

A photograph of a person in a blue uniform, likely a healthcare professional, seen from the back and side. They are looking towards a blurred background that appears to be a clinical or educational setting with bright lights. The overall color palette is dominated by blue and teal tones.

Education annual report
2024-25

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Executive summary

Welcome to the Education annual report of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This report sets out our current view of the ‘state of the nation’ for education and training in the 15 professions we regulate. This view is influenced by the last four years of our assessments of education providers and programmes. It also summarises areas we are currently focused on, and future internal and external drivers for our work.

Key findings

- > **Quality assurance remains central to the work of education providers** – there is a strong quality assurance mindset at education providers, and a focus on the quality of new and existing education programmes was prevalent in our assessment activities.
- > **Education providers actively seek to understand and respond to challenges** – the sector is outward facing with awareness of current challenges and initiatives, such as the pace of change with emerging technology, an aging population, and the ‘three shifts’ within the NHS 10 Year Plan for England. Challenges that directly or indirectly affect delivery of programmes were often well thought through and considered in line with our outcome-focused standards.
- > **Continued issues with financial sustainability for education providers** – at times, the challenges were acute (particularly for Higher Education Institutions), which led to some education providers considering staffing models and other areas linked to resourcing. We are working with the sector closely to understand financial challenges so that we are clear about our expectations with respect to resourcing. We require that programmes are financially sustainable. When we need to hold education providers to this expectation, we will also play a supportive role when it is in our regulatory remit to do so.
- > **Partnership working is integral to the delivery of high-quality programmes and has become more important due to shifts to alternative delivery models** – strong partnerships are integral to the sustainability and quality of programmes. Good partnership working is best underpinned by formal arrangements which clearly defined objectives, expectations, and responsibilities which are supported by well-defined engagement frameworks. We found that strong and specific partnership working between education providers and employers was not always in place for apprenticeship programmes in England, which is essential for our standards being met. Our requirements for employers to be in place at the point of approval was not always understood by education providers, and this delayed approval (and therefore start dates) for some apprenticeship programmes, while education providers worked to meet our requirements.

> **Education providers can enable workforce expansion, but not all professions need expansion at the rate being delivered**

– the pipeline of future professionals has grown. Education providers recognise the key role they play in supplying the UK workforce with highly skilled individuals who focus on the needs of service users. They have overcome challenges presented, often in innovative ways which align with our standards. Through our assessments, we were mostly confident that education providers had grown programme capacity in a reasonable way. However, our stakeholders are now telling us that there is oversupply of new graduates in some professions. This, combined with challenges of growing practice-based learning opportunities, education provider resources, and growing the pool of academic staff may mean that capacity ceilings are being reached for some professions. There is also uncertainty linked to the NHS 10 Year Plan in England, as the future workforce needed to deliver the Plan has not yet been defined.

> **Programme capacity is not always filled, particularly for smaller professions**

– there are recruitment challenges for some professions, which mean available capacity numbers are not filled for some programmes. Increasing programme capacity alone is not the only solution to developing a sustainable workforce, and bodies such as NHS England have workstreams to address workforce challenges for their defined ‘small professions’. Through this work, there is recognition that workforce development is not just about ensuring capacity numbers increase, but it is also important to work upstream with potential future professionals, to ensure HCPC professions are seen as attractive career options.

> **Challenges in delivering a steady supply of new academic staff means that recruiting replacement or additional staff is sometimes difficult**

– there are known issues with the number of academic staff available for many of the professions we regulate, which means that recruiting replacement or additional staff is sometimes difficult for education providers. Education providers recognised their own contributions to developing the pipeline of academic staff, but this is a systemwide issue, with solutions needed across the system. This area is currently being worked on by relevant organisations, such as NHS England through their Educator Workforce Strategy¹.

> **Education providers routinely use data to inform decision making**

– all education providers use data in some way to inform their operations, whether that be applicant and learner data to inform widening participation and learner support, financial data to plan, and / or other data sources and uses. However, there were problems with feedback fatigue, which impacted internal education provider feedback mechanisms (such as module feedback), and external mechanisms (such as the National Education and Training Survey).

¹ [NHS England » Educator Workforce Strategy](#)

- > **All education providers are considering the use of artificial intelligence (AI) within education and training** – we saw good engagement and understanding of our [advice about AI in education](#), with many education providers explicitly setting out how they are managing increased access to artificial intelligence for learners, particularly how they uphold academic integrity, and support staff and learners in this area.
- > **There are different approaches and challenges for Higher Education Institution (HEI) and non-HEI education providers** – we approve programmes at HEIs and many other types of organisations. Due to the commonalities and supporting structures present for HEIs, non-HEIs often needed to provide evidence at a more fundamental level to address our standards. This was the case when requesting approval for new programmes, and to show continued good performance.
- > **Most education providers have been able to align their programmes with our revised standards of proficiency (SOPs) and standards of conduct, performance and ethics at the first time of asking** – but there are some exceptions. Our revised SOPs became effective in September 2023, and our revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) became effective in September 2024. From these dates, education providers needed to deliver the revised standards to all new learners, and ensure they meet them on completing programmes. These revised standards set out what is needed for safe and effective professional practice. Most education providers assessed to date have demonstrated alignment with the revised SOPs and SCPEs, showing us how they reviewed their programmes to do this. This was pleasing to see as it provides a tangible outcome of our review exercise, linked to our public protection duties. We did however find that a small number of education providers were not able to evidence how they aligned to our revised SOPs at the first time of asking, and therefore we have undertaken closer reviews for relevant programmes to make sure they deliver our professional requirements to ensure the public is protected.
- > **Complexity in assessments is growing, and therefore good forward planning by education providers is required to ensure intended programme start dates can be met** – we found that education providers who do not run existing HCPC-approved programmes, and / or where proposals are complex to review against our standards (eg where there are multiple parties involved in delivery), required longer assessments against our standards. Education providers should be aware of this, and ensure they plan regulatory engagement in good time to meet our standards by their intended start date.

The future

We are working to support the delivery of the [NHS 10 Year Plan in England](#), where it is within our regulatory role to do so, and where we can provide useful insight for others in the sector. We are also cognisant that the Plan is England only and are working with key stakeholders in all four nations on similar initiatives.

We have started to review our [standards of education and training \(SETs\)](#) and are consulting on these at the time of writing. These standards are a crucial part of our regulatory role, as they underpin all of the work we do. We recognise that changes will impact HCPC approved education providers and programmes and are therefore working closely with the sector on developing the SETs and considering implementation timeframes and activities.

We are strengthening our engagement model with education providers and stakeholders across all nations and English regions. Building on recent progress, we have established direct contacts and preferred engagement methods, delivering clear benefits and reinforcing our role as a trusted sector partner. Our focus is on deepening these relationships to enhance quality assurance by understanding stakeholder priorities, offering support, and clarifying regulatory requirements.

We are considering how we can further reduce areas of regulatory overlap, linked to our operating model and across the education sector. Our aim is to continue to make good independent regulatory decisions, whilst considering the work of others to reduce burden for education providers



Key areas of focus

We are currently focused on the following areas, through our assessment and engagement activities.

Degree apprenticeships

As part of our continued commitment to ensuring high-quality education and training across approved programmes, we have undertaken a series of targeted developments in our approach to approving degree apprenticeship programmes. These changes strengthen the robustness of our assessments, particularly in relation to employer involvement and the readiness of education providers.

When our SETs were last reviewed in 2017, there were no degree apprenticeship programmes for the professions we regulate, and therefore these standards were not explicitly designed to accommodate this model of learning. Although the outcome-focused nature of our standards means that apprenticeship programmes can be approved by us, we have carefully considered this through the review of our SETs, to ensure that they are written in a way that is applicable to a range of models of learning. We have not finalised our revised SETs, at the time of writing, we are consulting on the revisions.

Clarifying employer involvement in degree apprenticeship programmes

We have clarified our expectations for degree apprenticeship programmes and embedded these expectations with our stakeholders, to ensure that employers are in place at the point of programme approval. Employers are fundamental to the quality and sustainability of degree apprenticeship programmes, with learners spending 80 per cent of their time in the workplace. Without confirmed employer partnerships, it is not possible to meet several of our SETs. To ensure alignment with our SETs, we require education providers to clearly define who their employers are through our approval process, and we note these employers within approval reports.

Developing our assessment mechanisms for degree apprenticeship proposals

We have developed our assessment mechanisms to ensure that we appropriately consider the context of existing provision at education providers. Our standard approval assessments include an internal 'triage' to assess alignment between proposed programmes and HCPC-approved programmes that the education provider already runs. Where there is broad alignment, we take assurance from our previous assessment against institution-level standards, along with our subsequent monitoring of the education provider.

However, as degree apprenticeship programmes differ significantly from traditional higher education provision, we now undertake a partner-led institution-level review for any education provider proposing a new degree apprenticeship programme where none are currently approved by HCPC. This ensures a comprehensive assessment of how institution-level standards support the delivery of degree apprenticeship programmes, including considerations linked to our standards about the key relationship between the education provider and employer.

Supporting safe and inclusive practice-based learning in paramedic education

We are aware of persistent concerns within some paramedic practice-based learning environments, particularly relating to culture and behaviours that undermine learner safety. These include instances of sexual misconduct, bullying, and harassment.

Our education standards require that practice-based learning is delivered in a safe and supportive environment². In line with this, we have started to seek assurance from education providers on how they are addressing these issues, through our performance review assessments.

Robust evidence highlights the scale and seriousness of the problem:

- Our fitness to practise data for the 2023–24 financial year shows that paramedics were subject to sexual misconduct concerns at a rate eight times higher than the average across all HCPC-registered professions
- The NHS Staff Survey found that 8.4% of paramedics reported being the target of unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace, compared to 3.8% across all respondents³.
- The National Education and Training Survey 2024⁴ showed that:
 - 11.2% of paramedic learners had experienced ‘unwanted, harmful and/ or inappropriate sexual behaviours by other staff during their placement or training’, and that 15.5% had witnessed this behaviour – this compares to 4.6% and 5.5% of all AHP respondents respectively.
 - 18.2% of paramedic learners felt they had been bullied or harassed by other staff, and that 25.5% had witnessed this behaviour – this compares to 11.0% and 13.5% of all AHP respondents respectively.
- Public reports have further highlighted cultural concerns:
 - The NHS England Culture Review of Ambulance Trusts⁵ (February 2024) identified deeply rooted issues of bullying and sexual harassment.
 - The National Guardian’s Office Speak Up Review of Ambulance Trusts in England⁶ (February 2023) found that staff who raise concerns may face intimidation, ostracisation or inaction.
 - The Association of Ambulance Chief Executives (May 2024) reported⁷ sexual harassment prevalence among paramedics ranging from 13.7% to 16.5%.
- Several Care Quality Commission (CQC)⁸ ratings for ambulance services in England are ‘inadequate’ or ‘requires improvement’, with reports citing cultural issues including bullying and harassment.

² SET 5.4

³ [NHS Staff Survey](#)

⁴ [National Education and Training Survey 2024](#)

⁵ [NHSE culture review of ambulance trusts](#)

⁶ [National Guardian’s Office Listening to workers: a speak up review of ambulance trusts in England](#)

⁷ [Association of Ambulance Chief Executives Reducing misogyny and improving sexual safety in the ambulance service: what we know](#)

⁸ [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#)

From the 2024-25 academic year, we started asking education providers to outline how they are responding to these challenges through our performance review requirements. We asked education providers to reflect on:

- Their response to the Office for Students (OfS) condition on harassment and sexual misconduct, published in July 2024.
- How they support learners to understand acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and what actions to take when they experience or witness unacceptable conduct.
- How they work with practice education providers to identify and address concerns within specific employers.
- How they support practice educators to recognise unacceptable behaviours and respond appropriately when they occur.

