

Education annual report 2023-24

Executive Summary

This paper provides an addendum report to our [annual report for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years](#). The addendum sets out findings from our assessments of education providers and programmes in the 2023-24 academic year, and notes similarities and differences to the previous report. Taken together, the 2021-23 report and this addendum set out a 'state of the nation' for education and training in the 15 professions we regulate for the three academic cycles from September 2021 to August 2024.

We decided to produce an addendum report because our initial analysis for the 2023-24 report was not substantially different to that from the 2021-23 report. To produce this addendum we undertook the same level of analysis for each of the areas previously reported, but have either reported that findings from 2023-24 analysis support conclusions from the 2021-23 report and/or noted any new points from our analysis.

Building on the success of sector engagement linked to themes from the previous report, both the 2021-23 report and this addendum will be used to create materials for education providers across our standards. These materials will set out our regulatory requirements in these areas, and what we commonly see in programme management and delivery. Materials will be reviewed and updated yearly and education providers will be able to use them when developing new and existing programmes to understand our requirements and sector norms.

This paper includes the following for consideration:

- addendum to the 2021-23 Education annual report – 2023-24 academic year findings (including key statistics and detailed findings appendices); and
- appendix 1: Illustrative draft of resources for education providers.

Previous
consideration

In March 2024 the Education and Training Committee (ETC) approved the education annual report 2021-23 for publication and engagement.

On 11 September 2024 the ETC agreed the scope and focus of 2023-24 education reporting.

Decision	<p>The ETC is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) consider the main body of the addendum report (pages 1-20, but particularly the executive summary) and the illustrative draft of the resources for education providers (appendix 1); and b) approve the publication of the report and the creation of materials for sector stakeholders.
Next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production and publication of materials (quarter 3 2024-25) • Development and delivery of engagement plan (quarter 3 2024-25) • Findings from the 2021-23 report and the addendum report will be fed into the review of our standards of education and training (SETs) to consider if any standard development is required out of the findings.
Strategic priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop insight and exert influence • Promoting the value of regulation
Financial and resource implications	None – all activities are included within departmental workplans.
EDI impact and Welsh Language Standards	<p>The detailed findings in the report include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a section about EDI at approved education providers; and • information about Welsh language requirements of education providers in Wales.
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Addendum to the 2021-23 Education annual report – 2023-24 academic year findings

Executive summary

This report is an addendum to our [annual report for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years](#). It sets out findings from our assessments of education providers and programmes in the 2023-24 academic year and notes similarities and differences to the previous report. Taken together, the 2021-23 report and this addendum set out a 'state of the nation' for education and training in the 15 professions we regulate for the three academic cycles from September 2021 to August 2024.

Through this addendum report, we note the key findings from the 2021-23 report and explore where further findings support our conclusions and where there are any differences of note.

Key findings

Our key findings from the last report were:

- quality assurance is central to the work of education providers;
- education providers actively seek to understand and respond to challenges;
- partnership working is integral to the delivery of high-quality programmes;
- education providers are enabling workforce expansion by developing new and existing programmes;
- there were increases in overall programme capacity for most professions;
- education providers are responding to challenges with practice-based learning capacity;
- education providers routinely use data to inform decision making;
- the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant and lasting impact on the delivery of education and training;
- there are different approaches and challenges for Higher Education Institution (HEI) and non-HEI education providers;
- education providers have aligned their programmes with our revised standards of proficiency (SOPs); and
- good forward planning by education providers is required to ensure intended programme start dates can be met.

In this report, we have identified additional key findings as follows.

- Continued challenges with the financial sustainability of education providers and programmes.

- Intended programme learner number capacity is not always filled.
- The pipeline of academic staff is a challenge for education providers, meaning recruiting replacement or additional staff is sometimes difficult.
- 2023-24 was the first time we reviewed most Welsh education providers through our performance review monitoring assessments, following a commissioning exercise for programmes in many of our professions by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) in 2021. From this review, we saw how programmes had continued to align with the expectations of HEIW and how these expectations helped to drive a focus on quality.
- Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) awards¹ were given by the Office for Students (OfS) in 2023 and the work undertaken by education providers to respond to the TEF was helpful for them improving the quality of teaching.
- More education providers are considering the use of artificial intelligence within education and training.
- Revisions to programmes triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have become the 'new normal'.

The future

We have now concluded our first assessment of all HCPC-approved education providers, following the introduction of our current quality assurance model in September 2021. This means that all education providers have engaged at least once with our current model and that we have judged that education providers and programmes are performing as they need to in relation to our education standards. This also means that all education providers are now more familiar with our ongoing requirements and understand how to interact with us moving forward in line with the [principles](#) of our model.

We continue to be aware of challenges that lie ahead, particularly with:

- learner number expansions continuing at pace for many professions, to meet the needs of the population; and
- diversification of education and training routes, including a marked increase in work-based routes.

We are continuing to play our part in responding to challenges, ensuring we are working as far upstream as possible to understand what is happening in the health and care and education sectors, to help our stakeholders understand the current picture of education and training and to understand our standards, to ensure public protection.

¹ [TEF 2023 ratings - Office for Students](#)

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

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

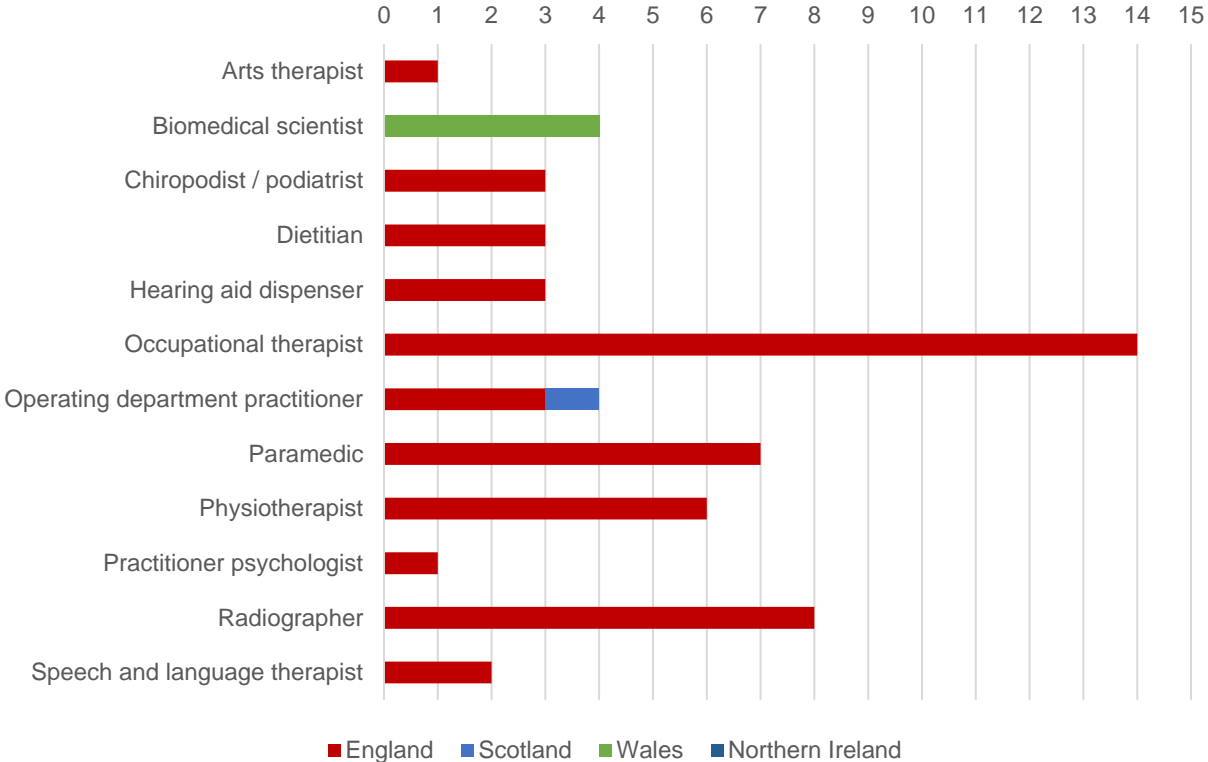


Figure 1 - Programmes considered in 2023-24, by nation and profession

Key findings

The following key findings from the 2021-23 report were supported by findings from the 2023-24 academic year:

- The key challenge for the sector was growth in the total capacity of approved programmes and the impact of this growth on practice-based learning and education provider resources (including staffing).
- There were common themes where further development was required by education providers for us to take assurance that our standards were met. Education providers were able to address shortfalls in the following areas, through further development of proposals:
 - **Capacity of practice-based learning** – linked to the bullet point above, recognising challenges within the sector, we tested the intentions to ensure that all learners would be able to undertake practice-based learning to support delivery of learning outcomes.
 - **Collaboration with partner organisations to support delivery of programmes** – considering how education providers were actively collaborating with their partners, both at strategic and operational levels. Commonly, this area included ownership of policies and process (such as learner support) and formal arrangements to manage relationships.
 - **Education providers securing appropriate resources for proposed programmes** – this area included education provider resources (such as physical learning space and resources to support learning) and staff resources (such as availability of teaching and support staff and practice educators).
 - **Design and delivery of the curriculum** – this covered a wide range of areas from delivery of the standards of proficiency to how curricula were designed to integrate theory and practice.

Quality activities, conditions and referrals

During approval assessments we sometimes need to explore in more detail whether or not a proposed programme meets our standards. This can be where there are gaps, or it can be to identify best practice that we can then share with the sector. We call these explorations ‘quality activities’.

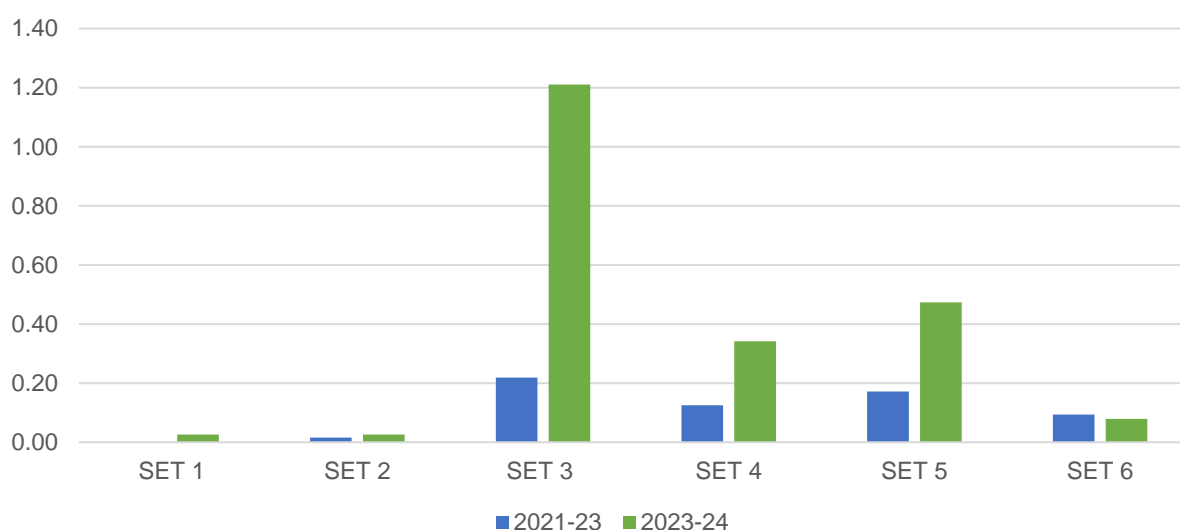


Figure 2 - Average number of quality activities per assessment, by SET area and report period

In 2023-24, we explored more areas on average per assessment than in 2021-23. The most significant differences were in SET 3 (programme governance, management and leadership), SET 5 (practice-based learning) and SET 4 (programme design and delivery). We explored these areas through quality activities because we were not assured from the education providers' initial documentary submission that relevant standards were met. The increase in the number of areas explored shows that education providers did not understand, or were not able to articulate how they met, our requirements in these areas. From our analysis, there does not appear to be an underlying reason for this linked to different approaches or different types of programmes. Our analysis for 2023-24 shows that the range of models proposed was proportionally consistent to 2021-23. As explored below, the areas that we picked up linked to these SET areas were often the same as in the 2021-23 period.

The main areas we explored through quality themes linked to the following areas of the standards of education and training (SET). This includes findings from 2021-23 which are supported by findings from 2023-24 and additional findings from 2023-24:

- SET 2 – programme admissions
 - Academic and professional entry requirements (new for 2023-24)

- SET 3 – programme governance, management and leadership
 - Collaboration with practice education partners
 - Availability and capacity of practice-based learning
 - Programme staffing and resources
 - Access to resources for learners
 - Use of data to inform decision making (new for 2023-24)

- SET 4 – programme design and delivery
 - Ongoing currency of the curriculum
 - Programme design, including alignment of the programme to our requirements for registration and integration of theory and practice
 - Management of the availability of artificial intelligence for learners (new for 2023-24)

- SET 5 – practice-based learning
 - Availability and preparedness of practice educators
 - Structure, duration and range of practice-based learning, enabling support of delivering learning outcomes
 - Learner support on practice-based learning (new for 2023-24)

- SET 6 – assessments
 - Assessment design, to ensure learners meet our requirements for registration

In most cases, we were confident with education provider approaches through exploration in quality activities. Where we were not, we set conditions. In 2023-24, conditions set were for one assessment, for which we recommended non-approval. This decision is pending at the time of writing.

In our previous education quality assurance model, we would often have set conditions on approval for these areas, especially when a further documentary submission was required. In the current model, we were able to work with providers further upstream to

fix issues before needing to set formal requirements. The low number of conditions set this year is a good demonstration of our ability to take regulatory action early, to ensure our standards are met through assessments.

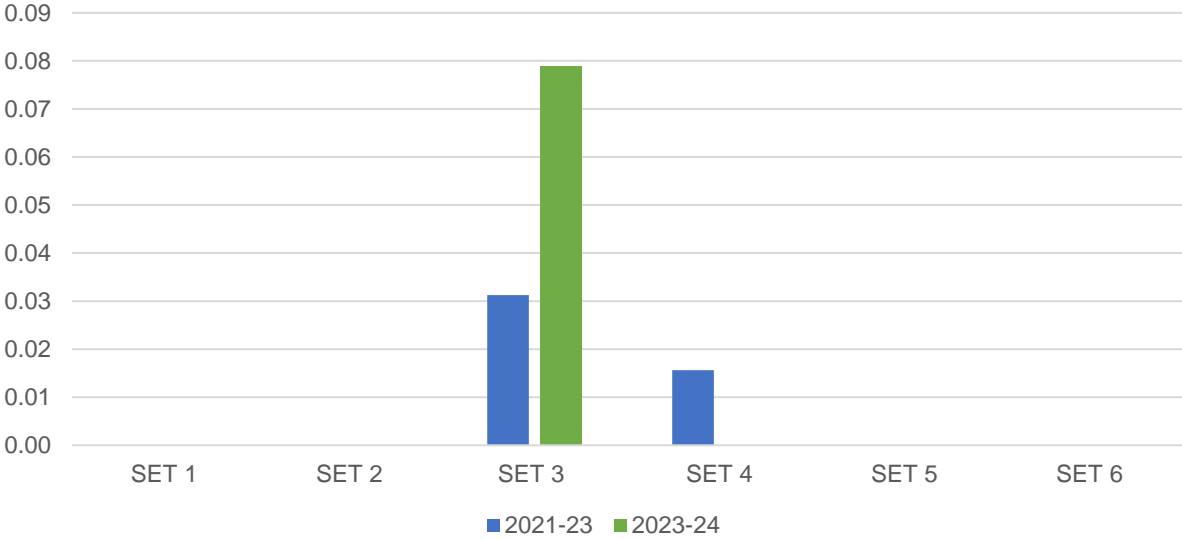


Figure 3 - Average number of referrals per assessment, by SET area and report period

We referred three areas through the approval process to the education provider’s next performance review process. In these cases we were confident that our standards were met at a threshold level, but there were specific areas that we considered important to pick up through future engagement. Due to the small number of referrals and these being case-specific, there are no themes to note across referrals, although we can see from the chart above that the proportion of assessments with referrals is broadly consistent across the two periods.

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 decide when we next need to engage with the education provider and set a review period of between one and five years. This is based on risks, potential issues and when those might need exploring. As part of this, 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 linked to these areas (normally in comparison to a benchmark) and over time whether there are changes in that performance.

We assessed 47 of the 126 HCPC approved education providers in the 2023-24 academic year. In the three academic years since we introduced our current education quality assurance model in September 2021, we have assessed all education providers

at least once, which means we can now confidently report on continued alignment with our standards for all education providers.

