Annual Participation Measure Background Notes

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Introduction

A joint workstream between the Scottish Government and SDS developed the Annual Participation Measure (APM) methodology, now part of the National Performance Framework. These notes outline the reporting approach used.

The APM is based on the shared dataset managed by SDS, which includes data from Scotland's thirty-two local authorities, Scottish Colleges, the Students Award Agency Scotland (SAAS), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the Scottish Funding Council. This dataset is stored on SDS's Customer Support System (CSS), used by CIAG staff to deliver services, and shared with partners through the 16+ participation portal.

From January 2025, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has shared data with SDS for statistical purposes, including employment records for 16- to 19-year-olds in Scotland. HMRC data was included in the 2025 and 2026 APM datasets but was not available for earlier years.

We received a limited dataset from HMRC, including employment episode records with start and end dates. The start date was based on either the employer-supplied start date or, if unavailable, the date of the first payment in the tax year.

For the 2026 measure, HMRC supplied a bespoke extract of 16- to 19-year-olds who were resident in Scotland on 31 March 2026, together with their employment records covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

In 2025, approximately 1.4% of records within the APM dataset were revised by HMRC data and in 2026 this was approximately 2.8% of records. The inclusion of HMRC data has had a positive impact by reducing the number of records with an unconfirmed status and contributing to higher reported participation, particularly in employment. The introduction of HMRC data therefore represents a break in the time series, and comparisons with years before 2025 cannot be made on a like-for-like basis and should be interpreted with care.

1. **How are records created on the Shared dataset?**

   The primary source for creating records on SDS's Customer Support System (CSS) is local authority school data, received via the annual pupil census and ongoing data sharing. If a supplied record does not match an existing one on CSS, SDS creates a new record using the provided details.

   Additional records are also created by SDS staff following direct contact with individuals or their representatives—for example, someone who moved to Scotland after compulsory schooling and received CIAG support.

   It is important to note that additional records are not created on CSS from unmatched data shared by data sharing partners, e.g. DWP, Scottish Colleges, or SAAS.

2. **Coverage of the annual participation measure**

   The **Mid-2025 population estimates** published by the National Records of Scotland estimates the number of 16–19-year-olds in Scotland.

   We compare the annual participation measure cohort with this estimate, and it will normally represent between 92 and 93 per cent of the population. In 2026, it was approximately 96.1% of the estimate.

The measure does not report on the entire population because the primary source of information to create records on CSS is local authority education (schools) data. This is received as part of the annual school pupil census for publicly funded schools and through ongoing sharing of local authority school data. CSS will not hold records for:

- Those who are attending/attended independent schools or those being home schooled with no previous record of publicly funded schooling in Scotland.
- Individuals who migrated to Scotland for the purposes of study or work who have no record of publicly funded schooling in Scotland and who have not received Careers Information Advice or Guidance support from SDS.

3. Who is included in the Annual Participation Measure (APM) cohort?

The annual participation measure cohort is based entirely on records held on the SDS customer support system (CSS). As outlined above, this is a shared data set to which partners contribute through data sharing arrangements. The following rules apply:

i. **Age:** To be included in the annual measure the age of the individual on the last day of the period of interest must be between 16 and 19. The age used within the measure is the age of the customer on the last day of the period of interest i.e., 31st March.

ii. **Primary Status Coverage:** to be included in the annual participation measure an individual must have status data covering the whole period of interest 1st April – 31st March. Records created mid-year that do not have a status history covering the whole the year have been excluded from the measure.

iii. **Excluded Statuses:** individuals who meet the above criteria but have a moved out with Scotland or deceased status at any point during the period of interest are excluded from the measure.

4. Annual Participation Measure Calculation Methodology

i. **Headline Classification:** The method used to calculate the annual participation measure is to assign each individual record in the cohort with a headline classification of

Participating, Not Participating or Unconfirmed.

Each status available on the shared data set has been allocated to a headline classification. The annual headline classification for each person has been calculated by adding up all the days an individual spends in each status and **the classification with the largest number of days** has been assigned to the individual.

Each headline classification is used to calculate the proportion of individuals participating, not participating and unconfirmed.

ii. **Status Grouping:** Once the annual headline classification has been calculated, the same methodology is used to calculate the status grouping.

The status grouping for each person has been calculated by adding up all the days an individual spends in each status within **the annual headline classification and the status grouping with the largest number of days** has been assigned to the individual.

iii. **Status:** The status for each person has been calculated by adding up all the days an individual spends in each status within the assigned status grouping **and the status with the largest number of days** has been assigned to the individual.

5. Managing the scenario when no largest number of days exists

There may be a small number of instances where the highest sum of days could not be used as the sum of days was equal.