We recognise the complexity of these issues and the importance of collaborative, sustained action. We are currently considering whether there is further regulatory action required linked to education and training and will use the results from our assessments to inform our work in this area. Our aim is to ensure that all learners benefit from safe, inclusive, and supportive environments that enable them to thrive.

This is in line with broader activities we are undertaking as an organisation on this topic, including through our [Professional Liaison Service](#), and in our [sexual safety hub](#).

Artificial intelligence in education

We recognise education providers are currently grappling with the challenges and opportunities presented by developments in technology such as artificial intelligence (AI). We produced a [document](#) to help education providers consider this area, aligning with our regulatory standards and requirements, and signpost to resources produced by other organisations. We considered how education providers responded to this area through performance review assessments from the 2024-25 academic year, but as there were a small number of education providers engaged through these assessments, we cannot provide a full reflection of approaches back to the sector at this time.

Quality indicators for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in education

We have developed a set of quality indicators to support equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in education and training. The indicators are intended to help education providers better understand how EDI considerations align with our SETs. They also act as a reference point for our assessments, helping ensure consistency and focus. Where these indicators are in place, we consider it likely that education providers are performing well in this area.

It is important to note that these indicators are not regulatory standards. We do not expect education providers to meet every indicator, nor do we assess them as mandatory requirements. We understand that different education providers may take varied approaches, and that not all indicators will be applicable in every context. However, we

have asked education providers to reflect on the indicators, where relevant, through our performance review assessments for the 2025-26 academic year onwards.

Staffing changes at education providers

We have produced [information](#) for education providers considering changes to their staffing, due to financial pressures within the education sector. We have asked education providers to consider our standards of education and training when considering changes to staffing. We reviewed how education providers responded to this area through performance review assessments from the 2024-25 academic year, but as there were a small number of education providers engaged through these assessments, we cannot provide a full reflection of approaches back to the sector at this time.

Programmes delivered by UK education providers internationally

As a UK regulator, our remit is to approve education programmes delivered by UK-based education providers. While programmes may be delivered outside of the UK, they must be run by a UK-based education provider to be eligible for HCPC-approval. Proposals for approval follow our standard process and we assess all aspects of delivery (including those outside the UK) against our regulatory standards.

We have seen education providers explore whether they can run programmes outside of the UK. This is a new trend, although we have previously approved programmes delivered outside of the UK, these have always been within Gibraltar, and these programmes have now been closed for some time. Within the last academic year, we have approved two programmes that are run by UK-based institutions outside of the UK (both delivered in the Republic of Ireland).

In line with our regulatory powers under our legislation and our public protection duties as a UK regulator the principles we apply when considering programmes delivered outside of the UK are:

- Only programmes run by UK-based education providers can apply for approval against our education standards, and entry onto our list of approved programmes.
- This can include programmes delivered outside of the UK, if they are run by a UK-based education provider.
- We do not consider approval for programmes run by non-UK based education providers, whether those programmes be run within or outside of the UK.

We will consider this area further in detail in the 2025-26 academic year, to ensure that we are able to apply our standards well where programmes are delivered outside of the UK. This may include further consideration of how the academic and practice-based elements of programmes can prepare future registrants for the UK workforce, considering the different systems and cultures in the countries where programmes may be delivered.

Continuous improvement

Our education quality assurance model does not stand still. Continuous improvement is embedded into the way we work, with internal structures in place to inform areas where we should improve.

Enhancing stage 1 approval for new education providers

From September 2025, we introduced a requirement for physical visits to education providers who are seeking HCPC approval for the first time. This change strengthens our approach to assessing institution-level standards during stage 1 of the approval process.

Our stage 1 assessment for new education providers is partner-led and involves a detailed review of documentary evidence to determine whether institution-level standards are met. This assessment may include a physical visit but has not required one to this point. Once an education provider is approved, new programme proposals would normally have an executive-led stage 1 review, without further partner scrutiny of institution-level standards. This approach is consistent with our quality assurance model and supports our aim to reduce regulatory burden.

Institution-level approval has significant implications. We have seen some education providers rapidly introduce multiple programmes in a short time after the approval of their first programme, and approval of these programmes relies heavily on the original judgement that the institution-level standards were met through the first review. This highlighted the need for greater assurance at the outset.

To address this, physical visits will become a formal part of our quality activities for new education providers. These visits will allow us to triangulate the documentary evidence by engaging directly with staff, other institution stakeholders, and reviewing facilities. This will help us identify potential risks and ensure that institution-level standards are robustly met, particularly given the possibility of future programme development.

Repositioning SET 1 as a programme-level standard

From September 2025, we moved the consideration of SET 1, which is our standard relating to the level of qualification required for entry to the Register, from the institution-level to programme-level assessment.

Historically, SET 1 was assessed at the institution level based on the expectation that education providers could demonstrate how their academic qualifications aligned with the required level. However, recent assessments have highlighted limitations in this approach. We have reviewed proposed programmes presented as equivalent to a Bachelor's degree with honours, delivered by organisations without degree-awarding powers or formal validation arrangements with higher education institutions. In these

cases, determining equivalence / comparability has required scrutiny of programme curricula, which is an activity not covered within institution-level assessment.

Additionally, there is a risk that approved education providers may propose programmes that do not meet the academic levels expressed through SET 1. This standard sitting at the institution level would risk this not being reviewed fully or considered linked to programme curricula.

To address these challenges, SET 1 will now be assessed during stage 2 of the approval process, alongside other programme-level standards. This will allow for a more comprehensive review of curriculum detail and ensure that qualifications meet the required level. This change also supports potential future developments in our standards, as part of the ongoing SETs review.

Further improvements

In 2024-25, we have also:

- Refreshed our expectations with education providers about apprenticeship programmes (as covered in the [above section](#)).
- Delivered improvements to our records change process, to ensure we have the checks in place to accurately update our list of approved programmes.
- Developed our assessment reports, for clarity and consistency.
- Introduced a requirement for education providers to update their 'baseline' information, which enables us to understand key approaches across the whole education provider, through performance review assessments.
- Captured further structured data to enable more powerful insight from the data we hold.
- Developed our quality checking mechanisms so we can categorise our checks across timeliness, administrative and quality areas, enabling better reporting and more focused improvement activities.

Future areas of focus



Future areas of focus

Workforce

We are working to support the delivery of the NHS 10 Year Plan in England and recognise the significant shift that the Plan will have for education and training. Developing the ‘three shifts’ within the plan will require changes within education and training, including curriculum developments, different practice-based learning opportunities to support delivery of curricula, and changes to workforce supply.

We have refreshed our [information for education providers](#), and insight about our [approval of apprenticeship programmes](#) (both produced in response to the previous Long Term Workforce Plan), to help education providers understand our regulatory approach and how our role needs to be taken into account through changes to education and training provision. We are continuing to engage with the sector to support delivery of the Plan, in keeping with our regulatory role.

We are also cognisant that the Plan is England only and are working with key stakeholders in all four nations on similar initiatives. For example, we are members of the Advisory Board for the Scotland Education and Workforce Policy Review.

Review of our standards of education and training (SETs)

Our standards of education and training (SETs) are a crucial part of our regulatory role, as they underpin all of the work we do. The SETs set requirements for education providers and programmes, to ensure that those who complete programmes meet our requirements for registration.

We have worked with stakeholders to develop proposals for [revisions to our SETs](#), and within the remainder of the 2025-26 financial year we will develop the revisions to these standards.

This is likely to be a large piece of work for education providers we approve, and within the education team at the HCPC. We recognise that implementing revisions will require proper consideration by education providers, and are currently reviewing our implementation timeframe for changes. We are also assessing the mechanisms by which we will review changes made by education providers to ensure they align with our revised standards.

National / regional engagement refresh

We are developing our model of engagement with education providers and other stakeholders within each nation and English region. In recent years, we have established direct contacts, and preferred methods of engagement with education providers and sector partners. We have started to see direct benefit of our engagement activities, which enables us to fulfil our commitments to being a good partner in the sector. Our aim is to continue building trusted relationships to support more effective quality assurance by understanding what is important to our stakeholders, identifying where we can support, and maintaining clarity about our regulatory requirements. In the 2025-26 academic year, we plan to undertake more informal face to face engagement, to build relationships with our stakeholders.

Reducing regulatory overlap

We are considering how we can further reduce areas of regulatory overlap, linked to our operating model and across the education sector. Our aim is to continue to make sound, independent regulatory decisions, whilst taking into account the work of others to reduce burden on education providers.

We have started working with other regulators and professional bodies, aiming to be a leader in the sector to understand the appetite for further reducing regulatory overlap and burden. We have been working with other regulators on producing a joint statement on AI in education, and are working with several professional bodies to consider where our assessments and standards can dovetail to inform each other's decision making and reduce overlap for education providers. Given the current financial and resource challenges for education providers, we will prioritise this work to ensure we can offer a streamlined process where possible.

Appendix 1 - assessment divers and statistics

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Approving education providers and programmes

We assess education providers and new programmes to ensure they are properly organised to deliver education, and train learners to be safe, effective and fit to practice.

We focus on whether education providers and programmes meet our standards of education and training (SET). These standards are outcome focused, to ensure those who complete programmes meet our standards of proficiency (which set clear expectations of our registrants' knowledge and abilities when they start practising) and standards of conduct, performance and ethics (which set out, in general terms, how we expect our registrants to behave).

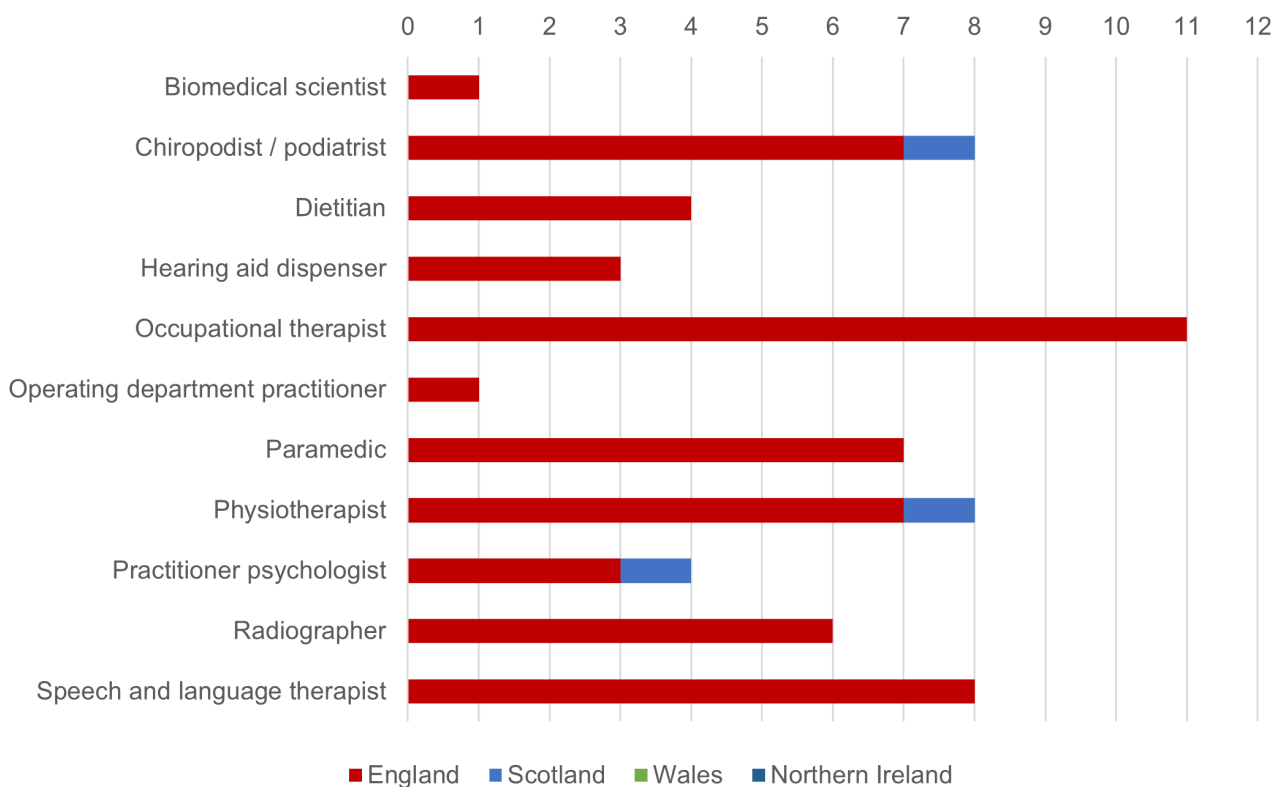
We undertake two-stage assessments, firstly assessing the institution, and then the programme(s). Where an education provider's new programme proposal aligns to existing HCPC-approved programmes, we do not ask education providers to evidence institution level standards through approval assessments. We make this judgement by reviewing 'baseline' information established by the education provider, against initial information provided through their approval request.