Key findings

The following key findings from the 2021-23 report were supported by findings from the 2023-24 academic year:

- **Quality assurance focus** – education providers were transparent throughout assessments, openly discussing the problems and challenges they had identified and what they were doing to resolve such issues. This showed a strong quality assurance and continuous improvement mindset, which is integral to quality assurance and enhancement. Consideration of the quality of programmes was also seen as integral to change and innovation. Education providers with strong centrally managed policies and common approaches across their provision were more easily able to reflect as an institution against the thematic portfolio areas.
- **Recognising and understanding challenges** – the sector is outward facing and aware of challenges from within and outside of the sector, such as cost of living, industrial action, emerging technology and an aging population. Challenges that directly or indirectly affect delivery of programmes were often well thought through and flexibly considered in line with established standards and frameworks (such as our education standards). Obligations to external organisations (such as other regulators and professional bodies) are also a key consideration for education providers.
- **Types of education providers and UK nations** – there was a clear split between the approach of higher education institutions (HEIs) and non-HEI education providers. HEIs normally have clear, well utilised structures (normally with a level of commonality across education providers) and non-HEIs lack similar structures, or have less ridged structures, with less commonality across education providers. HEIs also have external mechanisms, frameworks and standards to adhere to and non-HEIs may not as standard. This meant non-HEIs often needed to work harder to show good performance. There are also differences in influencers and approaches within the UK nations, with education, health and social care being devolved matters across the UK.
- **Partnership working** – strong partnerships are integral to sustainability and quality of programmes. Good partnership working is best underpinned by formal arrangements with clearly defined objectives, expectations and responsibilities, which are supported by formal engagement procedures.
- **Programme capacity** – education providers considered growth in overall capacity of programmes and the impact of this growth on practice-based learning and education provider resources (including staffing). Through performance review assessments, we were able to consider how education provider intentions worked in practice and could identify where there were challenges which needed more thought and attention from education providers. From our assessments, we were confident that education providers were growing their capacity in a reasonable way, considering the broader sector and external constraints such as the capacity of practice-based learning.

- **Education provider use of data** – all education providers use data in some way to inform their operations, whether that be learner data to inform learner support, financial data to plan, or other data sources and uses. However, linked to this area, 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).
- **COVID-19** – the COVID-19 pandemic was both a challenge to manage and a catalyst for change and innovation. This theme cut across many of the portfolio areas and we saw innovation in areas such as delivery of teaching, practice learning environments, simulation and learner support.
- **Alignment with our revised standards of proficiency** – all relevant education providers demonstrated alignment with the revised standards of proficiency (SOPs) through reflections on thematic changes to the standards and showed us how they reviewed their programmes to align with them from September 2023.
- **Shortfalls in education provider approaches** – in some areas, such as interprofessional education and service user and carer involvement, some education providers were less developed than we would expect. We picked up specifics through assessments and from these assessments are confident all education providers meet standards in these areas.

Additional findings from 2023-24 assessments:

- There were continued and at times acute issues with financial sustainability, which led some education providers to need to consider their staffing models and other areas linked to resourcing. Despite this, education providers often noted investment in their provision, particularly in physical resources. Some education providers referenced that international students were a key part of their financial plans, with the higher fees that international students pay.
- There were sometimes problems with education providers recruiting to their intended learner numbers. This shows that workforce development is not just about ensuring capacity numbers increase, but that it is also important to work upstream with potential future professionals to ensure HCPC professions are seen as attractive career options.
- The recruitment of academic staff continued to be an issue and education providers recognised their own contributions to developing the pipeline of academic staff.
- There continued to be shortfalls in interprofessional education and service user and carer involvement, which we needed to focus on through assessments. We often needed to consider developing arrangements and plans linked to these areas and referred to the next scheduled performance review, or in some cases a focused review assessment to enable us to understand how plans would be delivered:
 - interprofessional education – we explored this area through quality activities for five education providers (about a tenth of education

- providers) and referred areas to other processes for further assessments for six education providers; and
 - service user and carer involvement – we explored this area through quality activities for nine education providers (about a fifth of education providers) and referred areas to other processes for further assessments for eight education providers.
- We reviewed five HEIs in Wales in this academic year. Much health professional training² was recommissioned by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) in 2021 and we reviewed this provision in the 2021-22 academic year through the approval or focused review process. We decided to review all Welsh education providers affected by the commissioning exercise through performance review in the 2023-24 academic year. This enabled education providers to embed their new or changed programmes and undertake good reflection on the performance of those programmes. We noted the following points for these education providers:
 - commissioning arrangements with HEIW were central to the continued financial sustainability of relevant programmes;
 - HEIW was a key partner when developing provision and education providers needed to report metrics and other information to HEIW, linked to quality (including in practice-based learning);
 - there is an All-Wales Placement Reference Group overseen by HEIW, which enables national practice-based learning allocations;
 - the Reference Group also includes a set of pledges co-produced by education providers to help empower positive learning experiences in practice-based learning;
 - HEIW requires that interprofessional education (IPE) contributes to 20 per cent of the curriculum as part of their commissioning arrangements; and
 - the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr) replaced the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) in August 2024 and is now responsible for regulating institutions and funding for higher education (amongst other areas)³ in Wales.
- The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is an English ‘scheme run by the Office for Students (OfS) that aims to encourage higher education providers to improve and deliver excellence in the areas that students care about the most: teaching, learning and achieving positive outcomes from their studies’⁴. TEF awards were given in 2023 and several education providers reflected on how their TEF submission had helped them to drive improvements in teaching.
- More education providers explicitly drew 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.

² HCPC professions commissioned were biomedical scientists, chiropractors/podiatrists, dietetics, hearing aid dispensers, occupational therapy, operating department practice, paramedics, physiotherapy, radiography and speech and language therapy

³ [Home - Medr](#)

⁴ [About the Teaching Excellence Framework \(TEF\) - Office for Students](#)

- Revisions to programmes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as blended delivery approaches, are now embedded into programmes and we will no longer ask education providers to reflect on this area moving forwards.

Quality activities and referrals

During performance review assessments, we sometimes need to explore areas in more detail to consider education provider performance. These can be where there are gaps, or to identify best practice that we can then share with the sector. We call these explorations 'quality activities'.

The following table presents the number of quality themes and referrals linked to each portfolio area and is provided to show changes to the areas that we needed to explore further with education providers through our assessments.

Portfolio area	Quality activities		Referred to performance review		Referred to focused review	
	2021-23	2023-24	2021-23	2023-24	2021-23	2023-24
Resourcing, including financial stability	24%	17%	8%	4%	1%	2%
Partnerships with other organisations	20%	2%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Academic and placement quality (2021-23 only)	22%	N/A	8%	N/A	2%	N/A
Academic quality (2023-24 only)	N/A	15%	N/A	2%	N/A	0%
Placement quality (2023-24 only)	N/A	13%	N/A	2%	N/A	0%
Interprofessional education	18%	11%	5%	13%	0%	0%
Service users and carers	27%	19%	16%	13%	0%	4%
Equality and diversity	20%	0%	4%	2%	0%	0%
Horizon scanning	19%	4%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Embedding the revised HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs)	9%	19%	0%	4%	0%	2%
Impact of COVID-19 (2021-23)/Learning and developments from the COVID-19 pandemic (2023-24)	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods	13%	4%	1%	2%	0%	0%
Apprenticeships In England	9%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies (2021-23 only)	10%	N/A	1%	N/A	0%	N/A
Office for Students (OfS)	3%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Performance of newly commissioned provision in Wales (2023-24 only)	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	N/A	0%
Other professional regulators/professional bodies	5%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Curriculum development	15%	0%	3%	2%	0%	0%
Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Capacity of practice-based learning (programme/profession level)	19%	9%	3%	4%	0%	0%
Learners	19%	4%	1%	4%	0%	0%
Practice placement educators	12%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
External examiners	8%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Data	0%	4%	3%	0%	0%	0%

Figure 4 - proportion of quality activities and referrals for assessments, by report period

For the 2023-24 academic year, the areas most often referred to other processes were:

- service user and carer involvement (eight referrals) – we require that service users and carers are involved in programmes in some way and usually referred this area when involvement was under development or changing;
- interprofessional education (six referrals) – we require that learners are able to learn with and from, learners and professionals in other relevant professions and normally referred this area when approaches were underdeveloped or changing; and
- resourcing, including financial stability (three referrals) – we require that programmes are sustainable and fit for purpose to enable all learners on programmes to complete their education and training and usually referred this area when there were changes in resource modelling or increases in learner numbers.

In the previous report, we found that areas linked to academic and placement quality were referred nine times. For 2023-24 portfolios, we split this area into two distinct areas (academic quality and placement quality), which enabled more focused reflection by education providers on each distinct area. The previous finding of nine referrals was not mirrored this year, which may be influenced by the split in the portfolio enabling more focused reflection.

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 data is telling us and how the education provider considers data in their quality assurance processes; and
- if there are any specific development(s) or risk(s) that will impact at a specific time.

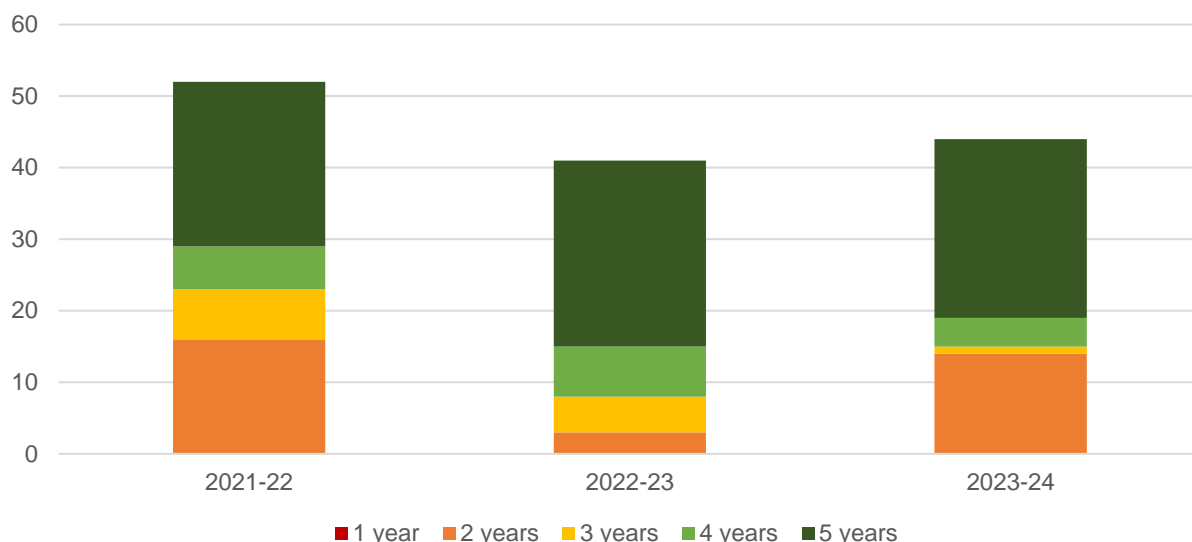


Figure 5 - Performance review assessment review period decisions - by academic year

In 2023-24, we set two-year review periods for a higher number of education providers when compared to 2023-24. This is due to education providers who received a two-year review period in the 2021-22 academic year being reviewed again in 2023-24. Most of these education providers are not included in external data returns and did not establish mechanisms to supply us with equivalent data through their performance review assessment, meaning the maximum review period we could set was two years.

For education providers included in external data returns, review periods were set at five years for 63% of education providers. We set this review period when:

- the education provider was high performing, from data, intelligence and based on the findings from our review;
- any immediate issues raised through assessments were dealt with by the education provider; and
- any remaining issues did not need to be addressed before a five-year review period.

Reasons for setting shorter review periods were normally due to:

- a significant change planned by the education provider which might impact on a range of our standards, which we considered needs reviewing along a shortened period to ensure any risks associated with changes were properly managed; and/or
- low data scores, to ensure actions defined by education providers were progressed to manage risks.

Concerns and issues

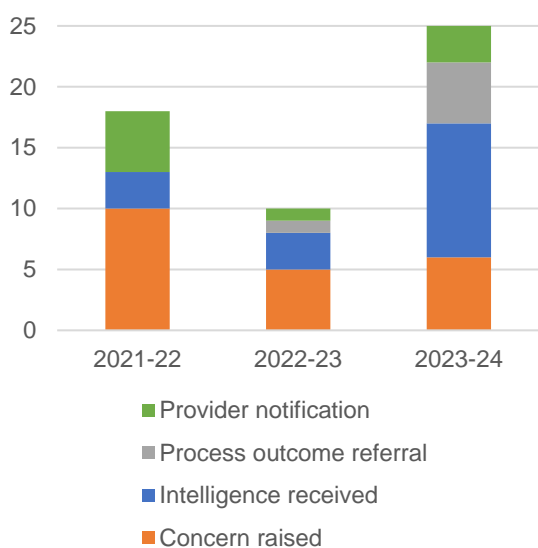
We listen to concerns and issues raised to us by external parties and are able to identify potential issues and concerns ourselves from the data and intelligence we receive. We consider concerns that might impact how our standards of education and training

(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.

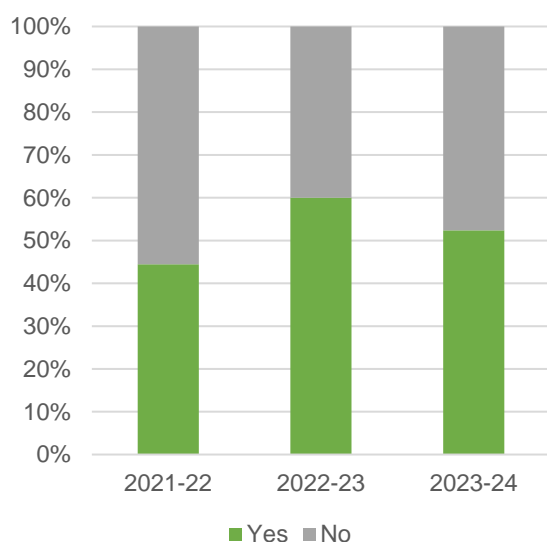
Statistics on process application

Source of process trigger



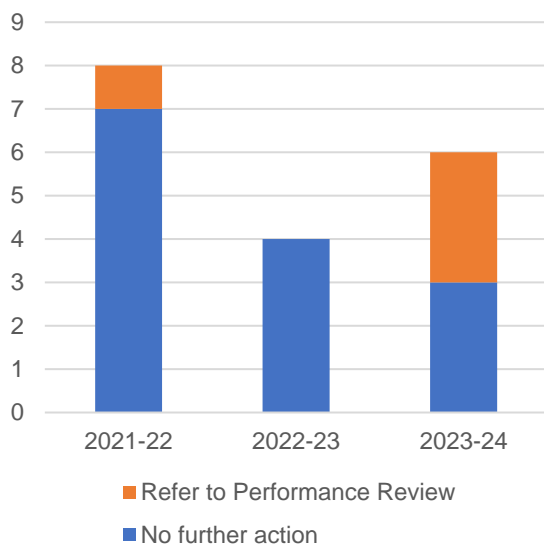
- We trigger focused review assessments from a range of sources, including referrals from our own assessments.
- In the 2023-24 academic year, the highest proportion of triggers were from us receiving intelligence, which is change from the previous report, where the highest proportion was concerns raised – normally these concerns were from learners.
- This change is linked to us establishing new acceptance criteria for learner concerns, which we have applied from September 2023. This means that we did not normally consider concerns raised when the contact had not followed education providers’ concerns or complaints policies.

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.

Review outcomes



- In 2023-24 we referred a higher number of focused review cases to the performance review process.
- This is a standard outcome for focused review assessment and is used when we consider that an area of concern has been addressed at this time, but when we would like to keep the concern in mind for future reviews.

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 identifies risks, we can trigger some form of engagement with education providers;
- risk-based – have an evidence-based understand 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 to 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.

Engagement with other bodies

We have continued to become a more active partner in the sector in 2023-24, with the aim to understand the sector to contextualise our assessments. Our professional body/HPC education forum group has continued to meet, to share information to support and assure high quality education and training in the HPC-regulated professions. 22 professional bodies are 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 five professional bodies and are working with several others to enable more structured and consistent information sharing through our assessments.

Year in registration survey 2024

We run a yearly survey to seek the views of those who have been HCPC-registered for a year. This survey focuses on respondents' education and training programmes, how this prepared them to practice and their first year in employment. We integrate insight from results into our education quality assurance activities and inform focus areas for our Policy and Standards and Professionalism and Upstream Regulation teams. For example, we used findings linked to interprofessional education and service user involvement in the academic setting to inform the questions we asked of education providers through their performance review portfolio submissions.

We most recently undertook this exercise in the summer of 2024. Over 2,000 individuals responded to this survey, across all professions and nations/regions.

In the most recent survey, agree responses significantly outweighed disagree responses for all questions, which is a positive finding. Results for education and training preparing learners for practice were particularly positive, with five per cent or less of respondents disagreeing with each statement.

Consistently with the last three surveys, too many respondents noted they had no interprofessional education within their academic learning (which links to SET 4.9) and that service user involvement was not visible/embedded within their programmes (linking to SET 3.7). We have developed our ask through performance review portfolios in line with these responses and this links to the problems reported in the [performance review section](#) of this report, meaning there is still work to be done on these two areas with education providers.

In the 2024 survey, we noted that:

- programme and staff interaction was an area where we saw lower agreement rates to statements; and
- feedback on academic work being timely and helpful were also statements more frequently disagreed with.

We consider that the above could be linked to education providers considering their staffing arrangements and the challenges in recruiting new academic staff, which has at times led to reducing staff numbers.

Respondents remained likely to recommend their programme to a friend or family member (74% in 2024 compared to 76% in 2023) and the percentage of those who would not recommend their programme was maintained at 11%. Although the data shows this has remained consistent, this may be a concerning finding for our sector partners when considering workforce planning.

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.