The following rules used to identify the participation headline, group, and status:

i. **Headline Classification:**

Where the highest sum of days between participating and unconfirmed was equal, the headline classification was recorded as unconfirmed.

Where the highest sum of days between not participating and unconfirmed was equal, the headline classification was recorded as not participating.

Where the highest sum of days was equal between participating and not participating, and the not participating sum was higher than unconfirmed then the headline classification was not participating else the headline classification was recorded as unconfirmed.

ii. **Status Grouping:**

Participating: where the highest sum of days was equal between two or more of the status groups, their final status grouping would be recorded using a hierarchy (1) Employment, (2) Education and (3) Training & Other Development.

Not-Participating: where the highest sum of days was equal between the status groups, their final status grouping would be recorded using the hierarchy (1) Unemployed Seeking then (2) Unemployed not Seeking.

iii. **Status:** Where more than one status had the same number of days within the same status grouping the latest status was identified from the status records and this status would be reported.

6. Handling Summer Transitions for those leaving school.

The period between 1st May and the first Monday in October was identified as a period of transition from school. Where an individual left school within this period and they transitioned from a school status to another status, the period between the date left school to the start of the new status was filled with a transition status. When calculating participation classification and other subcategories these transition statuses are counted within the category being transitioned into.

7. Handling individuals with gaps in their status history

Where an individual had one or more statuses covering the entire year, then the sum of all the days should total 365 days. Where gaps existed in this status history the deficit of days were counted as unconfirmed days until everyone had a total of 365 days.

8. Example Annual Participation Measure calculation

Start Date	End Date	CSS Status	No of Days
01/04	29/05	School Pupil	59
30/05	21/06	Transition to Unemployed Seeking	23
22/06	17/08	Unemployed	57
18/08	13/09	Unknown	27
14/09	24/01	Part-time Employment	133
25/01	19/03	Further Education	54
20/03	31/03	Modern Apprenticeship	12

Note, the first status available in the period of interest will always have the 1st of April as the calculated start date even though the actual start date on CSS could be earlier. Similarly, the last status in the period of interest will have 31st March as the end date.

Headline Calculation

APM Headline	No of Days
Participation	258
Non-Participation	80
Unconfirmed	27
Result = Participation	

Status Grouping Calculation

Status Grouping	No of Days
Education	113
Employment	145
Result = Employment	

Status Calculation

Status	No of Days
Part-Time Employment	133
Modern Apprenticeship	12
Result = Part-Time Employment	

9. Customer Characteristics

CSS mandatory fields include date of birth, gender, ethnicity, and disability. Most records on CSS are created through data shared from the annual school pupil census which populates these fields using date of birth, sex, ethnicity and disability, supplied by the local authority. Subsequent annual census data can update the disability field on customer records. We also receive monthly uploads of data from local authorities and customer characteristics fields are limited to date of birth and sex. During the delivery of CIAG services, staff may create additional customer records and confirm existing characteristics directly with customers and update the relevant fields in CSS, as appropriate.

The sex attribute within the Annual Participation Measure uses data held within a CSS field labelled as gender, which primarily reflects sex recorded from the school pupil census. We are currently undertaking system changes within CSS to bring recording in line with the UK-wide harmonised standard on the collection of data on sex for future reporting.

10. Allocation of a local authority within the annual measure

Several options were considered to report participation at a local authority level and following consultation with the National Reference Group, whose members have responsibility to provide oversight for data governance of the shared data set, it was agreed to adopt the following reporting methodology.

For school pupils, we will report the local authority of the school for publicly funded secondary and special schools. For

individuals attending residential schools the local authority of their home area is used based on their postcode or SDS centre.

For those who have left school we would continue to report the individual against the local authority of their school of leaving for a fixed period and thereafter the individual would be reported against the local authority linked to their postcode. If no postcode was available for mapping to a local authority, the SDS centre attached to the customer record would be used. All SDS centres are linked to local authority areas.

It was agreed that the link to the school of leaving would be retained for one year based on fixed points in the year. The change from reporting the local authority of the school to an individual's postcode would happen, as follows:

School Leaving Date between:	**Fixed Cohort Leave Date**	**Date Local Authority link changes from School to Postcode**
School census day to the 28th of February (Spring Term)	**1st January** (Prior to the start of the Spring Term)	1st January (12 months after the fixed leave date)
1st March (Spring Term) to the day before the census day	**1st June** (Within the Summer Term)	1st June (12 months after the fixed leave date)

11. Reporting at Sub Local Authority Level

The rules for allocating the local authority in the APM means it is possible for an individual to have postcode that is within one local authority whilst being reported in another local authority. As the individual's postcode is used within sub local authority reporting, only individuals whose postcode is within the same local authority as their reporting LA will be included in sub local authority reporting. When reporting at a national level all individuals are included.

