, Level 7 apprenticeships are not just a vital lifeline, but a means of levelling the playing field. They provide a pathway to advanced qualifications without incurring the heavy financial burden of a traditional degree, making them an accessible option for working professionals.

The Government must continue to fund Level 7 apprenticeships. Shifting this cost to employers, especially amid recent budget announcements increasing employers' National Insurance contributions, risks discouraging companies from supporting these programmes. With businesses already facing rising costs, they may struggle to invest in workforce development at the necessary scale. These apprenticeships not only benefit the individual but also the entire economy and their funding should remain a priority.

Philippa Rich, Head of Marketing, Healthcare Homes

The removal of the apprenticeship levy from government funding shifts the burden to businesses, threatening access to critical programmes like Level 7 apprenticeships. While this may seem pragmatic, it risks excluding public and charity sector professionals, such as NHS leaders, who often cannot rely on business funding to access these transformative opportunities.

As a current student at UCL's Global Business School for Health, I see firsthand the profound impact such programmes have on public service leadership. Studying alongside NHS leaders, I've gained invaluable tools to address complex systemic challenges, improve decision-making, and foster innovation—all aimed at creating a better, more resilient healthcare system. This programme is not a luxury; it is an investment in the leaders who ensure the NHS meets the needs of millions.

Requiring businesses to bear the cost could inadvertently deepen inequalities, leaving critical public and third-sector organisations without the skilled leaders they need. For the NHS, this would mean fewer leaders equipped to tackle growing pressures, worsening outcomes for the very communities these programmes seek to serve.

Rather than scrapping government support for Level 7 apprenticeships, we should preserve them for sectors like healthcare, where the benefits extend far beyond individual participants. These programmes are vital to building a future where public services thrive under the stewardship of informed, capable, and ethical leaders. Without them, we risk undermining the very systems that sustain our society.

Francisco Yeo, Chief Information & Technology Officer, The Health Foundation

The apprenticeship has made me a much better leader and has helped me develop and buy into the vision of my organisation. Prior to the apprenticeship I had a vague notion of what it was to drive a department or team to excel but with the apprenticeship I have developed a 3 year strategy for my department which is aimed at improving efficiency and patient experience. I would not have been able to undertake the MBA outside of the apprenticeship not only because of the time required but also the commitments to work and the funding. This is one of the greatest assets that I have noted while working for the NHS.

Dr Anthony Hemeson, Consultant and Clinical Lead for Paediatric Emergency Medicine, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

I am writing to share my personal experience and strong support for the continuation of the apprenticeship levy, especially in its current form which allows NHS Trusts to fund level 7 apprenticeships, including the Senior Leader apprenticeship.

This apprenticeship has been incredibly impactful on my learning and development. I have gained invaluable skills and knowledge that have significantly enhanced my professional capabilities. The structured learning environment, combined with practical, on-the-job experience, has allowed me to apply theoretical concepts directly to my role, leading to immediate and tangible improvements in my service and overall performance.

Without the financial support provided by the apprenticeship levy, I would not have considered undertaking this apprenticeship, nor would I have known such training exists. I urge the government to reconsider any plans to stop NHS Trusts from using the levy to fund level 7

apprenticeships. The long-term benefits of these programmes far outweigh the costs, and their continuation is essential for the ongoing development of a skilled and competent workforce within the NHS and other sectors.

Cassandra Jack, Matron, Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust

The Level 7 ACP Apprenticeship programme helps to develop knowledge and skills needed for the role which will transform NHS growing demands. On the journey to becoming an independent clinical practitioner, the apprenticeship programme plays a vital role.

Praveen Guruvayooappan Namboothiri, Trainee ACP and Clinical Nurse Manager, London Northwest University Healthcare NHS Trust

Level 7 apprenticeships means we can have a quicker turnaround, rather than 4 years. Our level 7 apprentices get to join the qualified workforce in 2 years which as an employer is most beneficial when dealing with shortages in the workforce. We get to attract staff with relevant first degrees and, due to the nature of level 7 qualifications, apprentices joining the workforce from this route typically show higher skills.

Olubukola Ireo, AHP Apprentice and ACP Lead, NELFT

I have benefitted enormously from the Senior Leader Apprenticeship. My developed leadership skills, knowledge and confidence afforded me a promotion - but more importantly I now provide vital coaching and mentoring to junior nurses who are also growing into future leaders - this is the value of NHS access to level 7 apprenticeships. As a workforce we are expected to make magic out of little to no resource. By providing access to level 7 apprenticeships, there is a chance to develop the skills, knowledge and leadership needed - AT LEAST - to develop the resilience needed within the workforce to keep inspiring and developing the workforce to be fit for industry.

Charlene Hales, Head of Nursing Mental Health, NHS

Having worked in the NHS for 24 years I had the opportunity to apply to be a trainee ACP within my Trust. This opportunity is unique and will allow me to gain valuable qualifications for both myself and the NHS. The funding will allow me to enhance my service delivery to patients and in my proposed new role I will take on more responsibility both clinically and from a leadership and education perspective to deliver an advanced level of practice in my area of interest, taking some of the burden away from the Consultant team in order for them to have more capacity to deliver care to patients with the most complex presentations. This will have a direct impact on quality of care and aim to reduce the burden of the waiting list that currently exists. The apprenticeship allows me to both achieve my Masters' qualification but also develop an extensive portfolio of practice, education, research and leadership to be utilised for the remaining 23 years of my NHS career. In a time when some NHS staff are demoralised and disillusioned the apprenticeship has revitalised both myself and all the others involved in the scheme which in turn will lead to greater patient satisfaction.

James Peirce, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner, NHS

The apprenticeship programme provides a job-based opportunity to develop essential leadership skills which make an impact on the workplace and develop leaders. The programme ensures that learning is thoroughly embedded into the working week; this is essential to ensure that I can develop the knowledge and skills that I need to fulfil my role now and in the future.

Sally Mordi, Designated Clinical Officer, North Middlesex University Hospital

I aspired to be a Nurse Educator at the start of my career (over 20 years ago) and was grateful to be given the opportunity to undertake a level 7 Academic Professional course as I had a goal of completing a postgraduate course in teaching, to support my role as a clinical nurse educator. I found the level 7 apprenticeship course beneficial, as I not only had the academic support from the university but also the support from the apprenticeship lead and a named mentor from my employer. This enabled me to discuss my learning and seek wider opportunities for gaining practical skills in my workplace. The apprenticeship route also provided funding for the course, which allowed me to focus on my learning and not to worry about the finances for paying for the course.

The support of the lecturers and module leaders was invaluable in enabling my success as a mature student.

I support the continuation of apprenticeships at level 7 to enable opportunities for persons who would otherwise not be able to access postgraduate courses by the traditional routes, to fulfil their academic goals, improve their career prospects and potentially minimise the social divide.

Pauline Myrie-Martin, Practice Development Nurse, North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust

The level 7 apprenticeship allowed me to be educated and trained over 3 years to carry out the role of an ACP. It provided me with the right balance between theory and practical training in order for me to be competent to do the role I currently do. When the role was audited all comments praised the role and how it provided a positive impact to patients and staff and bridged the gap between medicine and Nursing. Without the apprenticeship this would not have been possible.

Christine Budd, Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

I'm really excited to have started my Level 7 apprenticeship in September 2024. Being able to learn new things while also putting them into practice in my job is fantastic. It's really boosted my confidence and given me a much deeper understanding of my role.

I can't wait to use these new skills to tackle real-world problems and help my team. From what I've heard from past apprentices, this programme can really drive innovation and improve efficiency. I'm eager to be part of that and make a positive impact on our organization.