In 2023-24, we have:

- added the following areas to performance review portfolios, to enable a better understanding of education provider performance linked to our standards:
 - admissions – enables education providers to reflect on how their admissions policies and processes have developed;
 - learner support – enables education providers to reflect on how their learner support policies and processes have developed;
 - staff and practice educator development – enables education providers to reflect on how mechanisms for staff development have developed;
 - impact of workforce planning – enables education providers to specifically reflect on the impact of workforce planning, as relevant to plans within the four UK nations. This was often covered within the ‘resourcing, including financial stability’ section, but not all education providers specifically reflected on workforce plans, so we decided to draw this out into a separate portfolio area;
 - revised HCPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics – enables education providers to demonstrate how they have embedded the revised standards within their programmes for learners commencing from September 2024;
 - learner safety in paramedic practice-based learning environments – enables reflection by paramedic education providers about learner safety in practice-based learning environments, considering the evidence available which shows this is an issue particularly prevalent in paramedic practice-based learning environments;
 - strategic approach to gathering feedback – we have always captured feedback from specific groups. Adding this area enables education providers to reflect on how their approach to gathering, analysing and acting on feedback has developed; and
 - strategic approach to using data to inform quality – we have always used available data points, asked education providers to supply specific data and asked education providers to reflect on this data through their portfolios. Adding this area enables education providers to reflect on how their use of data has developed, to inform quality.
- included a contact updates form in the performance review portfolio to ensure our records are up to date for contacts at education providers and programmes;
- developed [information](#) for education providers who are not included in external data returns to enable them to establish regular reporting of data to us. This will enable education providers to increase their monitoring period from the current two year ceiling applied to education providers who are not in data returns;
- produced a clear statement defining which non-UK based programmes we can and cannot consider for approval;

- further developed internal quality assurance measures, specifically additional monthly checks based on clear metrics, to improve our assessment processes and the application of those processes;
- added process steps so we ensure we have a current record of the education provider 'baseline' (a description of how they meet institution level standards); and
- developed data capture for programmes to include the 'model of learning' to enable proactive analysis of trends.

Future areas of focus

We continue to focus on the areas noted in the previous report, as follows:

- Workforce expansion – within 2023-24, we produced [information for education providers](#), to help them understand our regulatory approach and to share insight about our [approval of apprenticeship programmes](#). We are continuing to engage with the sector to help with workforce expansion, in keeping with our regulatory role.
- Implementation of our revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics – within 2023-24, we communicated our requirements with education providers, namely that they needed to review their programmes to deliver the revised standards to new cohorts from September 2024. We will assess alignment with the revised standards through our performance review assessments and will be able to report on this area in our next annual report.
- Review of our standards of education and training – we have now commenced this review and have begun work with stakeholders to define changes needed. This is a multi-year piece of work and we will decide when education providers need to meet the revised standards as a part of our activities. This will depend on how substantial changes are, to enable education providers to work to meeting revised standards in a reasonable timeframe.

We have concluded the final year of performance review assessments, from our three year programme of assessments following the introduction of our current quality assurance model in September 2021. Findings from the final year of reviews are included in this report (and the [performance review section](#) of the appendix). We now move into business as usual with performance review assessments and will undertake these reviews based on the periods established with each education provider through the initial programme of assessment.

We have identified the following additional areas that we will focus on in the coming years.

- Proactive review of education provider performance data – Moving out of the three year period post model implementation, we will now focus on proactively reviewing external education provider performance data at the point of supply. This will enable us to pick up potential problems within the data and to work with education providers where there may be issues with their performance.
- National/regional engagement refresh – As above, moving out of the three year period post model implementation, we now have the opportunity to focus on better engagement with education providers and other stakeholders within each

nation and English region. This will enable us to fulfil our commitments to be a good partner in the sector, to continue to build trusted relationships to undertake more effective quality assurance.

- 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 good independent regulatory decisions, whilst considering the work of others to reduce the burden for 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. There is a drive for this in the sector currently, with the Council of Deans of Health (CoDoH) calling for reducing regulatory overlap in their manifesto work for the 2024 general election.
- 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 have produced a [document](#) to help education providers consider this area, aligning to our regulatory standards and requirements and signposting to resources produced by other organisations. We will consider how education providers are responding to this area through performance reviews from the 2024-25 academic year onwards and will be able to report on this in the next annual report.
- Paramedic practice-based learning – Within the paramedic education sector, expectations about the range of practice-based learning for paramedic pre-registration programmes have evolved over time, meaning that most organisations now expect some form of non-ambulance practice-based learning. When developing our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for paramedics, we introduced new requirements and some existing standards that were unchanged can be understood differently due to the range of settings in which a paramedic can now practice. With other organisations taking a clearer position on their expectations for non-ambulance experience in paramedic education and training programmes, we decided to review this area and come to a clear position on the subject. We have produced [advice](#) on this area and will require reflections through our regular performance review monitoring process from the 2025-26 academic year.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion developments – We are undertaking work to clearly define normal and good practice for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practices in education for our regulated professions, linked to our standards of education and training (SETs). This will enable consistent judgements to be made about education provider/programme compliance with the SETs linked to EDI. The outcomes of this work will also feed into our SETs review for any required development linked to EDI across the SETs.
- 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 will ask questions linked to this area through engagement with our regular performance review monitoring assessments and will be able to report on this area further in the next report.

Appendix A – 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

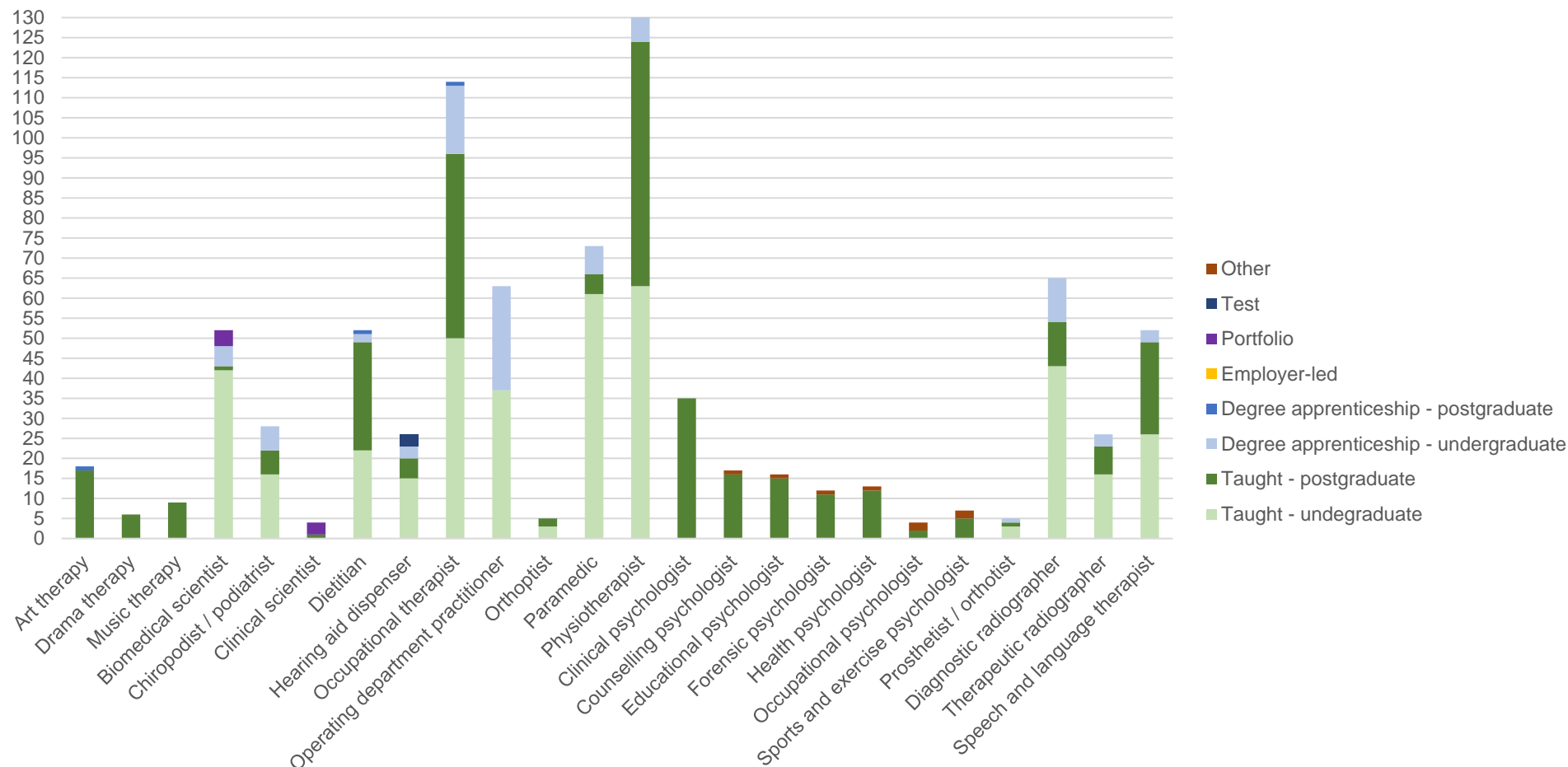


Figure 6 - Pre-registration approved programmes, by type of programme - 1 September 2024

We have seen growth in the overall number of programmes in the 2023-24 academic year by a total of 39 programmes (5 per cent growth overall). Some professions have grown more significantly:

- Orthoptist – 20 per cent growth (however due to small numbers this was only one additional programme)
- Therapeutic radiographer – 15 per cent growth (four additional programmes)
- Diagnostic radiographer – 12 per cent growth (eight additional programmes)
- Biomedical scientist – 10 per cent growth (five additional programmes)
- Hearing aid dispenser – 8 per cent growth (two additional programmes)
- Paramedic – 7 per cent growth (five additional programmes)
- Art therapist – 6 per cent growth (however due to small numbers this was only one additional programme)
- Speech and language therapist – 6 per cent growth (three additional programmes)

There were smaller percentage increases for chiropodist/podiatrist, dietitian, occupational therapist and physiotherapist programmes. Programme numbers for the remaining professions/modalities did not grow.

Growth in programme numbers often did not translate to the percentage level of growth for the capacity of learner numbers. For all professions except art therapists, 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 expect to see the shift to more apprenticeship provision continue to be developed as part of the sector's response to the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (in 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 capacity⁵ 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.

⁵ 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 2024)					Learner number capacity	New programmes (first intake in the 2023-24 academic year)						
	Taught	Apprenticeship	% apprenticeship	Other	Total		Taught	Apprenticeship	% apprenticeship	Other	Total	Growth in prog numbers %	Growth in learner number capacity
Arts therapist	32	1	3%	0	33	917	0	1	100%	0	1	3%	4%
<i>Art therapy</i>	17	1	6%	0	18	611	0	1	100%	0	1	6%	7%
<i>Drama therapy</i>	6	0	0%	0	6	134	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Music therapy</i>	9	0	0%	0	9	172	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Biomedical scientist	43	5	10%	4	52	2837	5	0	0%	0	5	10%	2%
Chiropodist/podiatrist	22	6	21%	0	28	1131	0	1	100%	0	1	4%	1%
Clinical scientist	1	0	0%	3	4	970	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Dietitian	49	3	6%	0	52	1764	1	0	0%	0	1	2%	1%
Hearing aid dispenser	20	3	12%	3	26	877	1	0	0%	1	2	8%	6%
Occupational therapist	96	18	16%	0	114	6031	1	0	0%	0	1	1%	0%
Operating department practitioner	37	26	41%	0	63	2455	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
Orthoptist	5	0	0%	0	5	276	1	0	0%	0	1	20%	7%
Paramedic	66	7	10%	0	73	6923	1	4	80%	0	5	7%	3%
Physiotherapist	124	13	9%	0	137	8303	4	3	43%	0	7	5%	2%
Practitioner psychologist	97	0	0%	8	105	3595	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%

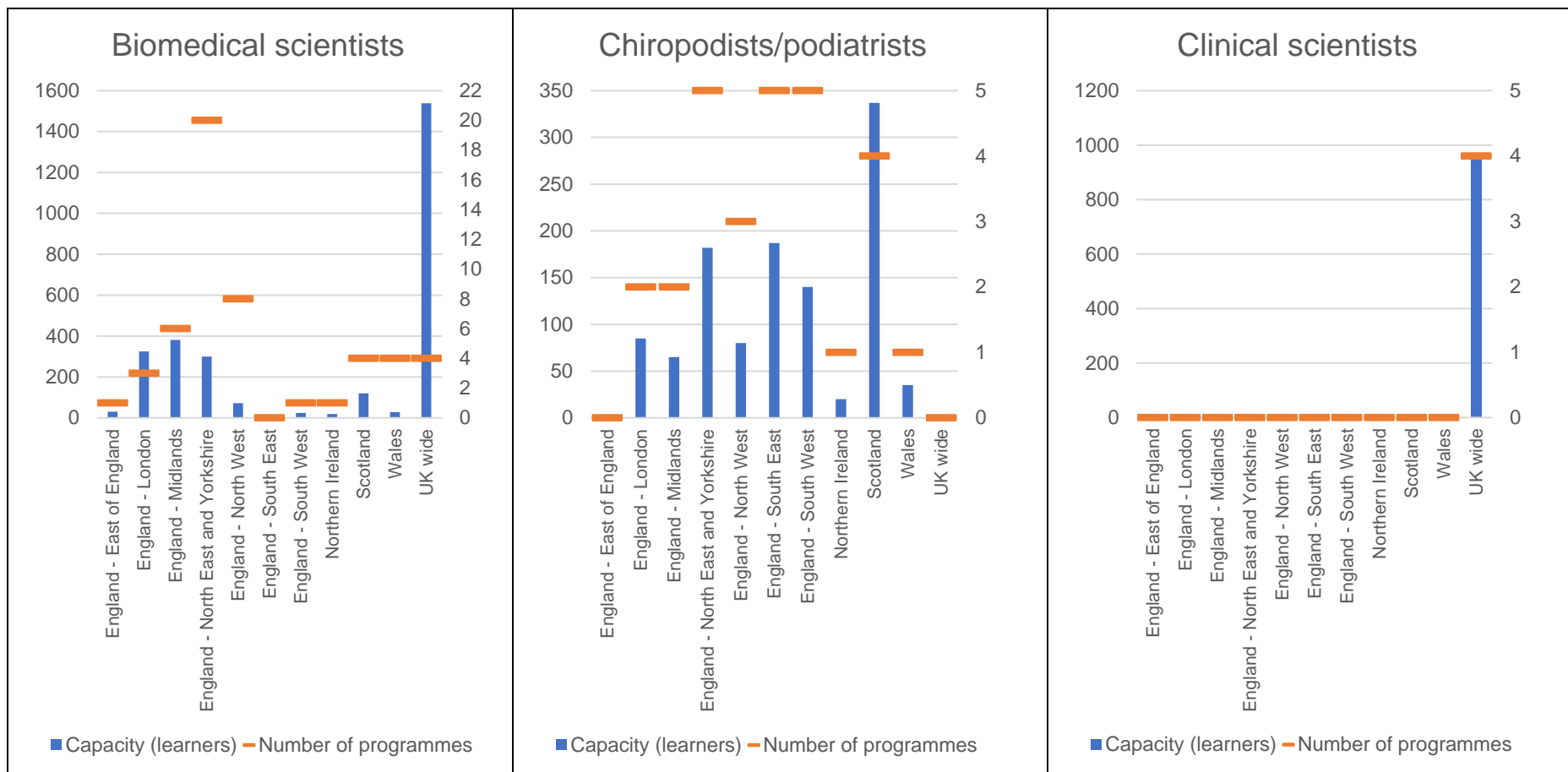
Programme type	Approved programmes (1 September 2024)					Learner number capacity	New programmes (first intake in the 2023-24 academic year)						
	Taught	Apprenticeship	% apprenticeship	Other	Total		Taught	Apprenticeship	% apprenticeship	Other	Total	Growth in prog numbers %	Growth in learner number capacity
<i>Educational psychologist</i>	15	0	0%	1	16	397	0	0	NA	0	0	0%	0%
<i>Forensic psychologist</i>	11	0	0%	1	12	493	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	77	14	15%	0	91	5538	11	1	8%	0	12	13%	7%
<i>Diagnostic radiographer</i>	54	11	17%	0	65	4511	7	1	13%	0	8	12%	5%
<i>Therapeutic radiographer</i>	23	3	12%	0	26	1027	4	0	0%	0	4	15%	13%
Speech and language therapist	49	3	6%	0	52	2580	2	1	33%	0	3	6%	3%
Total	722	100	12%	18	840	44337	27	11	28%	1	39	5%	2%

