Pre-16 Work Experience Practice in England: An Evaluation

*Jim Hillage, Jenny Kodz, Institute for Employment Studies
and Geoff Pike, Employment Research*

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Summary

Background

The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies in partnership with Employment Research to undertake an evaluation of pre-16 work experience in England. The main aims of the evaluation were to assess current practice and particularly the effect of the policy changes implemented since the last major evaluation in 1996. The evaluation is based on surveys of school work experience co-ordinators and area work experience co-ordinators, surveys of students to assess the impact and experience of their placement and qualitative interviews of students, school staff, employers and intermediaries in five case study areas. The fieldwork was completed in the autumn of 2000 and the main findings of the study are summarised below.

Volume, length and timing

We found that over 95 per cent of students have been out on work experience in either Year 10 or 11 — around the same proportion as in 1996. Schools with intakes from higher socio-economic groups tend to get higher proportions of their students on placements.

The most common length of work experience remains two weeks — occurring in two-thirds of schools, with a quarter organising one week. The school survey data indicate that average placement length has risen slightly in recent years. Around 14 per cent of schools said that they had changed the length of placements over the past four years. Two-thirds of these (*ie* ten per cent of the total) had increased the length mainly from one week to two, normally with the aim of improving the quality of the placement. The student data indicate that there are some benefits to be gained from longer placements.

Over half the schools in the survey organise a programme of extended work experience, though not necessarily disapplying students from the National Curriculum. Where offered, the average number of extended placements was six per school.

Most students (70 per cent) go on placements in Year 10, a higher proportion than in 1996. Nine in ten schools were aware that students were now allowed to go on work experience from the start of Year 10. Few schools had taken advantage of the new arrangements. The bunching of placements in the summer term of Year 10 is becoming more intense, with consequent problems for schools and employers trying to offer the maximum range of placements.

Organisation of work experience

The main methods of organising work experience are either a 'joint' approach, whereby schools and external agencies work together on finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements, or a more 'centralised' approach whereby a central agency is mainly responsible for these services. Very few schools take sole responsibility for organising work experience.

Since 1996, there has been an increase in the proportion of schools relying on a central agency to provide a health and safety checking service and also maintaining a database of employers. The main advantage of a centralised service is in reducing the burden on schools in terms of workload. A joint approach better enables schools to tailor placements to individual student needs. In centralised areas, work experience placements tend to be longer and less clustered in the summer of Year 10. The most common co-ordinating agency for work experience is the local Education Business Partnership.

Nearly half of the schools in the survey have a written policy on work experience and most of the rest include work experience within a careers education policy. More schools have developed work experience policy statements in recent years. There appears to be a positive link between the existence of a separate policy and more extensive preparation and debriefing.

The level of the person in school responsible for work experience varies. For instance, in one-fifth of cases, work experience is managed by a teacher with no or just one responsibility point, while at the other end of the scale in a further fifth it is the responsibility of a senior teacher. On average, the teacher responsible spends around 70 hours school time organising work experience and a further 50 hours outside school time. In addition, administration staff spend around 40 hours on work experience. The more time spent, the greater the time spent on preparation and the higher the proportion of students getting their preferred placement. Schools tend to spend less time organising work experience when they are part of a central system.

Area co-ordinators estimate that on average each placement costs around £23 to administer. Where schools contributed to the cost of a central agency, the average payment was £15.

Finding placements

On average, just under half of the placements are found by a central body and around a further quarter each by schools and by students/families. Schools in more affluent areas are more likely to rely on students and their families to find placements. Our student survey data suggest that higher ability students are more likely to find their placements through their own contacts.

Nationally there appears to have been a general shift towards centralisation in terms of finding placements. The main advantage identified to schools of using a centrally held area database of placements, is that it reduces the workload for schools. It also avoids disadvantaging students who do not have contacts with employers, for example through their families. The advantage of students finding their own placement is that it helps develop job search skills. 'Own find' placements are also often thought to be of better quality and better tailored to individual needs.

A number of issues were raised in relation to finding placements, in particular: limited range of placements available, lack of good quality or challenging placements for high ability students, schools being in competition with each other for placements at peak times, and the increased demands on employers for placements.

Health and safety checking

In most areas (approximately 80 per cent) a central agency is responsible for health and safety checking. On average, for over ninety per cent of placements an initial health and safety check is conducted by means of a personal visit. Since 1996, the proportion of health and safety checkers who have health and safety qualifications (IOSH and NEBOSH) has increased significantly. There was a general consensus that health and safety checking has improved over the past four years — although ten per cent of area and school co-ordinators still do not think arrangements are adequate.

Matching students to places

Around a quarter of central agencies provide a full service of matching students to placements. In other areas, matching takes place by the school or the student applies directly to a chosen employer. The majority of students are given a choice of placements, but in many cases this is a restricted choice, *eg* students select the type or occupation of the placement, rather than a specific placement, or choice is restricted by availability.

Since 1996, there has been a reduction in the proportion of students indicating interest in career as a main reason for selecting their placement (67 per cent give this as the main reason). On

average, 70 per cent of students get their first choice of placements, but where a central agency is involved, a lower proportion of students get their first choice. Overall, schools and co-ordinators are satisfied with the range of choice students have.

Just over half of area co-ordinators have taken positive measures to avoid students taking gender stereotypical placements. Further, over half of area co-ordinators report that most or all schools in their area took such measures. Despite this effort, 69 per cent of schools reported no change in the number of students taking non-gender stereotypical placements.

Pre-placement preparation

In most cases responsibility for work experience preparation lies jointly with careers and PSHE departments within schools or is an integral part of PSHE. On average seven lessons are used by schools for preparation activity; a typical lesson is one hour in length. School and area co-ordinators think that the quality of preparation in the school is good. Similarly, amongst students, there is a high level of satisfaction with pre-placement preparation. Most preparation time is devoted to health and safety. One in six schools do not discuss learning objectives with students prior to placements. Employers are rarely involved in placement preparation. Two-thirds of students visit the workplace prior to their placement – more where the placements are organised centrally.

Placements

The pattern of placements appears to have changed little since 1996. While there has been a decline in the proportion of placements taken in some sectors (*eg* banks, offices and health) there are rises in others (notably production, retail and leisure). There has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap in some sectors, *eg* production, legal and media. However, large differences remain in education and health, where placements are predominantly taken by girls. Higher ability students tended to be clustered in professional, legal, media and office environments. Students of lower academic abilities are more likely to be found in the education and production sectors.

The most common activity for students on placement (50 per cent of cases) was to help someone else do their job, while 43 per cent said they did an actual job, 27 per cent moved around departments and 13 per cent said they did a specially created job. Most students used a computer while on their placement, 30 per cent used one frequently and 28 per cent occasionally – an increase on the 1996 survey. Most students felt that they were given opportunities to show what they could do and take responsibilities on their placement.

While on their placement most students complete a daily diary and a log book. Fewer gather key skills evidence or interview people in the workplace. The more pre-placement preparation students do, the more likely they are to undertake a wider range of formal learning activities on placement.