Chinedu Okwu, Quality Governance & Patient Experience Lead for Private Patients Unit, Royal Free Hospital

I only started my apprenticeship in March of this year, but I am already finding the on the job learning hugely helpful to my current role and to the ongoing development of advanced practice in our organization. I have already been able to apply some of what I have learned from the Leadership and PADRICP modules to my day to day practice and my confidence has grown as a result. My colleagues are also benefitting because I am able to share my new knowledge with them and, I hope, inspire them to consider developing in advanced practice themselves. Without level 7 apprenticeships I would be worried about the opportunities for the future workforce and whether they would get the same protected time to learn and develop in advanced practice.

Amanda Headford, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner in Long Term Conditions, Sirona Care & Health

The level 7 apprenticeship has enabled me to develop the knowledge and skills related to advanced practice so that I can have a greater impact on patient care and service delivery. It has developed my clinical assessment and shared decision making with patients to provide a more patient-centred approach to care. Within the service I have been able to work across the different organisations to develop the service. This route has enabled me to develop in a supported way with support both from the university and my employer than would not have happened if I had undertaken this learning in a different route.

Alison Haines, Trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner, Sirona Care and Health (Heart Failure Specialist)

I am currently undertaking a senior leadership Level 7 apprenticeship to assist in the development of service provision and patient care within my NHS department. The skills learned through the apprenticeship are key to achieving the strategic goals of the organisation.

Scott Murray, Principal Orthotist, South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

As a trainee Advanced Clinical Practitioner (ACP) working in paediatric critical care, I have witnessed first-hand the transformative impact of Level 7 apprenticeships. These programmes

provide an essential pathway for developing advanced skills, fostering leadership, and enhancing clinical expertise, which are critical in a high-stakes, rapidly evolving healthcare environment. The apprenticeship model integrates academic rigour with hands-on clinical practice, ensuring that professionals like myself are equipped not only with theoretical knowledge but also with the practical competence to deliver safe, effective, and innovative care. In paediatric critical care, where the margin for error is minimal, this comprehensive approach has a direct impact on patient outcomes and family experiences. Furthermore, Level 7 apprenticeships make advanced clinical training accessible to a broader workforce, supporting career progression without the financial barriers often associated with postgraduate education. This inclusivity is vital for cultivating a diverse and highly skilled healthcare workforce, capable of addressing the complex challenges faced by our healthcare system.

For my organisation, these apprenticeships represent a cornerstone for building resilience and excellence within the team. By investing in advanced education, we not only retain talented professionals but also ensure the delivery of world-class care to some of the most vulnerable patients.

In conclusion, Level 7 apprenticeships are not just an investment in individuals; they are an investment in the future of healthcare. They empower clinicians, enhance care quality, and create a sustainable framework for professional development in the NHS and beyond.

Scott Penfold, Trainee Paediatric Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Children's Critical Care Outreach) University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust

The apprenticeship will be giving me the opportunity to learn on the job. Gaining support from my employers to develop my skills whilst also earning a living

Sophie Harper, Trainee ACP, Oxford University Hospital

I would not have considered an apprenticeship an option at my age and the cost would have been prohibitive for me, due to the potential negative impact on my family. Other reservations or considerations for me included being out of education for decades, rather than years and sitting amongst recent school leavers as classmates, but any doubts were quickly addressed by our NHS apprenticeship champion. We looked at some of the difficulties faced by more experienced, older workers in the modern workforce and how age or social circumstances shouldn't be a barrier or deciding factor for improving educational aspirations at any age, while improving employment prospects with regards to promotions in the individual's field of interest.

I believe making apprenticeships available to a wider range of workers can prove to be beneficial in a variety of ways. For instance, a more diverse and older staff supports bringing a wider skill set to the workplace, which has to be better for improving business development.

Marcia Newman, Project Manager, West London NHS Trust

The level 7 apprenticeship is a vital element in my everyday nursing practice. As a trainee I could simply not afford to self-fund the MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice and therefore, would lose out on my dream job role as an ACP. I believe if funding was cut short then the NHS would lose valuable trainee ACPs as they would face the same financial ties as myself.

Kaylee Lee, Trainee Surgical ACP, Wye Valley NHS Trust

If it wasn't for the apprenticeship I would not have been able to study. This is due to funding the course and getting the time from work to attend the lectures. Without apprenticeships, staff within the NHS do not increase their skills and knowledge base and therefore, patients will not receive the most up to date treatment, best practices and confident clinicians.

Anonymous

The apprenticeship is such an important part of Advanced Practice in order to try to standardise the role which will continue to support the NHS. ACP roles can have a great deal of variety and the apprenticeship allows knowledge of breadth and depth and off the job learning. I know people that have undertaken individual modules and others who have done an apprenticeship in which you get far more support and the ability to network with other ACPs which is pivotal to the role.

Anonymous

The ACP apprenticeship has been a very crucial part of my journey in advancing my skills, knowledge and career in nursing. It has helped me focus on studying, learning and gaining all the necessary attributes of an ACP which I can use to continue effectively helping my patients, the community and the healthcare institution I work for. Without the support of the government in funding courses and training like this, dedicated and well-deserved staff will have limited options in fulfilling their career aspirations and more importantly, in advancing their skills to help improve patient outcomes.

Anonymous

Completing the level 7 apprenticeship in advanced clinical practice allows me to work at an advanced level as a nurse. Due to the apprenticeship I am able see, diagnose, treat and manage complex medical problems independently, similar to the level of a junior doctor. I had tried and failed for many years to get onto this course as I was not able to secure funding or fund independently.

This education opportunity provides cost effectiveness which helps the strain on the NHS and also allows my career to progress in a way that would be impossible without the apprenticeship funding. If this area stops growing there will be increase strain on the NHS finances and greater reliance on expensive agency and locum staff due to the GP shortage.

Anonymous

The Senior Leader 7 Apprenticeship has been a pivotal part of my development as an NHS Graduate Management Trainee. It has provided me with invaluable leadership skills, strategic insight, and a deeper understanding of the complexities within the NHS. The programme equips me with the tools to navigate high-pressure environments, foster innovation, and make informed decisions that drive positive outcomes for patients and staff alike. It's an essential stepping stone in my career, empowering me to make a meaningful impact in healthcare management and leadership.

Anonymous

The Level 7 apprenticeship was an essential part of my growth as a biomedical scientist. It has helped me to develop new scientific, leadership and management skills directly applied to my job role. The project developed while on apprenticeship has improved and made more efficient patient care with adrenal dysfunction, and also saved costs on its diagnosis.

Anonymous

I have been working with apprentices for nearly 2 years now and I can see firsthand the positive impact this is having on their career progression in development. I am an apprentice myself and this opportunity is the only way I can enhance my skills and knowledge. Having very young family and full time job can be a barrier to traditional studies. I would not be able to afford tuition fees, which would force me to take up a student loan. Apprenticeships at higher level not only provide a salary while gaining hands-on experience, but also improve job prospects.

Anonymous

Many senior staff in the NHS rise through the ranks without formal learning in operational and strategic leadership and management - and I think we can all agree that competent and inspiring leadership is essential to the strength of our public services. Why would we not invest in this? The L7 programmes are vital to ensuring the continued and developing high quality that's absolutely necessary to the current and future health of the NHS and local councils, and the apprenticeship levy is fundamental to making this accessible to publicly funded organisations. I work with leaders and managers who have - and who haven't - been L7 apprentices and the quality difference can be marked, which is why I felt it was so important to undertake that learning myself.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital for my development as a Community Nurse Practitioner Manager because they offer a unique opportunity to advance my skills in healthcare leadership

and management while actively working in my role. These programmes integrate academic learning with practical application, enabling me to deepen my clinical expertise, enhance strategic decision-making, and strengthen my leadership capabilities.