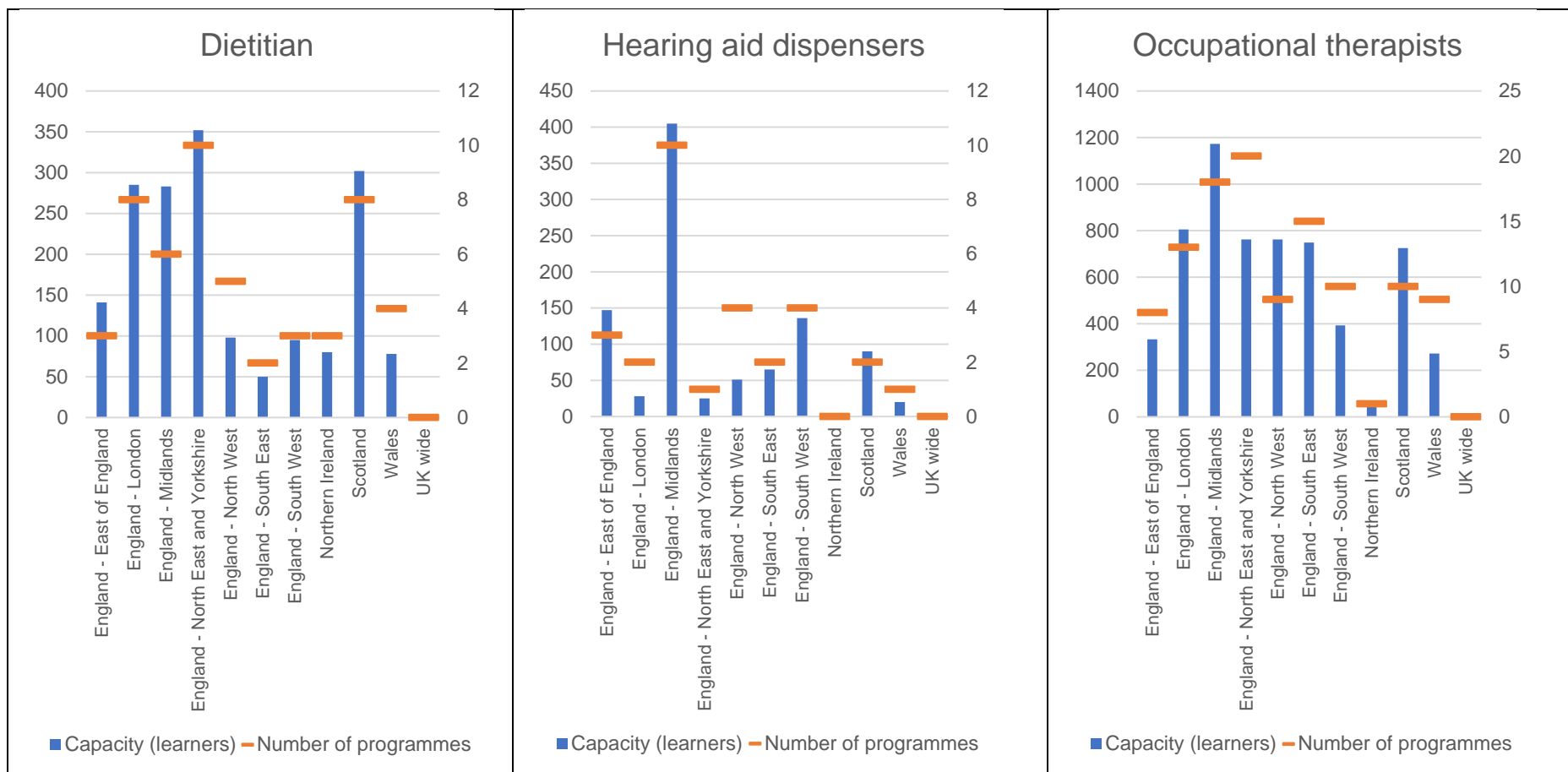
Nations and regions

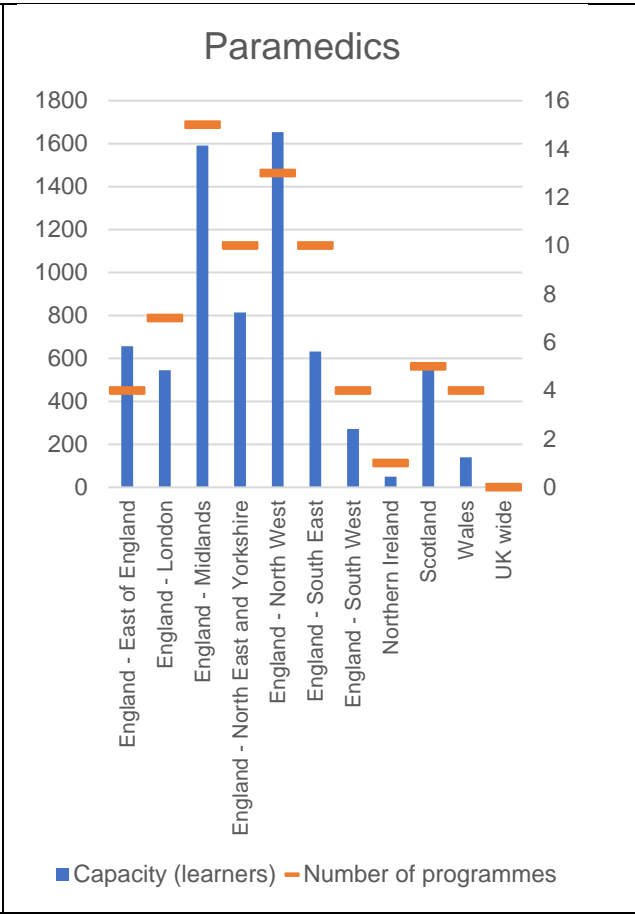
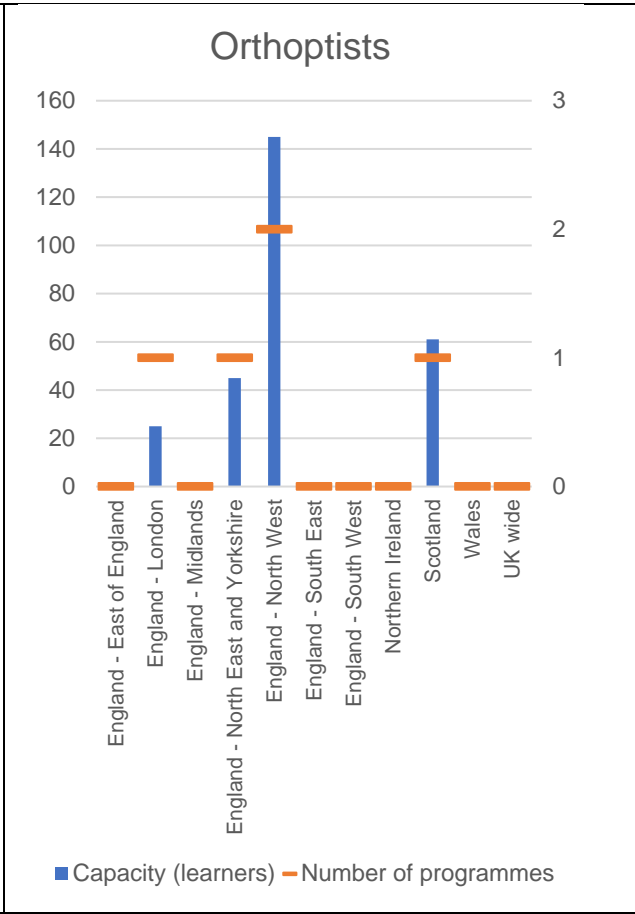
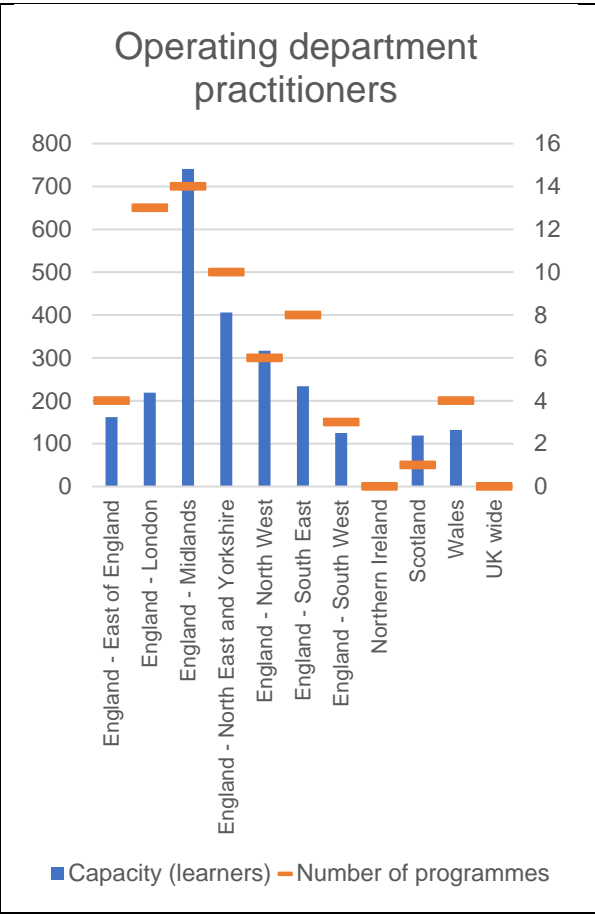
We have produced the following charts, which show learner number capacity (blue bars) and the number of approved programmes (orange lines) in each nation and English region. These charts are provided to give insight into the current national and regional picture within professions.

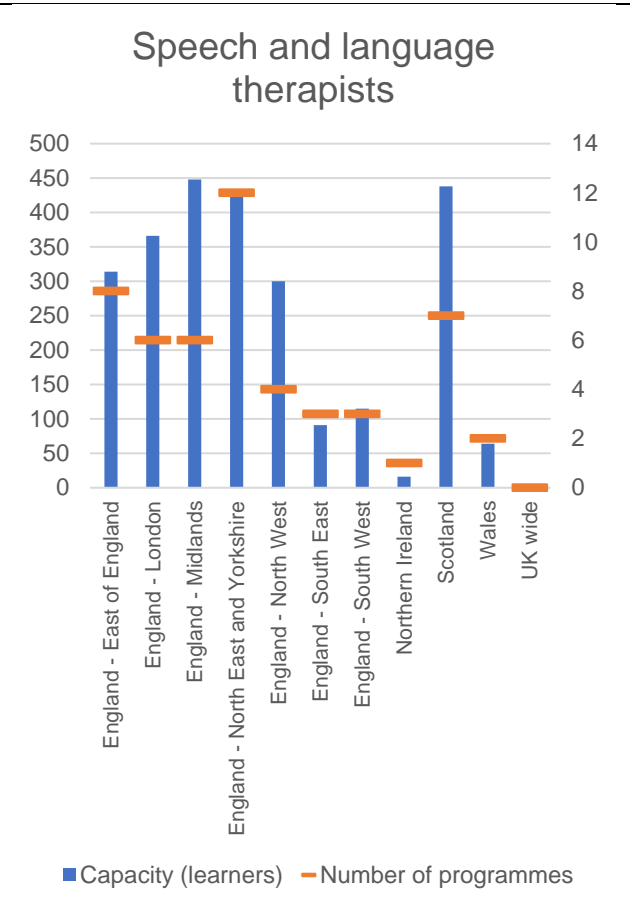
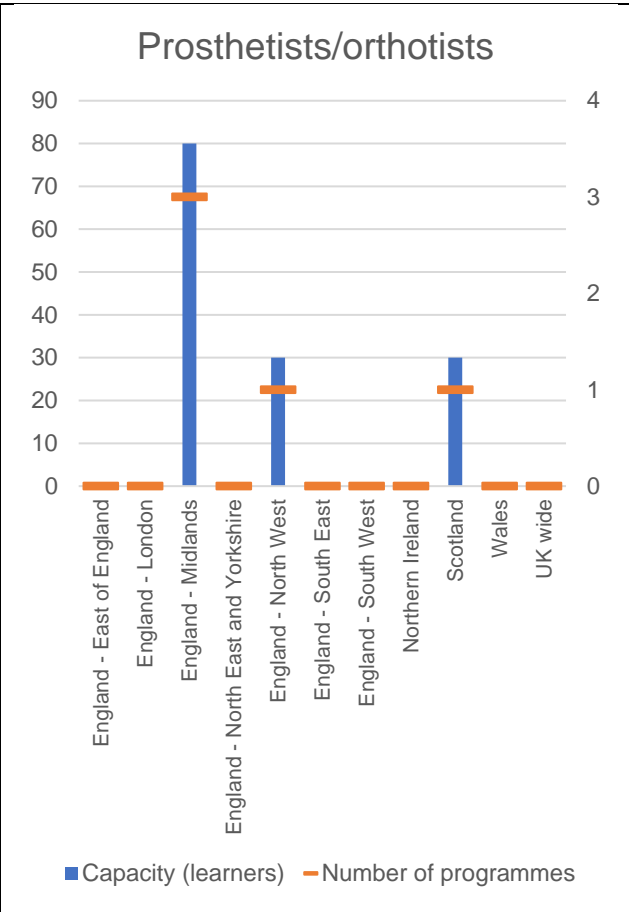
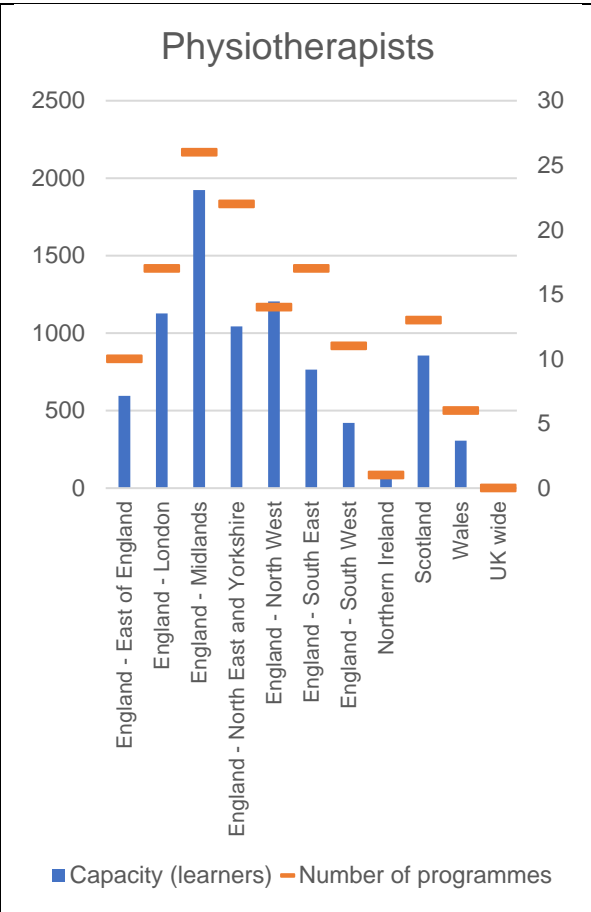
From the charts, the total capacity of programmes can be understood vs the number of programmes. There is variance in programme sizes – we can see similar programme numbers within nations/regions with a range of programme capacities. There will be a range of reasons for differences, but there may be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

