

Enhancing Student Transitions: Strengthening Pathways into Kent and Medway NHS Careers



16th May 2025

Donna Harrison – Apprenticeship Lead (Multi-Professional) South East WTE Clinical Professions Team, NHS England

Context

A strong relationship between health and care and further education (FE) is crucial for identifying workforce supply gaps and ensuring students are supported in their career aspirations. Activities like this today are essential to understand challenges we each have but a key opportunity to support students from our local population, from diverse backgrounds and to enable pathways for students to realise their potential.

The support and recruitment and retention is key both in AHP, Nursing and Midwifery professions – funding available for L3 and L5 apprenticeships and the Nursing Associate and Learning Disability Nursing apprenticeship degrees, pharmacy, cancer and diagnostics.

National Drivers

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan was published in June 2023 (refresh is expected in 2025). It sets out how the NHS will address existing and future workforce challenges by recruiting and retaining thousands more staff over a 15-year period.

NHS 10 - year plan – need to futureproof workforce

Apprenticeships is one of the seven priority areas/workstreams.

The LTWP lays out these ambitions:

- 22% of training for clinical staff to be through apprenticeship routes by 2031/32
- 20% of nurses to qualify through the apprenticeship route (compared to current 9%)
- 5% of annual training intake for midwives to be through apprenticeship route

Apprenticeships cuts across all professions and can produce increased collaboration with FE colleges and HEIs. Widening participation agenda is a key enabler

NHS England National Team Priorities

- Working with DHSC on 10 Year Health Plan
- Pipeline of L2 & L3 learners essential for growth
- Increase uptake of T Levels
- Over £220 million combined levy annually
- Over £25 million levy transfers so far from other industries into and across health and social care
- Linking in with DfE on High Values Training (HVT) and scope of Growth & Skills Levy
- Working with Ofsted, UVAC, NMC & HCPC on HEI Quality Networks

T Levels – Lessons Learned

- Increased demand and uptake
- Providers must engage with employers before enrolment
- Myth busting around under 18's in clinical areas
- Most successful programmes are co-designed with employers
- NHS can provide industry placements much wider than just health
- Working with AOC T Level team to match make
- Progression into apprenticeships or traditional university
- Excellent resources from Gatsby & NHS Employers

Healthcare Support Worker Programme- Kent



One of the key workforce groups we are targeting is the healthcare support worker (HCSW). A crucial pipeline of entry Level 2 and Level 3 entry level roles

The region reports 2,648 full time equivalent (FTE) healthcare support worker (HCSW) vacancies in February 2025. This is an increase of 60 FTE vacancies compared to the previous month resulting in the vacancy rate rising to 11.7%. This reduction is opposite to the desire to grow the HCSW workforce in-order to be aligned with the Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP).

Kent and Medway System data still places them with highest number of HCSW vacancies at 945 FTE giving a vacancy rate of 17%. This increased from 764 FTE in M10.

NHS Apprenticeship Statistics

In 2023, **195** different apprenticeship programmes were being delivered in the NHS in clinical and non-clinical roles. In SE we had approx. **3107** apprenticeship starts in 2023/2024.