This tailored training helps me address the complexities of managing multidisciplinary teams, navigating organizational challenges, and improving patient care outcomes. By equipping me with evidence-based knowledge and advanced management techniques, this apprenticeship supports my growth as an effective leader, ensuring I can contribute meaningfully to the delivery of high-quality, patient-centred care in my organization. It also positions me to meet evolving healthcare demands while driving innovation and excellence within my practice.

Anonymous

This is important to me as it is the only way I can develop personally and professionally while maintaining work life balance at the same time. Nursing is evolving, hence as a leader I need to maintain my skills and competencies without having to worry about incurring debts at the end of my course completion. The apprentice programme has provided huge opportunities for many to move up and develop in their career.

Anonymous

This training has given a much clearer skill on how I can improve the way I work and streamline services for patients. It also includes leadership training around management of staff and how to recruit and retain staff which is part of the NHS long term workforce plan - people promise.

Anonymous

It is important to me because the programme has allowed for career progression and allowing to expand my knowledge which is making real positive changes in the workplace. It has grown my confidence and allowed myself to meet new people and learn about other industries.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships represent a forward-thinking approach to education and workforce development. They reflect the values of accessibility, practicality, and excellence. These apprenticeships bridge the gap between theory and practice. They enable learners to apply academic concepts directly to real-world challenges, making the learning process more dynamic and immediately impactful for their careers and organisations. For professionals already in the workforce, Level 7 apprenticeships provide a structured way to continue learning and advancing in their careers.

Anonymous

The development opportunity for future leaders would be removed if these level 7 courses are taken away from the apprenticeship. There's no funding available in the NHS to otherwise fund these courses which would be a huge loss to future workforce and succession planning

Anonymous

I am currently undertaking a senior leadership Level 7 apprenticeship to assist in the development of service provision and patient care within my NHS department. The skills learned through the apprenticeship are key to achieving the strategic goals of the organisation.

Anonymous

Let's continue to develop the people that we need for the development of our industries. Please do not remove their access to the valuable experience and skills gained while contributing to the workplace.

Anonymous

I am currently a level 7 apprentice and cannot speak more highly of the learning, networks and skills I am developing through this fantastic opportunity

Anonymous

The level 7 apprenticeship has allowed me to work towards furthering my career. This will not only benefit my progression but benefit my patients and workforce and I am grateful to have been giving this opportunity

Anonymous

The extra support has been invaluable and the additional funding to go towards CPD to achieve competencies, skills and acquire bespoke further knowledge has been essential.

Anonymous

As a nurse for 25 years, I am now moving into nursing leadership. I agree I am highly qualified - funded by myself I hasten to add! Without the apprenticeship I would be unable to self-fund this course and would not be in a place to contribute as effectively to the organisation.

Education is key to all not just younger, less educated as suggested.

Anonymous

It has improved my confidence in my role and enhanced my managerial skills. The programme has enabled me to be able to better network within and without the organisation for positive report.

Anonymous

The level 7 apprenticeship enabled me to undertake higher level learning and development alongside my role as a manager within the NHS. It enabled me to gain these skills which will benefit both me personally and the NHS organisations I work with. The format of the apprenticeship aligning with work based practices and commitments means that even during the learning process, I was contributing to the workplace. These apprenticeships should remain available to employers and employees across the country because they provide an accessible route into higher education and provide real life and real time benefits to all involved. These are a great investment in people, business and the future and should be celebrated & encouraged and not seen as something which can be removed to save money in the short term.

Anonymous

The Level 7 Senior Leadership Apprenticeship has been a transformative experience for me, both personally and professionally. It has provided me with the tools and knowledge to implement meaningful improvements within my NHS department, enhancing our efficiency and overall performance. Through this apprenticeship, I've developed leadership skills that are not only helping me in my current role but also preparing me for future opportunities within the NHS. Without the support of the apprenticeship levy, pursuing this qualification would not have been financially feasible for me at this time. The levy has made high-quality leadership training accessible, enabling professionals like me to grow and contribute to the long-term success of the NHS.

This apprenticeship has been an invaluable step in my career development, and beneficial for while driving positive change within an organisation.

Anonymous

I was trained as a clinician. In order to progress in my career, the pathway is management based for which I received no formal training. Funding for L7 apprenticeships makes formal training possible and patient care is likely to benefit directly as a result.

Anonymous

Pursuing the Senior Leader Apprenticeship has been a journey of personal growth and empowerment for me. As someone who didn't have the opportunity to attend university, this programme has allowed me to develop advanced leadership skills while balancing work and family life. Studying alongside raising children and maintaining my career has been challenging but immensely rewarding. It's a testament to the flexibility and accessibility of apprenticeships that I've been able to achieve this.

For people like me, who took non-traditional educational routes, Level 7 apprenticeships are not just a vital lifeline, but a means of levelling the playing field. They provide a pathway to advanced

qualifications without incurring the heavy financial burden of a traditional degree, making them an accessible option for working professionals.

The Government must continue to fund Level 7 apprenticeships. Shifting this cost to employers, especially amid recent budget announcements increasing employers' National Insurance contributions, risks discouraging companies from supporting these programmes. With businesses already facing rising costs, they may struggle to invest in workforce development at the necessary scale. These apprenticeships not only benefit the individual but also the entire economy and their funding should remain a priority.

Anonymous

Doing an apprenticeship has allowed me to develop not only as a better clinician but as a better person. It is a structured and well supported way of learning for those of us who are not truly academic. Having the opportunity to learn later in life is always a hard choice with having to juggle the work life balance and family commitments. The apprenticeship allows this to happen as financially this would not be possible for many people.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships in advanced practice are crucial for paramedics in the ambulance service as they provide a structured, accessible route for professional development while addressing key challenges in the sector. These apprenticeships offer paramedics the opportunity to upskill and advance their clinical expertise without the financial burden of traditional postgraduate study. With access to funding through apprenticeship schemes, paramedics can pursue advanced practice qualifications such as Master's degrees without incurring tuition fees, ensuring that their education is financially viable and supported by their employers.

The concept of "release time" is equally important. It allows paramedics to balance the demands of their professional roles with the academic requirements of advanced practice training. This makes it easier for them to integrate learning with real-world experience, improving their ability to deliver advanced clinical care in the field. As paramedics can continue to work while studying, this dual approach enhances the relevance of their education and allows immediate application of new skills in their practice.

Furthermore, these apprenticeships are particularly valuable for mature students. Many paramedics enter the field later in life, bringing valuable experience from various backgrounds. Level 7 apprenticeships provide a flexible, supportive environment for these individuals to further their education while continuing to contribute to the workforce. This helps to retain experienced paramedics in the system, improving workforce stability and fostering a culture of lifelong learning.

In summary, Level 7 apprenticeships in advanced practice are essential for supporting paramedics' professional growth, ensuring high-quality care in the ambulance service, and addressing workforce challenges.

Anonymous

After previously attending university, working alongside university at a level 7 and then taking this into practice has been fundamental to my experience and knowledge and therefore effective care and safety for my patients and colleagues.

Anonymous

The Senior Leader Apprenticeship has been invaluable to me in my professional development. I have had the opportunity to get involved in projects of strategic importance for the organisation and to contextualise my experiences in the latest academic research. The apprenticeship so far has supported me to focus on holistically enhancing my leadership skills, to the benefit of my organisation.

Anonymous

Engineering, construction and built environment sectors

The apprenticeship has offered me an alternative route into architecture during which I have gained some valuable workplace experience which supported my university work and vice versa to enrich my learning.

Joshua George, Architectural Assistant, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

Not only does Level 7 Apprenticeship offer a financially feasible route for me to progress in the architectural education process necessary to become a chartered architect, it also provides a lot of benefits that the traditional route lacks including a huge amount of practicing experience. The current architectural education system and the practicing industry have a huge gap between them. The apprenticeship scheme is possibly the best way to breach the gap.