Most respondents from schools and area agencies were satisfied with the quality of the placements provided. Four out of five students said that they were happy with their placement. Students who did an actual job and those with access to a computer were significantly happier than those who did not. The more challenging the placement, the more students were satisfied. Students on retail and leisure placements tended to be the least satisfied.

Most, but not all, students are visited by a teacher while on their placement; fewer where students find the placement themselves, probably because of the distance involved. Visits generally focus on ensuring diaries *etc.* are being completed, health and safety and on whether the placement matches up to the job description.

Nearly all (98 per cent) of placements are completed, with lower proportions in schools with higher absence or exclusion levels. The main reason for non-completion was 'inappropriate student behaviour'.

Debriefing and follow-up

In most schools, post-placement debriefing lasts at least two lessons, although rarely more than half a day. Six per cent do not conduct any formal debriefing. The more time a school allocates for preparation, the more time is spent on debriefing. Employers are included in debriefing arrangements in only a minority of cases.

Most students use their placement experience in their Record of Achievement and there is some form of assessment linked to the completion of their log book or diary.

English, Business Studies and Information Technology are the GCSE courses most likely to build on the placement experience, either in student discussion or coursework. While 60 per cent of students used numeracy on their placement, only 11 per cent referred to their experience in subsequent maths lessons. The proportion of students making a connection between their school work and work experience while on placement has increased, especially in IT, Business Studies, Art and Design. However, only in IT has there been a significant increase in the proportion of students saying their experience was used in school afterwards. Work experience has increased significantly as a vehicle for developing key skills.

Impact

Most schools attach a high priority to work experience and think the process worthwhile. While two-thirds of area co-ordinators believe that the priority given to work experience has remained the same since 1996, a quarter think it has risen.

We have some general evidence that the quality of work experience is improving, at least in terms of inputs, as schools have a larger number of practices associated with a good quality work experience process. Schools where work experience is centralised are likely to have a greater number of practices associated with a good quality work experience process than schools in other areas.

Awareness and use of quality guidelines and frameworks is extensive among schools. There was widespread awareness of most of the main publications and they were generally felt to be useful. Although less prevalent, local quality standards were rated particularly highly.

Around 70 per cent of schools had evaluated their work experience programmes, commonly involving an assessment of staff and students' views.

Schools generally felt that work experience promoted students' personal and social development, enhanced their maturity and helped them develop an understanding of the world of work. Fewer saw impacts in terms of broadening students' career horizons or helping their GCSE coursework. Schools with higher GCSE attainment rates saw greater impact than those with lower scores, particularly in relation to promoting students' personal and social development, enhancing their maturity and motivating students to work harder in school.

Students also thought that work experience had an effect, particularly in terms of giving them a good idea of what work was like in their placement and, to a lesser extent, helping them decide about their career. Just over half (52 per cent) said that after their placement they felt more interested in doing well at school. Only one-fifth felt their placement was relevant to their school work.

Comparing students' views and attitudes to work and school before and after they went on work experience showed few differences apart from increases in the proportions who:

- felt it was important to sort things out and solve problems on their own at work
- were confident of working with adults and making friends at work
- recognised that having to use the telephone was a difficult task
- knew what it is like to go out to work.

Work experience versus part-time work

Three-fifths of students in our survey had some form of part-time job, generally something other than a paper round or baby-sitting. Most students thought work experience gave them a better idea of what work was like and more opportunities for skill development than part-time work. Teachers agreed, arguing that part-time jobs tended to be more narrowly focussed and much less interesting than work experience.

However, few students sought to capitalise on students' experiences of part-time work and work-related learning activities.

Conclusions

The study was asked to address a number of key issues including: the quality of work experience; the timing of work placements; the value of block placements compared with more flexible arrangement or part-time work; and the overall impact of work experience on students. We concluded that:

- Most participants involved in pre-16 work experience are satisfied that placements and the pre- and post-placement processes are of good quality.

- We further conclude that quality has been improving, particularly in terms of pre-placement preparation, health and safety checking, teacher visits and placement completion rates.

- However, a minority of placements were not of good quality and there was still scope for improvement in many areas, especially:

    - employer involvement in preparation and debriefing

    - integrating work experience within the curriculum

    - health and safety, and

    - equal opportunities.

- The two-week block is generally felt to be the most appropriate way of delivering work experience to most students and is relatively organisationally efficient. Extended work placement, where provided, appeared to work well. Placements appear to offer a more wide-ranging experience of work and offer more learning opportunities than part-time work, although few schools capitalise on the potential of the latter in work-related learning.

- Teachers believe work experience promotes students' personal and social development, enhances their maturity and helps them develop an understanding of the world of work. While we were unable to assess placements' contribution to some aspects of employability, we were not able to demonstrate conclusively that work experience contributes to either key or

vocational skill development. While it offers the opportunity to do so, positive outcomes were not picked up by this study.

We were also asked to make recommendations for the enhancement of future work experience policy and practice. We would like to see:

- sustained funding and support for the organisation of placements in schools and through their partners in agencies

- wider recognition of work experience achievements through existing or (only if necessary) new mechanisms

- further guidance to teachers on the integration of work experience into the wider curriculum

- a more coherent approach to work-related learning in schools up to and beyond work experience

- further development of different models of experience, particularly for higher achievers, within the framework of a block approach

- employers in IT, design and other segments of the 'new economy' encouraged to offer places

- central agencies develop and regularly update databases of placement providers (*ie* employers) in their area − providing access to them on-line to schools

- further guidelines and best practice models disseminated showing employers, particularly smaller ones, easy ways to enhance placements

- employers encouraged to participate in the whole work experience programme, not just placement provision

- employers encouraged to provide access to IT, with schools or work experience agencies developing materials for students to do on computer

- schools encouraged, with funding if available, to avoid placements at the end of Year 10

- local education business link organisations organise good practice exchanges between school (and area) co-ordinators

- central agencies identify and work with schools where provision remains inadequate.

Finally, the research raised a number of questions which could warrant further study.

1. Introduction

In this opening chapter we set out the aims of the study, outline our approach and describe how the rest of this report is structured.

1.1 Aims of the study

In January 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies, in partnership with Employment Research, to undertake an evaluation of pre-16 work experience with the aims of:

- assessing current work experience policy and practice in England, particularly the impacts of policy changes implemented since the last major evaluation in 1996 (Hillage *et al.*, 1996)

- informing the development of policies to further enhance the quality of work experience.

More specifically, a number of detailed objectives were agreed for the evaluation, involving making assessments of:

- the quality of work experience placements

- awareness and impact of QCA/DfEE guidance

- the new flexibility on the timing of work placements

- the relationship between the 'traditional' block placements and other similar activities

- the impact of work experience

- the costs and benefits and drawbacks of various approaches to the organisation of work experience, and

- recommendations for the enhancement of future work experience policy and practice.

During the course of the evaluation a further specific area of interest was identified and it was agreed that the evaluation would also assess:

- the different learning opportunities offered by part-time work and work experience, and

- the value of block work experience compared with more flexible placements tailored to individual needs.

1.2 Research approach

So that we could build up a comprehensive picture of pre-16 work experience, we used a number of research methods including qualitative interview based research, and quantitative survey based methodologies, and collected data from a range of people involved in the provision of work experience.