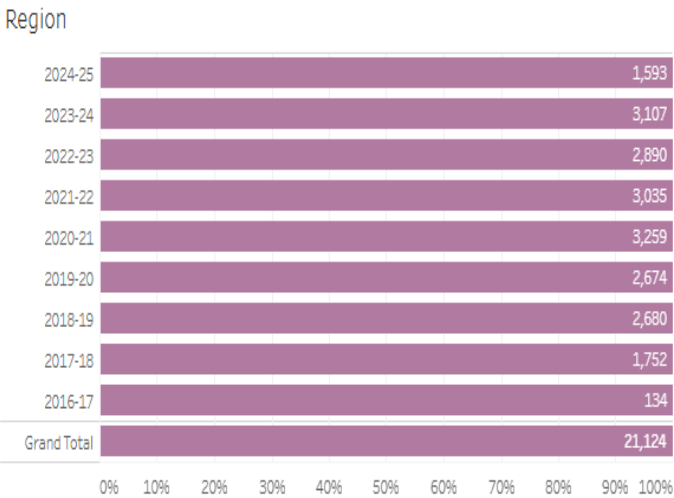
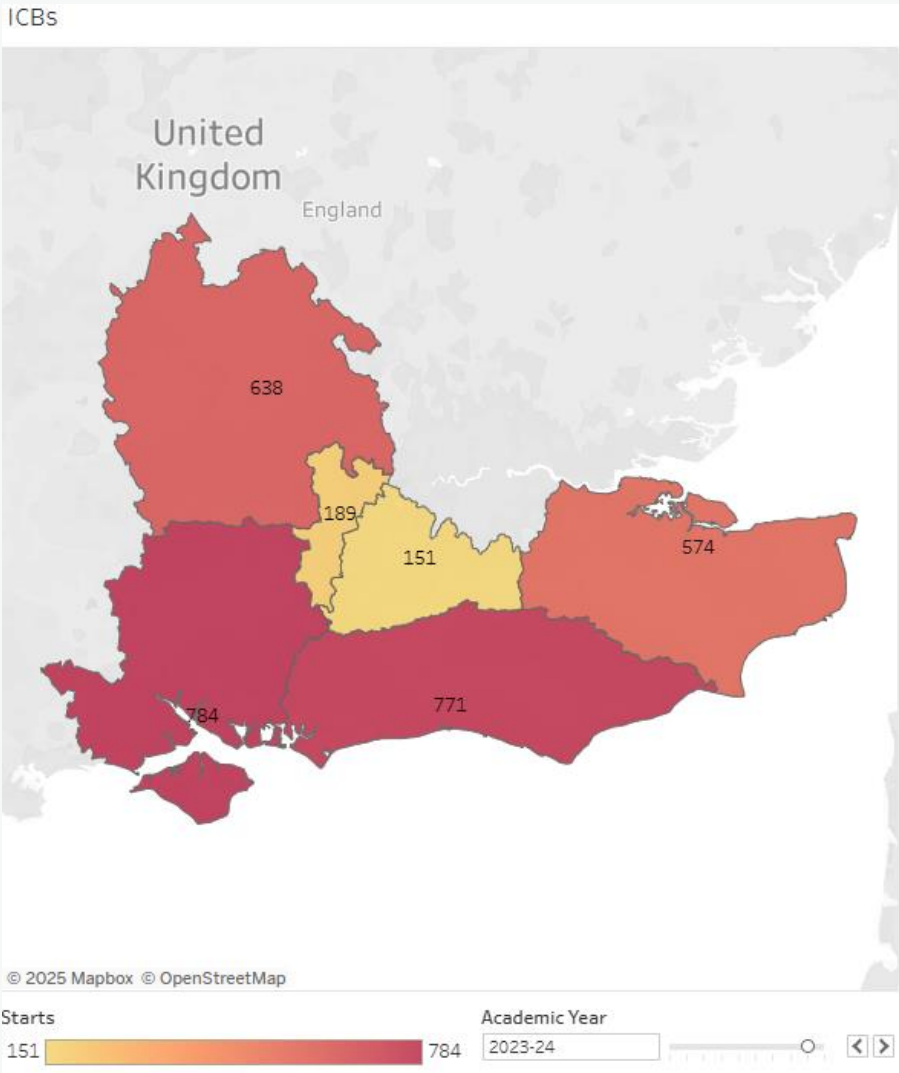