Eric Chan, Architectural Assistant, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

As an apprentice who has completed a master's degree and is now undertaking Part 3 studies, I have experienced firsthand the transformative benefits of the apprenticeship pathway. Over the past three years, my substantial work experience has equipped me with the skills and confidence needed to qualify as an architect. Additionally, the financial stability provided by this route has been invaluable.

The apprenticeship model nurtures better-trained professionals and ensures financial security for individuals. In contrast, the traditional route to architectural education demands prolonged periods without income, alongside significant financial commitments, often making it difficult for aspiring architects to lead a balanced life.

Investing in apprenticeship schemes benefits the UK economy by fostering a workforce of highly skilled individuals who can contribute to the national budget at an earlier stage in their careers.

This approach supports economic productivity, enhances social mobility, and promotes long-term financial well-being.

Marko Sherstylo, Architectural Assistant, Allford Hall Monaghan Morris

I started a Level 3 apprenticeship at 16 and am in my final year of a Level 6 apprenticeship. For me and many others, a Level 7 apprenticeship is the next step in my career.

Level 7 apprenticeships, especially in AI and digital courses, are vital. They provide advanced skills needed in today's fast-changing job market and help individuals gain knowledge in fields that are crucial for our economy.

They boost innovation and digital skills, benefiting both the person and the wider economy.

Defunding Level 7 apprenticeships would be a significant setback. It would limit opportunities for individuals to advance their careers and reduce the talent pool available to businesses. This could slow down innovation and hinder our ability to compete internationally.

Hannah Mehr, Apprentice Data Scientist, Arup (Member of the Association of Apprentices Council)

The Level 7 architecture apprenticeship has opened doors for me to qualify as a chartered architect. Architecture accreditation requires a 7+ years of education and without the apprenticeship, I am one of many who simply could not reach chartership without the Level 7 apprenticeship. The new ARB education system is set to reinforce Level 7 and master's qualifications as the primary education standard to qualify as an architect. Shutting the door on Level 7 will make the architecture industry exclusive to those who can afford multiple years of self-funded study.

Rachel Levy, L7 Architectural Assistant, AtkinsRealis

For me, it enabled me to do the course as I wouldn't have been able to do it with the cost of living and university fees.

Heleina Kanabar, Architectural Designer, BM3

L7 Apprenticeships have allowed me to attain the required qualifications in order to become an architect whilst also gaining valuable experience working. Full time education is expensive, especially when it comes to the hidden costs of an architecture degree, with printing and model making. This apprenticeship has allowed me to pursue my career goals without having to undergo the financial strain that a full-time course would have caused.

Carlos Gomes, Architectural Apprentice, Bond Bryan

My apprenticeship was a transformative chapter in my life, laying the foundation for both personal and professional growth. It provided a unique opportunity to blend hands-on experience with structured learning, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. Through this apprenticeship, I gained not only technical skills but also critical soft skills such as communication, time management, and problem-solving.

One of the most valuable aspects was the mentorship I received. Working closely with experienced professionals allowed me to learn directly from their expertise and gain insights that no textbook could provide. Their guidance helped me navigate challenges, understand industry standards, and refine my craft. This collaborative environment encouraged me to ask questions, embrace feedback, and continuously improve.

The apprenticeship also taught me the value of hard work and resilience. Juggling responsibilities while learning new skills demanded dedication, but it was incredibly rewarding to see my contributions recognized and impactful. It wasn't just about acquiring a skillset—it was about building confidence in my ability to contribute meaningfully to my field.

Moreover, this experience opened doors to networking opportunities and future career prospects. It allowed me to prove myself in a professional setting, ultimately leading to a full-time role in the industry. Beyond the career benefits, my apprenticeship instilled a deep sense of pride and accomplishment.

In hindsight, my apprenticeship was not just a step forward; it was a launchpad. It gave me direction, purpose, and the tools to thrive in my career. I am deeply grateful for the experience.

Tyler Scott, Architectural Assistant, CMS Architects

Level 7 apprenticeships represent the important bridging between the world of academia and the world of professional practice. What I have taken personally, is a way of thinking along with skills and knowledge that I could not have been exposed to in any setting other than that of Middlesex University, it has boosted my career growth.

During class discussions, I have given my unique perspective and heard from others who I would not have otherwise met. The external perspective and professional experiences of the course leader and lecturers have been invaluable for challenging thinking and generating discussions. The skills and knowledge have been instantly applicable in my professional practice, benefiting the ongoing improvement of the business.

Dan Barchus, Senior SHW Advisor, EKFB

The L7 apprenticeship has positively impacted my Architecture career. The return to university was unfeasible due to financial concerns and this route gave me the option to further my studies whilst earning a living. Another crucial benefit of the apprenticeship is that architects will become accredited and immediately be able to provide adequate work in the field due to the practical experience received.

Jacob Frost, Harris McCormack Architects

As a 25-year-old who just moved to Bristol last year, I have been able to support myself through working in the city but since starting an apprenticeship this September, I have also been able to make a load of new friends that help with my studies and social life. The work / study balance is not to go unmentioned. Being able to study whilst continuing to progress at work has brought a vast amount of benefit to my career and life.

George Beer, Architectural Assistant, HTA Design LLP

This apprenticeship has offered me an invaluable opportunity to progress my skills and work towards becoming fully qualified while still learning and engaging with real-life practice scenarios. The funding provided for this programme has significantly swayed my decision to continue within the industry and allow me the growth required to become competent in the profession. This route to qualification has been revolutionary in the industry with many employers and employees seeking this form of education rather than other routes and removing it would significantly impact the progress of the profession.

Sofia Coviello, Architectural Assistant, IMA Architects

As a senior engineer, I recognised that technical expertise alone was no longer enough to drive progress within my team and the wider organisation. I sought an opportunity to enhance my leadership and business management skills, and the Level 7 Apprenticeship program has been instrumental in that journey. This apprenticeship offered me a structured pathway to develop essential skills in strategic thinking, financial management, and team leadership, which are critical for effectively managing projects and aligning engineering objectives with business goals. The real-world focus of the apprenticeship has allowed me to apply what I've learned immediately in my role, improving decision-making and enhancing the performance of my team. I've become more confident in driving change, managing cross-functional teams, and communicating technical information to non-technical stakeholders. Additionally, the networking and collaboration with peers from diverse industries have provided invaluable insights into best practices and emerging trends in leadership.

In my organisation, investing in Level 7 Apprenticeships has led to stronger, more well-rounded leaders who are better equipped to navigate complex challenges and drive business growth. It has helped bridge the gap between engineering expertise and business acumen, making my leadership more effective and forward-thinking.

Michael Nash, Principal Systems Engineer, Leonardo UK

The L7 apprenticeship has been so crucial in training up the next generation of skilled, well-rounded and experienced people - especially for planning, this is more important than ever as there are huge shortages in staffing across the planning sector. And I'm sure this is the case across the board. It also gives less privileged people the opportunity to complete higher level study.

Hanna Lowson, Consultant Planner, LUC

Without the Level 6 and 7 Architect Degree Apprenticeships, I would not have been able to train to be an Architect given the huge financial costs involved with studying on a traditional basis.

Aimie Cheetham, Architect Apprentice, Lyons Sleeman Hoare Architects

Without the apprenticeship scheme, it would not have been possible for me to continue my career in Architecture. The cost or loan structure are unaffordable and my qualifications would have stopped at after my Bachelor's Degree.

There are many other people in the same situation as me who have benefitted from this, and it seems uncharacteristic of a Labour Government to remove this up-skilling and option to the people who need it the most.