The main methods involved:

- a nationwide survey of school work experience co-ordinators
- a nationwide survey of area work experience co-ordinators
- comprehensive case studies in five areas of England, each involving:
  - interviews with teaching staff in five schools
  - interviews/discussion groups with students in the five schools
  - three separate surveys with the students
  - interviews with intermediaries and employers.

Below we briefly discuss each of the approaches in turn. More details of our methodology appear in Appendix 1.

1.2.1 The school co-ordinators survey

The sample for the survey of work experience co-ordinators in schools (henceforth referred to as the *school co-ordinators survey*) was taken from the Register of Education Establishments (REE) and comprised:

- one in three randomly selected secondary schools
- all the schools in the five case study areas being visited during the course of the qualitative fieldwork research.

The final total sample included 1,091 schools. In the absence of a database giving names of school work experience co-ordinators all questionnaires were mailed to 'The Work Experience Co-ordinator'.

The questionnaire was developed in conjunction with the DfEE and the project steering group. It took the form of a 12 page booklet and sought information on all aspects of schools' delivery, organisation and management of work experience (a copy is in Appendix 2). It was mailed in March, spanning the Easter break, and the survey closed at the end of May 2000.

The survey asked questions about:

- the provision of work experience, when it took place and for how long
- the preparation and debriefing programmes
- the costs of organising the placement
- support received from central agencies
- quality issues and outcomes, and the perceived value of work experience.

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of all schools in the sample returned their questionnaire. We compared the characteristics of the schools that responded with the whole population. We found that schools with a high proportion of students eligible for free school meals were significantly less likely to have responded to the survey, and conversely those schools with low free school meal eligibility were more likely to have responded.

Free school meals (FSM) is clearly a key variable and is demonstrably correlated with a number of other school back-ground variables and school outcome variables. For this reason, and the fact that some important research issues are associated with issues of disadvantage, there is a potential bias in the data. To compensate for this difference between the respondents and the population of schools in England it was decided to weight the data. This results in a response set that much more closely reflects the population of schools in England. All data presented for the school co-ordinators survey in the remainder of this report are weighted to account for these differences.

1.2.2 Area co-ordinators survey

A separate survey of work experience co-ordinators working from Education Business Partnerships (EBPs), Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), Trident and Career Services (known as the *area co-ordinators survey)* was also carried out. All area work experience co-ordinators identified from DfEE records were sent a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was mailed in April 2000 and following two postal reminders and some reminders by telephone; it was closed in early June 2000. A total of 127 area co-ordinators were sent a questionnaire, of whom 99 responded to the survey, giving a response rate to the survey of 78 per cent.

An eight page questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was developed in consultation with the DfEE and the steering group. It was designed so that many of the questions would be comparable with the school co-ordinators survey and also with the survey of area co-ordinators conducted in 1996 (Hillage *et al.* 1996) (which we refer to in this report as the *1996 area co-ordinators survey)*. The questionnaire covered a range of issues including:

- background information about the area covered
- provision of work experience placements
- the number and timing of placements
- approaches to organising work experience placements
- management of health and safety
- support provided by central agencies to schools
- costs and funding of placements
- quality issues and outcomes, and
- changes to work experience since 1996.

1.2.3 The case studies

Five area-based case studies were conducted. The five areas were the same as those used in the 1996 study (with the exception of the area in Wales, as this study covered England only). It was agreed at the outset that the identity of the areas would not be disclosed, to maximise the confidentiality of the interviewees. Between them the areas represent a mix of communities (*eg* urban/rural with a geographical spread), and different lengths and forms of organising work experience.

In each area we visited five schools, where possible the same schools involved in the previous research. In each school we interviewed the work experience co-ordinator, a senior school manager responsible for the work-related curriculum, one or two year 10/11 teachers (*eg* head of year or a form tutor) and a selection of pupils who had recently been out on work experience (either separately or in a mini focus group). In all we collected data from approximately 80 teaching staff and 130 students.[1]

In addition, two surveys of students were administered.

- A *student impact survey* was developed comprising:
  - a '*before*' survey distributed to a sample of students in each case study school, generally in March 2000, prior to the students going out on work experience asking for their attitudes to work and school, and knowledge and experience of a range of work-related issues. Responses were received from 1,154 students from 24 of the 25 participating schools. Schools were asked to provide some background biographical data for each student participating in the study. This included SAT scores and, as an indicator of socio-economic status, free school meal information (data were received for 750 students). We

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[1] In one school all the interviews had not been completed at the time of writing the report due to travel difficulties caused by extreme weather conditions.

asked for absence data but these were provided by only a small number of schools and have not been used in the subsequent analyses.

- an '*after*' work experience survey which was administered in early July. Schools were sent batches of questionnaires addressed individually to each participating student, for completion before the end of term. Four schools where work experience was timed for autumn Year 11 acted as a control group for the research, completing both surveys prior to their work experience. In total, 826 students completed the after survey, of which 666 completed their work experience before the survey and 120 were yet to do their work experience (the control group).

- finally, 801 students completed a third questionnaire seeking information about their period of work experience — the work experience *student process survey*.

In all, 742 students completed all three questionnaires.

The final element of the case studies involved interviews with representatives from five intermediaries (such as EBPs, LEAs, TECs, Careers Services *etc.*) and five employers in each area.

The case study visits and interviews took place between May and November 2000. The case study data have been used thematically, to explore issues raised by the two co-ordinator surveys. The case studies have not been written up separately.

1.3 Report structure

Findings from all aspects of the research are presented in the following eight chapters. It is worth noting that all differences between groups of schools presented in this report are statistically significant to at least 95 per cent confidence level. The rest of the report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 explores the numbers involved and organisation of work experience, giving an idea of the survey coverage, the proportion going out on work experience, when and for how long, reasons for non-participation and briefly looks at the extent of 'extended work experience'.

Chapter 3 discusses the organisation of work experience at area level and at school level. On the former we examine different forms of organisation from centralised systems to school based. At school level we explore the management and costs involved in organising pre-16 work experience, looking at the nature of school policies and how it is co-ordinated within schools.

Chapter 4 examines issues concerned with finding placements, health and safety, matching and preparation, where responsibility

lies for these activities, how much preparation takes place and the degree of choice students receive in selecting their placements.

Chapter 5 looks at the actual work placements themselves; the range of tasks asked of students by their schools, school views of the quality of work experience placements. Also covered are issues around placement monitoring and completion of placements.

Chapter 6 presents data on the extent of debriefing and integration of work experience in schools, who is involved in this process, what is done and how much.

Chapter 7 looks at three important issues underpinning the evaluation and draws together our data on the value, quality and impact of work experience.

Chapter 8 is devoted to the specific issue of the different learning experiences gained by students from their part-time work compared with work placements.

Finally in Chapter 9 we assess what the study has found on the issues outlined in Section 1.1 that this evaluation was asked to address and make our recommendations.

2. Volume, Length and Timing

In this chapter we look at the overall scale of work experience — the numbers of students involved, why some students do not participate, and the length and timing of placements. The chapter also briefly discusses extended work experience.

