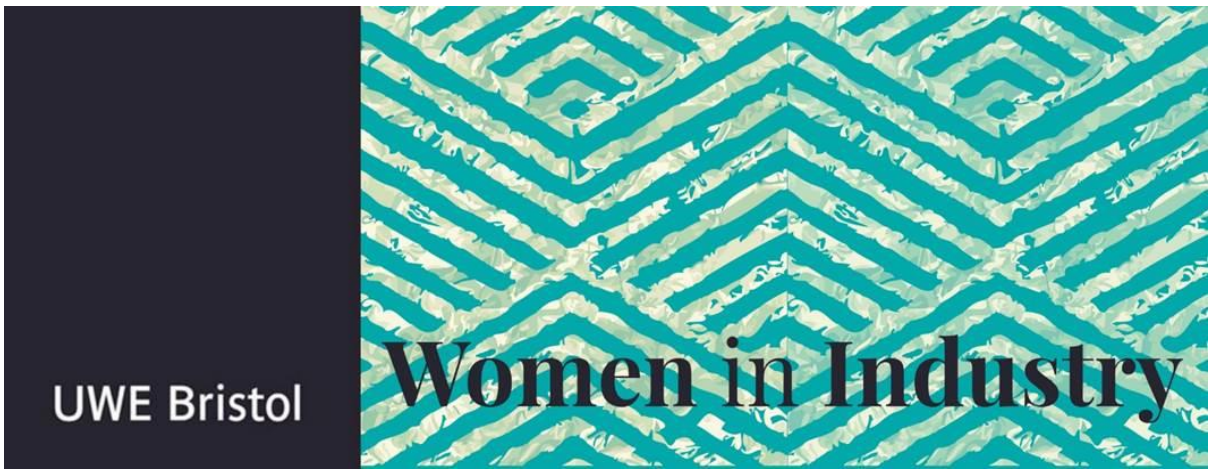
Women in Industry
Wave One Evaluation Report



Wave One Office for Students
Degree Apprenticeship Programme 2024

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2. Degree Apprenticeships

UWE Bristol has a strong ambition to grow apprenticeships in sectors aligned to our teaching expertise and local, regional and national employer skills needs. This is set out in our University Strategy 2030, committing to apprenticeship growth to meet employer needs whilst delivering inclusive pathways into higher learning.

The Women in Industry Wave 1 project aimed to lay the groundwork to accelerate investment in the growth of apprenticeship programmes and apprentice recruitment, meeting local and regional employer demand for skills in the key sectors of Engineering, Construction, and Digital, identified by the regional Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) as being critical to the continued economic development of the region.

Women in Industry Wave 1 combined an extensive mentoring, public engagement, and outreach programme, with a direct employer engagement programme focussing on apprentice recruitment with a focus on diversification practices. The project worked in partnership with STEMazing, STEM Ambassadors, Western Training Provider Network, and the West of England Careers Hub.

Importantly, it looked to increase the overall starts by focussing on increasing the proportions of women in these key sectors. We aimed to shift the dial on diversity in the workforce, introducing new cultural norms that will ensure we have a wider long-term pool of talent to recruit from. This will be critical to meeting future skills needs, where demand will accelerate as proportions of the workforce retire and the country works towards net zero sustainability goals.

2.1. Regional skills gaps

Nationally, and within the West of England (WoE), there are skills shortages in the Engineering, Construction and Digital sectors. The WoE LSIP identifies Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering and Construction and Digital as priority sectors:

- Employment in **construction in the region is predicted to grow at 1.6% per year** between 2020-2036, requiring **a net increase of 14,000 jobs**, with 73% of employers reporting challenges in recruiting to skilled manual/technical roles, despite this being essential for retrofit needs.
- Market intelligence Data sourced through LightCast estimates there will be a 7% increase for roles in Construction by 2030 for the City of Bristol region, and a 4% increase in the wider WoE.
- There are several significant redevelopment projects underway in our region requiring skilled workers across engineering and construction. These include Net Zero 2030 green skills demand, development of Gravity Enterprise Zone and the Bristol Temple Quarter regeneration project that expects to create up to 20,000 local jobs.
- Manufacturing and Engineering represents 6% of total employment within the WoE and the National Foundation for Educational Research estimates that the manufacturing sector will require 16,390 jobs to balance those leaving the sector.
- Despite Manufacturing being worth 46% of UK's total exports (2019), it is in decline and is critical to ensure the future sustainability of the workforce.
- Within engineering and construction there is also growing demand for digital skills, including Digital & Design Engineering, CAD, Software and Coding.
- Roles in IT/digital are expected to increase by 1.3% by 2030.

2.2. Under-representation of women in industry

The Women in Engineering report (2021) highlights that **just 17%, or 1 in 6 engineering roles, are filled by women.** Data from LightCast further highlights that only 24% of those working in construction/engineering industries relating to the Apprenticeship Standards targeted in this project are women. For digital industries, women make up only 23% of the workforce.

UWE and partner apprenticeship provision reflects a similar problem with under-representation:

- Women account for as few as 5% of starts on some Construction Programme Standards and only 18% overall across all construction standards.
- Women account for just 20% of all Engineering starts against a national average in in the Engineering Industry of 24% of the workforce
- Women account for just 18% of Digital starts against a national average of 23% of the workforce.
- Representation of people from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups is also low, making up just 5% of all apprentices in construction, 13% in digital and 11% in engineering. Indeed, only 9% of the UK workforce from Global Majority backgrounds, when 30% of UK engineering graduates are from these backgrounds.
- Some UWE programmes (Construction Site Management) have had no representation of people from Global Majority backgrounds in the last 3 years.

This project therefore directly addresses regional challenges highlighted in the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Employment Plan and the LSIP, including low awareness and participation in apprenticeship opportunities (particularly amongst people from Global Majority groups), low uptake of apprenticeships as a route to talent supply, and geographical inequalities.

2.3. Apprenticeship Standards

We aimed to achieve, for **UWE** delivery, overall **growth in starts of 38% against our 3-year current average by 2025/6,** increasing to 62% in 2026/27 as the impact of longer engagement gains traction. UWE Bristol aims to increase the **proportion of women across our Standards to 30% by 2025/6, and** doubling the proportion of current starts from **20% to 40% by 2026/27**.