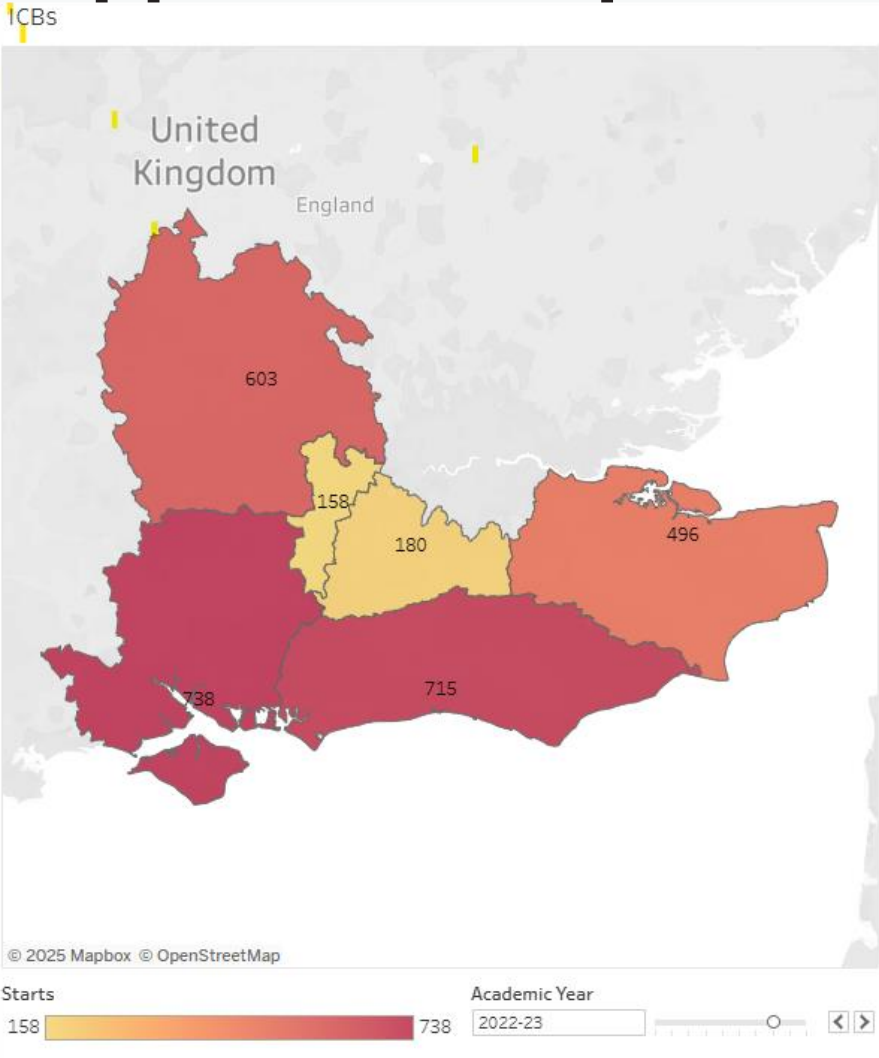
Most popular apprenticeship in the SE NHS