We design our assessments in this way to reduce burden for education providers, ensuring we take account of the context and history of an education provider when deciding how to assess.

New programmes considered in 2024-25

Programmes were proposed across two of the four UK nations, and for all professions except arts therapists, clinical scientists, orthoptists, and prosthetists / orthotists.

Programmes considered, by nation and profession

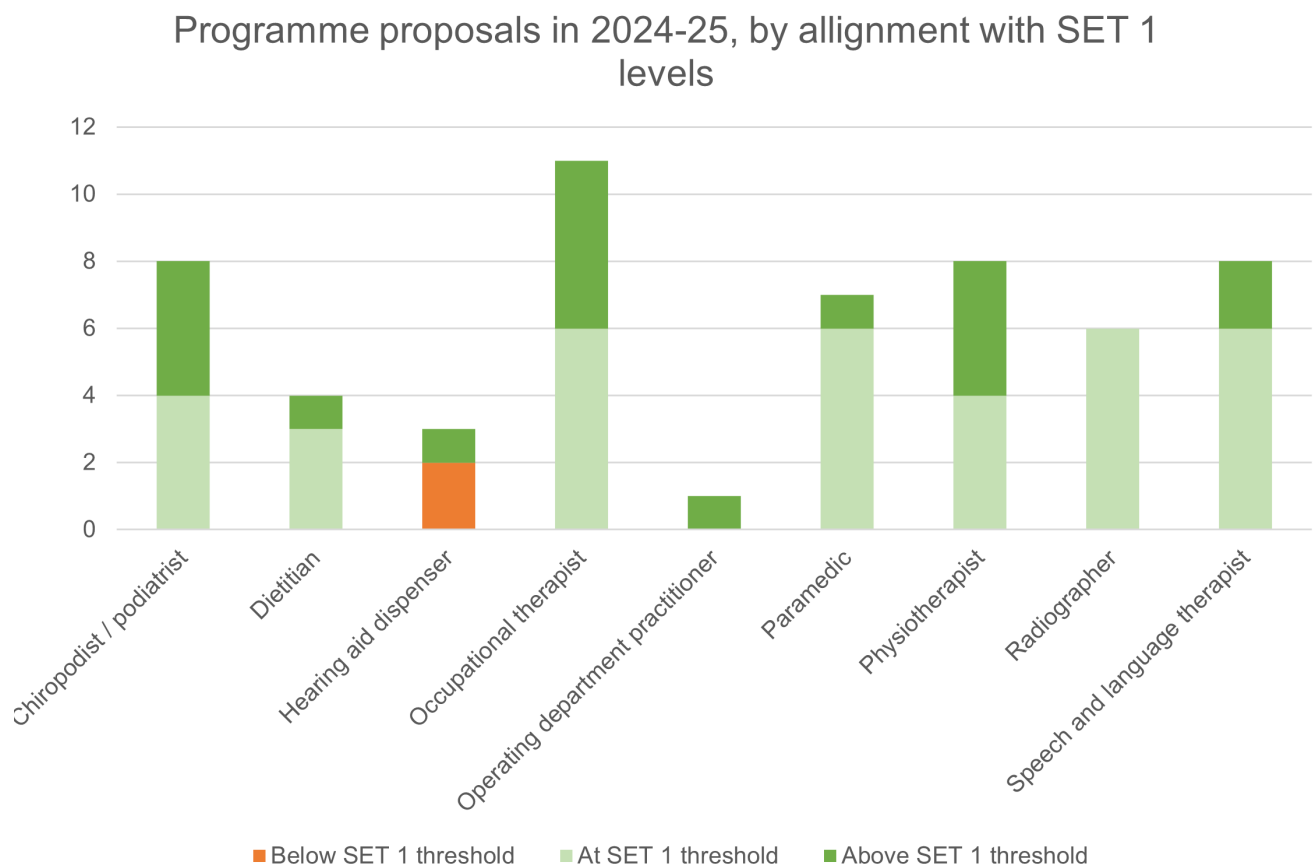


Diversification of education and training routes

SET 1 is the level of qualification we normally expect for entry to the Register. The levels presented in the standard are ‘normal’ expectations, and where education providers propose programmes below the normal level, the education provider needs to demonstrate how the qualification is of an equivalent level to deliver our requirements for registration.

In this year, around a third of programmes were proposed above the SET 1 level, with 4% being proposed below SET 1 level. This shows the diversification of education and training routes available.

Programme proposals in 2024-25, by alignment with SET 1 levels



We have seen continued diversification of models of learning, with:

- 46% of programmes being traditional taught HEI programmes
- 51% of programmes being apprenticeship programmes
- 3% of programmes being tests of prior competence

When considering capacity learner numbers:

- 43% of learner capacity numbers being traditional taught HEI programmes
- 54% of learner capacity numbers being apprenticeship programmes
- 3% of learner capacity numbers being tests of prior competence

Reviewing the performance of approved education providers and programmes

Through performance review assessments, we undertake periodic, proportionate engagement with education providers to understand their performance and the quality of their provision. Through an assessment, we determine when we next need to engage with the education provider and set a review period of between 1 and 5 years. This timeframe is based on identified risks, potential issues, and when those might need exploring. As part of these assessments, we will consider significant issues, and where education providers do not meet our standards, we would withdraw approval.

Education providers complete a portfolio covering a set of themes which are linked to our standards, sector developments, and initiatives which may affect the quality of education provision. Where available, we also ask education providers to reflect on performance data points linked to the numbers of learners, learner non-continuation, outcomes for those who complete programmes, and learner satisfaction. These data points give us metrics-based information about how education providers are performing related to these areas (normally in comparison to a benchmark), and over time whether there are changes in that performance.

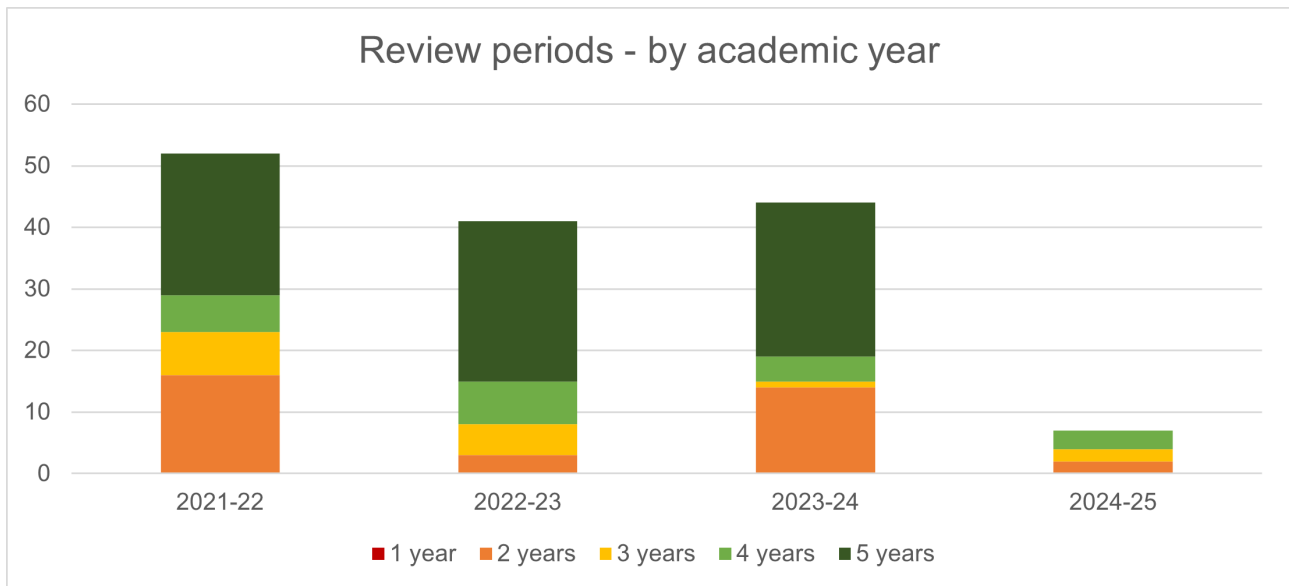
Due to outcomes of previous assessments, we went into the 2024-25 academic year knowing that we had a much lower number of performance review assessments when compared to previous years. We assessed 7 of the 142 HCPC approved education providers in the 2024-25 academic year. This compares to 47 in 2023-24, 41 in 2022-23 and 52 in 2021-22 (which was the first year of running the current review process).

Assessment outcomes – review periods

When defining the review period of between one and five years, we consider the following:

- Stakeholder engagement – how the education provider engages with their stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind.
- External input into quality assurance and enhancement – how the education provider engages with professional bodies, and other relevant organisations, and how they consider sector and professional development in a structured way.
- Data supply – whether data for the education provider is available through external sources, or if they have established a regular data supply.
- What the data is telling us, and how the education provider integrates data in their quality assurance processes.
- If there are any specific developments or risks that will impact at a specific time.

Review periods - by academic year



In 2024-25, although the sample size is small, the same pattern has emerged as in previous years – that non HEIs generally received shorter review periods than HEIs. This is due to non-HEIs not being included in external data returns, and without regular supply of data we cannot extend review periods to longer than a two year period.

Concerns and issues

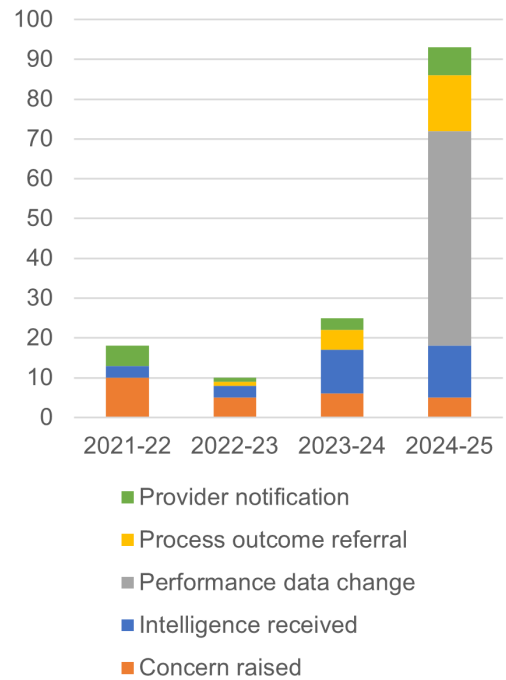
We listen to concerns and issues raised to us by external parties, and can identify potential issues and concerns ourselves from the data and intelligence we receive. We consider concerns that might impact how our standards of education and training (SETs) are met, which in turn may affect learners meeting our requirements for registration.

In these situations, we undertake ‘focused review’ assessments, which are focused on the specific concerns raised and whether they could impact on our standards. Through these assessments, we consider the concern itself, ask the education provider for a written response, and will follow up any areas required through quality activities. We will then come to a judgement about whether any further action is required, which can include us setting specific regulatory requirements, or in cases where our standards are no longer met by education providers or programmes, withdraw approval.