2.1 Volume of work experience and non-participation

Respondents to the school co-ordinators survey reported that on average 97.2 per cent of the relevant year group went out on work experience. The average number of students going out from each school is 170, with 25 per cent of schools sending out less than 125 each year and 25 per cent sending out more than 200. The most any school responding to the survey reported sending out is 400 students.

The area co-ordinators survey found that the average proportion of the cohort going out on work experience was 95 per cent, *ie* slightly lower than that estimated by the school data. This is likely to be a more reliable estimate as schools providing less work experience were probably less inclined to respond to the school co-ordinators survey. Based on this average of 95 per cent, we estimate that of the Year 11 cohort covered by the survey, 407,500 will have been on a work experience placement by the end of the academic year, and 20,000 will have not.

2.1.1 Changes since 1996

These data are not directly comparable with the responses from the 1996 survey of area co-ordinators' as in the last survey special and independent schools were included. The 2000 survey also received a higher response rate — 79 per cent as compared with 70 per cent. Nevertheless, the two surveys show similar proportions of the year group taking work experience, as the average proportion reported in 1996 was 95 per cent.

2.1.2 Students not going out on work experience

The school survey suggests that just under three per cent (2.8 per cent) of students in maintained secondary schools do not go out on work experience each year. These students, however, are more

likely to be in schools in areas of social disadvantage — as indicated by eligibility for FSM. Also, schools with lower GCSE attainment, higher absence rates, EAL and SEN support needs tend to have higher non-participation rates. Variation here is also apparent by school size and type.[1]

To present the data, the non-attendance has been conflated into three categories — schools reporting 100 per cent attendance, schools reporting low non-attendance of one to two per cent, and schools reporting higher non-attendance at more than two per cent. Table 2.1 highlights the main findings.

Schools with higher proportions of students eligible for free school meals (FSM) reported significantly higher proportions of students not going out on work experience. Schools with fewer than ten per cent of students eligible for FSM reported 1.8 per cent of their students not going out, while those with 30 per cent or more eligible for FSM reported an average of 5.6 per cent of students not going out. A similar difference was apparent between schools with low absence rates compared to those with high absence levels. It would therefore seem that schools with higher socio-economic intakes get a higher proportion of students out on placement.

These data are given further clarification when we look at the reasons schools give for work experience non-attendance. The main ones are:

Table 2.1: Proportion of students not going on work experience — percentages of schools in Special Measures with high eligibility for FSM and high absence rates

	Percentage of students NOT going out on work experience			
	None (0%)	**1-2%**	**More than 2%**	*Base = 100%*
All Schools	*35*	*35*	*30*	*669*
Large schools (more than 200 to place)	28	42	30	*216*
Schools offering GNVQ	25	38	37	*291*
Schools with more than 22% students with SEN	25	32	43	*215*
Less than 35% gaining 5 A-C grades	20	26	54	*196*
Schools with more than 30% eligible for FSM	19	26	55	*124*
Schools with more than 10% sessions missed in 1998/9	16	28	56	*169*
Schools in Special Measures	0	45	55	*11*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

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[1] Schools in more deprived areas with high proportions of disadvantaged students are more likely to be smaller schools, 11-16, not surprisingly in Special Measures or an Education Action Zone and comprehensive. It is worth noting when considering the main features of any variation displayed.

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- **Inappropriate student**: this included disapplied, disaffected, behavioural problems *etc.* — 42 per cent of all reasons given for non-participation. Schools in more deprived areas with more problematic student intakes and with high absence rates are much more likely to give this reason.

- **Student/parent decision**: this might include illness, holiday, parental prerogative or simply student refusal — cited more often by schools in more affluent areas — 31 per cent of all reasons given.

- **Simple absence**: failing to meet deadlines, apply or not turning up — 17 per cent.

- **School decision**: four per cent — *eg* interfering with coursework or GCSEs or the cost involved, and

- **Employer decision**: five per cent, cancellation or placement falling through.

As reported in the next section, schools with two-week placements appear to have better participation rates than those lasting one week. It is notable that the students most likely to miss out on work experience are those perhaps most likely to benefit, *ie* students who are disaffected from school but could be motivated by an appropriate placement.

Finally there appeared from the case studies to be a correlation between the commitment in the school to work experience and the number of students experiencing a satisfactory placement. One of the schools visited had chosen to adopt an increasingly low key approach to the provision of work experience. In practice this meant that students were required to manage their own work experience process more and more. Last year, 25 per cent of students found their own placements. The remainder were given deadlines for the completion of forms (including placement preferences) and a number of general reminders. If they failed to supply the necessary paperwork they lost their opportunity for work experience. This has meant that the numbers of pupils not going out on work experience doubled in the last two years (from six or seven to 20).

2.2 Length of placement

This section of the chapter deals with the length of work experience placements and in the next we look at timing. In both sections we highlight where any changes have taken place over the last four years.

2.2.1 Length of work experience

In the survey of schools, we found two-thirds of schools organise a two-week block work experience, 23 per cent organise a one-

Table 2.2: Average percentage of students undertaking work experience by length of placement, in 2000 and 1996

Length of placement	Mean proportion of students 2000	Mean proportion of students 1996
One week	26.0	25.5
Two weeks	67.9	67.8
Three weeks	5.7	5.8
Other	0.4	0.8
	Based on 99 areas	*Based on 102 areas*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

week block and five per cent use a three-week block. A further three per cent use a combination and two per cent have some other format for organising their work experience.

The area co-ordinators questionnaire also asked respondents what proportion of students in their area had placements of one, two or three weeks. Reflecting the school data, on average just over two-thirds of students had placements of two weeks, just over a quarter had one week and six per cent had three-week placements (Table 2.2).

The school survey data show that schools with higher absence rates, poorer GCSE performance, in more deprived neighbour-hoods with higher proportions of SEN, in EAZs and with comprehensive admissions policies are all more likely to offer two-week placements than is the case for schools in more affluent areas.

2.2.2 Alternative arrangements

The surveys found a few schools (under one per cent) with alternative ways of organising placements including two one-week blocks at separate times in Years 10 and 11, two consecutive but different one-week blocks and eight-day placements.

For example, one of the schools in the case studies organised two one-week placements, normally in May/June of Year 10 and one in the October of Year 11. However, this year, the Year 10 block took place in February due to timetabling commitments, which meant finding and setting up placements over the Christmas period. The school believes that two separate weeks offers a much wider experience of the world of work.

2.2.3 Extended work experience

Since 1996, schools have been permitted to organise 'extended work experience' where students undertake a period of work experience, sometimes in harness with work related training, for a

day or more per week for several weeks or more during their last two years of compulsory schooling. Schools were asked to indicate firstly whether or not they operate such a programme, and secondly the numbers of students involved and reasons for their involvement.

Over half the schools responding (55 per cent) said that they organise a programme of extended work experience. Use of extended work experience is, on average, concentrated in those schools with: high proportions of white and SEN students, mixed sex (only 24 per cent of girls' schools offer extended work experience, compared to 32 per cent of boys and 60 per cent of mixed schools) and non-denomination schools. A similar pattern is also noticeable for schools with higher absence rates and numbers of exclusions. Schools in Education Action Zones and in Special Measures are also more likely to offer this form of work experience, although the numbers in these cases are still small. Interestingly, the socio-economic environment, in terms of free school meal (FSM) eligibility, of the school has little or no bearing on whether or not the school offers this form of work experience. Only four per cent of selective schools offer extended work experience.