Thomas Crudgington, Architectural Assistant, Method Studio Architecture

I am currently in my working year out between RIBA part 1 and part 2 and the only viable option is the apprenticeship route. This is partly due to the financial burden of going back to university full time, which is the main reason the RIBA and ARB have worked so hard to establish the apprenticeship scheme in order to make architectural education more accessible to all. Having the option of the apprenticeship route allows you to have continuity within the new career you are trying to establish. Being able to apply the theory to practise in real time is invaluable and lets you look at the architectural world with such a wide lens, forming your own opinions based on research and experience.

The education system is divorced from the reality of work, especially within architecture, and the apprenticeship scheme is slowly but surely sewing these together.

Sian Nield, Architectural Assistant, Nick Carroll Architects

They provide greater flexibility for learning, making qualifications more accessible to a greater number of people with broader circumstances

Alice Woodward, Architectural Designer, Noma

I have seen first-hand the importance of the Level 7 apprenticeship. It has provided me the opportunity to up-skill and earn an income in a way that would not have been possible through a traditional university master's route. I recommend this route to others regularly and am

disappointed to learn that the Chancellor is considering defunding the programmes, a decision that would be directly impacting hard-working young people and taking away their chance at building themselves a brighter future at a time when their futures are already so daunting.

Lauren Swift, Architectural Apprentice, Strom Architects

As a young person, I found it hard to pivot my career once I had graduated and realised I didn't want to pursue my chosen discipline. I think it's underestimated how many young people are in the same position wanting to change the career they selected when they were 18.

An apprenticeship allowed me to explore my options and not be stuck doing something I did not want to do. I am three months into my apprenticeship and it's the first time I have felt joy about the work I am doing and look forward to going to work and school.

My apprenticeship helped me discover a whole new discipline I didn't know existed but that I am better suited to and strongly passionate about.

There is already so much support for school leavers, but not enough for graduates and those who want to change their careers or further their learning in a practical manner.

Defunding Level 7 apprenticeships is a massive blow to graduates already suffering under a dead job market and stifles growth and progression overall as a society.

Anonymous, Chartered Town Planner Apprentice, Planning Inspectorate

It has allowed me to continue to progress my career as I am able to access the part 2/3 required to become a qualified architect while I continue to work, gaining valuable experience and a wage which I need to afford the cost of living.

Michaela Hickery, Architectural Assistant, Ridge and Partners Ltd

This apprenticeship scheme has allowed me to continue my learning and develop my career rather than attending full time university. I was not in a financial or mental place to attend full time through no fault of my own. This scheme has allowed me to continue my profession alongside life especially on such a long education path.

Rebecca Jarvis, Architectural Assistant Part II, RPS Limited

The Level 7 apprenticeship allows me to gain further education and required qualifications towards becoming an architect while still providing valued contributions at work. The apprenticeship also provides opportunities to gain vital on the job experience and skills that are crucial to my professional development which is not possible through a full-time university route. Furthermore, the apprenticeship provides a significantly more financially viable option to achieve the legally required qualification to practise as a chartered architect than full-time university.

David Hilditch, Level 7 Architectural Apprentice, Scott Brownrigg

The L7 apprenticeship enables access to an ever-increasing demographic of people who need experience, but can't afford to do two more years of full time university without full time employment, and might not have the same opportunities as other students in the industry. We need to provide more access to industries like architecture, which has high costs in terms of both equipment, and length of study. Factors like these are what have made it a fairly difficult industry to access and the apprenticeship helps to alleviate these.

Dorrell Gayle-Menzie, Level 7 Architectural Apprentice, Scott Brownrigg

As a mature student, I found it very difficult if not impossible to take the time and financial commitment to retrain in Architecture, often a 7+ year process with a minimum of £65k fees. I have successfully qualified at level 6 but would be completely unable to fully qualify as an Architect without funded access to the level 7 post-graduate degree course. Many of my classmates on the apprenticeship route have been from diverse and sometimes underprivileged backgrounds and all of them have provided fantastic insight and a great diversity of ideas - to lose this from the profession or force these students into tens of thousands of pounds worth of debt seems utterly shameful.

Steve Jell, Architectural Assistant, Scott Brownrigg

As a current L7 architectural apprentice I would be incredibly disappointed to see the funding for this scheme withdrawn. I take huge value from being able to learn alongside my work and feel this is vital in bridging the gap between theory and practice, particularly important in our push to decarbonise construction. I see no other opportunity for the groundbreaking thinking and research of universities to be fed so quickly and effectively into industry with the chance to work holistically to solve the real world problems that often impede the delivery of these kind of things. The L7 apprenticeship funding offers an imperative opportunity for those from less wealthy backgrounds to train for high-skill jobs, without having to take extended periods away from work.
Tom Perring, Architectural Assistant, Spratley & Partners

The Architecture master's level 7 apprenticeship is allowing me to undertake my postgraduate study to become an architect. Without it I would not be able to fund and do this important degree. I am also learning so much more on the job alongside university, and becoming a crucial part of my working team, which seems better to me than the regular architecture master's degree.
Olivia Higson, Architectural Assistant, Spratley and Partners

The apprenticeship provided a route accessible for me and my life circumstances when full time education did not - by being able to remain in employment and learning on the job. Learning on the job has by far greater benefits in the learning of the trade and learning to face and overcome real situations or problems.
Tristan Beard, Architectural Assistant, StudioHIVE Architects

It is the only opportunity I have to sustain a career that leads to an architectural qualification whilst being able to continue to pay for a mortgage.
Ryan James Walker, Architectural Assistant, UMC Architects

The Level 7 Architectural Apprenticeship has allowed me to continue my career development whilst being able to live independently. It combines the benefits that come with university education, additional qualifications and learning from practice with real world projects. This will allow me to become a more knowledgeable individual that would not have been possible without the apprenticeship.
Martin Bignell, Architectural Apprentice, BoonBrown

I am writing to express my concern regarding the defunding of the Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship programme, which has been an invaluable pathway for aspiring professionals like me. This programme is not just an educational initiative; it is a lifeline for individuals from less privileged backgrounds, providing opportunities that would otherwise remain out of reach.

Unlike traditional academic routes that often require significant financial investment and extended periods without income, this programme offers a practical solution for those who might otherwise be unable to pursue their aspirations.

In my case, the Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship was my only viable path to becoming a qualified architect. Without this programme, the financial barriers to pursuing a career in architecture—due to the cost of tuition and the necessity of full-time study—would make this dream unattainable. It is sad to think that others may not have this opportunity.

As I work for a smaller firm in Devon, if the apprenticeship programme is removed, small practices will struggle to recruit and train future architects, leaving large firms to dominate the sector. This will inevitably create a divide, consolidating opportunities and resources within larger practices while smaller ones are left behind.

Defunding this programme would disproportionately impact individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, further entrenching inequality in industries that desperately need diversity and fresh perspectives. It would also hinder the growth of a skilled workforce capable of meeting the demands of our evolving economy.

I urge decision-makers to consider the profound social and economic consequences of defunding the Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship programme. By continuing to support this initiative, you are not only investing in individuals like me but also in the future of industries that rely on innovative and skilled professionals.

Helena Louise Jenkinson, Architectural Assistant, Woodward Smith Chartered Architects,

Because it's a great mixture of giving experience to architecture students which is currently missing and teaching architecture. It also allows people from poorer backgrounds to avoid getting into major debt while contributing to the industry.

Stanislav Brezden, Architectural assistant, WWA Studios

Without the Level 7 degree apprenticeship programme I would have been unable to continue progressing in my career as an architect as I would be unable to self-fund a full or part time master's degree leaving me stuck as a part I assistant with very limited opportunities for work and progression. Defunding apprenticeships does nothing but put barriers in the way of accessing education and opportunities.