Statistics on process application

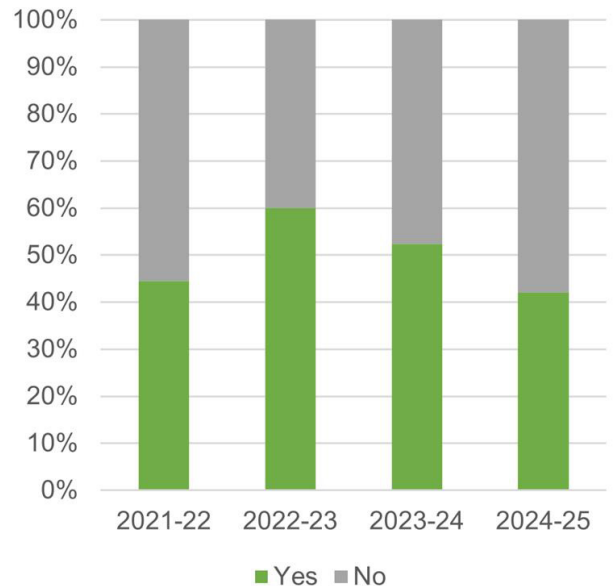
Source of process trigger

- We trigger focused review assessments from a range of sources, including referrals from our own assessments
- In the 2023-24 academic year, the highest proportion of triggers were from changes to performance data, which is change from the previous report, where the highest proportion was where we received intelligence from stakeholders.
- This change was because within the 2024-25 academic year, we proactively reviewed external education provider performance data at the point of supply for the first time
- This enabled us to identify potential problems linked to supplied data, and work with education providers where there may have been issues with their performance.



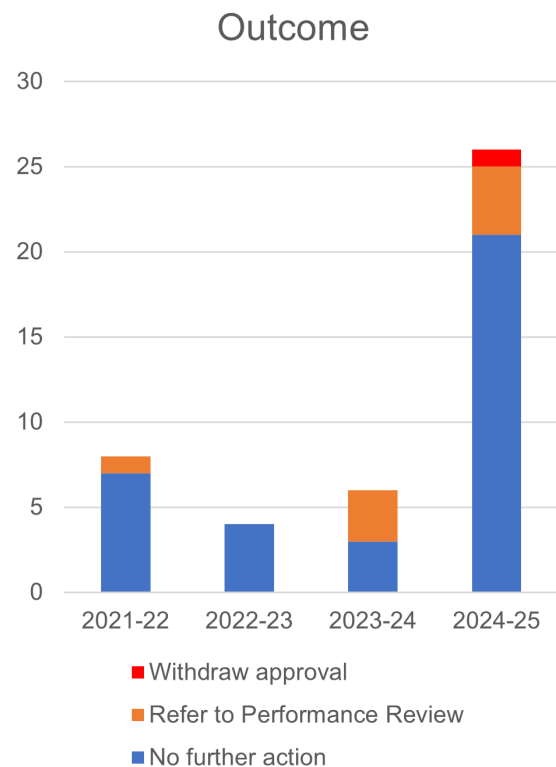
Triage decision – full review required

- When an assessment is triggered, we undertake a triage decision against our standards of acceptance.
- We aim to ensure that our resources are used well, to investigate areas that might impact on our standards being met by education providers and / or programmes.
- In line with previous years, we fully investigated about half of the concerns raised to us.
- Following an initial review of education provider performance data, we decided to formally review 54 education providers through internal triage, which led to us exploring data with 13 education providers.



Review outcomes

- In 2024-25 we referred one more focused review cases to the performance review process when compared to 2023-24.
- This is a standard outcome for focused review assessment and is used when we consider an area of concern has been addressed at this time, but when we would like to keep the concern in mind for future reviews.
- For the review of education provider performance data, we decided to take no further action with 11 education providers and referred areas to the next performance review assessment for two education providers.
- We took no further action with most reviews, because education providers were able to fully address our concerns, including taking action where required, through the focused review assessment
- We withdrew approval from one programme – although this decision was taken in September 2025, we have included this within this report, because the bulk of the activity to review the programme took place within the academic year (including the recommendation to withdraw approval)



Data and intelligence



Data and intelligence

Our approach to the use of education provider performance data

One of the pillars of our quality assurance model is using data and intelligence to inform our regulatory decision making. Using data and intelligence allows us to be:

- Proactive – where data and intelligence identify risks, we can trigger some form of engagement with education providers;
- Risk-based – have an evidence-based understanding of risks for education providers; and
- Proportionate – use risk profiling to undertake bespoke and right touch regulatory interventions.

The use of education provider performance data has continued to add value through to our assessments. We set up education providers to reflect on data points, and our partners to consider data through assessments, including comparison to benchmarks and trend analysis for each data point. Data helps us explore specific areas with education providers through our quality activities in our assessments, and to take assurance where performance data metrics are at or above benchmarks.

As referenced in the ‘concerns and issues’ section, we proactively reviewed education provider performance data for this first time in this academic year.

Engagement with other bodies

We have continued to become a more active partner in the sector in 2024-25, with the aim to understand the sector to contextualise our assessments. Our professional body / HCPC education forum group has continued to meet to share information to support and assure high quality education and training in the HCPC-regulated professions. There are 24 professional body members of this group, and we have good attendance at regular meetings, with a standard agenda that covers developments and challenges facing education provision for the professions we regulate.

We have shared and received information with professional bodies and commissioning organisations, which has informed our assessments. Normally, this enables us to contextualise assessments (for example, where a body provides information about shortages of practice-based learning in a nation or region), and ensure we are evidence informed to the situation when making judgements against our standards. We have established formal information sharing arrangements with eleven professional bodies, up from five at the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

Appendix 2 - Key statistics



Appendix 2 contents

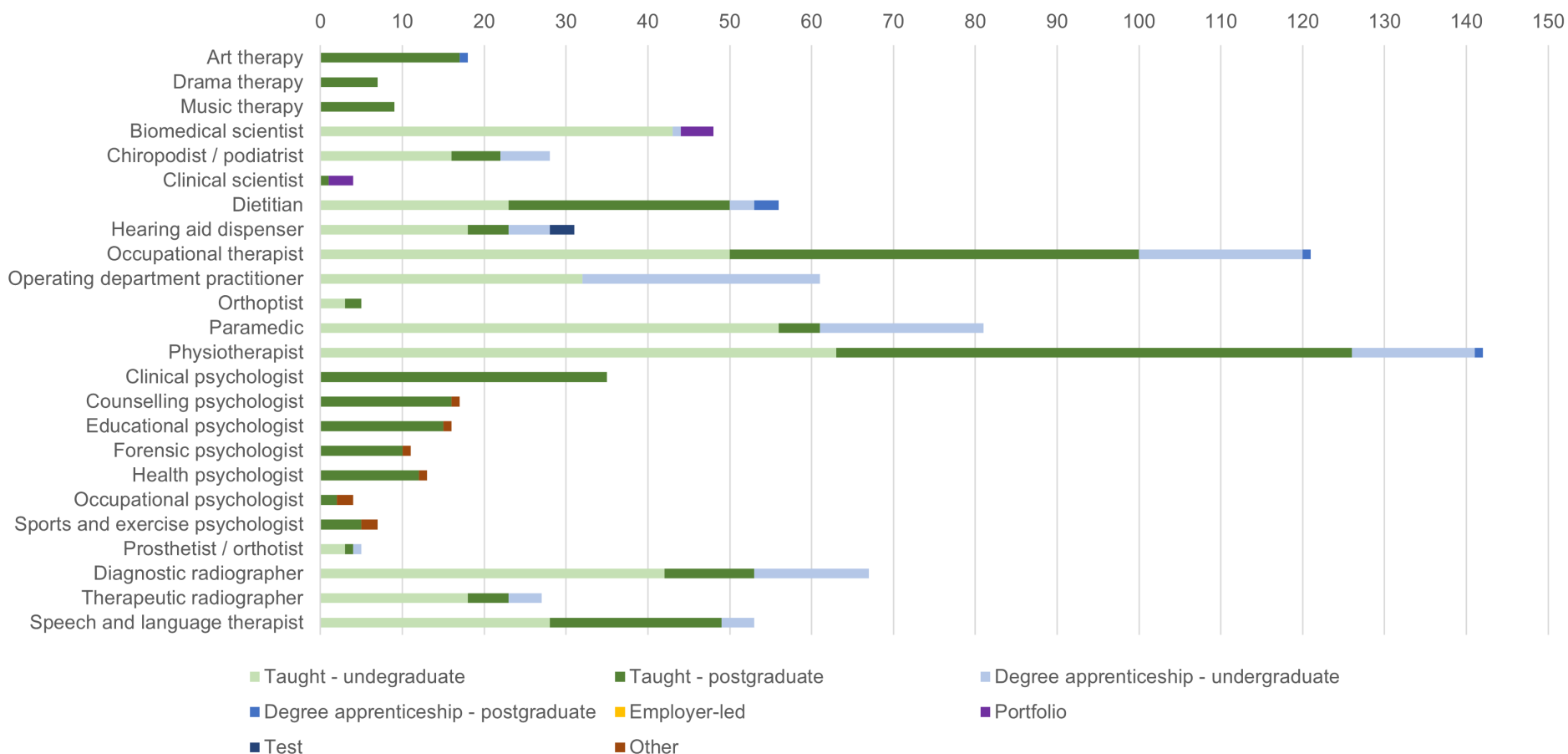
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Key statistics on education and training for HCPC professions

We have provided key statistics as a summary of the picture of education and training for the professions we regulate, and how that picture is changing.

Number of approved pre-registration programmes

Pre-registration approved programmes, by type of programme - 1 September 2025



We have seen a growth in the overall number of programmes in the 2024-25 academic year by a total of 57 programmes (7% growth overall). Some professions have grown more significantly:

- Hearing aid dispenser – 16% growth (5 additional programmes)
- Drama therapists – 14% growth (however due to small numbers this was only one additional programme)
- Dietitian – 11% growth (6 additional programmes)
- Paramedic – 11% growth (9 additional programmes)
- Diagnostic radiographer – 9% growth (6 additional programmes)
- Occupational therapist – 9% growth (11 additional programmes)
- Biomedical scientist – 8% growth (4 additional programmes)

There were smaller percentage increases for art therapists, operating department practice, physiotherapists, therapeutic radiographers, and speech and language therapists. Programme numbers for the remaining professions / modalities did not grow.

Growth in programme numbers did not translate to the percentage level of growth for the capacity of learner numbers. For all professions, there was a lower level of growth for the overall capacity of programmes. This shows that newer programmes are developed at a smaller scale than existing programmes.

There is a shift in the profile of professional education, with a higher percentage of degree apprenticeship programmes being developed than baseline percentages for most professions. This is linked with the apprenticeship initiative in England, and we may see the shift to more apprenticeship provision continue to be developed as part of the sector's response to the NHS 10 Year Plan for England. Other nations are also considering introducing apprenticeship or 'earn and learn' routes into the professions that we regulate, although the structures to support these routes have not yet been set up in these nations.

We have presented a comparison of numbers of programmes and learner capacity⁹ for all professions / modalities in table below. This is to show how increases in the number of approved programmes links to increases in the overall learner capacity for each profession and modality. This can be used by stakeholders to understand how new provision being developed contributes to capacity.

⁹ Learner number capacity is the maximum yearly capacity we have approved programmes to deliver. These figures were defined by education providers through our approval assessments, and we audit these numbers when education providers engage with us through performance review. They are not the number of learners that will admit to programmes each year, and this data should be read cautiously when understanding capacity.