Each record on CSS has an address field that will contain a postcode, and these contact details should be maintained by SDS advisers. The postcode of the customer at the point the data was extracted from CSS was used. CSS postcodes were then matched to the Scottish Postcode Directory (SPD), published by National Records of Scotland to identify valid postcodes. If the postcode recorded on CSS could not be matched to the SPD, we used the address details on CSS to identify a valid postcode for the address.

The 2026 postcode lookup is based on the 2026/1 SPD, published on 9 March 2026. Postcodes containing addresses in more than one local authority area are classified within the SPD as split postcodes. For reporting purposes, each split postcode is assigned according to its most populous component, identified by the suffix 'A'. This component determines the local authority classification and all associated sub-local-authority geographies, including SIMD Quintile, SIMD Decile and Intermediate Zone.

Participation Measure Status Definitions
Headline Classification: Participating

1. Education Group

School Pupil
Relates to individuals on the roll of a local authority or grant-aided secondary or special school. It also includes young adults who are receiving education through local authority purchased places at specialist provision, residential schools, those attending college or other providers but are on a school roll. Each local authority should ensure each school maintains an accurate pupil roll. They should ensure their management information system is updated with information related to when a young person is planning to or has left school, and this will be notified to SDS through regular data sharing.

Higher Education
Relates to individuals enrolled at a University, Higher Education Institution or College to follow a course of study at SCQF level 7 or above. This includes degree courses, courses for the education and training of teachers, higher level courses for professional qualification and Higher National Certificate / Diploma or equivalent. The individual could be enrolled on a Full-Time, Part-Time or distance learning basis.

Further Education
Those enrolled at college or other provider and studying below SCQF level 7, e.g., National Qualifications, Access courses, portfolio courses, portfolio preparation, pre-vocational courses, and special programmes. The individual could be enrolled on a Full-Time, Part-Time or distance learning basis.

2. Employment Group

Employment (full-time & part-time) and Self-Employment
Covers all individuals who consider themselves to be employed through undertaking paid work. This is based on self-classification adopted by the Labour Force Survey.

Individuals will be working full-time if they undertake paid work 16 hours or more per week and part-time for under 16 hours per week. Full-time employment also includes individuals undertaking a Graduate Apprenticeship.

Self Employed is defined as an individual who is earning a living by working independently of an employer, either freelance or by running their own business including anyone working as a professional athlete.

Included in the employment group are those who are undertaking an internship, where a young person has completed an agreed course and is working for a set period in an organisation to enhance their skills and knowledge through practical work experience and for which the individual should be paid.

Modern Apprenticeship
Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) provide individuals with the opportunity to secure industry-recognised qualifications while earning a wage. It relates to individuals undertaking a modern apprenticeship where there is a public funding contribution administered by SDS on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Modern Apprenticeship statistics related to the performance of our MA programme are published by SDS as Official Statistics using data derived from the FIPS database. CSS has its own

reporting rules which means the data shown here may not match the official account derived from FIPS. There is a transfer of data from FIPS to CSS and the data goes through a series of business rules to update statuses on CSS. Also, a modern apprenticeship status can be created on CSS by data shared from local authorities and by SDS advisers based on information received from another source e.g. individuals, parents, family members and local authorities without the corresponding data being held in FIPS. There is cleansing activity on CSS that updates an MA status to Full-Time employment if a corresponding record is not found on FIPS, but this is only after a set period. Therefore, the data shown here should be used with caution and is provided as a guide only, please refer to the Modern Apprenticeship statistics for official figures.

Data Import - Employed: This status was introduced in late summer 2021 and was used for the first time in the APM in 2022. Through data sharing SDS will receive information that an individual is in employment, but we may not receive information about the hours worked. In these circumstances we are unable to allocate the status to the Full-Time or Part-Time employment. For example, DWP share data that identifies an individual is claiming Universal Credit but has earnings as part of their claim, in these circumstances the individual will have a Data Import - Employed status created. In addition, when HMRC data was integrated into the APM dataset these records were also reported using this status.

3. Training and Other Development Group

Employability Fund (Reported between 2016 and 2022)

Following an announcement from the Scottish Government in October 2021, the Employability Fund ceased in March 2022 with associated funding transferred to local authorities in line with No One Left Behind Strategy. The Employability Fund aimed to support activity that will help people to develop the skills needed to secure a job or progress to more advanced forms of training. The Employability Fund supported participants and activity that mapped to stages 2 to 4 of the Strategic Skills and employability pipeline (SSP).