Professions without modalities



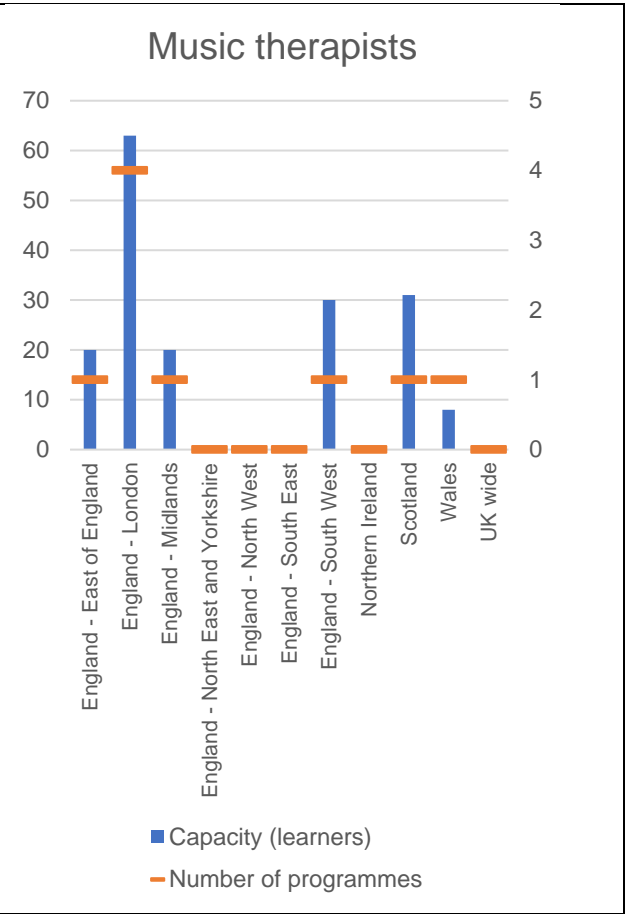
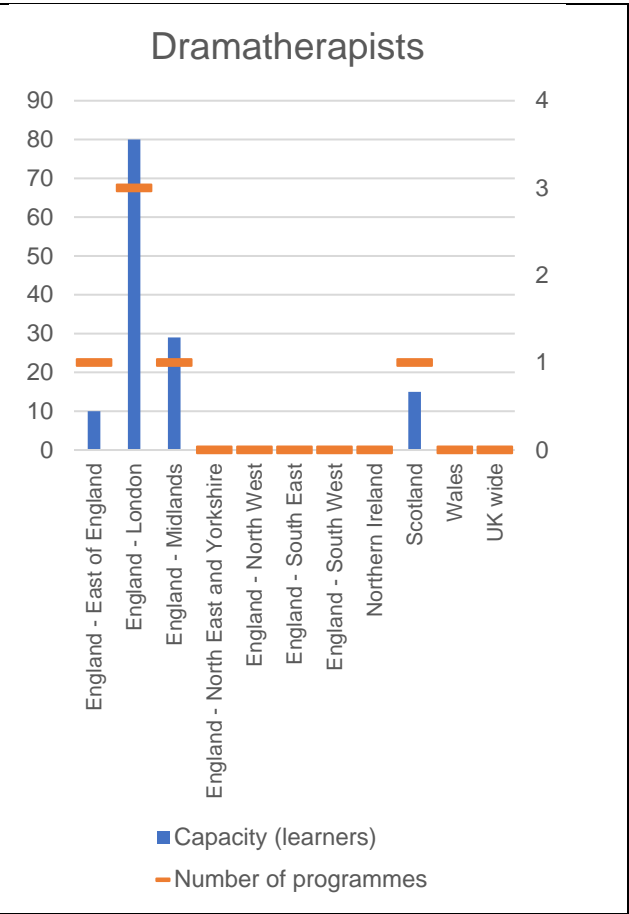
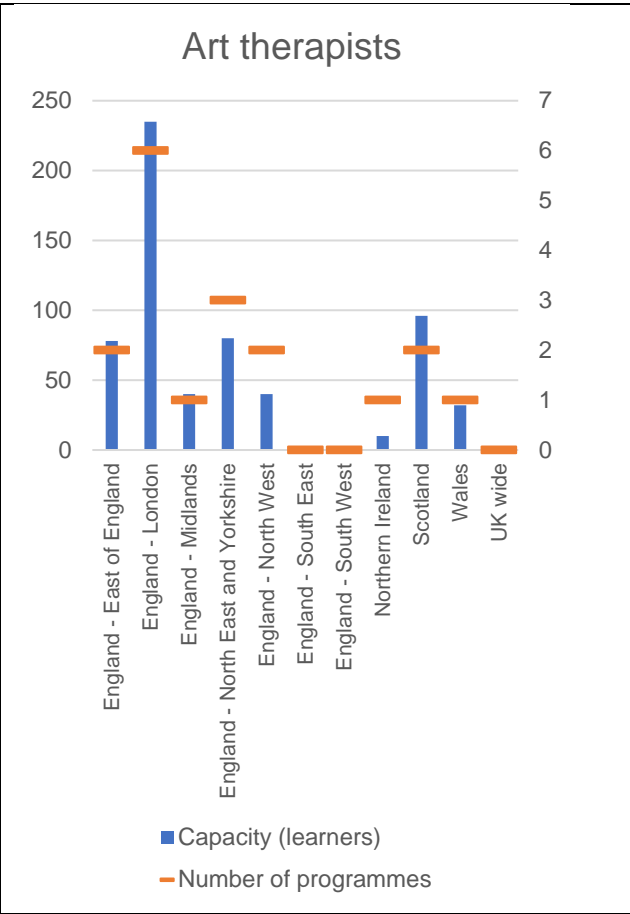


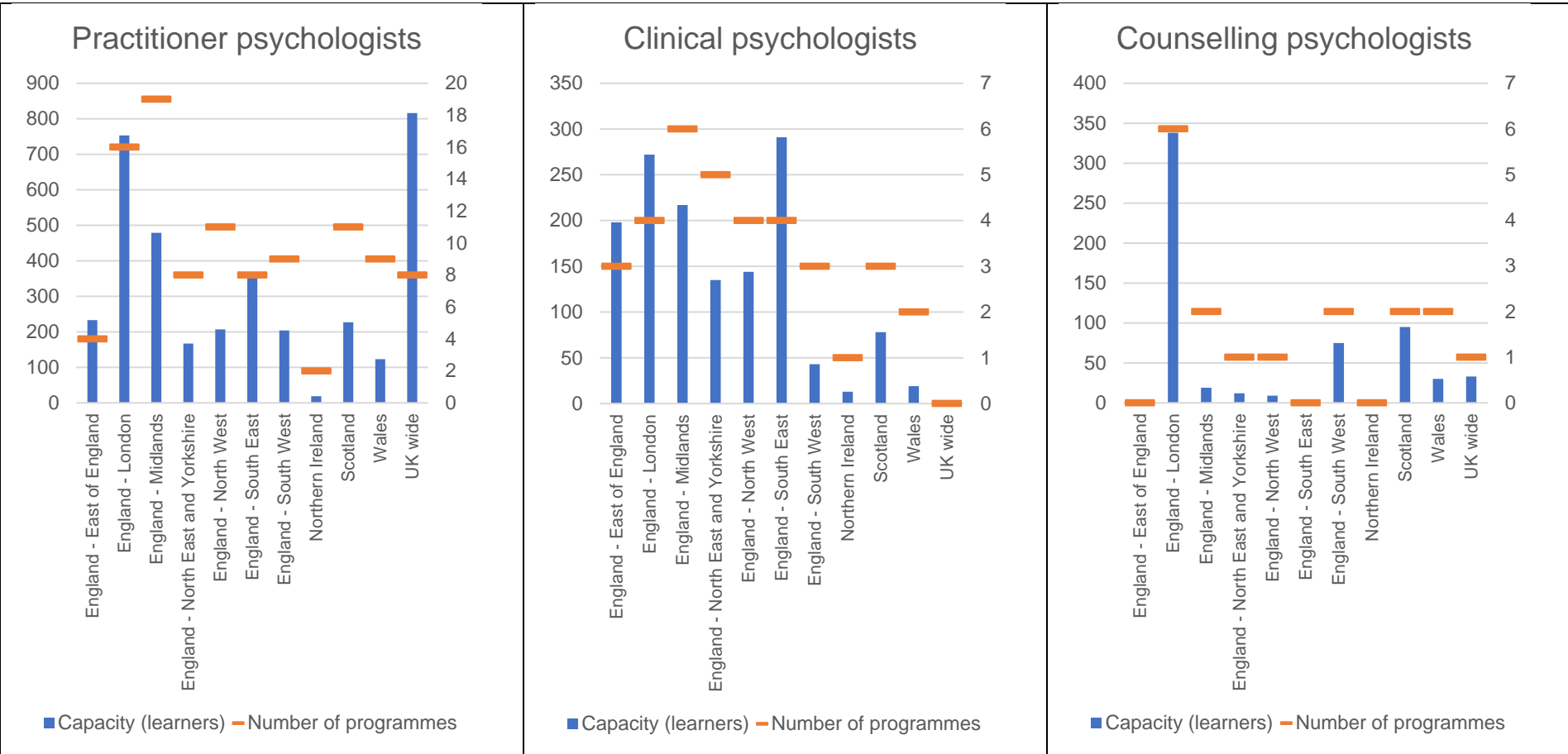


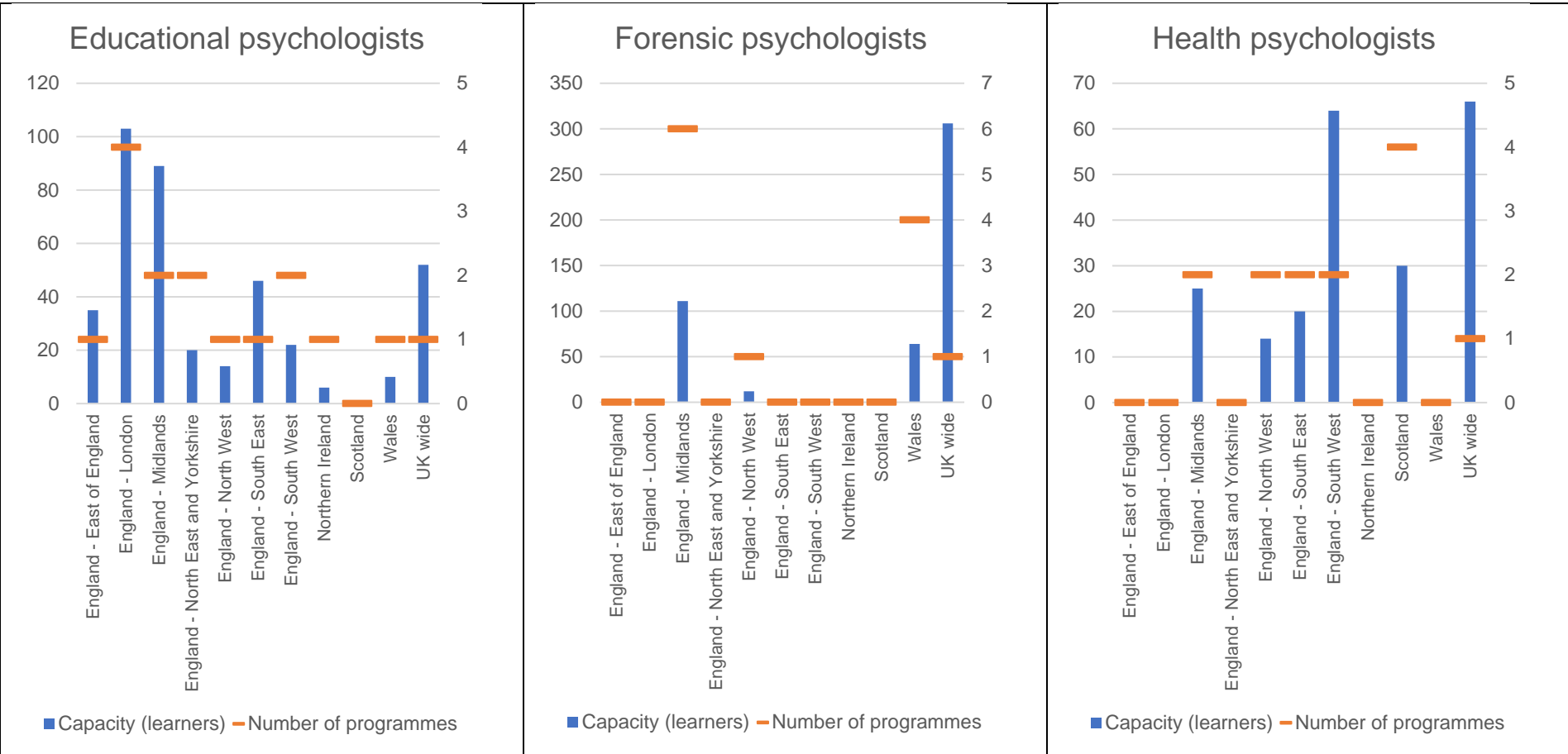


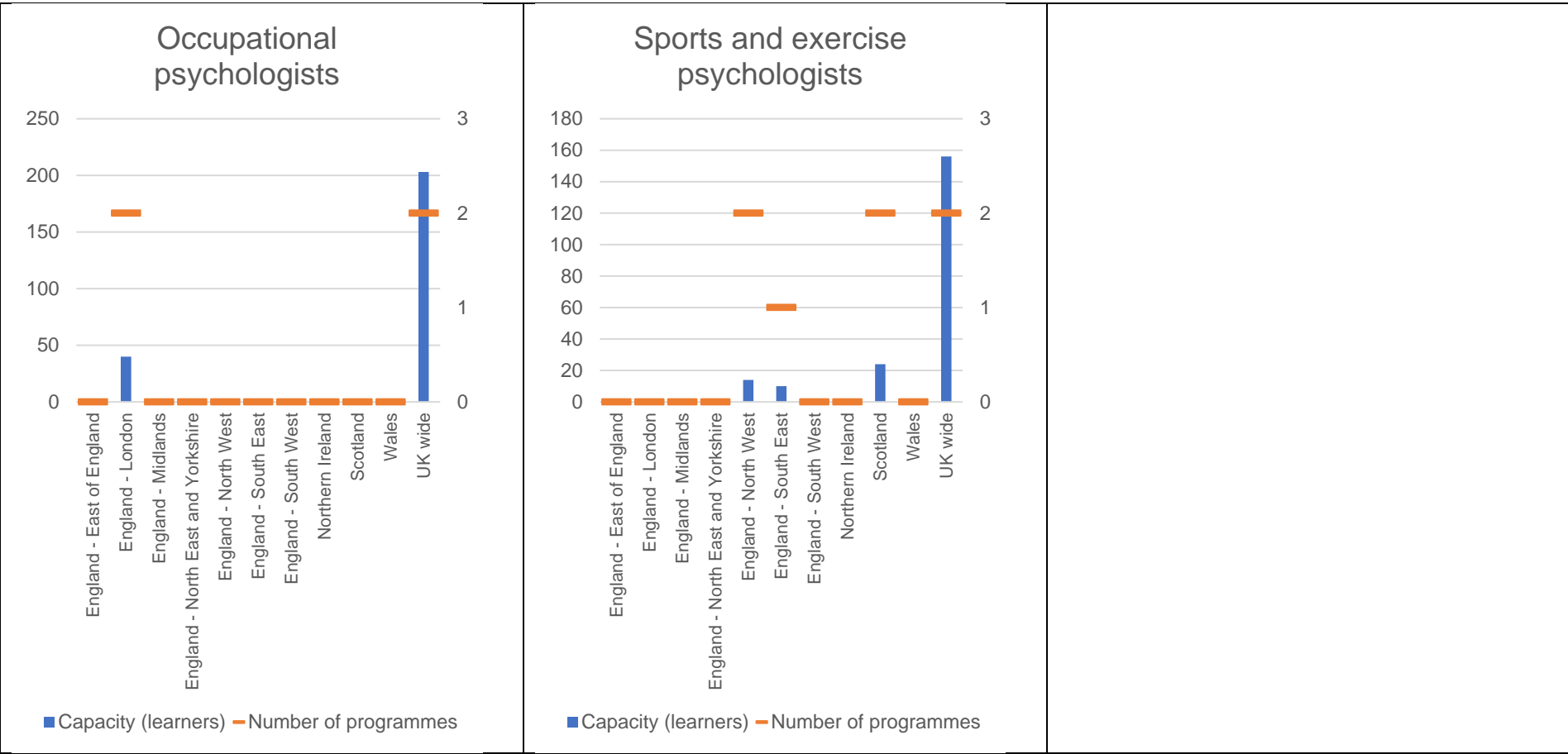
Professions with modalities

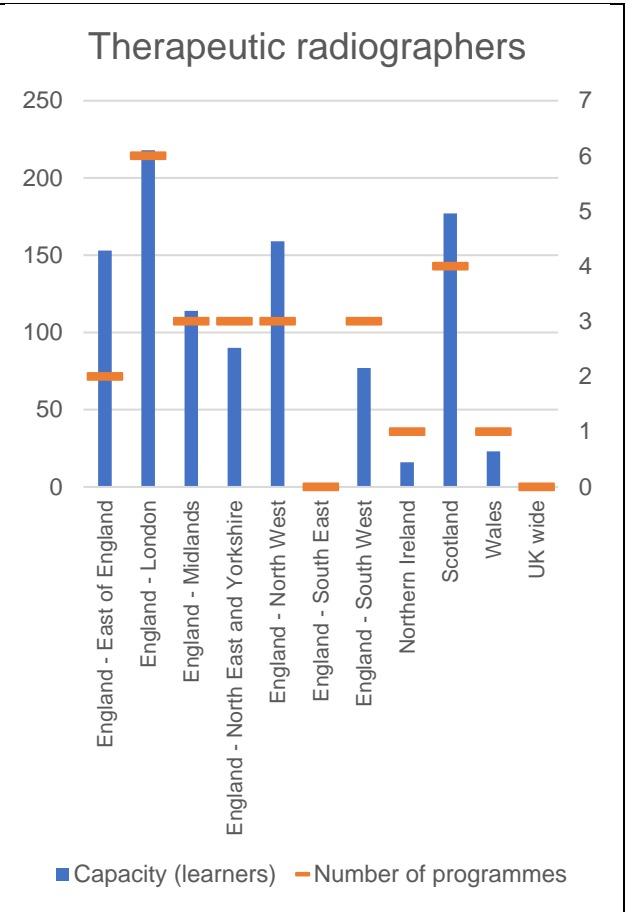
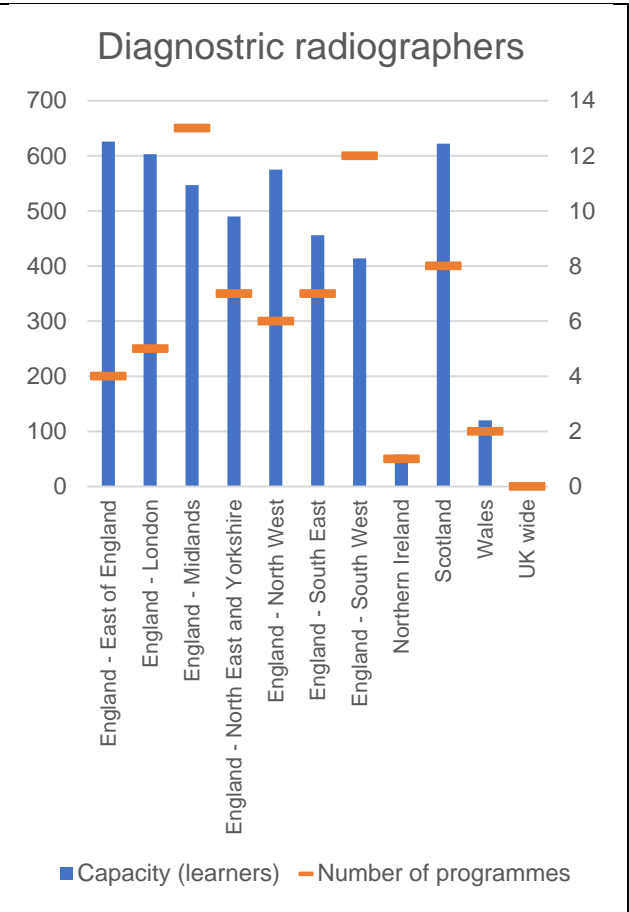
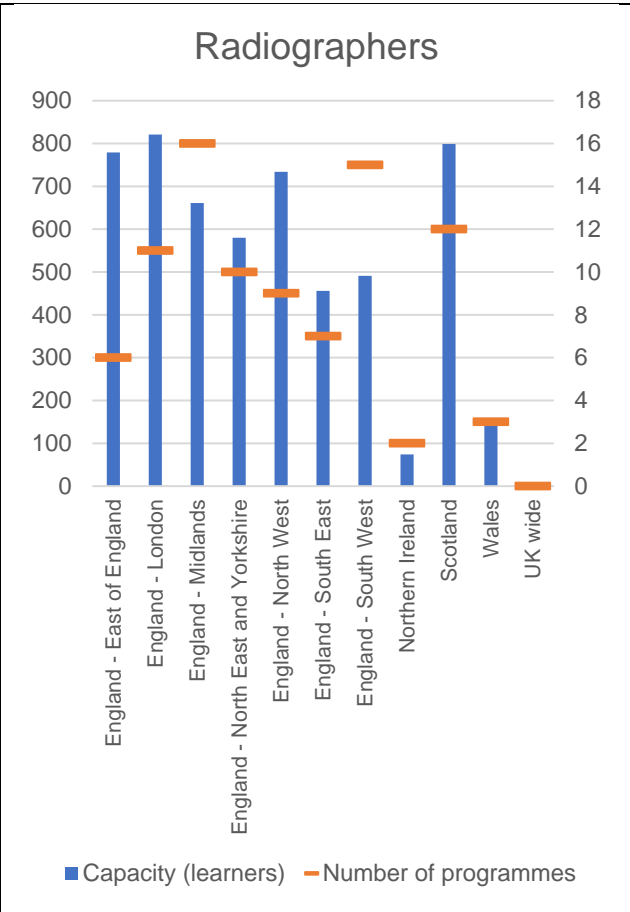












Number of approved post-registration programmes

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 around 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 chiropodist/podiatrist profession and we took the decision that annotating individuals who are able to practice in this specialist area was essential to protect the public⁶.