Programme type	Approved programmes (1 September 2025)						New programmes (first intake in the 2024-25 academic year)						
	Taught	DA	% DA	Other	Total	Learner number capacity ⁹	Taught	DA	% DA	Other	Total	Growth %	Growth in learner number capacity
Arts therapist	33	1	3%	0	34	927	2	0	0%	0	2	6%	2%
<i>Art therapy</i>	17	1	6%	0	18	611	1	0	0%	0	1	6%	2%
<i>Drama therapy</i>	7	0	0%	0	7	144	1	0	0%	0	1	14%	7%
<i>Music therapy</i>	9	0	0%	0	9	172	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Biomedical scientist	43	1	2%	4	48	2830	4	0	0%	0	4	8%	1%
Chiropodist / podiatrist	22	6	21%	0	28	1131	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Clinical scientist	1	0	0%	3	4	970	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Dietitian	50	6	11%	0	56	1879	3	3	50%	0	6	11%	7%
Hearing aid dispenser	23	5	16%	3	31	1067	4	1	20%	0	5	16%	10%
Occupational therapist	100	21	17%	0	121	6223	7	4	36%	0	11	9%	4%
Operating department practitioner	32	29	48%	0	61	2320	0	4	100%	0	4	7%	6%
Orthoptist	5	0	0%	0	5	276	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Paramedic	61	20	25%	0	81	7079	4	5	56%	0	9	11%	6%
Physiotherapist	126	16	11%	0	142	8515	4	2	33%	0	6	4%	2%

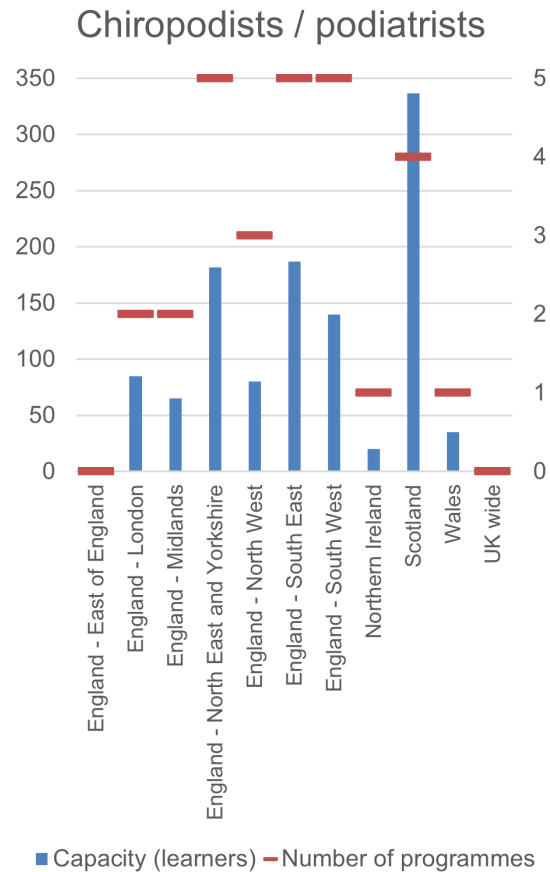
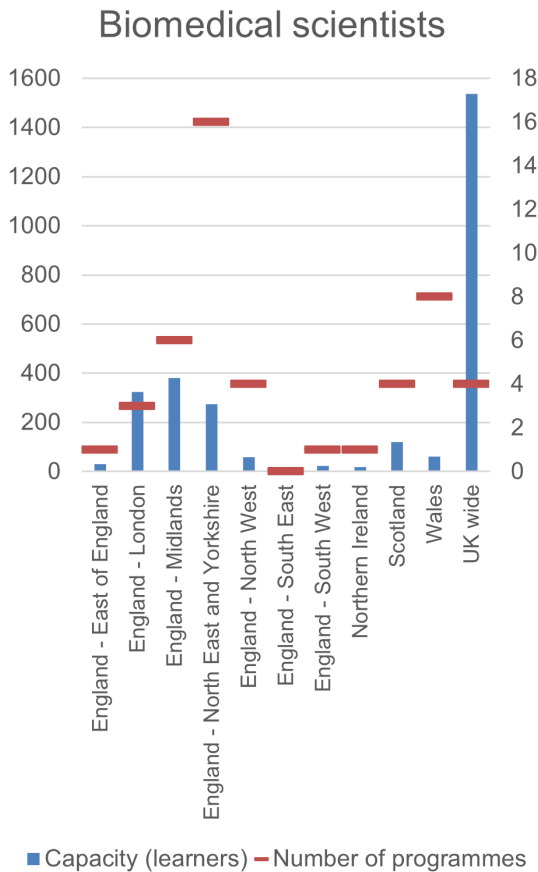
Programme type	Approved programmes (1 September 2025)					Learner number capacity ⁹	New programmes (first intake in the 2024-25 academic year)						
	Taught	DA	% DA	Other	Total		Taught	DA	% DA	Other	Total	Growth %	Growth in learner number capacity
Practitioner psychologist	96	0	0%	8	104	3583	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Clinical psychologist</i>	35	0	0%	0	35	1410	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Counselling psychologist</i>	16	0	0%	1	17	611	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Educational psychologist</i>	15	0	0%	1	16	397	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Forensic psychologist</i>	10	0	0%	1	11	481	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Health psychologist</i>	12	0	0%	1	13	219	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Occupational psychologist</i>	2	0	0%	2	4	243	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Sports and exercise psychologist</i>	5	0	0%	2	7	204	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Prosthetist / orthotist	4	1	20%	0	5	140	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Radiographer	76	18	19%	0	94	5611	3	4	57%	0	7	7%	2%
<i>Diagnostic radiographer</i>	53	14	21%	0	67	4494	3	3	50%	0	6	9%	2%
<i>Therapeutic radiographer</i>	23	4	15%	0	27	1117	0	1	100%	0	1	4%	2%
Speech and language therapist	49	4	8%	0	53	2615	2	1	33%	0	3	6%	5%
Total	721	128	15%	18	867	45166	33	24	42%	0	57	7%	3%

Nations and regions

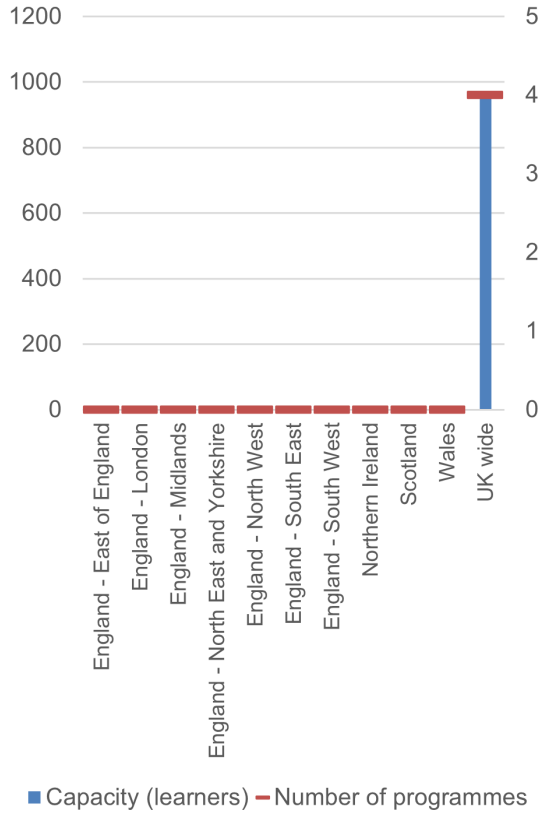
We have produced the following charts which show learner number capacity (blue bars) and the number of approved programmes (orange lines) in each nation and English region. These charts are provided to give insight into the current national and regional picture within professions.

From the charts, the total capacity of programmes can be understood vs the number of programmes. There is variance in programme sizes, we can see similar programme numbers within nations / regions with a range of programme capacities. There will be a range of reasons for differences, but there may be opportunities to increase learner numbers for existing lower capacity programmes.