Other Formal Training

The Scottish Government streamlined employability funding into a single, all-age offer of support through No One Left Behind, designed to create a simpler and more joined-up employability support system across Scotland.

The Young Person's Guarantee was introduced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It aimed to ensure that all young people aged 16 to 24 had access to an opportunity in education, employment or training. Following a positive evaluation in March 2023, the Guarantee was mainstreamed across government from April 2023, with activity across education, skills and employability continuing to support young people into opportunities.

Through the No One Left Behind approach, an all-age employability offer is delivered across Scotland. Young people who are unemployed or economically inactive are eligible for support and receive a tailored offer based on their individual needs and circumstances. This may include support to progress towards employment or another positive destination, such as

further or higher education, where this aligns more closely with their aspirations. Individuals undertaking a learning agreement or action plan are recorded within this category.

In addition, Other Formal Training includes individuals participating in third sector funded training programmes with a formal attendance arrangement, where trainees would normally receive a training allowance or grant. It also includes individuals who are not employed but are receiving a scholarship, sponsorship or other external funding to participate in vocational or sporting activities.

Community Jobs Scotland participants were also included within this category until the programme ended in April 2022.

Personal/Skills Development

This status is split into two distinct categories PSD (Employability) and PSD (Social & Health):

PSD (Employability)

Those who participate in activities with the aim of improving their employability. These formal programmes will often be delivered by community learning and development or third sector organisation. The courses will have a structured attendance pattern.

PSD (Social & Health)

Some young adults may not be ready to enter the labour market and will require access to support from support services to make transitions into learning/ work or adulthood. This status relates to individuals who are undertaking structured opportunities appropriate to their long-term needs or to address their barriers to participation. It includes those whose entry to opportunities will have been planned through the transition planning process and take account of the strengths, abilities, wishes and needs of the young person as well as identification of relevant support strategies which may be required. In addition, it includes individuals who are facing barriers to participation and are participating in "structured" support for the removal of barriers prior to concentrating on employability.

Voluntary Work

Undertaking voluntary work/volunteering and involves a young adult giving of his/her time and energy through a third party. It will benefit both the young adult and others, including individuals, groups and organisations, communities, the environment, and society at large. Some volunteering may include a financial allowance. Work experience that is not organised via a formal training programme and un-paid work would also be recorded here.

Activity Agreements (Reported between 2016 and 2019)

"No One Left Behind: Next Steps for Employability Support in Scotland," outlined the Scottish Government's plan to deliver more effective and joined-up employability support across Scotland. From April 2019, a new local employability delivery model managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government was introduced. The integration of funding streams, as part of the ongoing implementation of No One Left Behind, means that although local authorities will provide the same type of support and opportunities for young adults, this activity will no longer be funded under the banner of 'Activity Agreements.' All activity funded via No One Left Behind will be included in the Other Formal Training category.

Headline Classification: Not-Participating

4. Unemployed and seeking employment or training:

This refers to young adults who SDS is aware of and are actively seeking employment/training. This includes those receiving support from SDS, DWP and other delivery partners. It will include individuals who have been identified through regular data sharing from the Department for Work and Pensions e.g., Universal Credit and legacy benefits. If there has been no contact between the individual and SDS within an 8-week period or if SDS has been unable to confirm with the local employability partner that the individual is still being supported, their status will be updated to "status unconfirmed". Any individual identified through data sharing with DWP are excluded from this update.

5. Unemployed and not seeking employment or training

Includes individuals who are **not seeking employment or training** for a range of reasons. References to short-term and long-term illness have been removed, as this distinction cannot be determined from the APM dataset.

Economically Inactive – the primary reason for an individual not being able to participate includes young people with caring responsibilities, pregnancy, those who are choosing not to participate, those who due to their complex needs or personal circumstances are not able to participate and those who are taking time out to travel.

Unavailable - ill health – those young people who are unavailable to participate due to illness.

Custody - Young people on remand or in custodial care.

6. Headline Classification: Unconfirmed

Individuals with an unconfirmed status refers to those 16–19-year-olds who have an individual record within the participation measure but despite multi partner data sharing and attempted tracking by SDS and their partners, it was not possible to identify an up-to-date status for reporting.

SDS has developed procedures for following up customers as part of their service delivery. These procedures will include attempted contact with those 16–19-year-olds with an unconfirmed status.

SDS continues to collaborate with partners to further enhance service delivery through multi-partner data sharing and it is anticipated this work will also help to decrease the number of customers with an unconfirmed status.