In those schools offering extended work experience, 70 per cent offer traditional 'block' work experience to these students in all cases and a further 24 per cent indicate that they offer it in some cases. Here there was little variation by type of school, although schools with lower proportions of students with FSM were significantly more likely to offer both forms of work experience to all students. In the case study schools, extended work experience students generally found a block placement at the workplace they already attended.

In terms of the numbers involved, over 2,200 extended placements were provided by the 370 schools — an average of around six per school. Two schools provided more than 100 placements. The most common reason for offering extended placements was to address disaffection and disillusionment among students who were not achieving in school and at risk of exclusion or motivational problems. Some schools were also providing it for GNVQ provision and, more generally, as an alternative curriculum.

Example of an extended work experience scheme

In one school we visited a new scheme has recently been introduced. Approximately 30 students were identified in Year 9. Each student and their parents were interviewed by the school and a careers officer and the students are placed in an area of vocational interest. Students were disapplied from the National Curriculum. The scheme consists of two and a half days on placement and two and a half days in school studying Mathematics, English, Science, IT, a work-related learning option and PE. The key element of the placement is that it is hands on

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and practical. In school students are in groups of seven and much time is spent monitoring and mentoring students. A Youth Awards Scheme is being introduced next year. The school thought the scheme was working well and one respondent said that:

'We think the scheme is very successful and has an impact in many different ways. Main visible change is that the students show huge improvements in social skills in Year 10 and seem more interested in school. But also it has the advantage of taking out some of the more difficult students from class so the remainder of the year group is also starting to do better'.

Other schools in the area operated other systems of extended work experience. For example, one runs a programme where students are identified during Year 10 with block work experience being used as a means to determine suitability and an appropriate partner for the work experience element of the package. In Year 11 these students (12) are disapplied from parts of the National Curriculum, doing a separate course in school focusing on work skills, life skills, CVs *etc*. They spend two days on placement, two days in school and one day at college. This is a pilot scheme and so far the school has found the two days undertaken in school to be somewhat problematic. Issues for the future include the cost of college places, and funding it properly so that it has credibility and is not just a way to deal with difficult students.

In another of the case study areas a similar programme has been in operation for the past three years. Students with behavioural or attendance problems who are 'doing nothing for themselves nor for others around them' are identified in Year 9 or Year 10 for an alternative programme outside the National Curriculum. This involves a part-time timetable at school, covering the core subjects, courses provided by a local training provider and one or two days per week at an employer. These students go out on block work experience at the same time as all others in the schools. Each student has the choice whether their block work experience takes place at the same employer as their extended placement. In two of the other case study areas, none of the schools visited offer extended placements. This is either due to lack of demand in high academic achieving schools or the small size of the school, or because a programme of extended placements is still in the planning stage.

Generally, respondents (including employers) were enthusiastic about extended work experience where it met the needs of the student, although we did not independently examine the impact of such placements on the students concerned. However, it was clear that there was often a lot of work involved securing appropriate placements, and also in re-organising the curriculum for them for their time in school. One of the issues here was avoiding problems of the extended work experience students being seen (and seeing themselves) as a 'sink set'.

2.2.4 More flexible options

The key advantage of the universal block placement approach over other more flexible arrangements was that it was relatively easy to organise. More tailored arrangements, *eg* involving more regular or longer visits to employers were felt to be difficult to organise with employers (who would need to provide a more structured programme) and in school — in maintaining a timetable to meet GCSE requirements.

2.2.5 Changes in length of placement since 1996

As shown in Table 2.2, the average lengths of placements by area have changed little since the previous area co-ordinators survey was conducted in 1996. However, these general figures may mask a degree of change at school level. Our school survey data show that overall, 14 per cent of schools had changed the length of their work experience placement since 1996. Of these schools, 36 per cent had reduced the length of their placement and 64 per cent had increased the length. Thus the school data suggest a slight shift towards longer placements which may not have been yet picked up at area level.

Approximately one-half of those that had reduced the length of their placement had moved from a three-week placement to a two-week placement, the remainder going from two to one or making only minor changes to the length. Of those that had increased the length, 78 per cent had moved from one week to two weeks, one school had moved from two- to three-week placements, and the others had made minor changes to the length (one day). One in ten schools that had altered the length of their placements had changed to a combination of lengths.

There was very little difference between different types of schools in whether or not they had changed the length of the placement offered. Schools with better GCSE scores were slightly more likely to have changed the length of placement, but those changing the length were equally likely to have increased the length as those schools with lower GCSE scores.

The reasons given by schools increasing the length of placement, centred on:

- improving the quality of experience (53 per cent of cases mentioning aspects of placement quality)

- central body decision (40 per cent) especially if Trident have assumed control of the school's organisation of work experience.

For those schools reducing the length of placement, three-quarters cited curriculum pressure, teaching time *etc.* as the main reasons. Fifteen per cent of schools mentioned problems in getting

placements as a reason for reducing the length. In the words of one school:

> '[Work experience is] a very valuable experience. Disappointed that we have gone from 15 days to ten days – GCSE pressure for time and Trident pressure for placements.'

Schools with a central body are less likely to have changed the length of placement since 1996, but where a change has occurred, are more likely to have reduced the length compared to those not using a central agency.

In one case study area there has been a concerted effort in increasing the proportion of two-week placements (in the last four years the proportion has increased from five to 25 per cent). The LEA (contract holder) and the TEC are keen to see a further increase, and three of the schools visited seem close to introducing two-week placements. Schools in the area are highly autonomous and the LEA sees the most appropriate way forward to:

> 'gently encourage and persuade and slowly more will shift to two weeks – the national agenda is also persuading more schools to go to two-week placements and we think that once a certain number convert the rest will soon follow.'

In another area where three-week placements were the norm schools reported increasing pressure to cut the length to two weeks to accommodate other curriculum priorities. One school was thinking of having a two-week placement for all and an optimal third week for those who would benefit.

2.2.6 Is longer better?

Schools tend to defend the length of their placement quite vigorously. Although we did find some evidence of a trend towards a two-week norm, those with one week tended to argue that:

- during one week pupils become motivated, and do not lose interest as they may do if the placement were any longer:

  'There is nothing better than a pupil leaving a placement and wanting more.'

- pupils are not going to learn any more in two weeks than in one. Work experience is about key skills and not learning a job. Proper training takes months

- pupils can soldier on to the end of one week, if they are unhappy, or the placement is not suitable

- employers are better able to structure a week, and there are more places to go round.

Advocates of the two-week placement tended to say that one week is too short for young people to settle and to get a rounded

Table 2.3: Proportion of students not participating in work experience by length of placement (percentages)

	Length of Placement				All Schools
	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	Other	
All went out	30	39	37	12	35
1-2 % did not go out	37	33	43	51	35
More than 2 % did not go out	33	28	20	37	29
Base N = 100 %	*158*	*447*	*35*	*33*	*673*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

view of work and a workplace. One week is 'too much of an initiation experience and not enough of a work experience'.