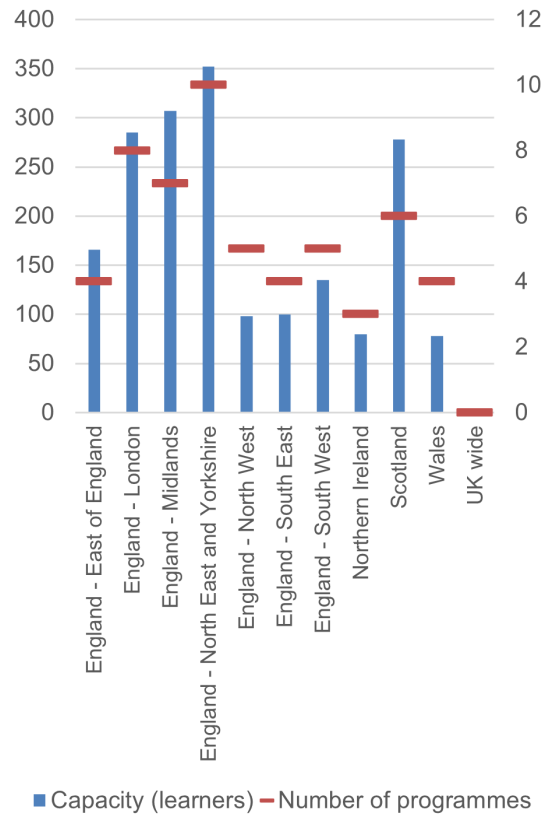
Professions without modalities



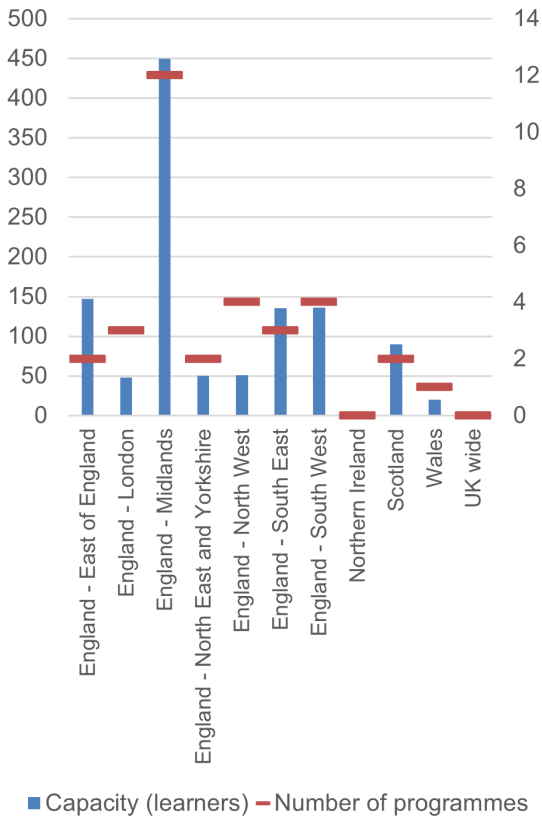
Clinical scientists



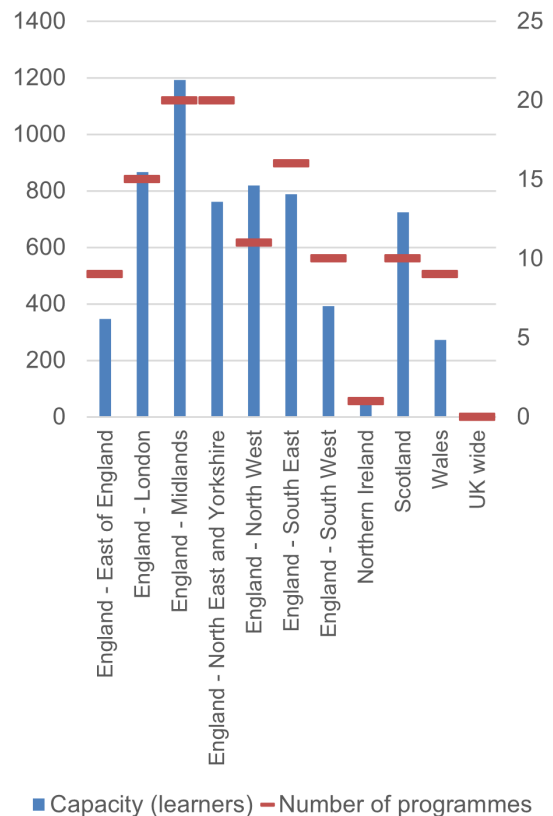
Dietitians



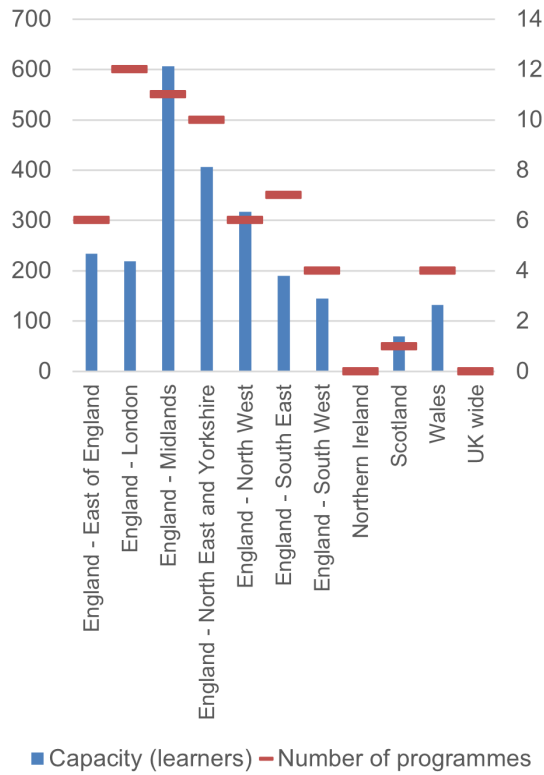
Hearing aid dispensers



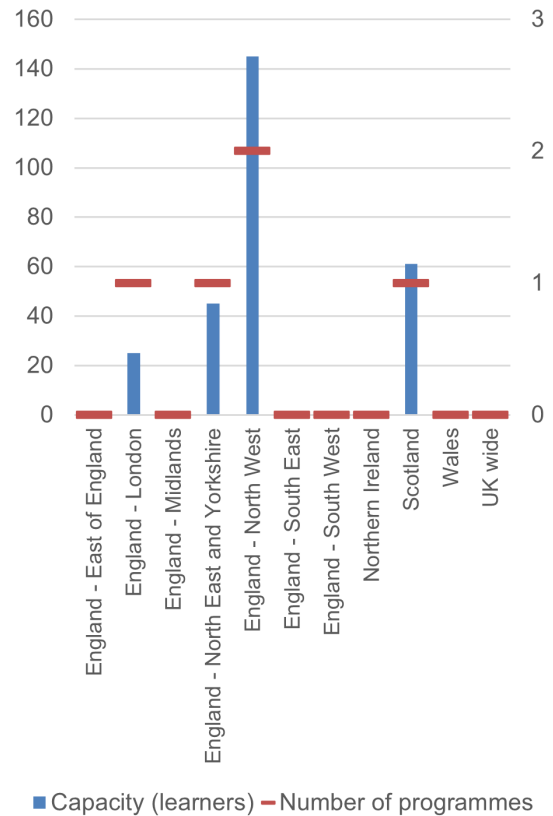
Occupational therapists



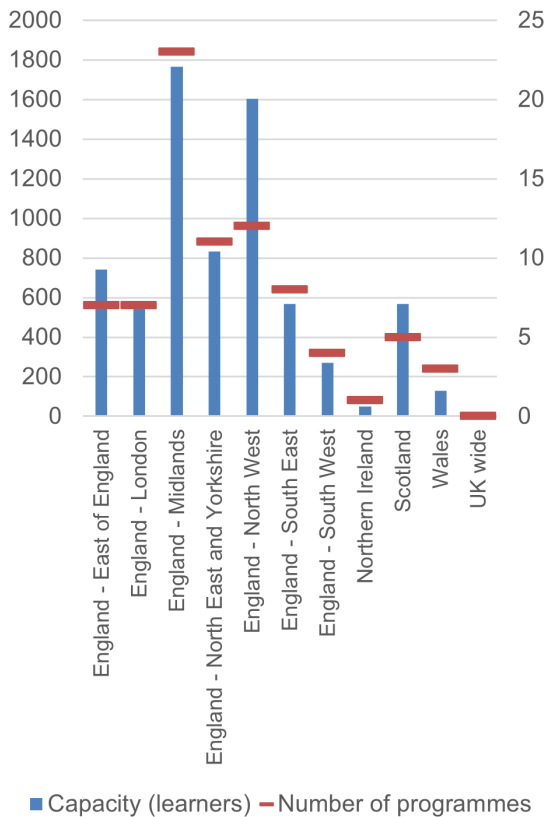
Operating department practitioners



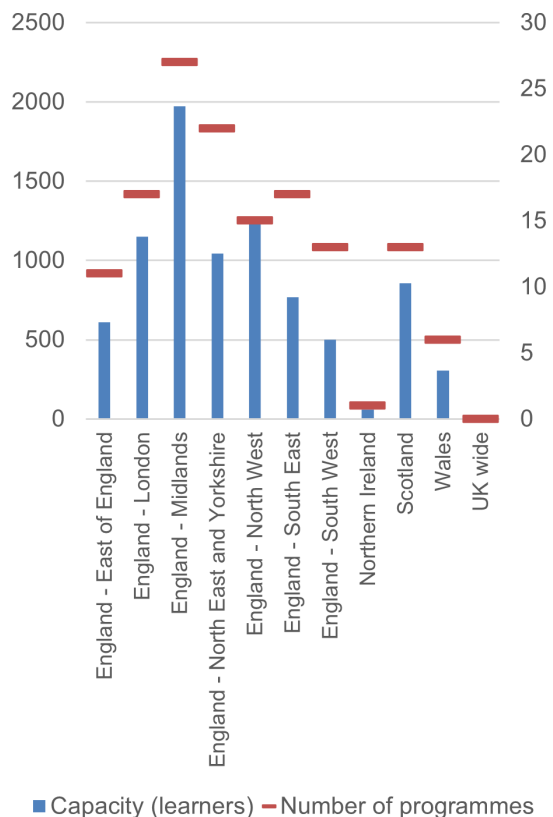
Orthoptists

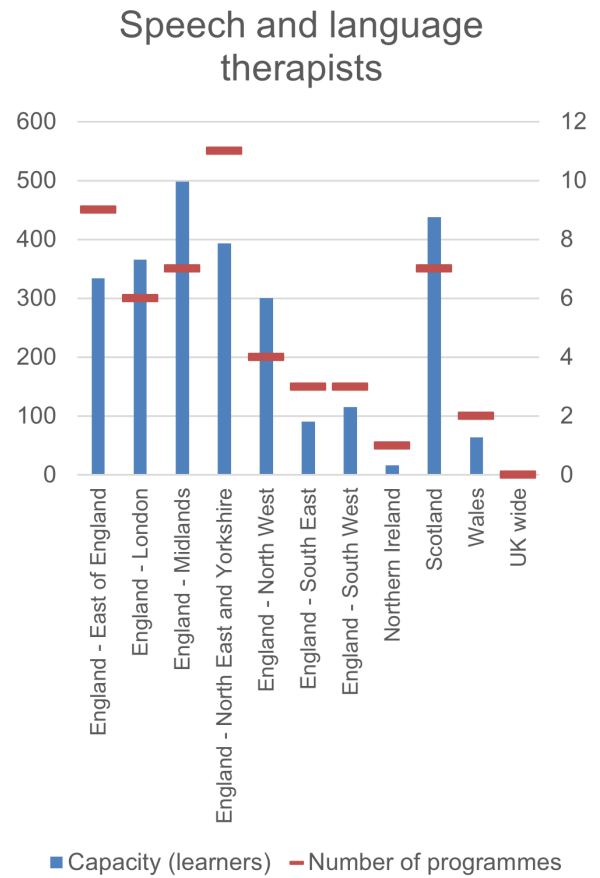
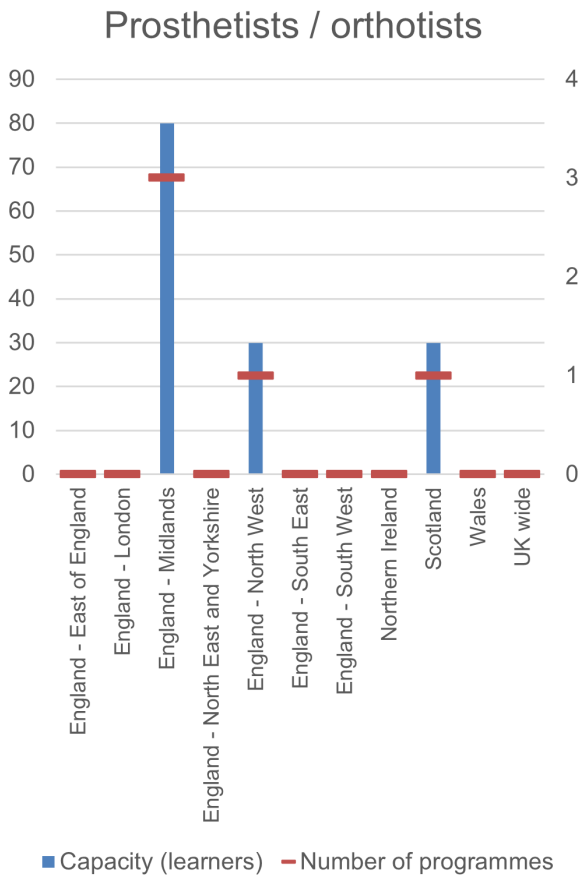