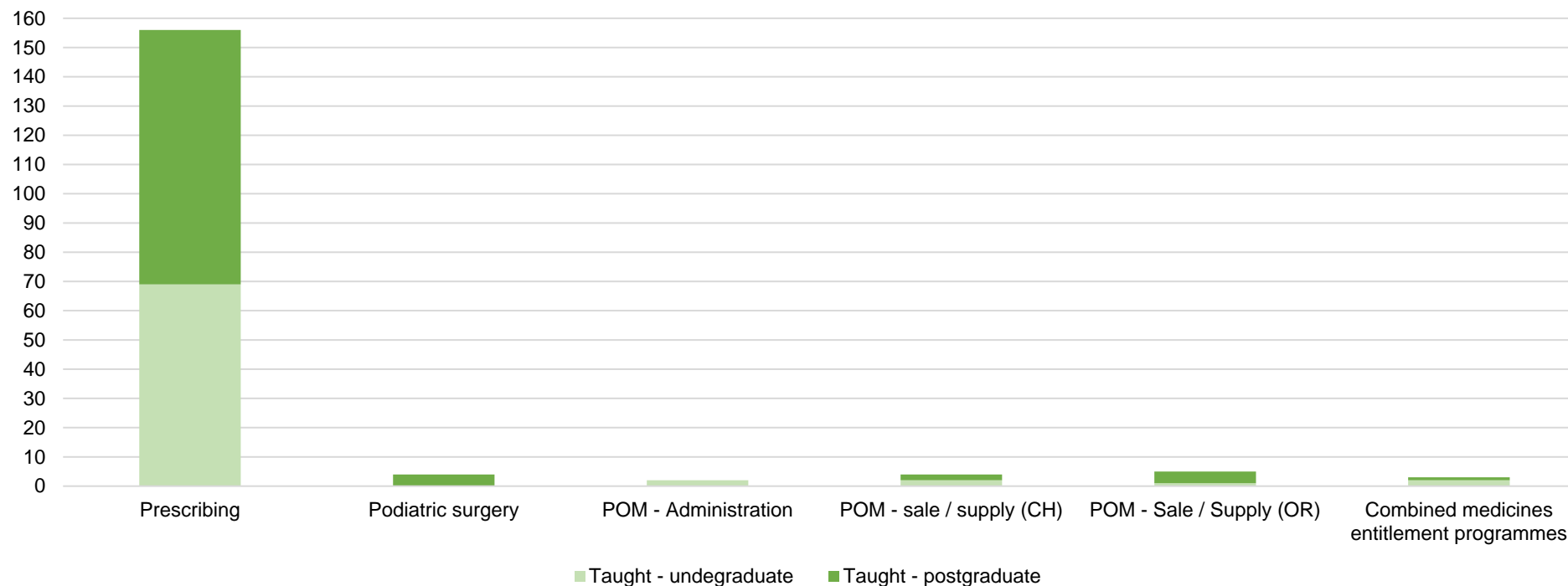


Figure 7 - Post-registration approved programmes, by type of programme - 1 September 2024

⁶ Our Council made the [decision](#) to add the annotation for podiatrists practising podiatric surgery in May 2012.

Appendix B – detailed findings

This appendix provided detailed findings from assessments undertaken in the 2023-24 academic year. It notes the key findings from the previous report and explores any additional findings from 2023-24.

Approval assessments

In this section, we have reported findings linked to how education providers have met or aligned with our Standards of education and training (SETs), at either the institution or programme level, depending on where the standard sits.

SET 1 – Level of qualification for entry to the Register

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- All but one programmes proposed were at HEIs, which meant they were able to deliver programmes which meet the UK Quality Code. As programmes proposed by HEIs were at or above SET 1 level, we were able to take assurance that SET 1 was met due to HEI alignment with the Code.

Findings (2023-24 academic year):

- About a quarter of programmes were proposed above the SET 1 level, which is in line with the percentage of all programmes delivered above SET 1.
- The proportion of new programmes proposed above the SET 1 level has dropped from the previous report (where about a third of programmes were proposed above the SET 1 level). However, this finding continues to show that education providers are diversify professional provision, to enable individuals with undergraduate degrees to access professional training along shortened timeframes. This was most prevalent in occupational therapy training.
- One programme was proposed by a non-HEI where the expected qualification level is at bachelors degree with honours. After a full and fair assessment, the Education and Training Committee (ETC) was minded to not approve this programme at its meeting of 30 August 2024. This was due to the proposed programme not being equivalent to the academic level required and therefore the standards of proficiency would not be delivered as required. The final decision on this programme is pending at the time of writing, as the education provider is able to supply observations on the 'minded to not approve' decision, to the ETC meeting in November.

SET 2 – Programme admissions

Institution level standards – programme advertising and admissions processes

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear structures in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that all parties have the information required to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme (SET 2.1)
- These structures included:
 - clear advertising through central services (such as the University and College Admissions Service (UCAS) and Discover Uni);

- consideration of the model of learning, for example apprenticeship programmes being advertised differently and in different places;
- consistency of information across information for applicants and members of staff applying admissions requirements;
- selection methods and techniques being clearly defined and applied appropriately; and
- review of admissions requirements to ensure they remain current and fair.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- The use of hybrid activities to help applicants understand the requirements, for example, webinars and virtual tours

Institution level standards – Language requirements

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear requirements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that applicants to programmes have a good command of English (SET 2.3).
- What we mean by ‘good command’ may differ depending on the programme – we make sure that learners are able to use the English language at the level necessary to communicate effectively with service users and carers, educators and others and to complete the programme successfully.
- These requirements included:
 - a threshold requirement for UK applicants to hold a GCSE in English;
 - for international applicants, a requirement that learners hold an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 7, with no element below 6.5, which is the requirement in the SOPs⁷; and
 - although not a requirement of our standards, education providers in Wales normally assessed Welsh language skills as part of entry, which links to a requirement of Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) (who commission many HCPC-regulated professions in Wales) that Welsh proficiency is tested as part of entry requirements.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

⁷ This is the case for all HCPC professions, except speech and language therapists, where the requirement is equivalent to level 8, with no element below 7.5

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- variety of assessment methods for English language competence, such as interviews and online questionnaire/tests;
- alternative entry requirements to IELTS or an English GCSE, such as the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR);
- requirements set are a combination of institution level policies with programme specific requirements; and
- post-registration programmes do not need to check English language competence at the point of application, as applicants are already registrants and therefore meet the relevant communication SOPs.

Institution level standards – suitability of applicants

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- education providers had clear requirements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that education providers assess the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks (SET 2.4);
- by ‘suitability’ we mean that an applicant is of appropriate character to train to become a health and care professional and to interact safely with service users and carers.;
- all education providers required a criminal conviction check to be carried out by the relevant national body (for UK applicants), or by an equivalent body for international applicants; and
- education providers were clear that admissions to programmes were subject to The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions) Order, which enables education providers to ask questions ‘about spent convictions and cautions in order to assess a person’s suitability for admission to certain occupations’.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – compliance with health requirements

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- education providers had clear requirements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that the admissions process ensures applicants are aware of and comply with any health requirements (SET 2.5);
- this is to make sure learners will be able to take part in a programme safely and effectively and meet our standards for registration once they complete the programme; and
- education providers set health requirements for entry to programmes, including:
 - occupational health assessments, where judgements were made about whether individuals are able to practice a profession (ie meet all of our standards) considering any health conditions; and
 - mandatory immunisations, often linked to requirements for practice in specific professions.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – equality, diversity and inclusion in recruitment

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants (SET 2.7)
- This ensures that the admissions process is open and impartial and does not discriminate unfairly against certain applicants. We also require that there is an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants' prior learning and experience (SET 2.6)
- Education providers have active aims to recruit learners from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- They consider alternative arrangements for admissions, to widen access to a diverse range of potential learners.
- Education providers also capture diversity data in admissions, to consider where groups are under-represented in applications and to consider differential outcomes. This data is then used to consider which groups should be focused on in future recruitment activities.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A small number of programmes assessed were run by an education provider who is also the employer. For these education providers, the policies and processes relating to EDI will differ and include those appropriate to employment contracts.

Programme level standards – academic and professional entry requirements

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Through our assessments we judged that all education providers set their academic entry requirements at a level appropriate to the delivery of the programme
- Requirements were different for different programmes based on a range of factors, including the academic level of the programme, the model of learning and expectations of other organisations

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

SET 3 – Programme governance, management and leadership

Institution level standards – sustainability of programmes

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear arrangements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that programmes must be sustainable and fit for purpose (SET 3.1)
- This is to make sure that there is a future for the programmes, that they are currently secure and are supported by all stakeholders involved
- Education providers integrated newly proposed programmes into existing business plans, which demonstrate the ongoing financial stability of the institution.

- Programmes aligned with existing sustainability arrangements, through the involvement of relevant stakeholders who provide resources and commitment to deliver programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – programme management

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear arrangements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that programmes must be effectively managed (SET 3.2)
- This is to ensure that there is effective management and clear responsibility for programmes
- Policies and processes were in place to ensure programmes are effectively managed, such as management structures and clear articulation of the roles and responsibilities of all involved

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – overall professional responsibility for programmes

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear arrangements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is a person in place holding overall professional responsibility for each programme, who is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register (SET 3.3)
- This is to ensure there is an appropriate person in place and that the education provider has a mechanism for ensuring this role is filled on an ongoing basis
- Education providers aligned new provision with existing policies and processes which ensure that the person with overall responsibility for the programmes is appropriately qualified and experienced and that the role is filled on an ongoing basis.
- This recognised that this standard is not just about the person in place at the time of assessment, but also how they would ensure an appropriate person would be in place in the future, with any personnel changes.
- Normally, this was delivered through a clear job description and management structures which ensure the role is essential and would be recruited to with changes in personnel

Findings from 2023-24 cases support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report

Institution level standards – quality and effectiveness of programmes

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there are regular and effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place (SET 3.4)

- This is to ensure that programmes are of good quality and are effectively delivered on an ongoing basis
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes with internal and external quality assurance assessments, including the quality assurance of practice-based learning
- There was a split in education providers, with some running a 'continuous improvement' approach to quality and some running a cyclical review model

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – service user and carer involvement

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear strategies in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that service users and carers are involved in programmes (SET 3.7)
- This ensures that service users and carers contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of programmes.
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes with existing policies and processes to ensure that services and carers are involved in their newly proposed programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – learner involvement

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear mechanisms in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that learners are involved in programmes (SET 3.8).
- This ensures that the experience of learners is central to the quality and effectiveness of programmes.
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes to existing policies and processes to ensure learners contribute to the programme in some way.
- Primarily, education providers sought structured feedback from learners and many education providers also directly involved learners in review activities such as curriculum development and approving new programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A small number of education providers explicitly noted that they involved learners in the development of new programmes. We were not clear how this compares to 2021-23 findings, because learner involvement in the development of new programmes was not explicitly reference by education providers in 2021-23, although this does not mean it did not happen.

Institution level standards – equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear strategies, policies and procedures in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval

process, linked to our standards which require that there must be equality and diversity policies in place in relation to learners and that those policies must be monitored (SET 3.14).

- This ensures that programmes provide an impartial, fair and supportive environment to allow people to learn.
- Equality and diversity policies are in place throughout programmes, including within practice-based learning.
- Education providers are aware of their legal responsibilities in this area and have institution-level strategies/high level commitments in place related to EDI.
- Strategies are aimed to ensure education providers are inclusive and fair in their activities, focused on areas such as learner recruitment and admissions, experience, progression, attainment and employability.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Several education providers sought external recognition of their EDI policies/processes. For example, the Athena Swan award and the Race Equality Charter.

Institution level standards – learner complaints

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is a thorough and effective process in place for receiving and responding to learner complaints (SET 3.15).
- This ensures education providers consider and settle complaints from learners and that complaints contribute to the overall way in which the programme is governed.
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes to existing policies and processes which ensure a fair, transparent and supportive response to learner complaints.
- These apply throughout the duration of the programmes including practice-based learning.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – ongoing learner suitability

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is a thorough and effective processes in place for ensuring the ongoing suitability of learners' conduct, character and health (SET 3.16)
- This ensures that education providers protect service users and carers who interact with learners and make sure that learners who complete the programme meet our standards for registration and expectations of professional behaviour.
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes to existing policies and processes to protect service users and carers interacting with learners.

- There were teaching and learning activities embedded which set out expectations of professional behaviour for learners in practice and to develop learner ability to meet our standards of conduct, performance and ethics at the point of registration.
- Education providers had well documented learner fitness to practice procedures, to make decisions about learner continuation when things go wrong and normally required declarations from learners when any situation might impact their ongoing suitability.
- There were some complexities for apprenticeship programmes, where learners are also employees. Education providers are clear which policies should be followed in these situations and how engagement structures functioned to address any issues which might arise in the practice or academic setting.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is an effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users (SET 3.17)
- This standard is to help learners to recognise situations where service users may be at risk, supporting them in raising any concerns and making sure action is taken in response.
- Education providers aligned proposed programmes to existing mechanisms and support, through which learners can identify safety or well-being concerns about service users and make sure appropriate actions are undertaken.
- Normally policies were badged as ‘whistleblowing’ and applied to both the practice and academic settings.
- Importantly, education providers were committed to supporting learners to recognise situations where service users may be at risk, through structured teaching and learning.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- In addition to whistleblowing, policies were also referred to as ‘escalating/raising concerns’ and ‘safeguarding’

Institution level standards – eligibility for admission to the Register

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear arrangements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that all parties are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register (SET 3.18)
- This ensures that there is no confusion about which programmes we approve. Learners, educators and the public must be clear on which programmes meet our standards for registration and which do not.

- There were clear regulations in place which clearly state which programmes are approved and hence lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. These were often contained in programme specifications.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – collaboration with practice education providers

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers recognised that collaboration with practice education providers was key to the sustainability and quality of programmes. This is due to the centrality of practice-based learning within education and training and ensuring programmes are resourced and sustainable to deliver practice-based learning to all learners, to support delivery of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency.
- Formal agreements were in place, with defined mechanisms to collaborate contained within these agreements. There were different considerations needed depending on the model of learning and the type of relationship between the education provider and practice education provider. Many collaborative arrangements established when establishing programmes facilitated co-production of programmes, particularly for apprenticeship routes.
- We often needed to explore this area further with education providers, to consider how information provided in documentation would work in practice. Through our explorations, we were satisfied that collaborative arrangements had been established that would be maintained once programmes were approved.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Collaboration often worked differently for NHS providers and non-NHS providers and education providers recognised the differences when working with NHS and non NHS providers, including whether central structures and resources were available to manage and ensure the quality of practice-based learning

Programme level standards – capacity of practice-based learning

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Capacity of practice-based learning is an issue often discussed within the professions we regulate. From our assessments, all education providers were able to demonstrate that there was capacity for their proposed learner numbers and that capacity issues would be managed effectively
- They worked with sector stakeholders to achieve this, including groups that provide national/regional oversight, practice education providers and other education providers (normally in collaborative regional groups).