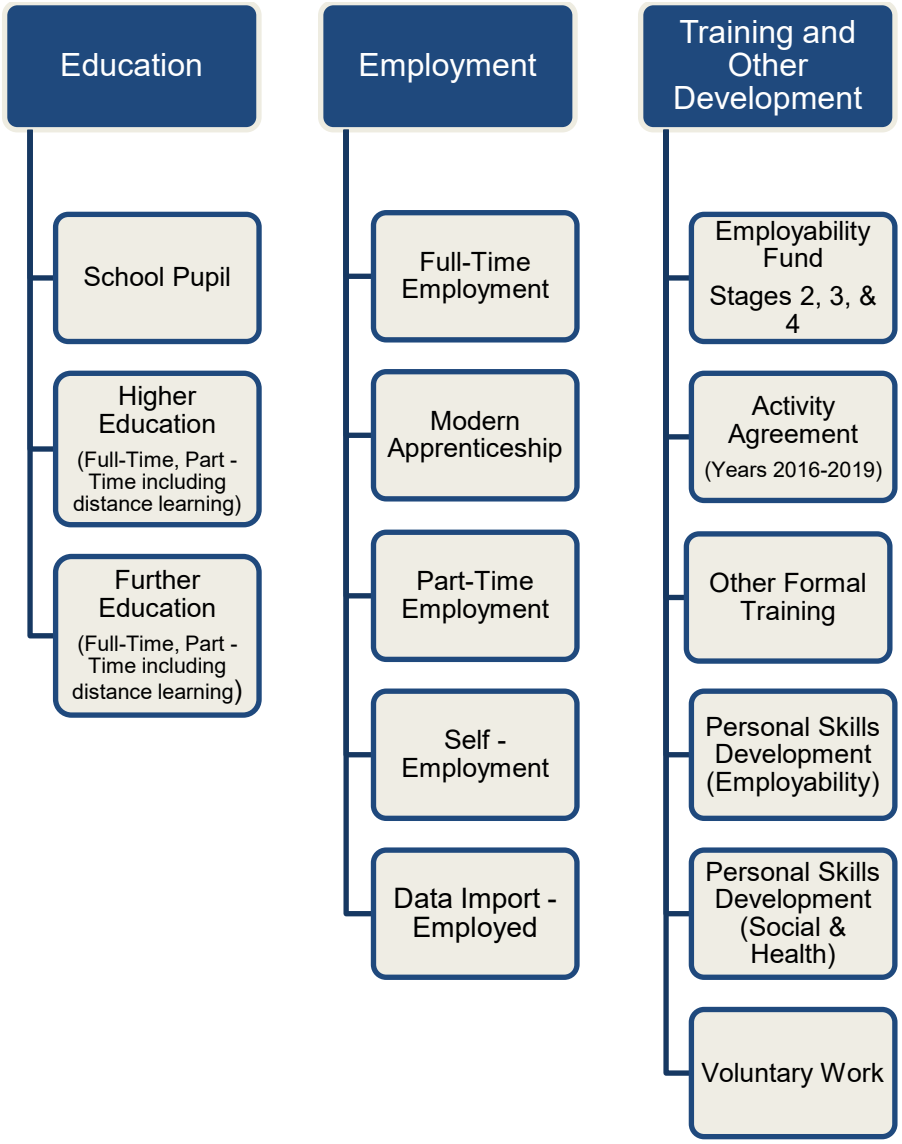
7. CSS Statuses excluded from the measure