Paramedics



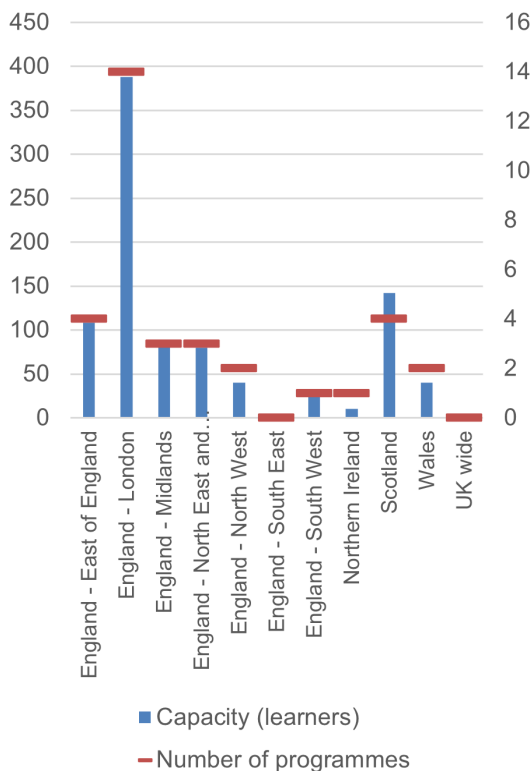
Physiotherapists



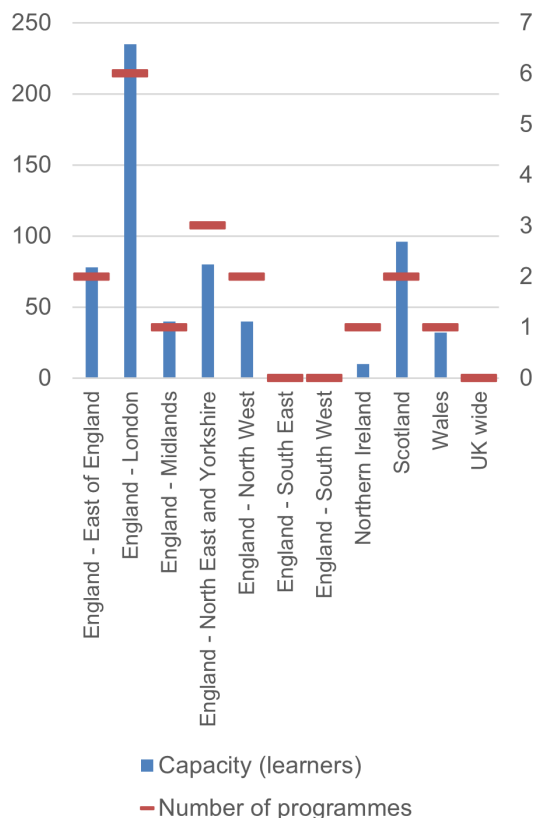


Professions with modalities

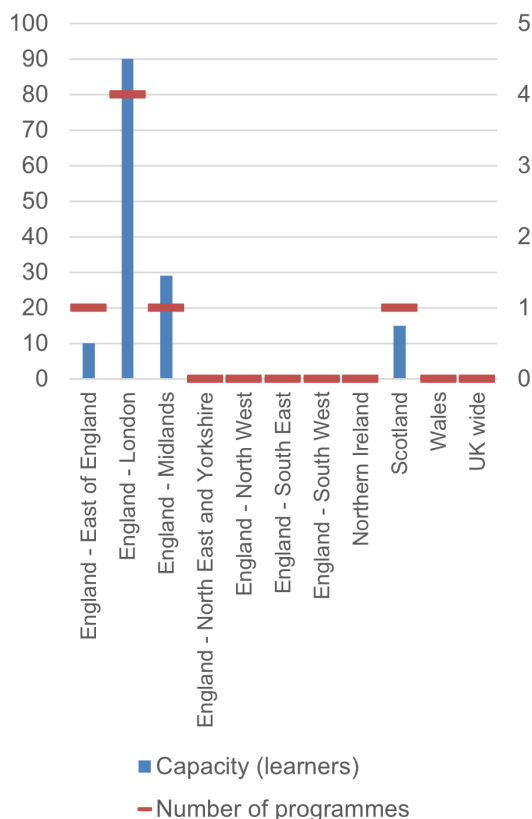
Arts therapists (whole profession)



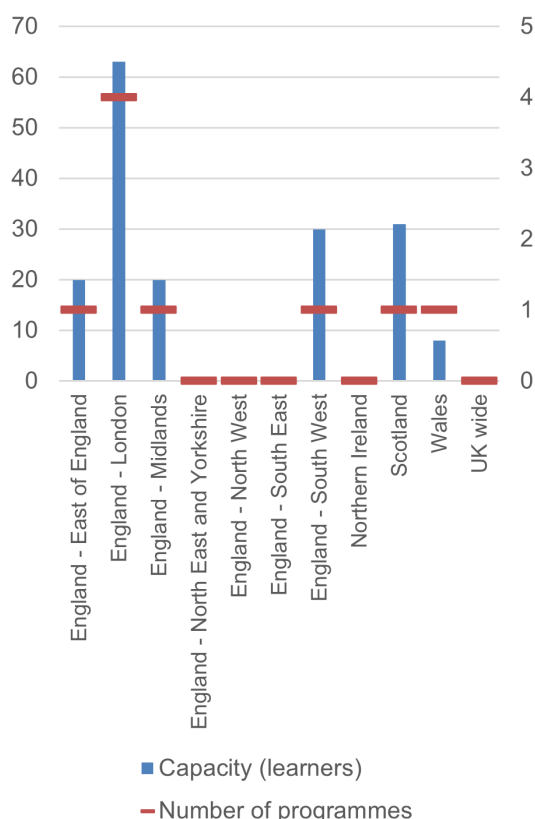
Art therapists



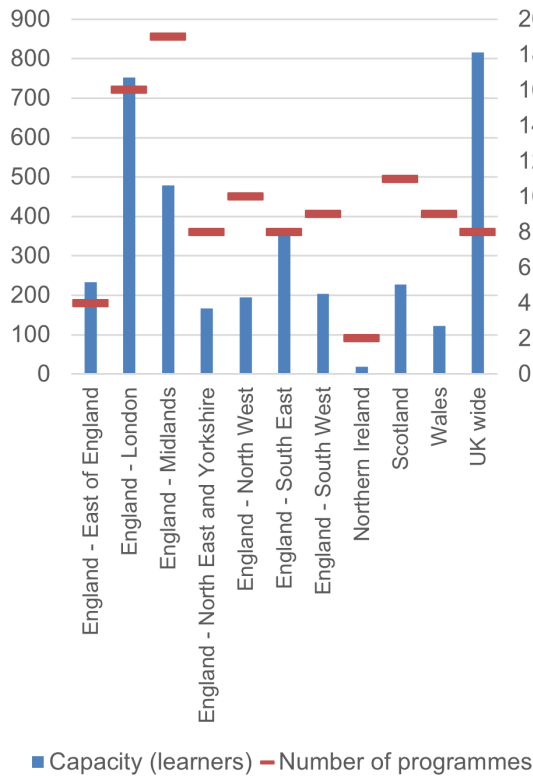
Drama therapists



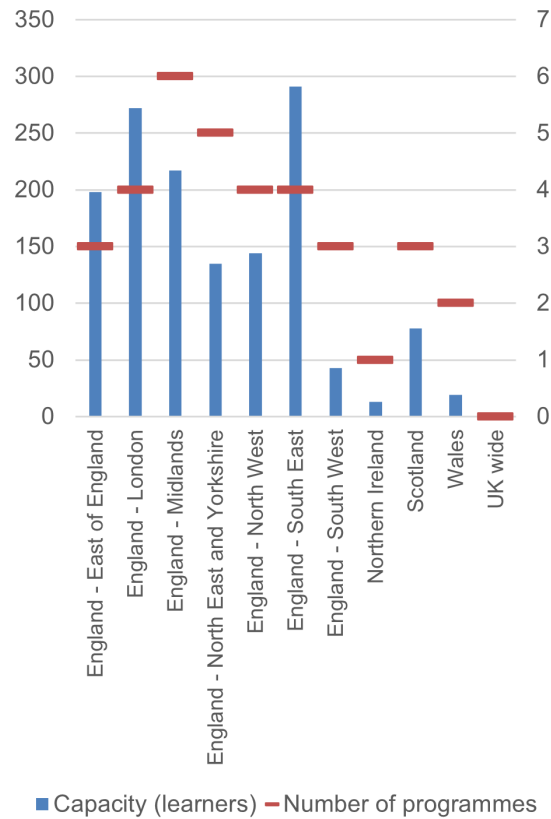
Music therapists



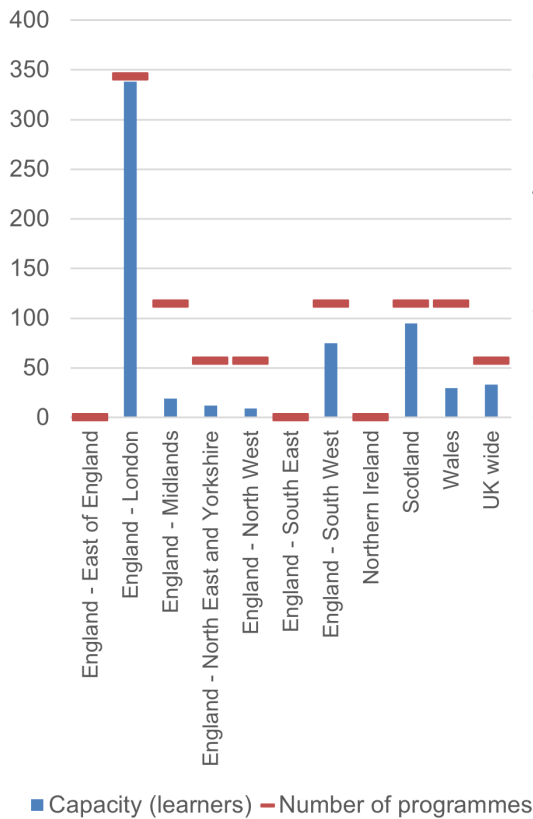
Practitioner psychologists (whole profession)