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Further references to central mechanisms to consider practice-based learning capacity and allocate practice-based learning between education providers
- Where it was relevant, we tested education provider and central intentions for increasing practice-based learning capacity, including how they ensure these intentions were sustainable

Programme level standards – staffing

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had considered staffing requirements for proposed programmes and were aware of the challenges in this area, often driven by the availability of academic staff across professional areas.
- Through our assessments, we were confident that education providers either resourced or had robust plans in place to resource their programmes for the number of learners proposed. They considered how they would use existing staff, recruited new staff and filled gaps in expertise with visiting or guest lecturers. There were clear mechanisms in place to develop new and existing staff to deliver effective programmes. Therefore, we were satisfied that programmes would be staffed appropriately for the number of learners proposed.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – resourcing

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had considered resourcing requirements for proposed programmes. This included technical solutions, physical teaching space and providing academic materials to support learning.
- Through our assessments, we were confident that education providers either resourced or had robust plans in place to resource their programmes for the number of learners proposed
- They considered how they would use existing resources and develop new resources where required, depending on the design of the proposed programme. We found that education providers were resourced appropriately to deliver teaching and learning for the number of learners proposed.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

SET 4 – Programme design and delivery

Institution level standards – interprofessional education (IPE)

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear strategies, policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that learners are able to learn with and from professionals and learners in other relevant professions (SET 4.9)
- This ensures that learners are prepared to work with other professionals and across professions for the benefit of service users and carers.
- Education providers normally had IPE leadership, policies and procedures in place, which described the approach and methods used to enable learners of different programmes and from different professions to learn with and from each other.
- IPE was often well structured into programme delivery and assessment.
- Learning with and from other professional groups was often also included in practice-based learning agreements.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – consent

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there are effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners (SET 4.10)
- This ensures individuals' rights are respected and the risk of harm is reduced, whilst also making sure that learners understand what will be expected of them as health and care professionals.
- There were established processes in place to enable learners to obtain consent from service users and for learners in practical or role play sessions.
- Education providers were clear that learners must identify themselves as learners to service users.
- In practical teaching, education providers gained consent from learners where required and had good 'opt out' mechanisms which did not disadvantage individuals.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – mandatory attendance and attendance monitoring

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and mechanisms in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that education providers identify and communicate to learners the parts of programmes where attendance is mandatory and that associated monitoring processes are in place (SET 4.11).
- This ensures that all learners who complete programmes meet the SOPs, by being fully involved in the parts of the programme which are essential to achieving them.
- Education providers were clear about which parts of programmes were mandatory – these linked to teaching and learning required to meet our requirements for registration.
- Learners are normally informed of attendance requirements through programme handbooks.
- Education providers have processes in place to monitor learner attendance and intervene when there are potential attendance issues.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- There was more focus on specific institution wide attendance monitoring policies which are used to identify and support at risk learners

Programme level standards – overall programme design

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Programmes were structured to deliver our requirements for registration, including ensuring learners were able to develop their skills, knowledge and

experience through practice-based learning. Primarily, two types of programmes were proposed:

- Traditional taught programmes, where learners were situated at the academic institution with practice-based learning experience gained away from the academic institution.
- Apprenticeship programmes, where learners were situated at their employer who delivered most practice-based learning, with academic learning gained at the academic institution.
- Programmes were designed embedding complimentary academic and practice-based learning to enable learners to develop the academic underpinning and practical skills to meet our requirements. This included ensuring practice is evidence based, through requirements to undertake research as relevant to the academic level of the programme.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – considering the expectations of professional bodies and other organisations

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers were aware of and usually aligned with the expectations of professional bodies and other relevant organisations. We welcomed consideration and alignment with these expectations, as it showed that education providers were considering professional norms in developing and delivering programmes.
- When there were bodies that had regulatory or commissioning requirements of education providers, those requirements were central to programme design. We frequently saw alignment for apprenticeship programmes and programmes centrally commissioned in Wales.
- Sometimes, alignment with requirements was presented as meeting our standards in and of itself. We explored these areas with education providers to ensure our standards were met with these approaches.

Findings from 2023-24 cases support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report

Programme level standards – currency of curricula

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Consideration of current practice informed programme design. This was enabled by education providers developing their curricula with stakeholder input, to meet regulatory requirements and normally professional body expectations.
- Mechanisms were inbuilt into quality assurance processes to ensure currency of programmes were continually considered, which normally included stakeholder input and active review of changing requirements and expectations of other bodies.

Findings from 2023-24 cases support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report

SET 5 – Practice-based learning

Institution level standards – quality and safety of practice-based learning

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies, systems and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is a thorough and effective system in place for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning (SET 5.3) and that practice-based learning takes place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users (SET 5.4)
- This ensures practice-based learning is of the required quality to support learners to progress through programmes and that practice-based learning is undertaken in a safe environment.
- Systems were in place to ensure that practice-based learning is initially approved and regularly monitored, to ensure it is of good quality and undertaken in a safe environment

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – information for learners and practice educators

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear mechanisms in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that learners and practice educators have the information they need in a timely manner to be prepared for practice-based learning (SET 5.8)
- This ensures clear expectations about practice-based learning are set and communicated to everyone involved.
- Education providers have mechanisms in place to set clear expectations for both learners and practice educators to ensure they are prepared for practice-based learning.
- These expectations were normally contained through learner and practice educator handbooks.
- Many education providers have individuals or teams to manage the placement experience. Their responsibilities include ensuring all involved in practice-based learning have the information they require to be prepared for practice-based learning.
- There was also normally documentation, such as practice assessment documents, which enabled practice educators and learners to understand specific requirements and competencies to be achieved.
- Education providers also provided training for practice educators to support this area

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – centralising practice-based learning in programmes

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- All proposed programmes planned to deliver practice-based learning, which was properly integrated with academic learning to support learners to meet our requirements for registration. There were two main approaches to this, linked to the two main types of programmes considered:

- Traditional taught programmes, where learners were situated at the academic institution with practice-based learning experience gained away from the academic institution.
- Apprenticeship programmes, where learners were situated at their employer who delivered most practice-based learning, with academic learning gained at the academic institution.
- We were satisfied with the arrangements to ensure practice-based learning was central to programmes in both models.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – structure, duration and range

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had considered the number, duration and range of practice-based learning required to support learners to achieve competencies required by the programme
- This was different for different programmes, depending on the profession and the model of learning. All education providers were able to show how their intended number, duration and range of practice-based learning would effectively support learners.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – staffing

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had mechanisms in place to set out requirements for practice educators to ensure practice educators were able to effectively support learners. These included the audit mechanisms applying to practice-based learning including areas to actively consider the staffing of practice-based learning
- We were confident that these mechanisms were appropriate to ensure learners are supported by appropriately qualified and experienced practice educators in practice-based learning.
- Education providers recognised the challenges in this area and that they had a role to play in driving up numbers of practice educators to support increases in learner numbers in the sector.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

SET 6 – Assessment

Institution level standards – objective and fair assessments

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear strategies, policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that assessments provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement (SET 6.3)

- This enables us to ensure that learners are fit to practice by the end of programmes.
- Objectivity and fairness in assessment was central to assessment strategies. All education providers had systems and mechanisms to ensure assessments are conducted in an objective and fair way to measure and determine learner performance.
- Education providers demonstrated how their assessment procedures were set up with objectivity and fairness in mind, with mechanisms such as marking criteria for staff, the use of plagiarism software, second marking and grade reviews and the appointment of external examiners.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A focus on transparency and communication with policies and procedures clearly communicated to learners and staff. This ensures everyone is aware of standards and processes in place which ensures objectivity in assessment.

Institution level standards – progression and achievement

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that requirements for progression and achievement through programmes are clearly specified (SET 6.4). This ensures that learners understand what is expected of them at each stage of programmes and educators can apply assessment criteria consistently.
- Education providers had clear requirements for learner progression through programmes. These were set out in programme and module specification documents.
- Normally, there were ‘no condonement’ arrangements in place, due to the nature of programmes needing to deliver the full range of competencies as required by our standards. This means that it is not possible for learners to fail certain elements of the programme and still achieve the academic award that leads to registration.
- There were normally well defined ‘gateway’ points in programmes, such as a certain assessment being passed before learners could progress to practice-based learning. This is particularly important, when ensuring the safety of service users who will come into contact with learners.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – academic appeals

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear policies and processes in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there is an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals (SET 6.6).
- This ensures that assessment processes are applied fairly and that learners have a mechanism to appeal when they feel they have not been.

- Processes clearly explain how learners can make academic appeals at the institutional level. These can be found in academic regulations and complaints policies and procedures.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Institution level standards – external examiners

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had clear arrangements in place to ensure institution level standards were aligned to or met through the approval process, linked to our standards which require that there must be at least one external examiner for each programme, who is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register (SET 6.7).
- This is to ensure there is an appropriate person in place and that the education provider has a mechanism for ensuring this role is filled on an ongoing basis.
- All programmes had at least one appropriately experienced external examiner in place and mechanisms to replace external examiners when needed.
- Most external examiners appointed were HCPC registrants from the profession and where this was not the case, the education provider was able to describe how their alternative arrangements were appropriate, for example more than one external examiner who between them cover the knowledge base required.
- External examiners' feedback is considered through quality mechanisms such as programmes boards and they are provided with appropriate training and support.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Programme level standards – assessment design and application

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Assessments were designed to measure achievement of the learning outcomes, which education providers clearly linked to our requirements for registration.
- Assessments were undertaken through programmes, to ensure learners had the skills, knowledge and experience required to progress to the next stage of the programme
- We saw a range of techniques used, appropriate to the areas being assessed and are confident that education providers have the mechanisms in place to ensure only those who are fit to practice complete programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Performance review assessments

In this section, we have reported findings linked to the portfolio areas we ask education providers to reflect on. This enables us to report alignment with our standards of education and training (SETs) across the education provider and programmes we approve.

Institution self-reflection

Resourcing, including financial stability

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- We found that education providers who are cognisant of the current landscape, internal and external initiatives/challenges and their own data, are best equipped to manage their resources and finances.
- Planning is key to this and understanding the environment and specific situations help education providers plan and deliver on those plans. For example, new provision can facilitate investment in physical resources, but comes with challenges of staff recruitment and availability of practice-based learning.
- Understanding and planning to mitigate these challenges is a key part of ensuring there is a return on investment and that programmes remain fit for purpose.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24.

- We reviewed five HEIs in Wales and all of these education providers reflected on the commissioning arrangements with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) as being central to the continued financial sustainability of their commissioned programmes. For some education providers this led to additional programmes being approved (which we reviewed through our approval process in the 2021-22 academic year). Education providers also reflected on reporting to HEIW for these new programmes and for continued commissioning for existing programmes to show HEIW that quality was achieved and maintained.
- Many education providers reflected on continued financial pressures within the education sector and for their own institutions. Some education providers had put in place new financial strategies to proactively manage these challenges and address where it was in their control to do so. In some instances education providers had reviewed, or were in the process of reviewing their staff resourcing, which in some cases led to changes to support staffing arrangements and/or redundancies of support and/or academic staff. We have produced [information](#) support education providers in this area, including how they should consider our standards in making staff resourcing decisions.
- Some education providers had struggled to recruit academic staff and had put mechanisms in place to try to address this, for example careers information for clinical staff who may wish to join the academic workforce.
- Some education providers reflected that they received funding from organisations such as the Office for Students and NHS England, to enable continued development in specific areas.
- Several education providers reflected on how international recruitment was an important part of their financial modelling, with the larger fees they are able to charge for international learners and a small number of education providers reflected that there had been challenges in international recruitment due to a drop in applications from the European Union.
- Some education providers reflected on how they had been unable to recruit to intended learner numbers and how this might impact the ongoing sustainability of

specific programmes. In these cases, education providers applied mitigation plans and were considering how they could drive up recruitment numbers, or consider resources for their programmes, in the longer term.

Partnerships with other organisations

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Across education providers, partnership working was understood as integral to the running of programmes. All education providers had identified and were maintaining partnerships, as required by our standards and most were performing well in this area.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24.

- Developing partnership arrangements with a broader range of organisations, to support with the delivery of practice-based learning.
- Education providers in Wales reflected on how they work in partnership with Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) as the commissioning body for many HCPC-approved programmes in Wales, to support programme quality, including in practice-based learning.

Academic quality

This section and the placement quality section were combined as one in the previous report. Education providers often split this section in two, as policies and processes and education provider reflections were usually different for academic and placement settings. In portfolios for the 2023-24 academic year onwards, we have split this section in two to better facilitate reflections for the two distinct areas.

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Quality is a central consideration for education providers and they are maintaining the quality of their programmes well. This is important because quality of provision has a direct impact on learners meeting our regulatory requirements and becoming professionals who are fit to practice.
- There are different approaches to quality, but broadly speaking, education providers have a multifaceted approach which covers all areas of programmes and partnerships. There were very few education providers which were underdeveloped in this area and all education providers were able to demonstrate continued alignment with our standards through this exercise. For the small number of education providers with gaps, they had always identified those gaps and had implemented appropriate solutions.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Several education providers reflected on their Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission and the resulting TEF award, which were given in 2023. Education providers often used this process to drive improvements in teaching.

Placement quality

This section and the academic quality section were combined as one in the previous report. Education providers often split this section in two, as policies and processes and education provider reflections were usually different for academic and placement settings. In portfolios for the 2023-24 academic year onwards, we have split this section in two to better facilitate reflections for the two distinct areas.

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- See bullet points within the [academic quality](#) section
- We found that education providers often considered external assessments of practice education providers when reviewing the quality of practice-based learning. We also found that some education providers could do more in this area and will set clearer expectations that all information about the quality of practice-based learning should be considered when making decisions about continuation of and support for, learners in practice settings.
- Strong strategic and operational relationships with practice partners were helpful in resolving any issues and maintaining or improving the learning experience to required standards.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Some education provider reflected on challenges with the quality of practice-based learning, particularly stemming from needing to secure additional practice-based learning opportunities due to programme expansions. Education providers identified these challenges through existing quality mechanisms, which shows they are working well and were able to put specific interventions in place where needed to ensure good practice-based learning experience for learners.
- Education providers in Wales referenced national placement allocation and quality model (the All-Wales Placement Reference Group), which is overseen by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). Education providers referenced the All-Wales Student Healthcare PACT (Partnership, Accountability, Credibility, Trust), which was a set of pledges co-produced by education providers through the All-Wales reference group, to help empower positive learning experiences

Interprofessional education

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Most education providers showed good IPE through their reflections, which positively impacted on learning linked to the SOPs. Where there were gaps in this area, education providers had often identified these gaps as areas for improvement and were working on developing their IPE.
- Where gaps remained, we set expectations for education providers to improve in the short term or as part of their next portfolio submission and this was considered in review periods we established through assessment outcomes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- This is an area we often picked up to review further through quality activities, with six referrals to other processes. Normally we referred to ensure that plans noted by education providers to develop interprofessional education would be delivered.
- There remains a range of how developed IPE is for education providers assessed in 2023-24. There continued to be difficulties for some education providers with delivering IPE, but education providers recognised these issues and were working to address them. Understanding these difficulties, we were satisfied that all education providers continued to align with our IPE standard, but recognised the planned developments and will consider these moving forward in future assessments.
- Some education providers who deliver employment or portfolio-based routes, along with education providers which only deliver one professional programme, had a different approach to IPE. For example portfolio based routes ensure learning with and from others as part of portfolio requirements, rather than through direct learning. This is acceptable within our standards for this model of learning.
- Some education providers in Wales referenced Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) requirements that IPE contributes to 20 per cent of the curriculum, as part of their commissioning arrangements

Service users and carers

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- All education providers involved service users and carers in some way at the institution and/or programme level and most were able to demonstrate how this involvement positively impacted on learning linked to the SOPs.
- Where there were gaps in this area, education providers had often identified these gaps as areas for improvement and were working on developing their service user and carer involvement.
- Where gaps remained, we set expectations for education providers to improve in the short term or as part of their next portfolio submission and this was considered in review periods we established through assessment outcomes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- This is an area we often picked up to review further through quality activities, with eight referrals to other processes. Normally we referred to ensure that plans noted by education providers to develop service user and carer involvement would be delivered.
- This can be a difficult area for education providers to manage, with the COVID-19 pandemic and resourcing problems impacting continued development in this area. Our standard is not specific about how service users and carers must be involved in programmes, rather focusing on how service users and carers contribute to the overall effectiveness of programmes. This gives education providers the opportunity to meet this standard in a range of ways, but it can also enable more tokenistic involvement and may encourage under thinking or under development when compared to norms within the education sector.

- Even considering referrals and problems identified, we were satisfied that all education providers continued to align with the relevant standard as part of this review exercise

We will consider further engagement with education providers on this standard, to ensure our requirements are well understood. We should now see education providers move beyond noting that COVID-19 restrictions impacted their service user and carer involvement and there is much within the gift of education providers, with proper planning and investment, to develop this area further. We will also consider developing this standard as part of the review of our standards of education and training (SETs).