	Apprenticeship Profession	2022-23	2023-24
1	Registered Nurse Degree (NMC 2018)	471	504
2	Nursing Associate (NMC 2018)	311	259
3	Senior Healthcare Support Worker	221	152
4	Associate Ambulance Practitioner	160	153
5	Paramedic	140	127
6	Business Administrator	135	111
7	Team Leader or Supervisor	114	73
8	Operations or Departmental Manager	93	64
9	Pharmacy Technician (Integrated)	91	101
10	Ambulance Support Worker (Emergency, Urgent and Non-Urgent)	90	73

Most popular non-clinical apprenticeships in the SE NHS

Top	Apprenticeship Profession	2022-23	2023-24
1	Business Administrator	135	111
2	Team Leader or Supervisor	114	73
3	Operations or Departmental Manager	93	64
4	Senior Leader	79	87
5	Customer Service Practitioner	20	20
6	Data Technician	20	19
7	HR Support	15	8
8	Data Analyst	13	37
9	Customer Service Specialist	8	5
10	Accounts or Finance Assistant	4	3

Apprenticeship Starts by ICBs – 22/23 & 23/24

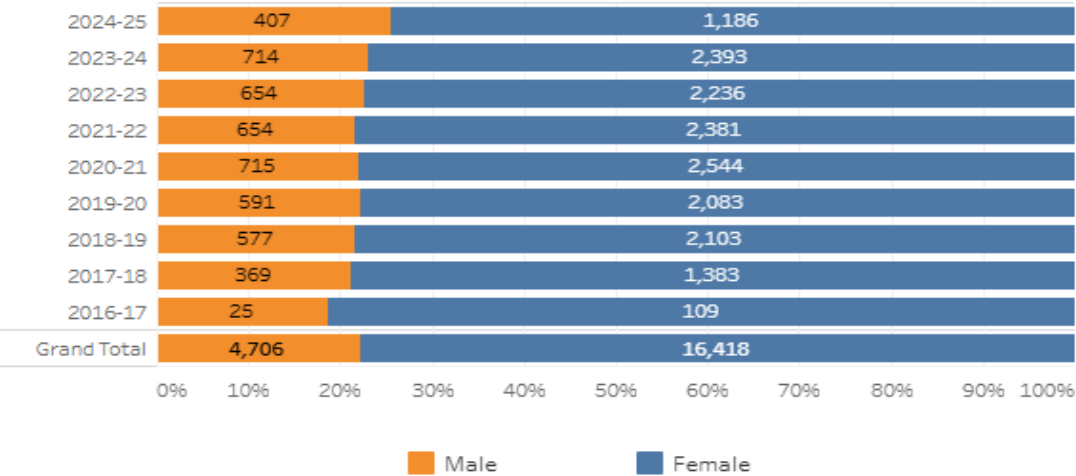


System	22/23	23/24
BOB	603	638
Frimley	180	189
HIOW	738	784
K&M	496	574
Surrey H	158	151
Sussex	715	771

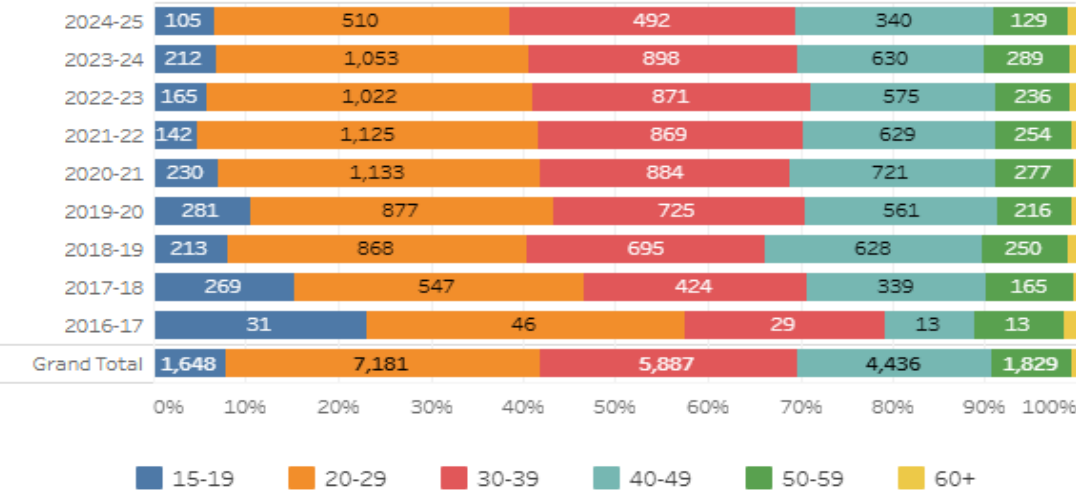
SE regional starts by Year/Diversity/Level