Moved out with Scotland

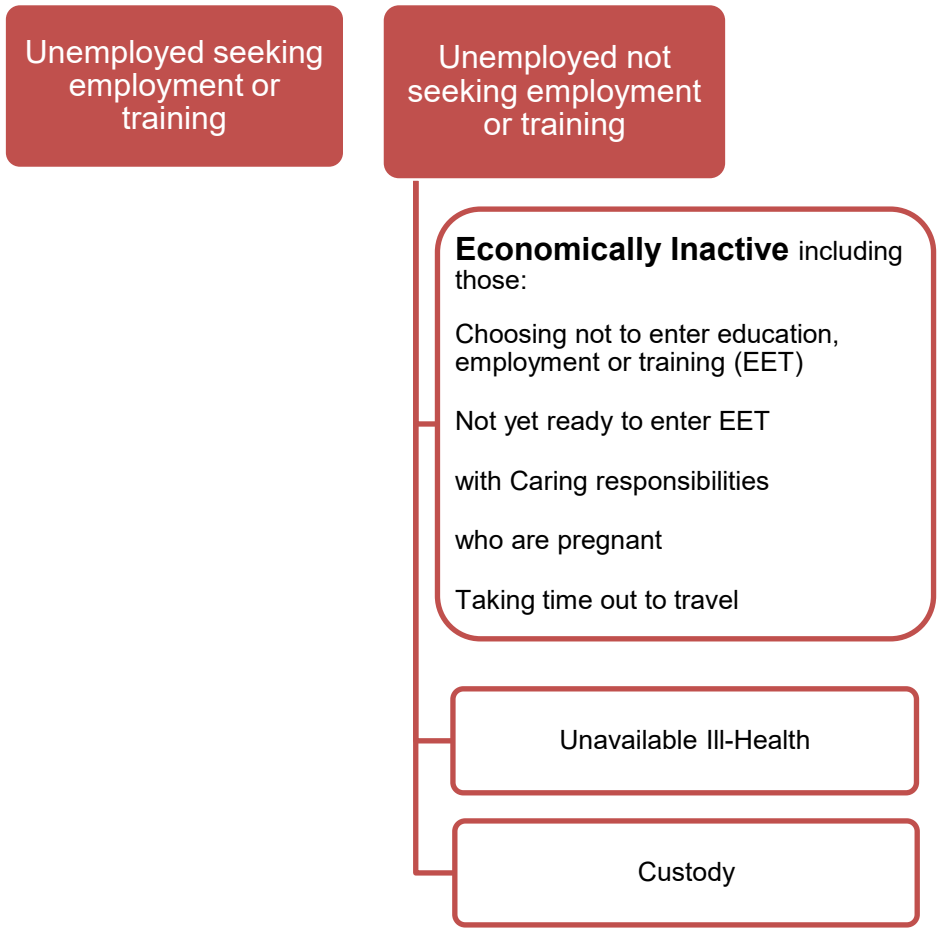
Where SDS has been notified the young person has left Scotland on a permanent basis. However, those who are ordinarily resident in Scotland and are supported by SAAS to study out with Scotland will be recorded within Higher Education.

Deceased: Where SDS has been notified the young person has passed away.

Headline Classification: Participating

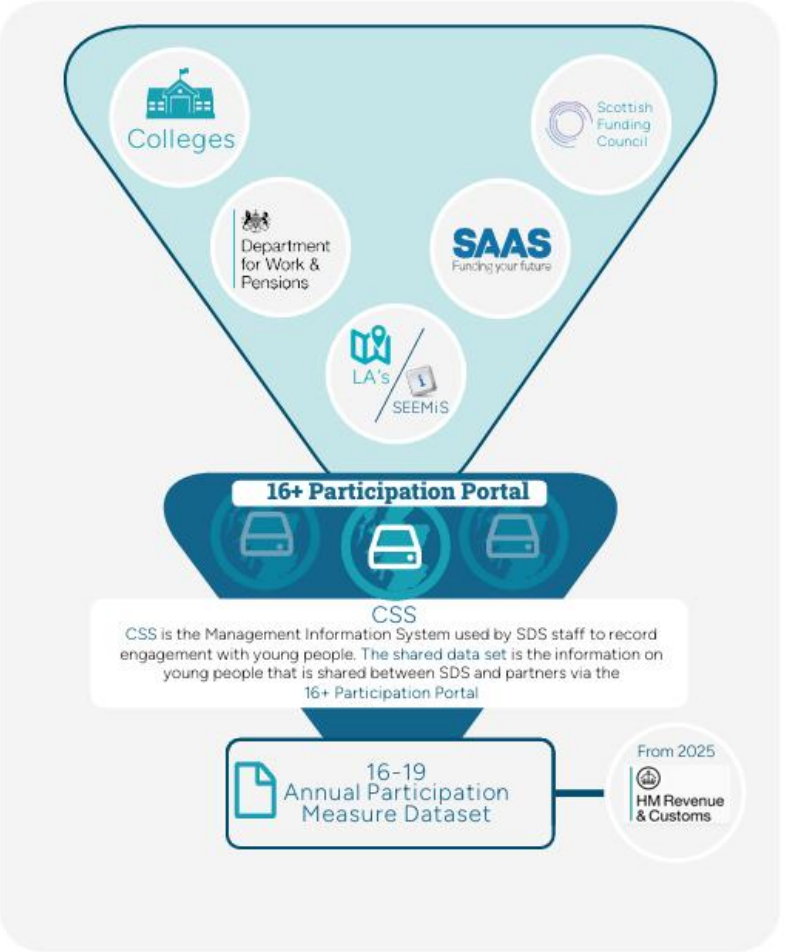


Headline Classification: Not - Participating



12. Recording and updating statuses on CSS

The participation measure is based on a shared data set which is updated through multi partner data sharing and direct data input by SDS staff, because of contact with individuals, their parents/representatives, or organisations an individual is engaging with. Each organisation that shares data is responsible for the quality of the data held in their system. However, SDS also uses an additional set of validation and business rules to govern the creation of new statuses from partner data. The graphic and tables that follow outlines the current sources of data that contribute to the shared data source and what statuses are created:



Data Supplier	Primary or secondary statuses which could be created on CSS
Local Authority	***a)*** Creation and update of school pupil statuses for those at publicly funded schools based on the annual school pupil census returns prepared by each local authority. ***b)*** Throughout the academic year there is ongoing data sharing from SEEMiS (school management information system). This data will be used to maintain school pupil records, identify school leavers, and create post school statuses where this information is supplied.
Scottish Colleges	***a)*** A student enrolment at Scotland's Colleges creates or updates Further Education (FE) or Higher Education (HE) statuses. ***b)*** Withdrawals from FE and HE courses creates an unconfirmed status (unknown)
Student Awards Agency Scotland	***a)*** A student enrolment via SAAS creates or updates Higher Education statuses. b) A student enrolment on a Graduate Apprenticeship will create a Full-Time Employment status. ***c)*** Withdrawals from HE courses creates an unconfirmed status (unknown)
Department for Work and Pensions	DWP share both Universal Credit data and legacy benefits e.g., Job Seekers Allowance. SDS receives data for individuals aged between 16 and 24 years old who are in receipt of Universal Credit, both in and out of work. This data is used to update statuses to unemployed seeking, economically inactive, data import – employed or self-employed. Unemployed seeking statuses will be created on receipt of JSA data.
SDS Funding Information & Processing System (FIPS)	Participants in Modern Apprenticeships. Programme leaver information will be used to update post programme statuses.
Scottish Funding Council (College Leaver Survey)	Variety of statuses created for college leavers based on data gathered through the annual SFC college destination survey.

In addition to the above organisations, SDS also receives data from other partners, e.g., Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO).

To complement the sharing of the above administrative data by partners, there is ongoing sharing of information at an operational level to support the delivery of services to individuals. SDS advisers continue to track and engage with young adults thus maintaining an accurate record of their circumstances.

13. Statistical Disclosure Control

Statistical Disclosure Control aims to minimize the risk of an individual being identified through the release of statistics. For example, when breaking down statistics by local authority, gender, and status there may small numbers in specific statuses. Potentially an individual could identify themselves or others may be able to recognise the individual through this release. Therefore, SDS applies a threshold of five which means any results based on values 1 to 4 will be suppressed, except for the unconfirmed status. We also apply secondary suppression to ensure potentially disclosive data cannot be calculated.

14. Calculations

The Annual Participation Measure report may refer to a percentage point (pp) increase or decrease, which means the absolute change between two percentages e.g., the proportion of 16-19 year olds participating increased by x pp. Throughout our analysis we calculate percentage point differences from unrounded percentages which means the actual differences used within the report may differ slightly from those calculated from the percentages shown in the report within text and graphs. Similarly, percentages within this report may not sum to 100%, due to rounding.

15. Comparability to other published statistics

The detail outlined above provides the background to statuses recorded in the shared data set and the APM methodology. Caution should be exercised when making comparison to published data on specific topics such as Higher Education participation, the Modern Apprenticeship programme, unemployment rates or school leaver destinations. Other published statistics may use differing methodologies and timings and therefore are not directly comparable.

For example, Modern Apprenticeship (MA) statistics related to the performance of the SDS MA programme are published as Official Statistics using data derived from the SDS Funding Information & Processing System. However, CSS, the source system for APM data, has its own reporting rules which means the data used for the APM will not match the official account derived from FIPS. There is a transfer of data from FIPS to CSS and that data goes through a series of business rules to update statuses on CSS. In addition, modern apprenticeship statuses can be created on CSS by data shared from local authorities and by SDS advisers based on information received from another source e.g. individuals, parents, family members and local authorities without the corresponding data being held in FIPS. There is cleansing activity on CSS that updates an MA status to Full-Time employment if a corresponding record is not found on FIPS, but this is only after a set period. Therefore, the MA status data within the APM should be used with caution and is provided as a guide only, please refer to the Modern Apprenticeship statistics for official figures.

SDS statistics on the Modern Apprenticeship programme can be viewed at
http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/modern-apprenticeships

HMRC Data

From January 2025, HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has shared data with SDS for statistical purposes, including employment records for 16- to 19-year-olds in Scotland. This data, sourced from HMRC's Real Time Information (RTI) system, is submitted by employers each time they pay an employee and includes details such as payment amounts, deductions, and employment dates.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) received a limited dataset from HMRC, including individual identifiers (name, date of birth, gender, and postcode), employment episode records with start and end dates, and—where available—an indication of working hours. The start date was based on either the employer-supplied start date or, if unavailable, the date of the first payment. The dataset covered the full year from 1 April to 31 March.