Addressing intersectional issues, we also aimed to increase the proportion of starts from people from Global Majority backgrounds from an average of 9% to 20% from 2025/26 onwards.

The following Standards were included in the project:

Construction and Property

- Civil Engineer
  Chartered Surveyor

Engineering

- Aerospace Engineer
- Manufacturing Engineer
- Embedded Electronic Systems Design
- Product Design and Development Engineer

3. Inspire Sustainability and Women Like Me

UWE Bristol's School of Engineering led the mentoring and role modelling aspects of the project. Encouraging diversity and inclusivity, the programme aims to engage children in primary and secondary education across the West of England, with a focus on disadvantaged areas. Using curriculum-linked engineering outreach and careers support, we are connecting children with real-life, diverse engineering role models to widen participation and aspirations for STEM careers.

The Inspire programme was led by Dr Laura Fogg-Rogers, Associate Professor at UWE Bristol, with support from Graphic Science, the STEM Ambassador hub of the West of England, and in collaboration with Future Quest, the West of England Careers Hub and Western Training Providers Network. The programme builds on the success of previous projects founded and launched by UWE Bristol, including Curiosity Connections – the network for inspirational primary STEM education in the West of England, and Women Like Me – a tiered mentoring project for women engineers. This was expanded into the Women in Industry programme, a network of high-quality diverse career mentors and role models, supported to interact with communities and schools throughout the West of England.

Previous reports and evidence for the Women Like Me programme can be found here:

- Fogg-Rogers, L., & Hobbs, L. (2019). Women Like Me Executive Summary 2019. Bristol, UK: Royal Academy of Engineering Women Like Me Executive Summary 2019 (worktribe.com)
- Fogg-Rogers, L., & Hobbs, L. (2019). Catch 22 - improving visibility of women in science and engineering for both recruitment and retention. JCOM: Journal of Science Communication, 18(4), Article CO5. https://doi.org/10.22323/2.18040305

The Women in Industry programme takes a recruitment and retention approach to diversifying industry. The mentoring and HR practices aspects of the project intend to support women apprentices to continue in their roles and progress with their companies. The outreach and careers aspects of the project intend to change perceptions of male-dominated professions, following a Science Capital approach to influential role models for young people.

Within the programme, senior women are paired with junior women to provide mentoring and career support, relevant to their profession. The junior women are then encouraged to undertake outreach and engagement with young people, to act as inspirational and diverse role models for future recruitment.

4. Evaluation Methods

The framework for this evaluation drew on Science Capital concepts, as well as much research about role modelling and social influences from UWE Bristol's Science Communication Unit, as well as research from HR Management from UWE Bristol's Business School.

The evaluation focussed on the cross-sectional sample of women involved in the project, and featured longitudinal pre and post mixed methods with mentors and mentees involved. The project has Ethics Approval to collect data under the UWE Bristol Faculty Research Ethics Committee FET.21.03.037.

We evaluated the impact of our programme through several levels of data, working from reach, to outputs, to outcomes, and finally initial impact with different audiences (Figure 1). Each level of data collection required different evaluation methods, along with different forms of data collection for each audience. This is outlined in Table 2.

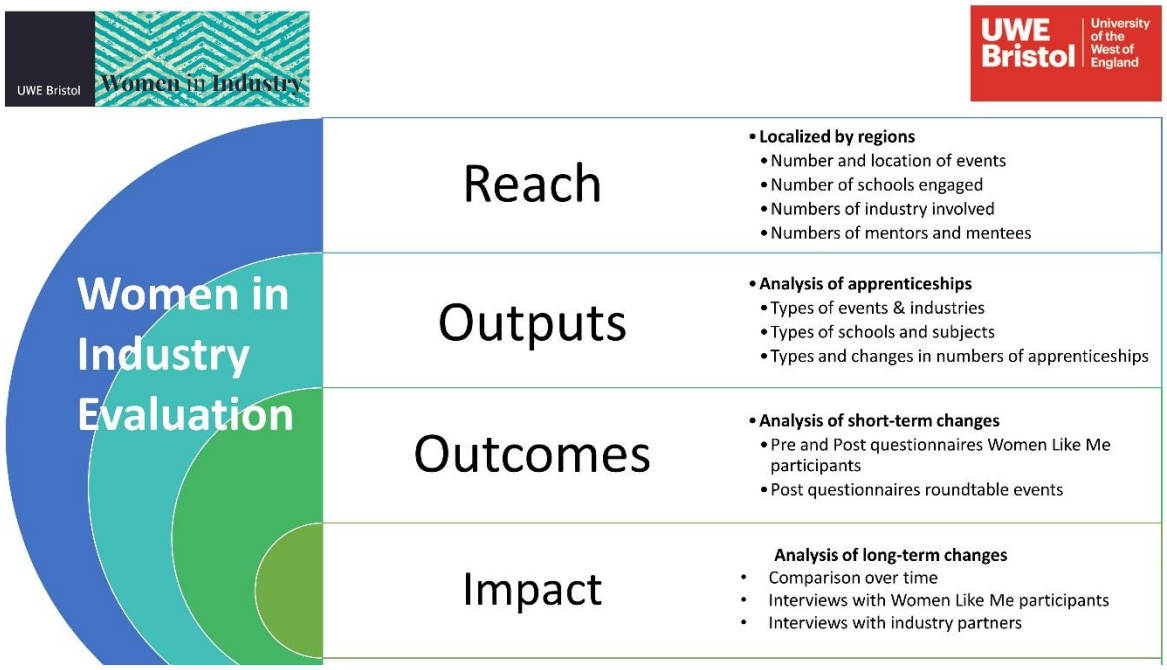


Figure 1: Levels of data and audiences involved in evaluation

Table 1: Evaluation indicators for Women in Industry Audiences

Audience		Reach	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
Women Participants	Apprentices	- Numbers - Demographics – gender, ethnicity, experience - Company	- Numbers and Types of activities - Intersectional analysis of reach	- Attitudes to engagement and industry - Changes in Engineering Outreach Self-Efficacy Scale - New policies or actions in education or workplace	Improvements in entry to industry jobs - Improvements in diversity in industry jobs -Improvements in retention in industry jobs
	Mentees (may overlap with apprentices)				
	Mentors				
Industry	Company representatives	- Employees from each company - Apprentices/ Career stage/ HR	- Numbers and Types of activities - Intersectional analysis of reach	- New policies or actions in education or workplace	

5. Findings

5.1. Apprenticeship Data

Gender

There has been a steady increase in the number of both male and female apprentices over a five-year period of apprenticeships at UWE Bristol. However, male apprentices form a significantly larger proportion compared to females, with over 900 male apprentices in 2023/24 compared to fewer than 200 female (18% of total). While the intake of female apprentices is growing, this growth has been at a much slower rate compared to males. This increase is shown in Figure 2.