Starts by Academic Year - Diversity and Level

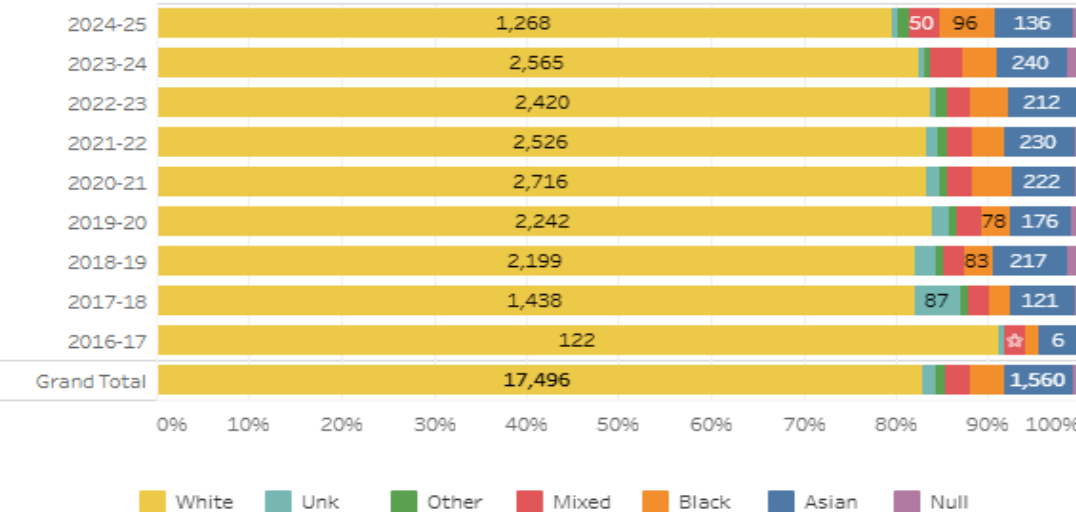
Gender



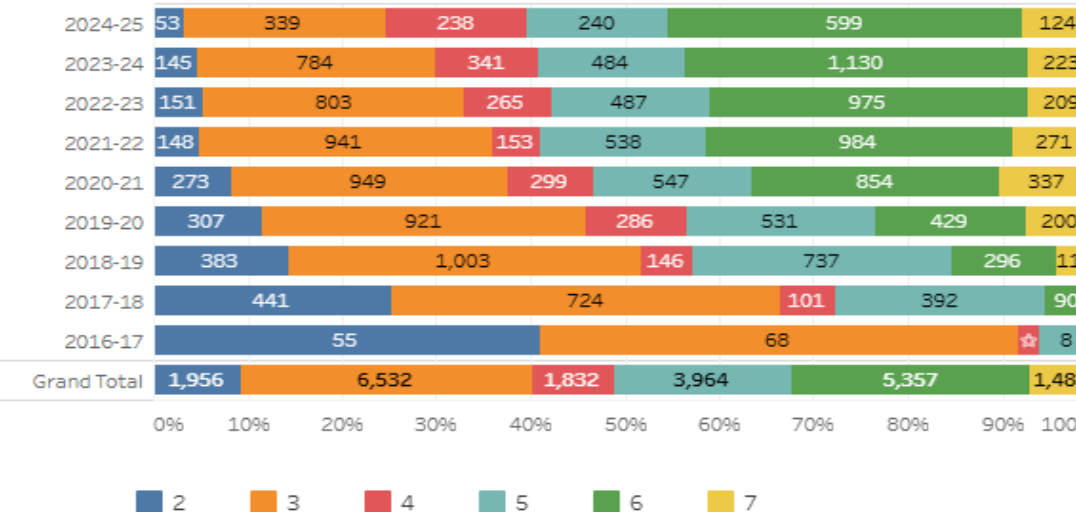
Age



Ethnicity



Level



Region

SE

ICB

(All)

Organisation

(All)

Note: Values fewer than 5 have been replaced with a '☆' symbol for anonymity in the diversity charts.

Useful Resources



- [NHS England » Creating a new 10-Year Health Plan](#)
- [T Levels in health and care | NHS Employers](#)
- [Introducing T-levels | Gatsby](#)
- [Industry placements guidance resources | Association of Colleges](#)
- [NHS England Skills for Life resources](#)

Thank You



@nhsengland



company/nhsengland



england.nhs.uk