Anonymous

I am currently enrolled on a DA7 apprenticeship Architectural Degree course and the proposal to overhaul funding will likely compromise my chance of progressing within this career. I have been fortunate enough to receive this opportunity from my employer to help me through the course, both in terms of their financial support but their educational training. However, I believe that the reform will likely put a heavy burden on my employer, economically and situationally. The overhaul to me, means the withdrawal of funding and the incentivised support that the government has on its currently enrolled academics and businesses.

Anonymous

The level 7 apprenticeship is providing me with the academic grounding and the necessary knowledge paired with work experience to develop me into a fully-fledged planner. Without the level 7 apprenticeship, my employer may have been unlikely to fund the course, and therefore my development would be limited.

There is a recognised shortage in skilled planning officers, which has a knock-on effect by putting the brakes on development which provides the country with economic, social and environmental benefits.

Therefore, funding of the apprenticeship is surely beneficial to the individual, employer, and the country itself in having a highly skilled workforce. With your manifesto focusing on growth, it would surely be illogical to cut such funding?

Anonymous

I am one and it would not have been possible for me to qualify as an architect financially without the support. Also working in architecture is worlds apart from studying hence this route is way more beneficial and a full-time master's is a huge waste of time.

Anonymous

The scheme's ability to provide routes for students such as myself to pursue higher degrees and career progression cannot be undermined. Specifically in Architecture, when master's degrees and financing is particularly challenging, the Apprenticeship offers an invaluable opportunity for students to progress towards the accreditation whilst reducing financial burdens. A large selling point for students to progress within Architecture through an Apprenticeship route is the funding arrangement. This would be a substantial loss to the programme and students should Level 7 Apprenticeships be de-funded.

Anonymous

Without embarking on my level 7 degree apprenticeship, I would not be able to utilise my theoretical knowledge from my university studies within my workplace. The combination of off and on the job training has helped me to develop my skills as a planner whilst understanding the theory and policy behind it. The master's degree provides me with the most up to date knowledge and information on the planning system and I can feed this back into the workplace allowing the whole company to benefit from me as an apprentice.

It has also provided me an opportunity to attend university which would not have been possible if this was self-funded and so apprenticeship's open the opportunity of education wider than self-funded courses and so funding is vital in educating the next generation of apprentices.

Anonymous

As a level 7 Architectural Apprentice, training to be an Architect, the apprenticeship programme engages me to blend my academic research with practical on-the-job training to learn a holistic learning experience. This prepares me to continue researching and learning to deliver a high standard of design work, which encourages me to understand to scrutinise and to understand completely the work I am producing in the construction industry.

If I did not choose this pathway and went down the 'traditional route' of doing part 1, part 2, part 3 in full time education it would not have prepared me enough to tackle design work to comply with regulations, policies, and legislations, to ensure design quality and crucially building safety.

The apprenticeship programme ensures a high calibre of learning and understanding which the apprentices apply during and after the programme, driving a higher standard in the work force specifically the construction industry.

Anonymous

As I am progressing through my career, it has become evident that the vital skills I learn as part of my level 7 apprenticeship will help unlock new opportunities and career progression.

Anonymous

I couldn't have afforded to complete my architectural education without the apprenticeship. I am also convinced that my level of competence as a newly qualified architect is far superior to this of many who studies part II full-time thanks to the amount of in-practice experience I have had.

A big problem of the architectural education, apart from the cost and length of it, is how detached the work done at university is from work in practice and the apprenticeship is an amazing way to bridge that gap and make architecture a field available to all to study and practice in.

The industry is known to lack diversity and offering heavily subsidised apprenticeships to all makes it

Anonymous

If I was not doing the Level 7 Apprenticeship, I would not be pursuing a career in architecture. It is that simple and the same for MANY others. This course is one of, if not the only, thing available that makes this industry accessible to anyone passionate about it - things like economic, class and ethnic background that have been confirmed to make this industry inaccessible are no longer roadblocks to pursuing architecture.

A shocking number of people stop pursuing architecture after undergraduate, not because they're not passionate, talented or hardworking, but simply because this architecture is almost impossible to access as someone from an underrepresented group with no personal connections in the industry. In terms of the quality of the outcomes, apprentices qualify as more confident, and in many cases, more competent architects because of how much time is spent in practice learning on the job and the way academic learning is done in parallel. It would be to the detriment of the profession to defund this course.

Anonymous

Simply put, as an older apprentice, without it I'm afraid I would not have become an architect. It was only viable option to me and so I am grateful that it was option. It is also more grounded in the real world, you keep yourself in the industry whilst actively applying what you've learnt in the apprenticeship, far superior to the pie in the sky university experience.

Anonymous

I believe that it provided an incentive for my employment in 2021 when the industry was hardly recruiting. My own resources were depleted after a 2-year gap of unemployment and living in poor conditions -were it not for this opportunity I would be forced to leave the UK and with it my ability to repay any student loans I have. Instead, I can say that three years on I am prospering in a great environment with a set of highly developed skills that will serve me throughout my tax-paying life in the UK.

Anonymous

Level 7 is very important for my career development and moving up the ladder in my career. Furthermore, I will be the first person in my family to have reached level 7 and this means a lot to me and my family. Without the government initiative to offer financial support, I would not have been able to meet the financial demands of undertaking a level 7 qualification.

Anonymous

As a Level 6 apprentice, progressing to a Level 7 apprenticeship is an important for me to achieve my full qualification. The Level 7 is vital for reaching my long-term career goals and maximise my potential as a professional. I have already undertaken the Level 6 Architectural Apprentice Route so would like to continue this route for my next stage. I feel it is crucial to have alternate routes into architecture due to the length of the course. This helps provide some flexibility in such a big commitment to become fully qualified.

Anonymous

Local government

Level 7 apprenticeships are hugely valuable in enabling those who may not otherwise be able to afford a Masters degree to have the opportunity to progress and develop crucial workplace skills, especially in planning where there is a huge lack of senior level planners.

Sophie Murray, Apprentice Planning Officer, Somerset Council

Having only been enrolled onto this flagship course since its commencement 6 months ago, my entire career direction and associated prospects look markedly different prior to enrolment. If the government is serious about reaching net zero and ensuring our economy can grow sustainably, for the benefit of the many and not the few, supporting this Sustainability apprenticeship should be seen as a vehicle to achieving those aims.

Osama El-Amin, Wormwood Scrubs Charitable Trust Manager, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham

These apprenticeships are so important because they develop key leadership skills in organisations and provide suitable development pathways across all sectors, boosting diversity and learning equity across all protected characteristics.

Daniel DeBuc, Talent Manager, London Borough of Havering

For town planners, there is a significant risk that leaders will be deemed too highly qualified to be invested in without the apprentice levy. This means that they will be less qualified at business management. Ultimately these qualifications give time out for formal training and develop future leaders within local government. For this reason, the level 7 apprenticeship is highly valuable and should be continued.

Sarah Ashton, Head of Planning, Braintree District Council

I have just come to my EPA point of my Level 7 apprenticeship and this has provided me with a wealth of learning, knowledge and support that I would otherwise not have received.

These are important to the growth of services and development of managers and without government funding local authorities are unable to support their workforce to complete this.

Samantha Jeffery, Care Leaver Service Manager, Hertfordshire County Council

The Level 7 enables the completion of professional qualifications for certain occupations, furthermore it allows professional development. As a manager I am undertaking the Level 7 Senior Leader to further develop my career. I would not be able to fund this myself and it is unlikely that my organisation would have the money to pay for this qualification.

I am a great believer in being a lifelong learner and am the oldest apprentice in our organisation as I am 62 (nearly 63).

Jan Elkin, Organisational Development Lead and Apprenticeship Manager, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils

I am a current level 7 apprentice (so my funding is not at risk) but believe that this move will have a substantially detrimental effect on the development of high level/strategic thinking local government officers (which I hope we can agree is probably a bad idea).