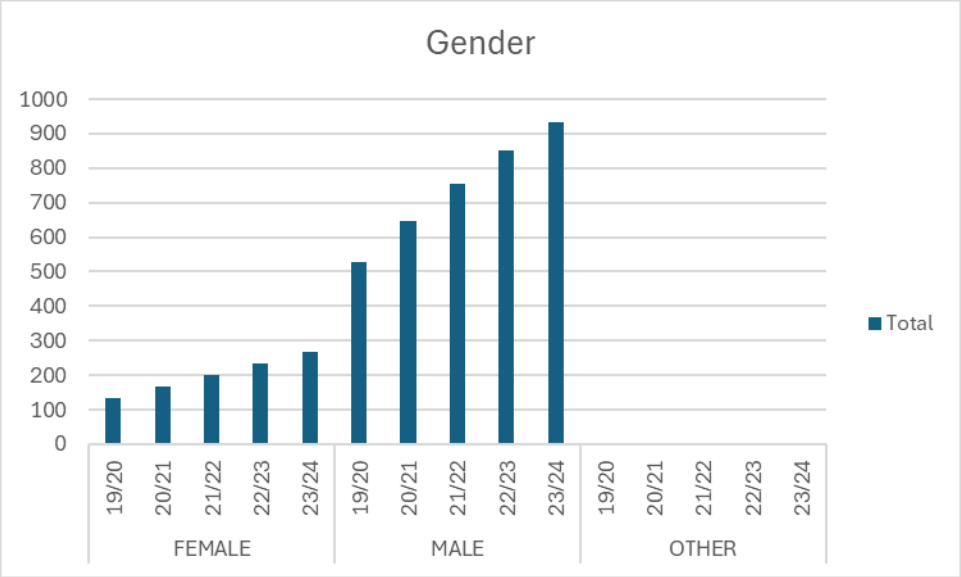


Figure 2: Gender split in apprenticeship starts at UWE Bristol over a five year period.

For the 2024/25 intake, UWE Bristol initially targeted 126 starts, but following the Wave 1 project, the team are now forecasting a total of 141, which is a 12% increase in overall applicants. Across the six apprenticeship standards in scope for the project, there was an increase from 25% of applicants being women in 2023/24 through to 40% of applicants being women in 2024/25. This is a 60% increase in the proportion of women applicants.

Ethnicity

Over the years from 2019/20 to 2023/24, there has been a significant increase in the intake of apprentices across all ethnicity categories. The White category consistently represents the largest group, with over 900 individuals in the 2023/24 intake of 1000 individuals (Figure 3), equating to 10% of the cohort, compared to a national statistic of 13%. However, there has been a gradual increase each year in people from Global Majority backgrounds. Data for apprenticeship starts for 2024/2025 are not yet available.

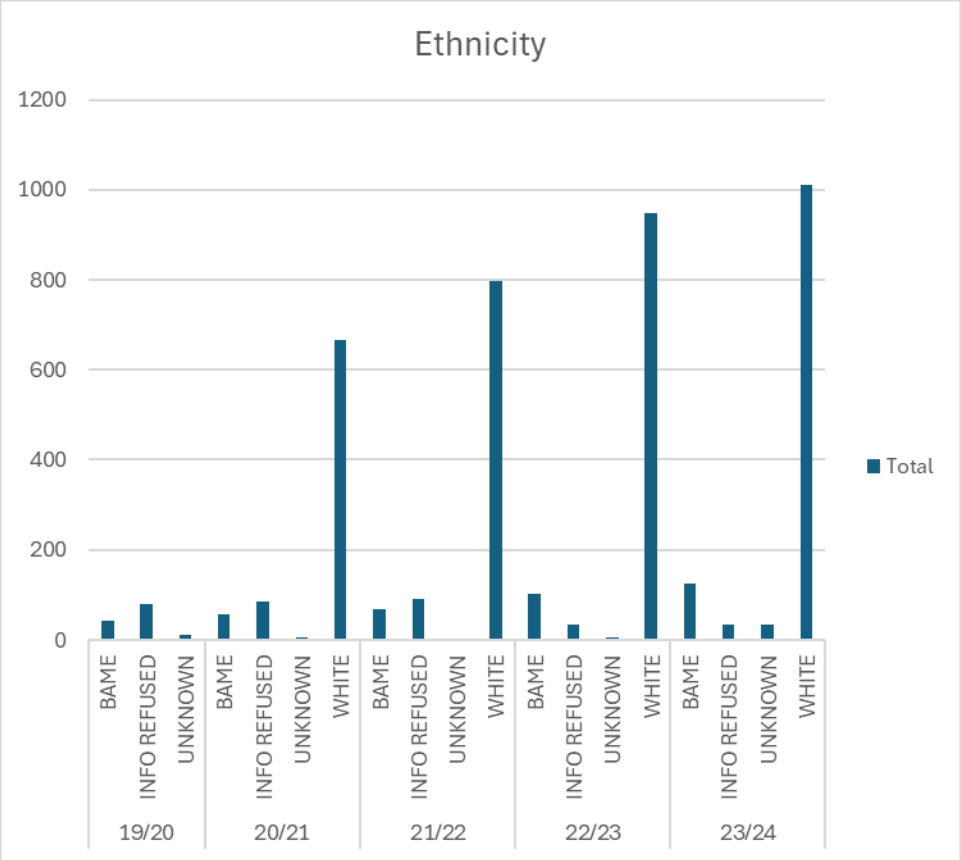


Figure 3: Ethnicity backgrounds for apprentices at UWE Bristol

Disability

The majority of apprentices do not declare a disability, and this trend remains consistent over the years. In the 2023/2024 year, fewer than 100 apprentices declared a disability (10%), although this figure is growing over the years, as Figure 4 indicates.