For the 2026 measure, HMRC supplied a bespoke extract of 16- to 19-year-olds who were resident in Scotland on 31 March 2026, together with their employment records covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

The data supplied by HMRC was matched to CSS data and where a match was found the unique reference from CSS was added to the HMRC data set. This was linked to the original APM status dataset which held each status for an individual within the period covered by the APM. The original APM status data was based on information provided by key delivery partners such as local authorities, colleges, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS), as well as status information recorded by SDS advisers.

Status information within the combined dataset was reviewed to incorporate HMRC employment data. This included aligning original status start and end dates with the HMRC records which created a new status history for the customer within the APM data set. The Annual Participation Measure Calculation Methodology was then applied to calculate the new APM reporting categories.

In 2025, Approximately 1.4% of records within the APM cohort were revised based on HMRC data. In 2026, approximately 2.8% of records were revised. In general, the following rules were applied:

Education statuses: If a higher education (HE) or further education (FE) status started in the period of interest and it was confirmed by data shared by SAAS or Scottish Colleges and there was also HMRC data covering the same period then HMRC data was ignored, and the existing status remained. School pupil statuses were managed in the same way using the date left school, mainly supplied by local authorities. In these scenarios it was accepted that an individual could be working whilst studying and education was treated as the primary status.

If a FE or HE status was available, but it was not confirmed by data or if the mode of attendance for the status was not full-time then each status line was reviewed to determine if HMRC data for employment should be used.

Training and Other Personal Development statuses: each status line was reviewed to incorporate HMRC data for employment.

All changes to the above statuses had no impact on the overall participation rate.

Not Participating statuses: each status line was reviewed to incorporate HMRC data for employment, amending status days as appropriate. If a non-participation status within the CSS dataset began after the HMRC status, then only the days preceding the non-participation status were updated. If the HMRC status started after the non-participation status, then the HMRC days were used.

These updates may have had an impact on the overall participation rate.

Unconfirmed: if HMRC data was available and it covered the whole unconfirmed period then the unconfirmed days were updated to employment. However, if there were only partial HMRC days to cover the unconfirmed status, then the number of days from HMRC data was used and the balance of days remained unconfirmed.

These updates did impact on the overall participation rate.

Employment statuses: If an employment record on CSS could be matched to a record in the HMRC data set and HMRC data confirmed this employment status had ended then the remaining days of that CSS status were updated to unconfirmed days.

These updates did impact on the overall participation rate.

Individuals within the APM dataset could have multiple statuses throughout the year and move between education, employment, training and other development, non-participation, and unconfirmed statuses. Integrating HMRC data into the existing status history required a more in-depth review of these records to create a new status history using HMRC data.

Limitations of the HMRC data: The HMRC data only covered the period of interest. If an individual left employment before the period of interest, then we would not be able to match all employment records to HMRC data.

Universal Credit Data

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is one of the key partners who share data with SDS. Since 2014, SDS received data for those aged 18 and over in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance and Income Support. These benefits were replaced by Universal Credit (UC) with the rollout completed by December 2018, however, SDS did not receive UC data until late summer 2021.

The inclusion of UC data for individuals aged 16-19 has led to improvements in data quality and means the measure can now comprehensively report on those who are out of work (unemployed seeking and unemployed not seeking). In addition, the UC data has also been used to identify individuals who are employed and in receipt of universal credit. Unfortunately, DWP was unable to supply historic universal credit data meaning figures and percentages for previous years remain unchanged. Within previous reports we noted that we were unable to reliably quantity the impact the lack of UC data had on the APM. However, we believed we were unable to comprehensively identify or report on young adults who were unemployed and claiming out of work benefits.

It should be noted that through the delivery of post school services and transition support from school, SDS track and engage with unemployed young adults. In local areas, SDS works with DWP to

offer support to young unemployed people thus maintaining an accurate record of their circumstances. As a result, the APM for previous years will have accurately reported on unemployment where SDS had delivered support to individuals. Although available to all, SDS support is mainly delivered between the ages of 16 and 18½ years old. This approach will have to some extent mitigated the absence of UC data in prior years.

The figures and percentages impacted by the lack of UC data included the categories of unemployed seeking, unemployed not seeking, employment and unconfirmed. This meant the headline classifications of participation, non-participation and unconfirmed will have been directly impacted. Examples of how the absence of UC data will have had an impact include:

- DWP data was used to create unemployed seeking statuses and the number of 18- and 19-year-olds reported within an unemployed seeking status gradually reduced since 2016.
- DWP data was used to update individuals from unconfirmed or participating to unemployed seeking.

As the results of the 2022 and 2023 report demonstrate, the inclusion of UC data has improved the quality of the shared data, particularly in relation to unemployed and unconfirmed statuses and, within these, the 18- & 19-year-old age groups.