Equality and diversity

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Our analysis shows that EDI is a key area of focus for education providers, which should not be surprising considering current societal focus and that education providers (particularly in higher education) have been leaders in this area for some time.
- For example, the widening participation agenda has been in place for more than 20 years and data and information shows the positive impact of this initiative⁸ (although there is further work to do) and other corrective actions, such as responding to attainment gaps.
- Education providers are most successful in this area when they are proactive in their approach, clearly define their intentions, plan how to deliver these and measure success.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Some education providers reflected on drives to develop the local population into professional roles, which in turn impacted in the diversity of learner populations, where the local population was not diverse. Education providers recognised this point and how it would impact their headline diversity data. We considered that it was important for education providers to reflect on data and provide commentary to explain any data that might look, but may not actually be, concerning.

Horizon scanning

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Good horizon scanning was undertaken at the regional, national and occasionally global level, to enable education providers to plan effectively, mitigating risk and exploiting opportunities. Education providers who effectively horizon scan were better placed to win commissions, more quickly implement change and less likely to experience problems due to external changes.
- Through portfolios, education providers were less clear how they undertook horizon scanning, instead focusing on the specific areas they had identified. For 2023-24 submissions, we have expanded our guidance for education providers

⁸ [Widening participation in higher education, Academic year 2021/22 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

so we can better understand and assess their horizon scanning mechanisms, to inform our overall view of education provider performance.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We will further consider how we ensure education providers understand the requirements of this section when working with education providers on our performance review requirements moving forward.

Thematic reflection

Embedding the revised HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs)

Our revised standards for proficiency (SOPs) became effective on 1 September 2023. Education providers needed to deliver the revised SOPs to new cohorts from this date and we asked that they reported their approach to integrating the revised SOPs through their performance review submissions from 2022-23 onwards.

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- It was clear from the reflections that education providers implemented effective processes to conduct the review and implementation the revised SOPs in a structured way.
- Through our reviews, we were satisfied that all education providers assessed would deliver and assess the revised SOPs from September 2023.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

This was the second year in which we considered this area through performance review assessments and we will continue to assess and report on this area until we have reviewed all education providers.

Learning and developments from the COVID-19 pandemic

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers responded well to an extremely challenging situation and had gained valuable insight because of the pandemic.
- The successful and rapid adjustments to challenges show that most education providers have policies, processes and structures in place to respond to challenging situations. Education providers used responses to the pandemic as a catalyst to deliver more permanent innovations to their programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. This was the last year where we included this portfolio area, as we have now reviewed learning and developments from the COVID-19 pandemic for all education providers.

Use of technology: changing learning, teaching and assessment methods

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Our analysis shows that that the pandemic was the major catalyst for the review and implementation of the use technology for delivering lessons and conducting assessments.

- A key outcome of this has been increased understanding of the opportunities that can be harnessed using enhanced technology to deliver programmes. The urgent need to adapt to the use of technology enabled education providers to identify the digital skills gaps amongst staff and learners.
- Overall, education providers have performed well in this area because they adapted effectively to the urgent needs to use technology to continue the delivery of their programmes.
- Many education providers have returned to at least some traditional face-to-face teaching post-pandemic and many also retained a form of hybrid learning with the combination of online and face-to-face learning.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- There is more focus on actively monitoring the potential uses and risks of artificial intelligence (AI) in education and healthcare. As a result, education providers have considered how they uphold academic integrity and support staff and learners in this area.
- In response to the rise of generative AI, some education providers have trained their staff in educational technology. They also highlighted improvements in plagiarism detection tools like Turnitin, which now feature enhanced AI detection capabilities to maintain academic integrity.

Apprenticeships

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers were managing this area well. Many education providers have directly engaged with the apprenticeship initiative, either delivering or planning to deliver apprenticeship programmes. Other education providers recognised the impact the apprentice provision would have within professions and/or regions.
- Particular challenges mainly linked to the availability of practice-based learning and the shifting relationship with practice partners.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Sector body assessment reflection

Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers were clear about how they utilised the Quality Code in their processes, instead of focusing on their reflections of how they had performed against this.
- We will expand our guidance for education providers and provide clarity about the status of the Quality Code so education providers can understand what to reflect upon. This will provide us with information to inform our overall view of education provider performance.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- From August 2024, the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr) replaced the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and is now responsible for regulating institutions and funding for higher education (amongst other areas)⁹.
- Some Welsh education providers noted this point and most education providers in Wales reflected on how they had maintained HEFCW requirements within the review period.

In relation to the point from the previous report, on expanding our guidance for education providers linked to the Quality Code, we have included further information in our guidance materials for education providers.

Office for Students

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers were clear about how they utilised the OfS Conditions of Registration in their processes to ensure continued compliance, instead of focusing on reflections about how they had performed against these requirements or the outcomes of their internal reviews.
- We appreciate there were temporary pauses to engagement with the OfS requirements due to the pandemic and while they finalised and rolled out, their revised Conditions of Registration.
- We did not identify any risks as the education providers had appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure continued compliance internally. We therefore considered education providers were performing well in this area.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A large proportion of education providers had not reported to the OfS during the review period

Performance of newly commissioned provision in Wales

This was a one off portfolio area for performance review assessments undertaken in the 2023-24 academic year and only applied to HEI education providers based in Wales. Education providers reflected on the successful integration of HEIW-commissioned provision, following these programmes starting or continuing from the start of the commissioned period (September 2022).

Following an exercise where we [worked with HEIW](#) on understanding their commissioning arrangements, we decided to review all Welsh HEI education providers in the 2023-24 academic year through performance review (year three of the programme of assessment for all education providers following introduction of our current model in September 2021). This was because we reviewed all new and existing programmes out of the commissioning exercise in the 2021-22 academic year and so were confident with programmes at that point and wanted to give sufficient time for developments and reflection before our next review.

⁹ [Home - Medr](#)

Education providers reflected on the challenges they faced after securing bids for new programmes from HEIW. These included integrating interprofessional education (IPE) modules, achieving commissioning for new programmes and enhancing existing HCPC programmes to ensure they were secure through the commissioning exercise.

We have woven findings linked to HEIW requirements and the commissioning exercise through other sections of this report, where they are most relevant.

Other professional regulators/professional bodies

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Where education providers engaged with other regulators and/or professional bodies, they usually reflected well on that engagement.
- Some education providers who were not subject to external reviews provided limited reflection, which missed some of the good work they may have done with engagement outside of formal review processes.
- We also found that professional bodies for smaller professions, or without a strong education accreditation function were overlooked by education providers in their reflection. This missed opportunities, either with education providers considering the work of the whole range of professional bodies, or in reporting to HCPC, about how they are keeping abreast of developments in professions. The former may limit the ability of education providers keeping their provision up to date, the latter may negatively impact on our view of risk for the education provider.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Profession specific reflection

Curriculum development

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Our overall analysis shows that education providers have generally performed well in this area because they have demonstrated how they systematically review their curriculum and make changes when required. They have robust processes and policies in place to continuously monitor, review and make changes to their programmes through consultations with internal and external stakeholders.
- Changes are made to reflect standards from professional and regulatory bodies, but other catalysts include the need to meet learner need. Education providers have shown they are committed to continuously improving their curriculums to ensure learners meet the relevant standards.

Findings from 2023-24 cases support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Overall, we considered that education providers performed well in this area. Our analysis of the reflections shows most education providers have regular engagement with professional bodies relevant to their professions and update their curriculum to reflect changes made by their respective professional bodies.

- We noted the relationships between education providers and professional bodies was positive overall and there was regular engagement between both parties.
- We are confident education providers have the processes in place to make adjustment in an effective way to meet professional body expectations.
- Some education providers gave explanations of the specific changes they made in response to changes to professional body guidance.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report. We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A small number of education providers reflected on how they had integrated changed made to professional body expectations in line with the revised HCPC SOPs. Education providers not reflecting on this point does not mean they did not also consider these changes; it may mean that they did not report those changes explicitly through their submission
- A very limited number of professionals bodies made updates and education providers considered these changes alongside HCPC updates.

Capacity of practice-based learning (programme/profession level)

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Throughout their reflections in the portfolios, education provided recognised the challenges and importance of developing quality placement practices for learners.
- They explained how they addressed the short-term challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic and process implemented to address the ongoing challenges with regards to limited practice-based learning capacity. They adapted to serious challenges relating to placement capacity through long and short-term plans to continue to increase placement capacity through the development of planning models, technological innovations and effective partnerships.
- It is clear the ability to sustain practice-based learning capacity is a primary objective of the education providers and there are processes in place to ensure appropriate capacity of practice-based learning opportunities to support learners.
- There are also effective processes in place to manage and support learners on current placements.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- Education providers in Wales referenced national placement allocation and quality model (the All-Wales Placement Reference Group), which is overseen by Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). This enabled practice-based learning allocation based on a national strategy and arrangements.

Stakeholder feedback and actions

Learners

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- We considered education providers clearly outlined effective processes for involving learners in the quality and effective delivery of the programmes. They appropriately reflected on the benefit of learner feedback and how this contributed to the ensuring the quality of the programme.

- Some education providers went on to discuss how they plan to enhance learner involvement going forward.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

We also noted the following additional points from 2023-24:

- A small number of education providers introduced survey management processes to reduce survey volume to combat survey fatigue

Practice placement educators

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers clearly outlined effective and regular processes for gathering and responding to feedback from practice educators
- This enabled collaborative approaches to maintaining the quality and effective delivery of the programmes.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

External examiners

Key findings (2021-23 report):

- Education providers had a good working relationship with their external examiners. They value the importance of the external examiner role and these processes were robust and transparent to ensure the continued quality of programmes.
- The processes closed the feedback loop so individuals could see how their feedback had been considered and had been of benefit to the programme.

Findings from 2023-24 assessments support the conclusions from the 2021-23 report.

Data

Our use of data through performance review

We do not make regulatory decisions using solely data we produce or receive. We use data and intelligence to form part of a quality picture of education providers/programmes. For the performance review process this means that where risk assessment allows, we will lengthen the period between performance review engagements from two years (which is the historical norm for HCPC), up to a maximum of 5 years.

Education provider reflection on supplied data points

Where data is available from external supplies, we provide this data to education providers through their portfolio and ask them to reflect on the data. This might include noting how they have used a disappointing data point as catalyst for change, or challenging us if they are unclear how data points were arrived at and/or if data points are out of date.

Through our assessments, it was clear that education providers consider data in developing their programmes. Normally, they were aware of disappointing results and

had plans in place to address these results. These areas are referenced through our analysis for specific portfolio areas.

Education providers not included in external supplies

When we do not have access to data points for normal areas, the maximum length of time we will allow between performance review assessments is two years. This is so we can continue to understand risks in an ongoing way when data is not available.

If the education provider can show us how they will supply relevant data points, then the two-year cap is lifted – we consider what is reasonable on a case-by-case basis. This might include externally available or verifiable data but may also include data supplied directly by the education provider. Establishing the method of supply is important in this – we need to be assured that we will receive good data on a regular basis and agreeing the method for this supply is a key part of the cap being lifted. We have developed [information](#) to help education providers understand our requirements, as referenced in the main body of the report.

In the period reviewed, no education providers established data returns that would satisfy our requirements, although some are making progress to be able to do this.

Appendix 1 – Illustrative draft of resources for education providers

Resources for education providers – Service user and carer involvement

This document summarises our findings from reviewing education providers and programmes in recent years. It provides our view on service user and care involvement, including our regulatory requirements and what we commonly see in programme delivery. This information should be considered by education providers when developing new and existing programmes, linked to this area.

We have resources available for other key areas, which link into all of our standards of education and training (SETs). These resources are available on our website [[link](#)].

Our threshold requirements

Our [standards of education and training](#) require that ‘service users and carers must be involved in [programmes]’ (SET 3.7).

We expect to see:

- a clear definition of who service users and carers are, relevant to the professions delivered;
- policies and processes are in place to ensure service users and carers contribute to programmes;
- that service users and carers are supported to undertake their role(s); and
- processes are in place to plan, monitor and evaluate involvement.

This area is particularly important currently with the introduction of our revised standards of proficiency (SOPs), which became effective from September 2023. A key theme within the revisions is to ‘[further centralise the service user](#)’ within practice, and we consider good service user involvement within training provision as important to support this theme.

Summary reflections

Service user and carer involvement is most effective when it is considered as a key part of institution/division strategy, meaning it is properly integrated into various aspects of programmes and the way the institution/division functions. It is generally at its weakest when it is seen as a supplementary initiative added to programmes.

Education providers with a more ‘hands-off’ academic approach, for example those delivering portfolio-based routes, or programmes where learners were more independent, need to work harder to integrate service users and carers into their provision.

Within more traditional HEI provision, there is often a broad range of involvement, from basic non-structured involvement (which can sometimes be tokenistic), to

service users thoroughly integrated into multiple aspects of programmes in a strategic way.

The COVID-19 pandemic should no longer be seen as a barrier to good service user and carer involvement.

Education provider approaches

Established central groups drawn upon by programmes to provide specific involvement within education provider frameworks, with service users and carers involved in:

- a wide range of learner-facing areas (such as in admissions, delivery of content, assessments and fitness to practise panels);
- governance (ranging from advisory groups to integration of service users and carers within a wide range of groups with differing functions);
- quality improvement (such as with design and development of programmes, and the production of policies – again involvement was wide-ranging from single point consultation through to co-production); and
- less frequently, service users and carers were involved in research.

We consider the following as good practice:

- internal lead roles responsible for developing service user and carer involvement strategy (with service users and carers) and co-ordinator roles to manage involvement and logistics;
- measuring success embedded into reporting;
- payment for service users and carers, above and beyond expenses (which is seen by some service users as essential, rather than ‘good practice’);
- support for service users and carers, in the form of training and preparation for sessions, practical support for attendance and risk assessments where required;
- contingency planning if things went wrong, such as unexpected unavailability for a learner session;
- wellbeing considerations for learners and service users and carers built into learner sessions; and
- feedback from service users and carers and others being acted on, to further embed involvement, with good communication of changes made in response to feedback.

There are external frameworks, standards and organisations to inform service user and carer involvement, such as:

- the requirements of other regulators;
- professional body expectations; and
- regional groups, which represent service user and carer interests in geographic areas.

Current sector focus and challenges

There are common pitfalls in to involving service users and carers, as follows:

- reliance on a small number of individuals;
- too narrow a range of experiences within service user groups;

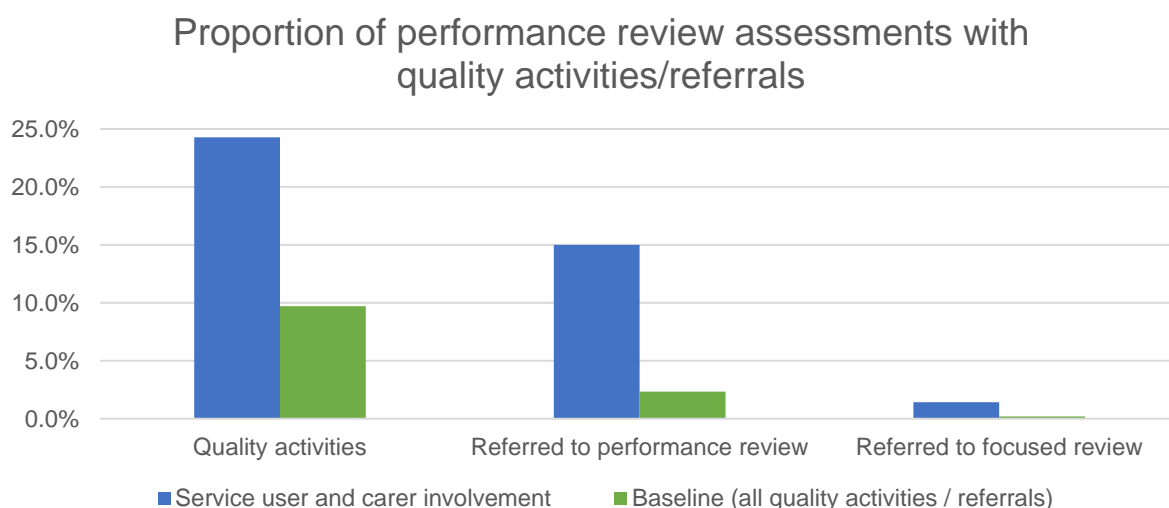
- ill-defined staff responsibilities to support, integrate and optimise service user and carer involvement;
- uncoordinated approaches to involvement, which were not underpinned by clear objectives, a service user strategy and/or the required resources to support; and
- impact of involvement was not evaluated in a structured way.

Some of these pitfalls can contribute to sustainability issues. When good practices reside with individuals (service users and/or staff) rather than through policies and structures, practices and momentum is lost when people move on. There is also a linked challenge in balancing service users and carers who are able to contribute (with the support and level of institutional understanding needed to do this) and over-institutionalisation which can affect the ability of an individual to contribute to topics with the service user and carer perspective.

Recruitment and retention can be an issue for education providers, and this is sometimes seen as an explanation for small groups or narrow ranges of experiences, rather than a problem to be solved to improve service user and carer involvement.

Some education providers use simulation as an example of service user involvement. Although service user input into the development of simulation is service user involvement, the continued use of materials/technology produced with service user input is not in itself service user involvement.

Areas commonly explored further through our assessments



We commonly referred this area to be considered in future assessments when service user and carer involvement was under development or changing.