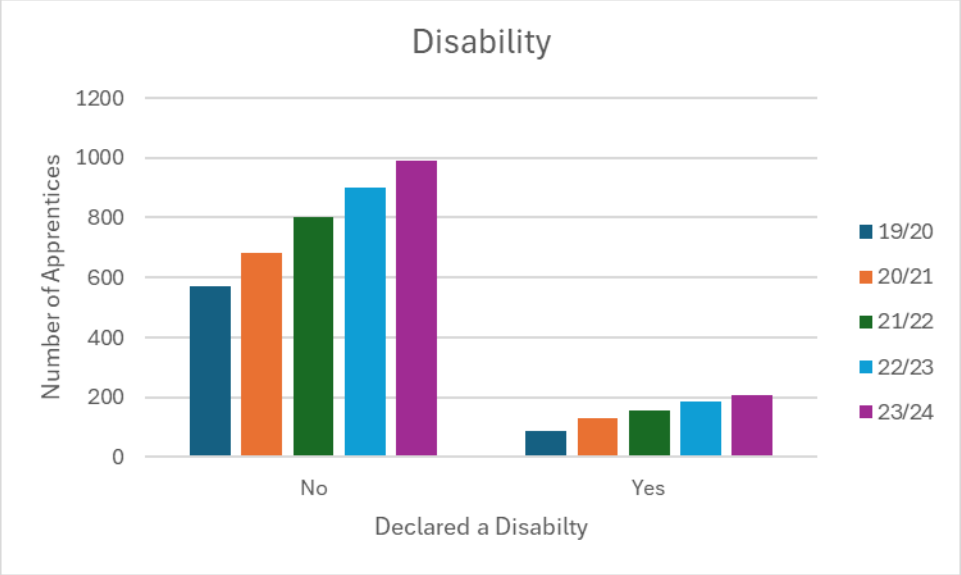


Figure 4: Apprentices declaring a disability over a five year period at UWE Bristol

Growth in Apprenticeship Starts

The data indicates that degree apprenticeship students at UWE are growing steadily year on year across all demographic categories. However, there is a large gender disparity in environmental and technological professions, with men significantly outnumbering women in engineering, construction/property and digital apprenticeships. Ethnic diversity remains low, though there are signs of modest improvement, particularly in the increase in apprentices from Black and Asian backgrounds. The number of apprentices declaring a disability remains a small minority, though there is slight growth.

Data for the forthcoming years will be analysed in future projects, but the effectiveness of the Women in Industry programme appears promising, with a 60% increase in women applicants (from 25% to 40%) in the 2024/2025 application round.

5.2. Industry Engagement

UWE Bristol conducted two employer roundtable events, targeting employers within sectors relevant to the Standards being addressed, specifically in the Built Environment and Engineering fields. We have seen strong participation from both existing employer partners and new organisations, including notable contributors such as Bristol Airport and Boeing, who are interested in the objectives of the initiative.

To enhance awareness of the degree apprenticeship offerings at UWE Bristol, the project launched a dedicated website focused on apprenticeship activities: Women Like Me - Projects | UWE Bristol This platform provides employers with valuable information regarding our Women in Industry mentoring program, the apprenticeship standards offered by the University, and details on how they can actively engage with our initiatives.

The Degree Apprenticeship Hub LinkedIn page has proven to be an essential platform for effectively showcasing the positive outcomes of our project activities. We have seen substantial engagement from employers with the content shared. This success is further bolstered by our comprehensive project marketing campaign, which encompasses the creation of videos, blogs, and photography.

The majority of employers involved in the initiative to date have been larger, regional organisations. This trend indicates that local prospective apprentices will benefit from a higher level of engagement and knowledge among employers in these vital sectors moving forward. However, SMEs have successfully engaged in the project through participating in the roundtable events that represent the local industry. The project has continued engagement through an expanded Wave Two project, due to conclude in 2025.

Wave One Events

The project began with the launch of the Wave One mentors/mentees initiative on 26th March 2024, which was attended by 36 participants. This event marked the start of the mentoring program, connecting mentors and mentees to foster professional growth and support for women in STEM industries.

On 17th April 2024, the first employer roundtable event provided a forum on gender diversification and a platform to discuss strategies for recruiting more women into STEM industries. Employers and industry leaders shared best practices for supporting women in their organisations. Speakers included Simon Flenley, Prof. Elena Marco, Amelia Davies, Felicity Cargill, Ellen Parkes, Sarah Behenna, Dr. Laura Fogg-Rogers, Mariana Gonzalez Fuentes, and Nic Crowley. Notable companies represented included Airbus, Bristol Airport, Boeing, Bristol City Council, Business West, Oxford Instruments, Vattenfall, and Wessex Water, among others.

Following the success of the first roundtable event, the project hosted a second Women in Industry Employer Roundtable on 6th June 2024 at the Arnolfini in Bristol. This event provided another valuable opportunity for employers to share strategies for recruiting and retaining more women in STEM industries and to learn from best practices shared by other organisations. The event featured Dr. Vanda Papafilippou, an expert in equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace, who led a discussion on the challenges of recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce through an intersectional lens. Employers engaged in a collaborative exploration of effective solutions to overcome these challenges. The event concluded with a networking lunch, allowing participants to build connections and exchange ideas.

The project also included a STEMazing goal-setting workshop and monthly mentor circles, which offered participants targeted professional development opportunities.

Engagement with the wider community was a key focus, exemplified by the Engineering Family Fun Day (6th July), which attracted significant interest, with over 1,400 tickets sold via Eventbrite. This interactive event showcased engineering in a family-friendly environment, sparking enthusiasm for STEM careers among attendees.