Robin Ray, Assistant Director, St Albans City and District Council

Level 7 apprenticeship programmes play a crucial role in driving social mobility, addressing skills gaps and creating opportunities both for young people starting off in their careers and more mature staff members who have not had opportunities previously.

These apprenticeships provide a pathway for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve higher qualifications and not incur student debt. Combining practical experience with academic learning apprenticeships make executive level roles accessible to those who may not have had the means to obtain traditional university education. Apprenticeships break down barriers, offer diverse candidates the chance to excel in industries where they are underrepresented which not only benefits them but enriches the workplace with diverse perspectives. Apprenticeships provide mature staff members the opportunity to upskill and transition into new roles enhancing their careers and economic stability.

Apprenticeship programmes are key to addressing critical skills gaps across industries and helps us and other organisations to meet business needs. Apprentices develop the expertise required to drive innovation and growth. As a local authority apprenticeships help us to cultivate knowledge and skills necessary for sustainable development.

Removing Level 7 apprenticeships would undermine these benefits and disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups and increase further skills shortages. Maintaining and expanding these apprenticeships is key to individuals and the economy, fostering a more equitable and skilled workforce for the future.

Gemma Lenton, Workforce Development Specialist, Wokingham Borough Council (South East Employer Apprenticeship Ambassador)

My employer would not be able to fund the level 7 qualification outside of the apprenticeship scheme. Due to the nature of my role, it is not always common that younger workers would undertake the level 7 via their employer and is a qualification that comes with a higher level of skills and experience.

Anonymous

The level 7 Senior Leader apprenticeship helped me consolidate my learning using real life situations faced in a work environment by a Senior Leader. I gained an enormous amount of confidence to step up and take on duties that would lead to a promotion opportunity and share the learning to build capacity within my team. The process improved my own performance and that of my team. It gave me a much higher level of critical thinking than when I started the course leading to better outcomes for the organisation.

Anonymous

Level 7 apprenticeships help us to showcase that we care about the level of qualifications in our sectors, for example we currently upskill staff on the level 7 Town Planner apprenticeship and this is a great development opportunity for both staff and business.

Anonymous (Current and former apprentice)

Education

I am currently on an MBA apprenticeship in Senior Leadership at Middlesex University and am finding this programme invaluable in terms of my career development.

Nick Kassouf, Technical Tutor in Biomedical Science, Middlesex University

I am a current Level 7 Apprentice at the University of Warwick. Without this programme, I would definitely not have had the opportunity to undertake this level of professional and skills development. I have 25 years of experience in various industries and a Bachelor's degree, but with three children and the caring commitments that go with that, I have had to work part-time for most of the past 15 years.

Having reached the stage where I can refocus on my career somewhat, but without the time or financial resources to self-fund this kind of learning, this apprenticeship opening was a huge opportunity for me which I would not have otherwise had access to. I am learning so much from both the academic and professional sides of the apprenticeship and have found avenues already in the first 6 months to incorporate this knowledge into new developments for my projects to support my employer's strategy and overall productivity and success.

I really hope that this apprenticeship can still be offered in the future to help others like me to develop their skills and make greater contributions to their organisations and their sectors in UK business.

Emma Barker, Journal and Conferences Manager, University of Warwick

This has allowed me to develop my leadership skills, drive my curiosity and add value to my job almost immediately. I intend to progress onto an MBA which is not something that I can afford to do without L7 funding help. The investment in the Levy means my current employer benefits from Day 1.

David Bishton, Transformation Manager, University of Warwick

I am currently working through my EPA. The programme has really allowed me to develop and grow as a leader. I've learned new approaches and theories to apply to real world scenarios within my day-to-day work as part of the course. My professional growth and the impact of the programme has been observed and commended by my line manager and others. It has been hugely beneficial and I would recommend it to any aspiring or developing senior leader.

Daniel Henton, TEL Systems Manager, University of Sunderland

Level 7 apprenticeships have been instrumental both to my personal professional development and to the strategic objectives of the University of West London (UWL). These apprenticeships represent a significant commitment to lifelong learning and align perfectly with our organizational goals of continuous improvement and excellence in education.

As a Senior International Student Experience Officer, the Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship has provided me with advanced leadership skills and a deeper understanding of organisational management within the higher education sector. This program has not only equipped me with the practical tools needed to navigate complex challenges and enhance our service delivery but has also fostered a culture of innovation and excellence within our teams.

Personally, the apprenticeship has been transformative, enhancing my capabilities in leadership and strategic planning and preparing me for future challenges and opportunities in higher education management. It has solidified my commitment to driving excellence at UWL and inspired me to pursue further academic achievements, such as a PhD, to continue enhancing our educational offerings.

Level 7 apprenticeships are a cornerstone of professional development in any sector, providing the skills, knowledge, and experience necessary to lead and innovate in a competitive landscape.

Andreea Coroama, Senior International Student Experience Officer, University of West London

As a former student of the Level 7 apprenticeship, a workplace mentor to a current student, and a colleague to several others who have undertaken Level 7 programmes, I can attest to the significant positive impact these opportunities have. They benefit not only the individuals involved—many of whom may not have otherwise had the chance to pursue advanced education—but also the delivery organisations and public sector workplaces that gain from enhanced skills and knowledge. Removing this opportunity would undermine the progress made in providing accessible learning to those who might not be able to afford a university degree, setting back efforts to promote equitable professional development.

Andy Mulligan, Security Manager, University of Sunderland

Without the level 7 apprenticeship I would not be in the job role I am now, the funding of providing people at later life with invaluable work experience whilst giving the chance to obtain a

qualification in an industry that is already struggling and severely understaffed is completely invaluable. Keep people aspiring and learning in later years of life.

Laura Smith, Senior Planning Officer, University of the West of England

As someone nearing the completion of a Level 7 apprenticeship in Senior Leadership, I can confidently say this opportunity has been life changing. Coming from a deprived background, university was never an option for me. The cost, coupled with the need to support my family, made the traditional academic route unattainable.

The apprenticeship pathway opened doors I never imagined possible. It allowed me to balance full-time work, the responsibilities of being a mum, and professional development. This balance was crucial—not just for me, but for my family. It's given me the tools to excel in my career while setting an example for my children about the power of perseverance and lifelong learning.

Eliminating Level 7 apprenticeships would be devastating for individuals like me who rely on this flexible, accessible pathway to achieve their potential. These programs provide a bridge to leadership and professional success for those who might otherwise be overlooked by traditional education systems. They empower people to upskill without sacrificing their livelihoods or personal responsibilities.

Losing this vital option risks closing the door on countless aspiring professionals who are eager to contribute to their industries and communities. For me, this apprenticeship has been more than an academic qualification—it's been the catalyst for a brighter future, for myself and my family.

We must preserve this opportunity for others who share my story and my ambitions.

Emma Colbeck, Accommodation Services Manager, University of Sunderland

Level 7 apprenticeships are key to helping people who have not had the opportunities or chances to this level of training. I have never taken an undergraduate degree and this always put me off looking at Level 7 master's courses. My work experience is strong but academically I had not had the chances. The apprenticeship levy and specifically the L7 degree apprenticeship helped me achieve this. To be clear I would never have had this opportunity without the L7 degree apprenticeship.

Andrew Scott, Head of User Services, Durham University

The level 7 apprenticeship has completely changed the way I view my role, giving me opportunities to understand the strategic view of the organisation more, leading to strong experience and knowledge to evolve my career.

Anonymous

I have been lucky enough to have benefited from a Level 7 apprenticeship. This has had a significant impact on myself, my organisation and the teams I work with. The apprenticeship has developed my leadership, people and change management skills. Without the funding offered through the apprenticeship levy, I am sure my organisation (a public sector organisation) would not have been able to fund this significant learning opportunity.