Similar arguments are applied to three-week placements, *ie* the first week is used to 'settle in', the second to 'get to grips with the job' and week three 'to get the benefit'. The general argument was that a longer placement was more like 'real work' and less of a 'taster' and that students were more likely to undertake real tasks in longer placements. That said, some of the schools we visited with three-week placements were questioning the marginal utility of the extra week.

In the school survey, schools offering two-week placements report lower non-participation rates than schools providing one week placements (Table 2.3). This is despite the fact that the main cause of non-participation is considered to be 'inappropriate students', *ie* behavioural problems, special needs and disaffection, more prevalent in schools from deprived neighbourhoods which tended to show higher non-participation rates. This suggests that schools operating two-week placements are much more likely to get all their students out than is the case for one week placements − whoever the students are − and may be indicative of the priority attached to the process.

There is little difference between the levels of satisfaction with their placement reported by students on one, two- or three-week assignments. However, the data do suggest that those on longer placements are more likely to 'have an opportunity to show people what they can do' and to 'find the placement challenging' and to think that their placement gave them 'an idea of what work is like'. On the other hand, students on one week placements were more likely to think their placements were 'not long enough', compared with those who went out for two or three weeks (55 per cent compared with 40 per cent and 42 per cent respectively). In one area where a number of schools only go out for one week, the students interviewed wanted to stay out longer:

> *'One week is not really enough. You don't get to do anything or apply what you've learnt. You're just getting used to it and start to get some responsibility and then its over.'*

Two-week placements are more likely to occur in the summer term of Year 10 than one or three-week placements (see Section 2.3).

2.3 It's all in the timing

Looking at when placements occur, it is apparent that the summer term of Year 10 is becoming increasingly popular.

Figure 2.1 shows the weeks students return to school after work experience by year group. This is based on the school co-ordinator survey data and clearly shows the peak in work experience placements during the summer of Year 10.

From the area co-ordinators data (Table 2.4), we estimate that of the Year 11 group of students covered by the survey:

- one per cent take work experience in the autumn of Year 10
- five per cent in the spring of Year 10
- 64 per cent in the summer of Year 10
- 27 per cent in the autumn of Year 11
- three per cent in the spring of Year 11, and
- two per cent in the summer of Year 11.

While there are some minor differences between the two surveys (due to sampling differences and the nature of the questions asked) they indicate the same overall pattern with a concentration at the end of Year 10, seeping into the beginning of Year 11. However, the proportion of students going out in the summer term has risen from 55 per cent to 64 per cent.

Figure 2.1: Percentage of work experience students returning to school by weeks of the academic year
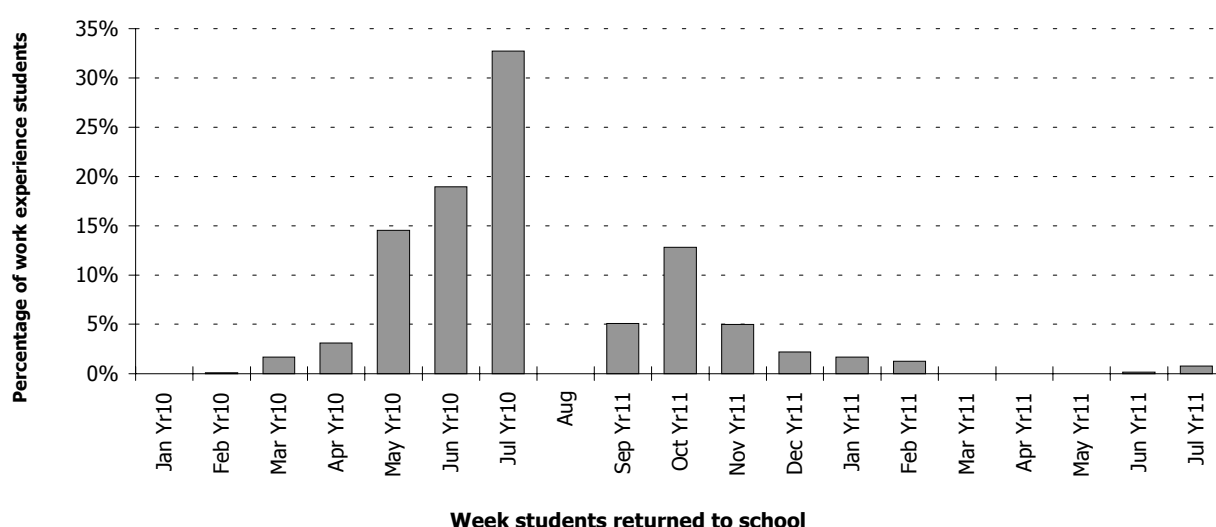
Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

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Table 2.4: Average proportion of students undertaking work experience, by academic term, in 1996 and 2000

Timing of placement	Mean proportion of students 2000 %	Mean proportion of students 1996 %
Autumn term Year 10	1.2	n/a
Spring term Year 10	4.5	n/a
Summer term Year 10	63.6	55.4
Autumn term Year 11	26.5	34.6
Spring term Year 11	2.6	6.7
Summer term Year 11	1.5	3.8
	Based on 84 areas	*Based on 98 areas*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience – Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

The school survey data show that schools providing a two-week placement were most likely to conduct work experience in Year 10 while schools doing it in Year 11 were more likely to provide one week placements or, interestingly, three-week placements (Table 2.5).

2.3.1 Awareness of law change in timing

Two years ago schools were allowed to start sending students on work experience from the beginning of Year 10. Previously they had had to wait until after Easter in Year 10 before being able to go on work experience. The surveys aimed to establish firstly the awareness of this change in the law, and secondly how schools had responded to the change.

All area co-ordinators except one (99 per cent) were aware of the change in the law. In the school co-ordinators survey, nearly nine out of ten respondents (89 per cent) were aware at the time of the survey that the law had changed with little or no difference between types of schools. Schools which had increased the length of their placement were slightly more aware of the law change

Table 2.5: Proportion of students participating in work experience by academic term and length of placement (percentages)

	Length of Placement				
	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	Combination	All Schools
Year 10	55	78	57	61	*71*
Year 11	45	22	43	39	*29*
Base N = 100%	*156*	*448*	*37*	*23*	*664*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience – Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Table 2.6: School responses to the change in law allowing earlier work experience: percentages by school characteristics

	School response			
	Already moved it	**Considering moving**	**No plans to move**	*Base N = 100%*
All Schools	*21*	*9*	*70*	*571*
Over 20% FSM eligibility	28	11	61	*209*
High absence rates	28	12	60	*145*
Under 35% 5 A-C GCSEs	27	10	63	*177*
School offers GNVQ	25	12	64	*258*
Over 55% 5 A-C GCSEs	11	7	83	*178*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

than those which had decreased the length or made no change (97 per cent compared to 82 per cent of those that had decreased the length of placement).

Over one-third (39 per cent) of area co-ordinators reported that one or more schools in their area had responded to the change in the law by moving work experience to earlier in Year 10. However, in most areas (80 per cent) it was only three schools or fewer that had responded in this way. The average proportion of schools in each area that had moved work experience to earlier in Year 10 was less than ten per cent (9.7 per cent).