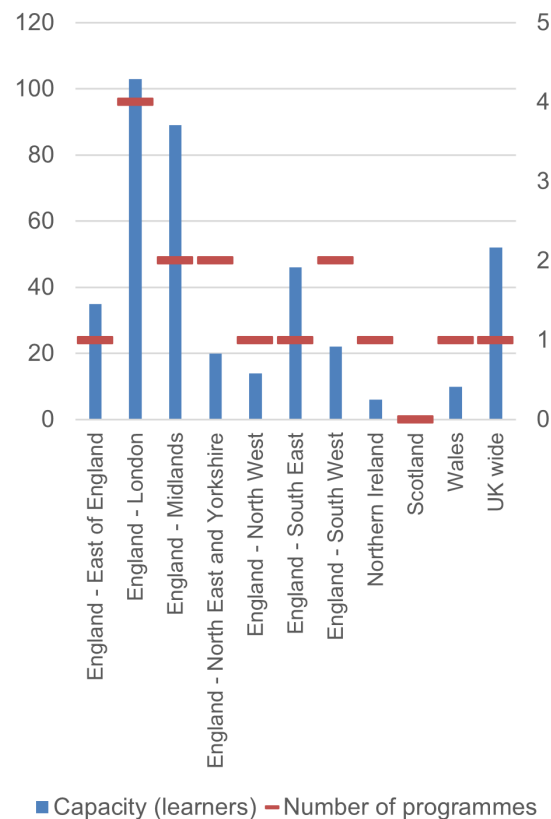
Clinical psychologists



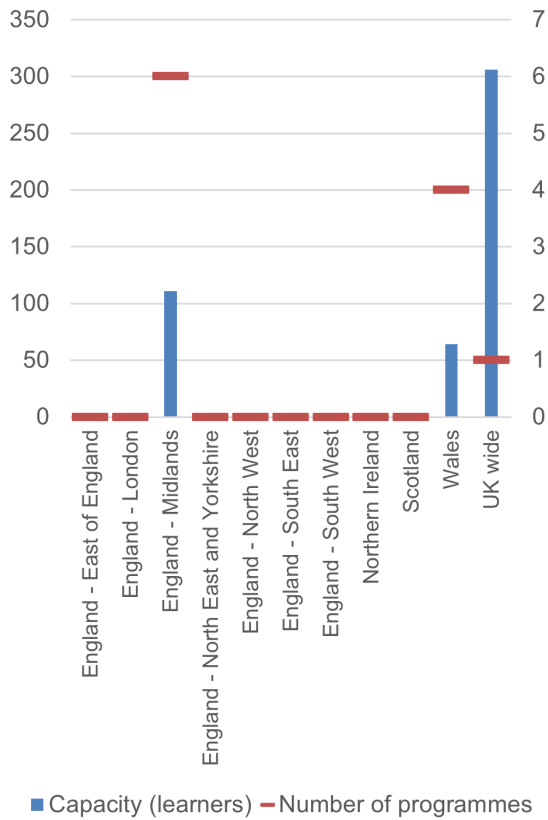
Counselling psychologists



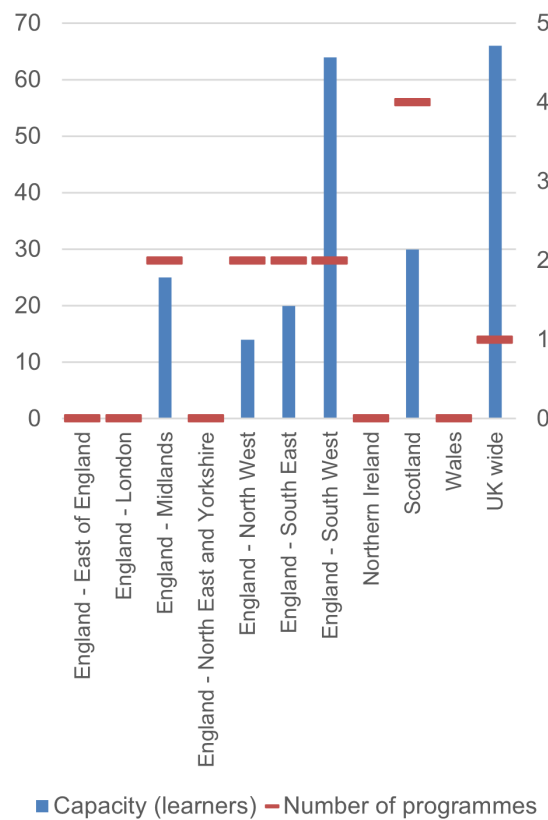
Educational psychologists



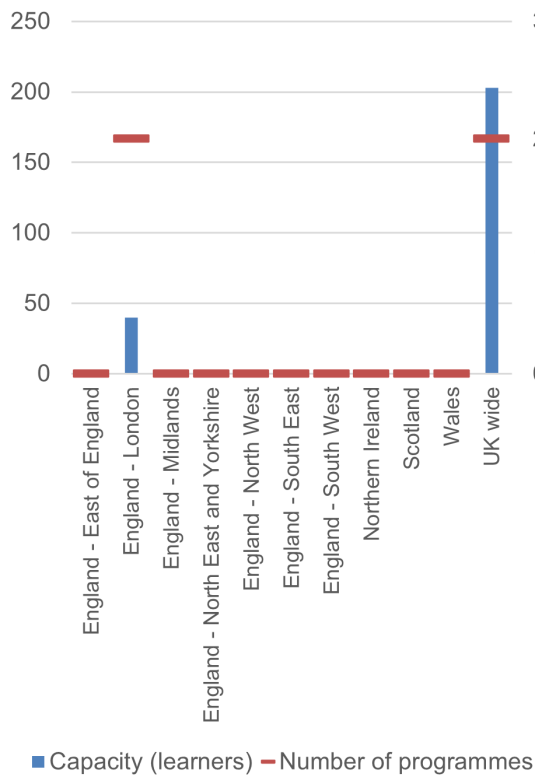
Forensic psychologists



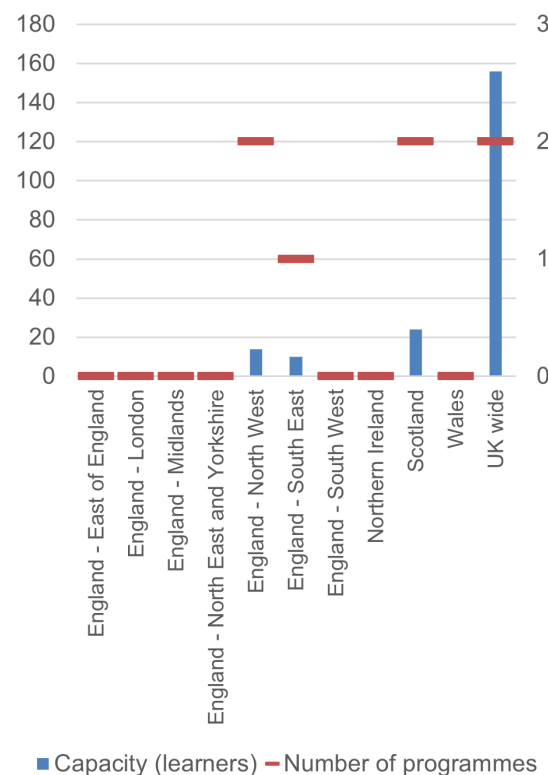
Health psychologists



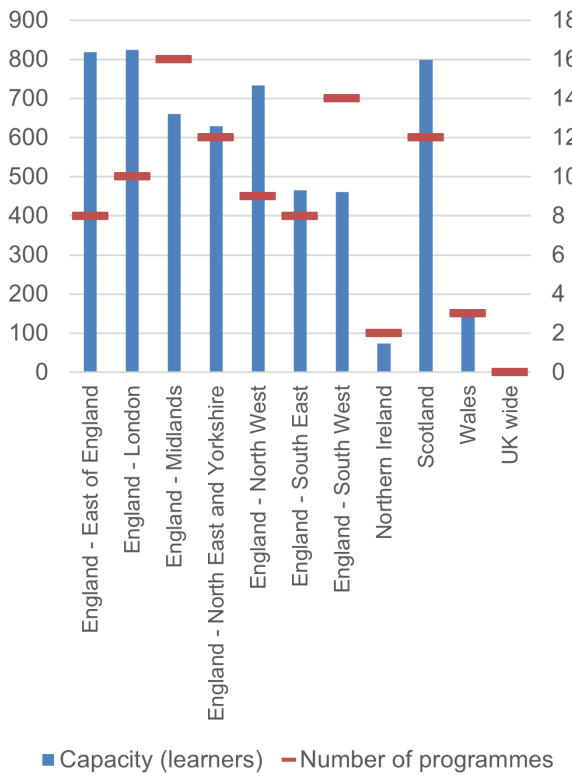
Occupational psychologists



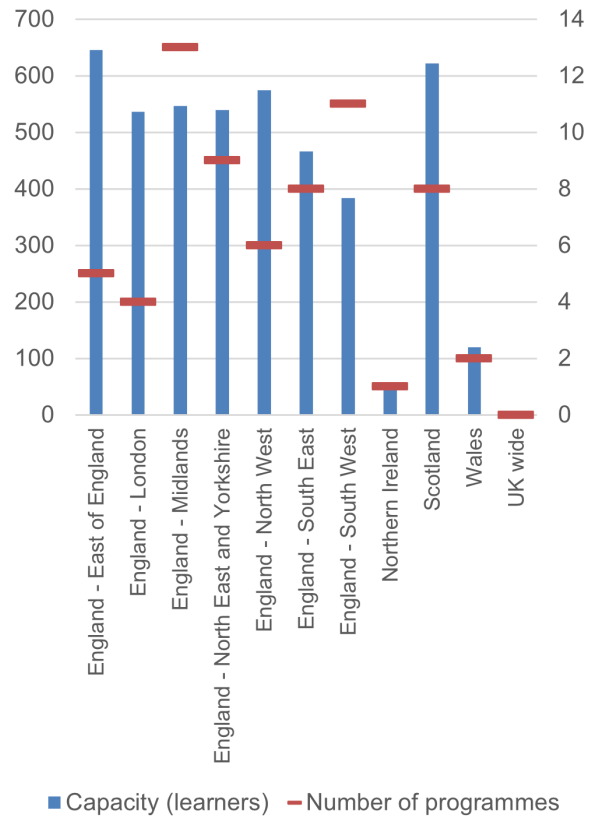
Sports and exercise psychologists



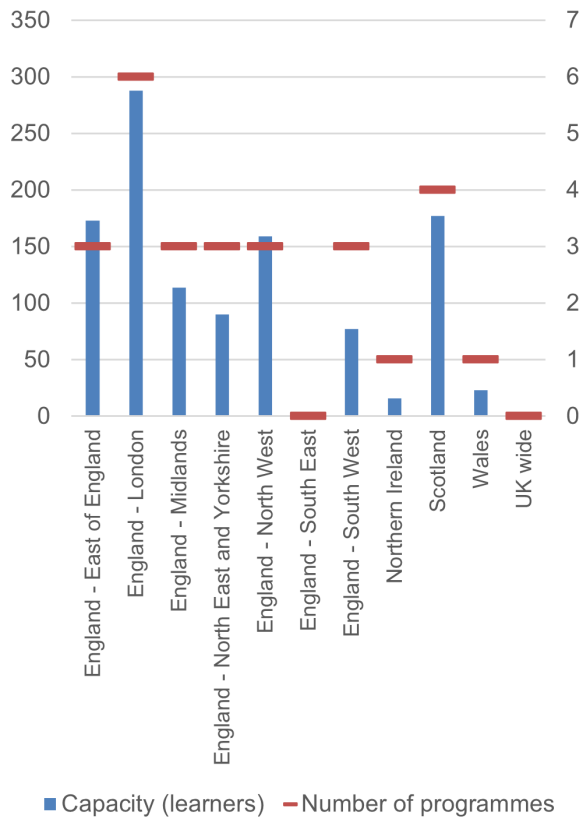
Radiographers (whole profession)



Diagnostic radiographers



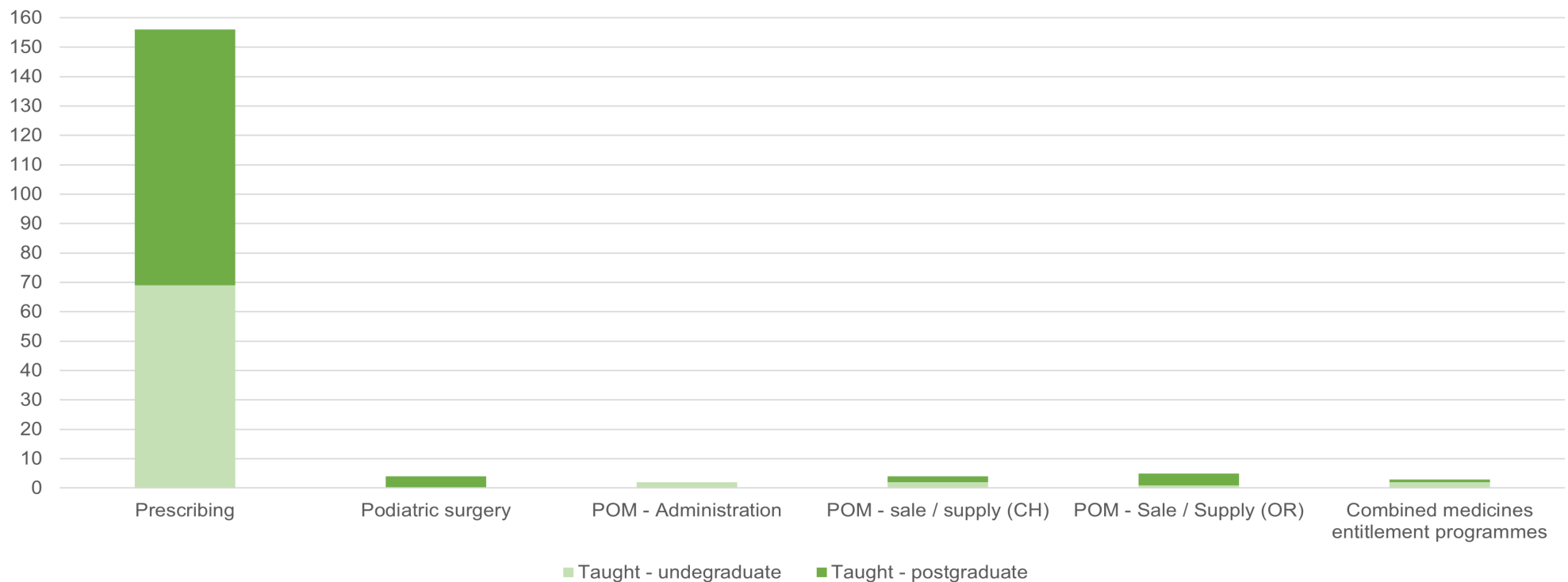
Therapeutic radiographers



Number of approved post-registration programmes

We also approve post registration programmes, which lead to an 'annotation' on our Register. We are required to do this by legislation where a registrant has undertaken additional training linked to medicines and has obtained entitlements to sell, supply, administer or prescribe these medicines. We also annotate for podiatrists practising podiatric surgery, as this is a high level of specialism within the chiroprapist / podiatrist profession, and we took the decision that annotating individuals who can practice in this specialist area was essential to protect the public¹⁰.

Post-registration approved programmes, by type of programme - 1 September 2025



¹⁰ Our Council made the [decision](#) to add the annotation for podiatrists practising podiatric surgery in May 2012