Finally, UWE Bristol participated in the Cheltenham Science Festival (4th–9th June), a prominent event that further amplified the project's outreach and visibility, connecting with a broad audience to inspire interest in STEM fields.

Feedback from the First Roundtable

The insights gathered from the first employer roundtable further enhanced the project's understanding of effective diversity and inclusion strategies. Employers identified specific actions to attract under-represented groups, such as targeting younger audiences, promoting alternative entry points, and using anonymised recruitment processes to reduce bias. These findings highlight the importance of designing recruitment activities that break traditional barriers and foster inclusion. Retention strategies discussed included providing employee resource groups, cultural facilities, and flexible adjustments in apprenticeship delivery. Participants also noted the need for addressing the social aspects of apprenticeships, suggesting that fostering communities within the workplace could improve engagement and retention among apprentices.

Moreover, employers shared how they leverage networks to empower minority groups, with examples including Women Like Me mentoring, Techgirls, and LGBTQ+ resource groups. Community-focused initiatives, such as DigiLocal and Babbasa, were also recognized for their role in connecting under-represented individuals to industry opportunities. These networks demonstrate the importance of partnerships and support systems in driving diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

How do your employer networks actively design their recruitment activities to attract underrepresented groups?		How do your employer networks retain diverse groups in the workplace?	What networks do you currently use to empower minority groups in industry?		
Target younger audiences	Infleucning the influencers	Emplopyee resource groups/ working groups	Babbasa	Eco green skills	Bristol future talent partnerships
Build knowldege ofalternative pathways	Breaking down traditional barriers	Providing cultural faciltiies such as praying rooms	Women Like Me Mentoring	AFBE	Techgirls
Promote different start points for entry	Anonymized recruitment process	Adjustments:flexibility in the way an apprenticeship can be delivered	DigiLocal	STEM Ambassadros	16-25 Independent People
Establish clear training plans and option where plans change	Omitting desirable criteria and focus on essential		STEMazing	Cyberfirst	Employee Resource Groups
Help young people where they're being advertised	Bias detection on job adverts		Social side of DA's is lacking, socieities etc.	Neetwork	Business focused green skills
What images and language do we promote?	Bias detection on job adverts		LGBTQ+	Apprenticeship Ambassador Network	Women in IT
Encouraging apprentices to go into schools or colleges who facilitate	Bias detection on job adverts				
Tarin employers with the right tool kit for recruiting underrepresented groups					

Figure 5: Summary of employer responses from the first roundtable on strategies to attract, retain, and empower under-represented groups in degree apprenticeships.

Feedback from the Second Roundtable

Employers shared reflections on the diversity of their current workplaces, identifying gaps such as the under-representation of women, limited intersectionality, and insufficient data collection on neurodiversity and other protected characteristics. Many highlighted a reliance on industry standards or basic metrics but acknowledged a growing commitment to addressing these gaps, including hiring EDI specialists and conducting surveys to guide improvements.

Barriers to attracting diverse female applicants were also a significant focus. Participants emphasised the need for targeted advertising strategies, increased visibility of apprenticeship opportunities, and partnerships with educational institutions to reach under-represented groups. Challenges such as high entry criteria and misconceptions around apprenticeship offerings were flagged as areas requiring attention.

The discussion extended to recruitment advertising, where employers highlighted inclusive practices such as anonymised applications, outreach activities like mock interviews and employability workshops, and attending career fairs focused on under-represented groups, including women and SEND communities. Employers noted that shifting from CV-based assessments to values-based or situational questioning could help reduce bias.

Apprenticeships were seen as a vehicle for change, with suggestions to promote success stories, address gender pay gaps, and utilise allyship and outreach to engage under-represented groups.

How diverse is your current workplace?	Barriers that limit diverse female applicants when applying for an apprenticeship	Recruitment Advertising	Apprenticeships - vehicle for change	Recruitment
80 people, maximum 25 women, no idea about neurodiversity, not being captured	Limited to hiring on LinkedIn	Inclusive job adverts:	16x quantity surveryos in Weston of which 5 were female	Metircs, recruitment systems better than current HRIS
Majority of company is white British/european	Advertising on website	Attend a variety of career fairs: women, SEND, STEM, Quiet hours	Promotion and celebrate success on socials, media	Dsiclosure, if people do, can support, 30% increase @WW
Age is varied	Need to think about the visibility of opportunities	Social Media	Allyship	Proactivity here
Not currently measuring characteristics	If you are looking for a specific group of people, you have to go to them	Outreach: mock interviews, employability, workshops, assessments	Outreach work	Wellbeing support in BAU once recruitedNo CV's unless L4 and above (WW)
No in house HR	Need to build partnerships	Insight days	Gender pay gap	
Measure protected characteristics	Need to really think about what you are advertising	Blind applications	Day in life videos	
Probably in line with industry standards	Companies sometimes sell the concept of apprenticeships versus the consent	Profile not CV		
Review benefits, guide HR policy	Need to make sure people understand	Assessment centre		
Measure protection characteristcs at application stage	A lot of universities have quite high entry crtieria	Questions at interview, values, situational		
Hired EDI specialist, recently snet out survey to get update, more will come out of that		Application with basic questions		
Uni of Bristol - leadership team, mainly women but not a lot seen on intersectionality		L2H training, inconscious bias, mandated, recruitment		
		Recruitment policy		

Figure 6: Summary of employer responses from the second roundtable on intersectionality for under-represented groups in degree apprenticeships.

5.3. Women in Industry Mentoring Participants

The Women in Industry mentoring and role modelling programme launched in January 2024 and recruited 41 women mentees and 45 women mentors, resulting in 41 pairs. The programme will continue beyond Wave One and finishes in December 2024. This is a 39% increase from previous years of the programme, when on average 25 mentees and 25 mentors were recruited. This has also created synergies with employer engagement initiatives by facilitating connections between peers in the junior women and senior women networks.

Within the cohort, there were 15 women apprentices actively participating in the programme, supported by industry employers who offered mentorship from their paired experienced women mentors. The data on the different fields of work for the mentors (Figure 7) and mentees (Figure 8) are presented below.

