

Participation on DfE Training and Education Provision by Disability: Notes for Users

Overview

This document accompanies the infographic ‘Participation on DfE Training and Education Provision by Disability’ and provides additional information about the statistics presented.

Different measures are used across the provisions included in the infographic, namely occupancy, enrolments and participation. These measures are not directly comparable, and care should be taken when making comparisons between provisions.

Due to overlaps between provisions, figures should not be summed to produce an overall total. Users should take account of double counting when interpreting the statistics.

DfE does not fund all provision delivered by Northern Ireland (NI) Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) Colleges. In NI HEIs, DfE funding relates to maintaining fees at lower levels for NI and Republic of Ireland students, while some provision is delivered to students from outside these areas. NI FE provision may also be funded through programmes such as Step Up (Northern Ireland Office), the European Social Fund (ESF), and non-regulated courses, which may be self-funded.

Reference periods vary across the infographic.

The layout of the infographic has changed for 2024/25. Care should be taken when making visual comparisons with earlier editions.

Double Counting

Some provisions are presented in more than one chart within the infographic. For example, Essential Skills and Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) are delivered through FE colleges and are presented separately while also contributing to overall FE figures. In addition, HLAs delivered at NI HEIs are presented separately and contribute to overall NI HEI figures.

Users should take this overlap into account when interpreting the figures. As a result, figures presented across provisions should not be summed to produce an overall total.

Metrics Used

Different measures are used across the provisions presented in the infographic:

- **Occupancy:** ApprenticeshipsNI (AppsNI) and Skills for Life and Work (SfLW).
- **Enrolments:** Essential Skills in FE Colleges, FE Colleges and NI HEIs.
- **Participation:** HLAs in FE and NI HEIs.

Rounding

Figures presented in the infographic are rounded to the nearest hundred.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Provision Notes

ApprenticeshipsNI

The infographic presents AppsNI occupancy by disability status for August to October 2025.

Occupancy is the total number of participants on course at the end of each academic quarter.

Data source: Trainee and Apprenticeship Management System (TAMS).

Further information is available on the DfE [Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland Statistics](#) webpage.

Essential Skills in Further Education Colleges

The infographic presents enrolments on Essential Skills in FE Colleges by disability status for the 2024/25 academic year.

It should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as having two or more enrolments.

Data source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR).

Further information is available on the DfE [Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes](#) webpage.

Further Education Colleges

The infographic presents enrolments at FE Colleges by disability status for the 2024/25 academic year.

FE Colleges are the main providers of further education and training in NI. FE College enrolments include Essential Skills, HLAs, AppsNI and SflW activity in the FE sector. Higher Education (at level 4 and above) delivered across FE Colleges is also included. The enrolment figures presented in the infographic represent all regulated and non-regulated enrolments in FE Colleges during the academic year.

It should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as having two or more enrolments.

Data source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR).

Further information is available on the DfE [Further Education College Statistics](#) webpage.

Higher Level Apprenticeships in Further Education

The infographic presents participation in HLAs in FE by disability status for the 2024/25 academic year.

Participation refers to the total number of students enrolled on HLA programmes at FE Colleges and College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). This includes students in any year of an HLA programme.

Data source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR) and CAFRE.

Further information is available on the DfE [Higher Level Apprenticeships](#) webpage.

Higher Level Apprenticeships in NI Higher Education Institutions

The infographic presents participation in HLAs in NI HEIs by disability status for the 2024/25 academic year.

Participation refers to the total number of students enrolled on HLA programmes at HEIs in NI. This includes students in any year of an HLA programme.

Data source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Further information is available on the DfE [Higher Level Apprenticeships](#) webpage.

NI Higher Education Institutions

The infographic presents enrolments at NI HEIs by disability status for the 2024/25 academic year.

NI HEI enrolments include students enrolled on HLA programmes delivered by HEIs. It should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as having two or more enrolments.

Data source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

Further information is available on the DfE [Higher Education Enrolments](#) webpage.

Skills for Life and Work

The infographic presents SfLW occupancy by disability status for August to October 2025.

SfLW is a programme designed for young people aged 16-17, or under 22 years for those with a disability, and under 24 years for those who qualify under the Children (Leaving Care) Act (NI) (2002).

Occupancy is the total number of participants on course at the end of each academic quarter.

Data source: Trainee and Apprenticeship Management System (TAMS).

Further information is available on the DfE [Skills for Life and Work Statistics](#) webpage.

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