Anonymous

In my organisation, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact that level 7 apprenticeships have had on both individuals and the university as a whole. These advanced apprenticeships not only foster a culture of lifelong learning, but also equip our colleagues with critical skills and behaviours that allow them to develop their strategic abilities.

Level 7 apprenticeships make up a key component of our apprenticeship levy spend, with 22% of our current apprentices accessing a standard at this level. Abandoning this level of apprenticeship would mean that we would be unable to spend a levy that is already difficult for us to capitalise on effectively. In addition, many mid to senior level staff would be unable to access development opportunities and would negatively impact our talent retention. Level 7 apprenticeships have vastly increased apprenticeship exposure across the university, as senior level staff have taken up this opportunity and have been proud to advertise this to their directorates.

Higher education is currently navigating extreme financial challenges, resulting in restructures and redundancies nationwide. Removing level 7 apprenticeships would be another blow to an already struggling sector, that will result in decreased talent retention, fewer development opportunities and an erosion of strategic-level thinking across senior leadership.

Anonymous

Within my organisation, the level 7 apprenticeship is giving long-standing employees, who have been responsible for the development of more junior members of their team, a valuable opportunity to focus on their own professional development.

Anonymous

The Level 7 apprenticeship programme has had a significant impact on my skill as I have seen my confidence improve since I started the programme. The interactions in the class with likeminded professionals have provoked excellent cross pollination of innovative ideas. My employer has and is benefiting immensely from my enhanced skills, for example I have carried out significant high-profile investigations which could have cost my employer substantial fee to commission external investigators - thanks to my renewed skill in this area.

Anonymous

Additional sectors

The level 7 apprenticeships are vital to change management and give you the tools to influence organisations to work safely and effectively whilst boosting productivity. Having this level 7 in my arsenal will encourage me to enrol onto a PHD giving me that competitive edge influencing others to enrol onto future apprenticeships.

Daniel Richardson, Head of Health & Safety, Bidvest Noonan

Level 7 apprenticeships are vital to BSI as they enable the organisation to develop high-level expertise and leadership capabilities among employees while aligning with strategic goals. These advanced programmes offer industry-relevant skills and knowledge, fostering innovation, driving performance, and ensuring BSI remains competitive in a rapidly evolving global market. By investing in Level 7 apprenticeships, BSI not only supports the professional growth of its workforce but also reinforces its commitment to excellence and continuous improvement, creating a sustainable pipeline of future leaders and experts.

Leah Fisher, People Development Advisor, BSI

The Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours I am learning will help bridge the skills gap for Green Skills, and sustainability in general. I feel very passionate about the subject I am studying, and know that the outcome will enable me to help support public sector organisations with Net Zero and Sustainability.

Nathan Teed, Business Development Manager, Capita

I have found that studying while working and being able to network with others I'd never normally work with, has been invaluable. Learning on the job has meant I have been able to apply it effectively on a daily basis, and have not had to compromise on the work I do in my main job role and in my apprenticeship - it allows for time management, a work/life balance, and real life learning with people that are also doing apprenticeships. Many of the modules and questions can be related to my job and I have been able to understand concepts with ease due to applying this regularly.

Lauren Mayhew, Member Services Manager, Copart UK Limited

The Level 7 Senior Leadership apprenticeship has been nothing short of transformative for my professional development and leadership capabilities. Pursuing this postgraduate diploma has opened my eyes to new perspectives and approaches that I never considered before, fundamentally changing how I operate in my role.

The immediate applicability of the programme's content has been particularly impressive. Rather than simply learning theoretical concepts, I've been able to implement new strategies and techniques directly into my daily work routine, seeing tangible results and improvements almost

immediately. The program's structure allows me to learn and apply simultaneously, creating a powerful feedback loop that reinforces my learning and drives real organisational impact. What sets this apprenticeship apart is its comprehensive approach to senior leadership development. Each module builds upon the last, creating a holistic understanding of what it means to be an effective leader in today's complex business environment. The practical nature of the coursework means that every lesson learned becomes an opportunity for immediate workplace application and experimentation.

I'm already witnessing significant returns on this investment in my professional development. My decision-making has become more strategic, my team management more nuanced, and my overall approach to leadership more confident and informed. This apprenticeship isn't just about earning a qualification – it's about developing practical, applicable skills that create real value for both myself and my organisation.

Justine King, Head of Strategic Programmes, Evoke plc

This has given me the opportunity to progress within my organisation faster than it would usually take me because of the invaluable skills the apprenticeship has taught me.

Nimrah Bowdler, Asset manager, Heathrow Airport

I undertook the Level 7 apprenticeship to build on my practical knowledge in a leadership role and to learn more about strategic leadership. The course has given me more confidence in myself, in my role and my future. Being able to still work at the level I am and study at the same time allows me to put the knowledge I gain into immediate use.

Sarah Forster-Burke, Operations Manager, ScS

As a mature student, who left school after GCSEs, the level 7 apprenticeship is the only way I would ever be able to continue my lifelong learning journey.

Without this opportunity I would not be able to develop to this level while learning new skills and enhancing my value to my employer, society and myself.

Clare Wincza, Regional Health, Safety and Risk Manager, Sodexo

The Level 7 apprenticeship is vital to my career development and future prospects. It offers a unique blend of advanced education and practical experience, allowing me to gain specialized skills that are essential in today's competitive job market.

If the government defunds this apprenticeship, it would severely limit opportunities for aspiring professionals like me who seek to advance their careers without incurring significant debt. This program not only prepares me for leadership roles but also fosters essential skills that employers value, such as critical thinking and effective communication.

Defunding Level 7 apprenticeships would undermine the commitment to workforce development and reduce access to high-quality training. It's crucial for the government to support this pathway, as it plays an integral role in building a skilled workforce and driving economic growth.

Lukasz Wszolek, Senior Manager Industrial Engineering, Stericycle, Inc

As a Project Manager at IBM, I've experienced firsthand the value of continuous professional development, especially in leadership. The Level 7 Senior Leader Apprenticeship from the Open University offers a unique opportunity to blend academic studies with practical application, enabling me to grow as a leader and deliver greater value to my clients. This apprenticeship goes beyond traditional learning by providing the opportunity to develop knowledge, skills, and behaviours through showcases and end-point assessments. These structured milestones challenge me to undertake experiences and reflect on capabilities I might not normally explore in my day-to-day role. This process has been instrumental in shaping my ability to think strategically, lead effectively, and inspire others, helping me grow into a more capable and confident senior leader.

Matthew Royle, Project Manager, IBM

Great to increase knowledge and business acumen and be able to share with my peers. Great chance to be open to other areas of the business and build networks.

Jennifer Metcalfe, Store Manager, Tesco

The Level 7 apprenticeship enabled me to complete my Senior Leadership MBA. This helped me to progress my career and take on a Board Level role for a Private Equity backed business. The skills I learnt on the course supported my development more than any role specific and on the job training. The people I met have become friends and we have all moved into more senior roles since completing the course.

Kate Bates, Chief People and Culture Officer, Workwell People Solutions

Allows me to progress in my career and feeling more knowledgeable and secure about my duties and challenges with my job.

Anonymous

This Level 7 apprenticeship is a valuable opportunity to develop skills without taking a career break. It enables me and my colleagues to learn while we work and apply that learning every day. Without this levy, fewer (if any) of us would get this opportunity to break through the barriers that make it difficult for working mums like me to achieve higher paying jobs.

Anonymous

The apprenticeship has provided practical and hands on knowledge which is beneficial for my role. The contents of the course has helped to bridge the gap between theory and application of important business elements.

Anonymous

I'm committed to my professional growth and development. A Level 7 apprenticeship aligns with my career goals and will enable me to contribute more effectively to the organisation. By gaining a comprehensive understanding of the broader organisational landscape, I can better position myself for future leadership roles.

Anonymous