The school survey found significant variation between schools which were aware of the law change in their response to it (Table 2.6). Those schools offering GNVQs, with lower GCSE attainment, higher absence levels and in more deprived neighbourhoods were most likely to have changed the timing of their work experience, with the proportion of students eligible for free school meals seemingly the main associated variable.

A number of interviewees were sceptical about the maturity of young people earlier in Year 10 and whether they would gain maximum benefit from a placement. Some of the students who went out in Year 11 felt that to go out earlier would not have been beneficial. One said that:

'I don't think a lot of us are mature enough in Year 10 for work experience. I'm glad we do it now. It also gives us a break from the pressure of GCSEs.'

2.3.2 Changes in timing since 1996

Table 2.4 compares findings from the 2000 area co-ordinators survey with that of 1996, with regard to timing of work experience. Caution should be taken in interpreting these data, in that the 1996 survey included responses relating to independent and

special schools, whereas in 2000 these were excluded. This inconsistency notwithstanding, it appears that work experience is generally being conducted earlier. The comparison indicates that the proportion of students taking work experience in the summer of Year 10 has increased. We estimate that the proportion of the year group taking work experience in Year 10 has increased from 55 per cent to 64 per cent.

2.3.3 Why change the time?

Most of the schools who had changed the timing of their work experience had moved to earlier in Year 10, although no schools responding to the survey had moved to the autumn term.

About one in four schools who had changed their dates in response to the law change had moved to the spring term in Year 10, one-third had moved to the first half of the summer term and a further third had moved to the second half of the summer term. About one in ten had moved to autumn/winter Year 11.

Those schools who had changed the length of their work experience were more likely to have changed the timing (Table 2.7 highlights this).

The reasons for moving work experience were very similar to those presented for changing the length. Those that had decreased the length and changed timing tended to identify curriculum and GCSE pressures as the main reasons, more often than not going for a shorter placement in Summer Year 10. Those that had increased the length and changed timing were more likely to identify issues of quality and placement availability and were more likely to move to early Summer/Spring Year 10.

One school in the case studies had moved away from the end of the summer term to the first few weeks in June to allow more time for debriefing and review on return to school. Another had moved its three-week placements from Year 11 to Year 10 to avoid a clash with mock GCSEs.

Table 2.7: School responses to the change in law allowing earlier work experience by change in length of work experience (percentages)

	Change in length?			All schools aware of change in law
	Yes, decreased	Yes, increased	No change	
Already changed timing	43	32	19	*21*
Considering changing	0	8	9	*9*
No plans to change	57	60	72	*70*
Base N= 100%	*21*	*50*	*493*	*564*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

The data, therefore, suggest that while some schools have taken advantage of the change in the law to organise placements earlier in Year 10, the net effect appears to have intensified the pressure on the Summer of Year 10. From a school's point of view there are many advantages of organising work experience for Year 10 students particularly while Year 11 are on study leave or involved with GCSEs. Many schools also believe that the students are not sufficiently mature (mentally or physically) early in Year 10 to gain the full benefit from a placement. As a result, the issue of bunching of schools in the summer of Year 10 highlighted in the 1996 report (Hillage *et al.*, 1996), has worsened. This can clearly put pressure on employers taking part and lead to places being over-subscribed, a point made by a number of respondents to the area co-ordinators survey:

'The constant problem of "bunching" in June and July is a worry — if only four or five schools could be moved to the September to February period all schools would enjoy a wider choice of placements.'

'In one of our areas, we have been pressured by the schools to send all students out in the summer of Year 10. However, this puts unreasonable pressure on local employers and adversely affects the quality of the placements on offer, because many companies have their own staff on holiday at this time and can therefore offer fewer places.'

'Schools are still very stereotypical and haven't really moved away from traditional times — namely July. This brings a really heavy burden on companies.'

These comments were echoed by some of the employers we interviewed:

'It would be easier if placements were staggered as we could offer placements more easily. Rotating the timing of placements across schools would be good for employers.'

'It's a big problem that all schools in the area want placements at the same time. Basically the best organised schools will get the places or the more enthusiastic pupils. This means that people who could really benefit from the experience can miss out.'

2.4 Conclusions

Generally, there is a high degree of inertia in the provision of work experience. Some schools have been organising work experience at the same time and in the same way for 20 years. Changing the length of placement or moving the timing can be very disruptive to a school and there are many competing interests pulling in a variety of directions over student time. Therefore it is not surprising that we have not found a great deal of change taking place over the last four years. Indeed, the fact that around 30 per cent of schools had either changed the length of work experience, or when it took place, should be viewed as significant.

The changes that have taken place do however present a mixed message. The fact that two weeks appears to be becoming the norm suggests that work experience is perhaps being taken more seriously. On the other hand, the intensifying concentration in the summer term of Year 10 may be indicative of a triumph of administrative convenience over maximising the range of placements and therefore the learning opportunities available.

2.5 Key points

- Our surveys suggest that over 95 per cent of students have been out on work experience in either Year 10 or 11 — around the same proportion as in 1996.

- Students not going out on work experience tend to be in areas of disadvantage, in selective schools or those under Special Measures. Schools with intakes from higher socio-economic groups tend to get a higher proportion of their students on placements.

- The most common length of work experience is two weeks, occurring in two-thirds of schools, with a quarter organising one week.

- The school survey data indicate that average placement length has risen slightly in recent years. Around 14 per cent of schools said that they changed the length of placements over the past four years, two-thirds of whom (*ie* ten per cent of the total) had increased the length mainly from one week to two and with the aim of improving the quality of the placement.

- The student data indicate that there are some benefits to be gained from longer placements.

- Over half the schools in the survey organise a programme of extended work experience — mainly those either with a mixed sex intake or with boys only and with higher than average levels of absence or exclusions. Where offered, the average number of extended placements was six per school.

- Most students (70 per cent) go on placements in Year 10, a higher proportion than in 1996.

- Nine in ten schools were aware that students were now allowed to go on work experience from the start of Year 10. The area co-ordinators survey suggests that some six per cent of schools had taken advantage of the new arrangements, although this was not picked up by the school co-ordinators survey.

- The bunching of placements in the summer term of Year 10, if anything, is becoming more intense, with consequent problems for schools and employers trying to offer the maximum range of placements.

3. Organisation of Work Experience

This chapter looks at three related issues:

- the way work experience is organised in areas across England,
- the way it is managed within schools, and
- what it costs.

3.1 The main approaches to providing work experience

The 1996 survey of area co-ordinators distinguished between three main approaches to work experience:

- a school based system, where all aspects of work experience are organised in-house within each school in the area
- a centralised system, where an external agency is responsible for finding employers and matching students to places, and
- joint systems where external agencies and schools work more closely together.

In the 2000 survey we also categorised areas by these main approaches. In the first part of this chapter we look at the nature of the areas, and the provision of work experience and the services provided by the area co-ordinator. We also look at whether timing and length of placements vary with the type of organisation.