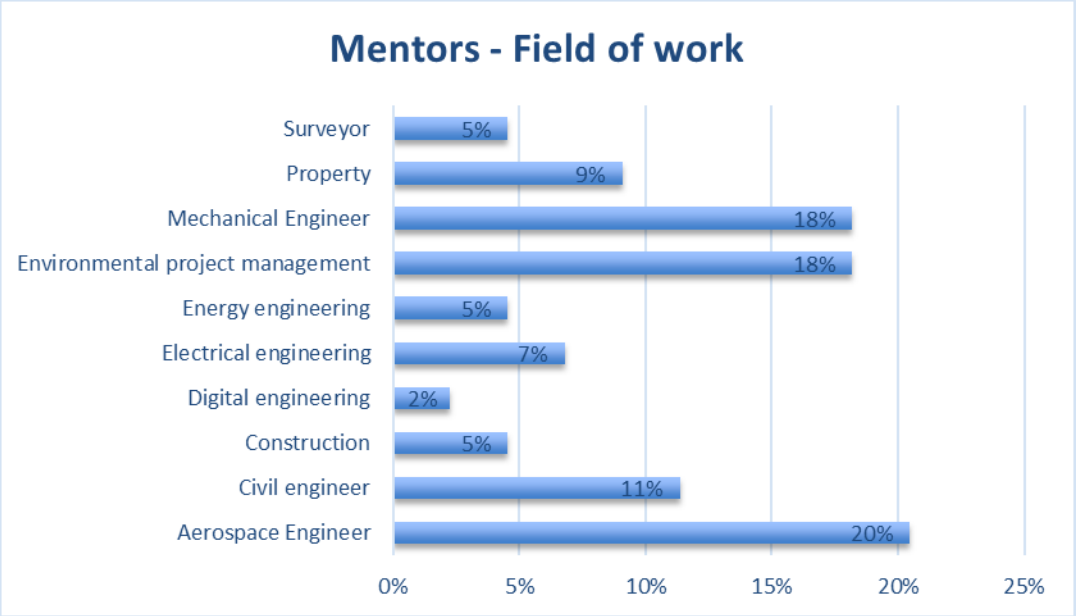
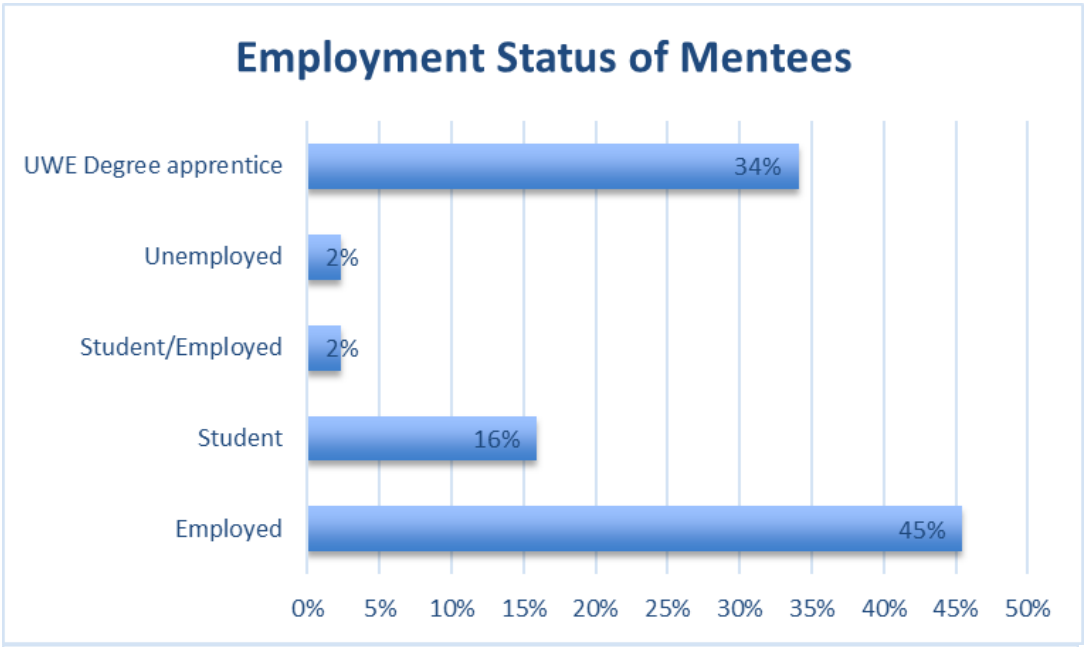


Figure 7: Employment fields represented through mentor engagement in the Women in Industry programme



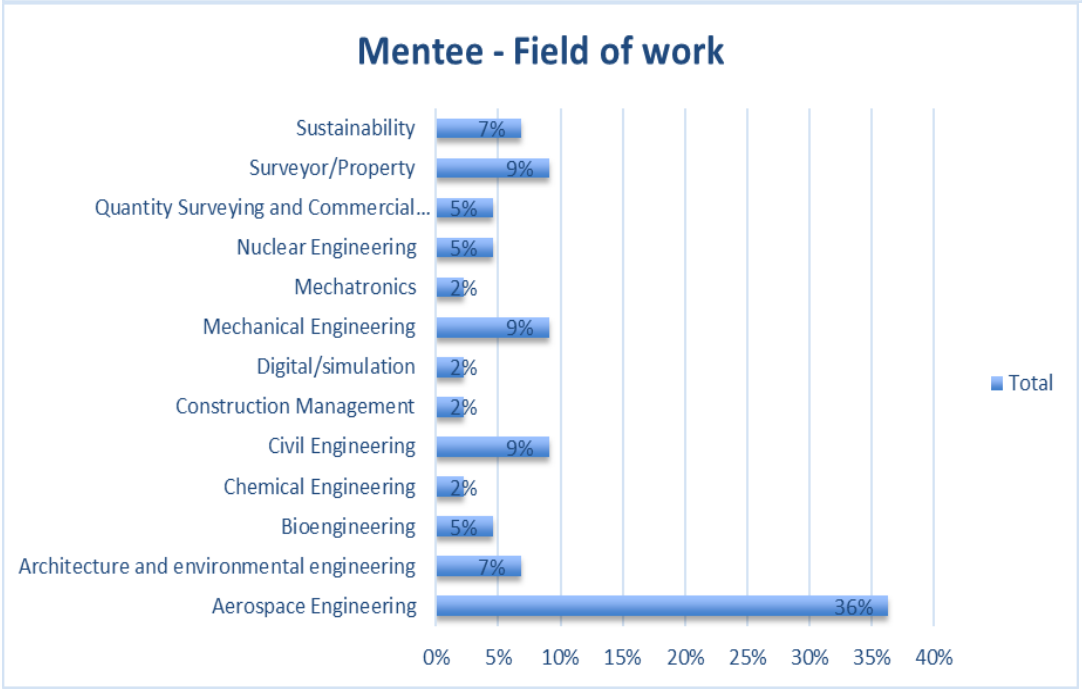
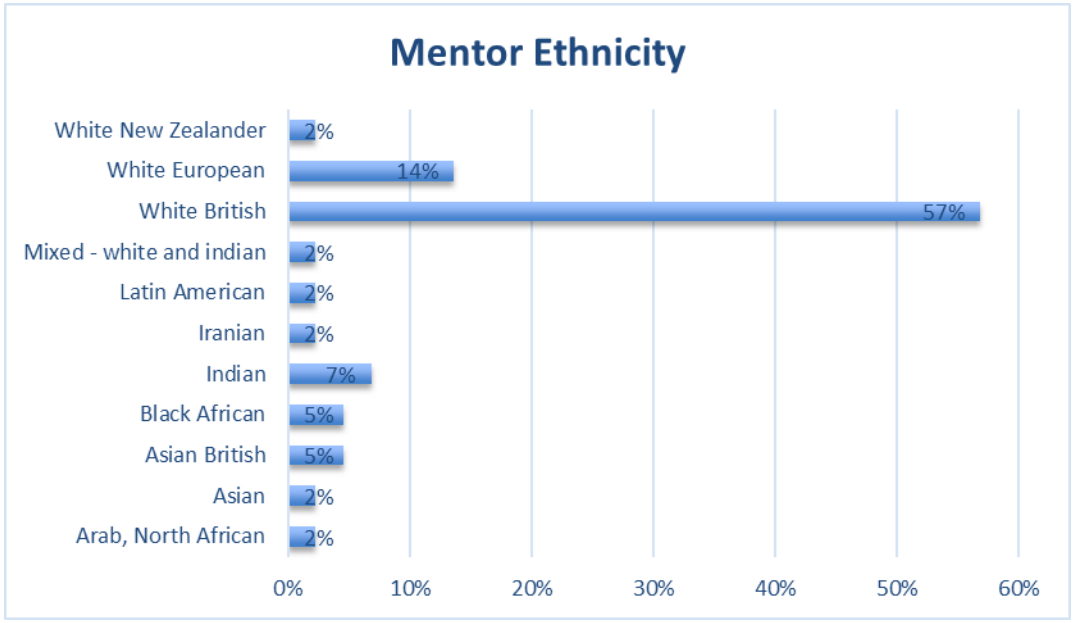


Figure 8: Employment status and fields of work for mentees in the Women in Industry programme

The programme attracted women from diverse backgrounds (Figure 9), indicating that women from inter-sectional backgrounds within male dominated fields are particularly seeking the support on offer from the Women in Industry programme. The mentors were 73% from White ethnicity (57% White British), with 27% of women from Mixed or Global Majority backgrounds. Mentees were from even more diverse backgrounds, with 62% of White ethnicity (55% White British) and 38% from Mixed or Global Majority backgrounds. This compares to 87% White backgrounds in the general British population, and 81% within Bristol.



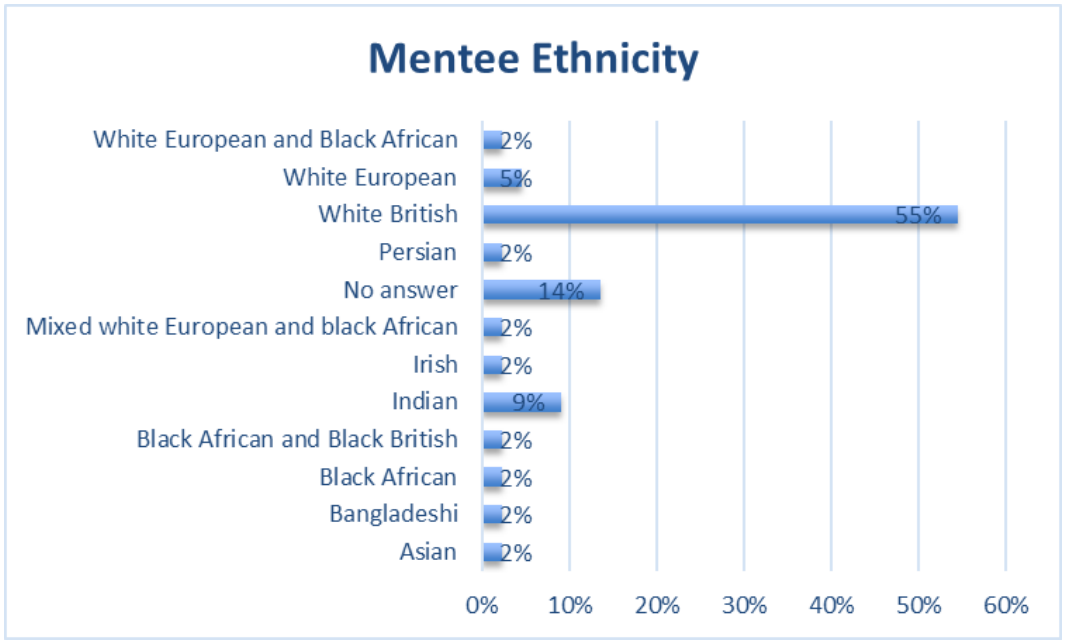


Figure 9: Ethnicity of women mentors and mentees in the Women in Industry programme

6. Programme feedback

In interviews and open quotes in questionnaires, many of the mentors and mentees stated that they thought the scheme was very valuable for their personal development, and the industry. They suggested that the scheme was needed to help women to overcome barriers they faced to being in male-dominated industries.

> *"Mentoring helps with empowerment, taking control, realising that you've got a voice and just practise using it, and doing it gradually. You don't have to do everything all at once, but just giving the small challenges for example if there's certain situations that they feel uncomfortable in then we'll just focus on saying one thing in a meeting". Mentor*

> *"I've got my second mentee and the first one I'm actually still mentoring. So I've now got two on the go because she was quite happy to carry on. So that's a really good sign in itself that she didn't want to stop". Mentor*

> *"Helping to give them confidence and helping them to realise that they've got a voice and how to use it in a minority group, all of those things apply just as much to a degree apprenticeship as they do to any woman in a male dominated environment". Mentor*

The mentees reflected that they not only needed support from their mentor, but visible support from a peer network of other women. They found the events and networking organised by the programme were very valuable, and more opportunities for networking with other women were requested as part of future schemes.

> *"It was nice to see some of the other people that were involved in the scheme [at the launch event]". Mentee*

> *"I can see it could be a bit intimidating, so it's nice to have another female in engineering to go to. And I think where it would be even more beneficial is if you're in a small manufacturing sort of environment, or working for a small employer. And if you're potentially the only apprentice they've taken on that year, having something external to be able to sort of talk to them, work out about apprenticeships, work out what they want to do in their career, how it's going, and any struggles". Mentee*

The mentors reflected that they felt they had supported their mentees to develop their confidence in their careers, and through this process, this had also supported their own development.

> *"Definitely confidence for myself, because I find that when you ask the questions to the mentees, you end up reflecting how you handle situations like that yourself. So it kind of ends up as a sort of reverse mentoring thing, although they won't probably realise that particularly. As you're asking open questions and helping them, you end up reflecting on yourself. I always do. After the sessions I've had, I always end up reflecting myself, so I actually think it leads to my own growth and development". Mentor*

"Again, it's the business of reflect self-reflection. I know that when I was a junior engineer, I certainly wasn't thinking about reflecting on myself. I was just too in the moment, just doing what people at work told me to do and didn't have that feeling that I had much power over my journey and what I did or didn't do. It's communicating that they can be empowered to take action and that their actions are important. So particularly with my first mentee, I think just helping her to make conscious decisions and really reflect on what it was she wanted and what was she all about. And I think that's one of the most important things is early on in your career journey to realise that you can take control and that you have a voice and you have a say and you shouldn't be afraid to use it". Mentor

"Because you are reflecting on how you respond and act in certain situations, so definitely more self reflection on myself and just confidence because when you see when you're helping them overcome whatever it is, it just gives you confidence that you actually do have some experience that's worth something. So I think it's that sort of feeling that you have actually got something to offer because I think most mentors they go into it thinking who am I to be a mentor, I know I did, but actually when you are working with junior engineers and women you realise that the experience you have experience is really valuable and you can talk confidently because it's your experience". Mentor

The mentors and mentees both stated they wanted the programme to continue, with more opportunities for networking, and more case studies on progress and successes within the scheme.

"I just think it's a really great programme". Mentor

"More meetups/networking, with activities within that networking session led by led by UWE". Mentee

"On the website it might be good to have on there some case studies and maybe a bit of like a show off of who our mentors and mentees are and what they're achieving. For example, if you've got any mentees that have won awards or they've managed to achieve something or they've finished their apprenticeship and achieve their end point assessment. You've also got your UWE social media, it might be worth when it's national apprenticeship week or something having one of the days in which is like a show off of the whole project. Mentee

7. Summary

The Engineering and Construction sectors are cornerstone employers in the West of England and need both greater numbers and greater diversity of new entrants to sustain growth in these industries. Through focussing on both recruitment and retention simultaneously, the project addressed both widening participation into these industries, as well as diversity and inclusion in the workplace. This has encouraged more women to apply for apprenticeships, as well as more women feeling supported to stay and progress in their careers.

Working together with businesses, training providers, Higher Education and regional governments, means that the project has streamlined resources, enhanced our reach and maximised impact from the project. The Women in Industry programme partnered with existing schemes and networks to enhance reach and impact. Working with STEMazing has enabled the programme to support senior women to act as mentors for junior women, who have focussed on career development and progression. Working with the South West STEM Ambassador Hub has enabled training and opportunities for junior women to role model diverse career pathways in schools. Partnership working has also enhanced and amplified the impact of existing schemes, such as the Western Training Provider Network's role modelling programme in schools, which is supported by the West of England Careers Hub. This has been an efficient use of resources to support skills development as well as economic growth in the region.

The programme has grown the impact of mentoring within the region, with a 39% increase in mentors and mentees paired through the scheme in 2024. There is also a wide diversity of women from intersectional backgrounds participating in the scheme, with 38% of women coming from Black, Asian, Mixed, or Ethnic Minority backgrounds, compared to 19% within the Bristol area. Mentors and mentees all stated that they found the project valuable and sought further mentoring and networking opportunities. There have also been encouraging increases in women applying to the six Degree Apprenticeship programmes in scope for the project, with a 60% increase in women applicants from 2023/24 (25% women) through to 2024/25 (40% women).

The project has also highlighted a significant commitment to apprenticeship programs within the West of England region, particularly those aligned with the University's and the West of England Combined Authority's sectoral foci. It also underscores the need for further exploration and understanding of Degree Apprenticeships, particularly regarding how employers can leverage these programmes to fulfil their corporate social responsibility goals and enhance access to Higher Education, thereby widening participation and improving career outcomes for diverse entrants to universities.

By facilitating discussions among employers about integrating Degree Apprenticeships into their business strategies, the project has illustrated an enhanced level of engagement from employers, with ambitious plans to utilise apprenticeships as catalysts for cultural organisational change and to address inclusivity gaps effectively. The project has been encouraged by the strong engagement and commitment demonstrated by employers toward the growth of Degree Apprenticeships and the opportunities they present in addressing sector, industry, and employer inequalities that disadvantage certain groups. The efforts undertaken in the Wave One initiative have established a solid foundation for the continued activities underway in the Wave Two expanded project, which will further enhance engagement with employers, apprentices, and the community.