3.1.1 The nature of the work experience areas

As in 1996, the organisation of work experience was predominantly demarcated by the LEA area boundary. Three-quarters of respondents to the co-ordinators survey said work experience was organised on this basis. This compares with 80 per cent in 1996. A further 17 per cent of areas were said to be based on the TEC boundary which was different to the LEA boundary, two per cent on the EBP boundary (different to the LEA or TEC) and four per cent on another boundary. These other areas included part of an LEA area, an old EBP area and a Trident area. In 11 per cent of areas, co-ordinators reported that the boundary of their area had changed since 1996. For over half, this was due to local government reorganisation and the advent of a new unitary authority. Other reasons included organisational policy, Trident

taking over, and two neighbouring LEAs delivering work experience jointly.

The average number of secondary schools per work experience area (excluding independent and secondary schools) was 27, but this ranged from one area with only three schools, to another with 127. Half of the areas had between ten and 30 schools within their area.

The average number of pupils in each of Year 10 and Year 11 was around 4,500 per work experience area. The numbers in each year group ranged from 600 to 18,000. The total number of Year 11 students covered by responses from this area co-ordinators survey is 427,553.

3.1.2 Approaches to organising work experience

The 1996 study (Hillage *et al.*, 1996) found that there was no single system of work experience provision. A key factor determining the nature of the provision was the extent to which individual schools take on all the administrative and organisational responsibilities of organising placements themselves, or use an external agency to provide some of the elements.

The 2000 area co-ordinators questionnaire asked whether placements were predominantly organised at school level, centrally, or some combination of the two. The different approaches were defined in the questionnaire as follows:

● *centralised* is where an external agency is mainly responsible for finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements

● *school based* is where the organisation for finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements takes place mainly in school

● *joint* is where schools and external agencies work together on finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements; and

● *mixed* is where an external agency is responsible for finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements for some schools in the area, while other schools organise their own placements.

The area co-ordinators survey found that joint and centralised systems predominate, covering over 85 per cent of the areas between them in roughly equal proportions. Weighting the data by the number of schools in each area, we found that nationally within the areas which responded to the survey:

● 33 per cent of schools are in an area where there is a centralised approach to work experience

● two per cent of schools use a school based system

- 47 per cent of schools use a joint system, and

- 18 per cent of schools are in an area where there are a mixture of approaches being used.

In the case study areas the IES team of researchers visited, two of the area co-ordinators described the approach as school based, two of the areas operated centralised systems, and one of the areas responded that theirs was a joint approach. However, within both of the areas which described themselves as having a school based approach, the central agencies are now taking on a more active role. For example, in one of the areas, the Careers Service is responsible for health and safety checking; in the other, the schools are increasingly reliant upon the county LEA database of employers providing placements. As such, we would categorise these areas as joint.

In one of the case study areas operating a centralised system, the co-ordinating agency is the EBP, in the other it is Trident. In the Trident area, two systems are in operation: in the urban area, Trident is responsible for all the finding, health and safety checking and matching, whereas in the neighbouring rural area the Careers Service, which is affiliated to Trident, maintains a database of placements and carries out health and safety checks, but the matching takes place within the schools.

In the case study area, described as 'joint', the work experience central agency was a newly created EBP. Previously, in this area, the Education Team within the TEC had been responsible for work experience. Now, the EBP funds the health and safety checking system, but the matching and finding of placements takes place in the schools.

3.1.3 Changes in approaches since 1996

Our survey and case study findings suggest that there is a convergence towards an approach whereby schools are more reliant upon central agencies for health and safety checking and finding placements, but the matching of students to placements is more likely to take place in schools. Nearly three-quarters of respondents to the area co-ordinators survey (71 per cent) reported that since 1996, reliance of schools on a centralised service for organising work experience has increased. A further 25 per cent indicated that this reliance on a centralised agency has remained the same, and very few said it has reduced. Similarly, over one-third of schools (35 per cent) indicated that their reliance on a centralised service had increased, around one-half (52 per cent) indicated no change, and some 13 per cent said it had decreased.

Our findings are not directly comparable with the 1996 survey. In the last survey, respondents were not asked to categorise the method of provision under such clear headings. Instead, a series

of questions were asked about which services were provided by which organisation, *ie* school or external agency. The responses were then used to categorise the areas at the analysis stage. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that many fewer areas were categorised as joint (28 per cent) in 1996 and more were school based (19 per cent) in 1996 as compared with 2000. This seems to bear out the increased reliance on a centralised agency reported by respondents in 2000. However, fewer of the areas in 2000 are categorised as centralised than they were in 1996 (42 per cent in 2000, comparing with 53 per cent in 1996).

The changes generally related to a greater involvement of the central agency in the organisation of work experience. The main ways in which the central agencies' involvement increased were:

- the central agency taking over responsibility for health and safety checking

- creation of an area database of employers, and in two areas this is shortly to be available to schools on-line

- local quality standards developed by the central agency, backed up by support services

- central agency area becoming more involved in assessing schools and employers for quality standards

- growth of interest in work experience generally, with the central agency in one area organising work experience for some schools in a neighbouring LEA, and

- in another area, provision of work experience Record of Achievement folders.

It appears, therefore, that since 1996 the driving forces behind a tendency for central agencies to become more involved are an increased focus on health and safety checking, and the quality of work experience placements, particularly through the application of quality standards.

3.1.4 Advantages and disadvantages of each type of approach

The qualitative case study research gathered views on the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches.

Centralised approach

Within the centralised Trident area, the main advantage identified was reducing the burden of organising work experience within the schools. For example, a typical comment from school work experience co-ordinators was:

'I could not do it without Trident.'

This finding relating to workload in schools is borne out by the schools responding to the questionnaire survey. Within this Trident area, only 18 per cent of schools agreed with a statement: 'there is too much work involved for the school in arranging work experience'. This compared with just under half (48 per cent) of schools agreeing with this statement within the other four case study areas and 42 per cent in the country as a whole. Trident in this centralised area also appears to be reasonably flexible and often was reported to do more for schools than they needed to. However, the disadvantages of the centralised approach related to the matching of students to placements. Where the central agency has sole responsibility for this, some schools complain about the lack of individual matching of students to placements and students not getting their preferred choice of placement.

Joint approach

In the 'joint' areas, schools value the balance between school ownership and matching of placements, and a lightening of workload through the central agency having responsibility for health and safety checking. For example, in one of the case study areas where schools have responsibility for finding placements, our findings show that while it is recognised that the onus on teachers to find placements creates a great deal of work for them, the ability of schools to tailor placements to individual student needs is felt to be more important. The central agency feels this is an economical way of organising the process. However, the disadvantages of this approach relate to a lack of resources within some schools. The system works well where work experience is given high priority and resources are ring-fenced for work experience, but less well in schools where work experience is less of a priority and where less time and resources are made available.

In another of the areas where schools are responsible for matching placements, schools again welcomed the maximum flexibility towards the needs of the student which this approach allows. However, at the time of the research there were teething problems with the central agency's recently introduced database of employers, and health and safety system. Delays and disappointments have resulted. In another area, where the central agency has recently taken over the health and safety vetting procedure, they had also developed a database of employers which schools would soon be able to access on-line.

3.1.5 Length of placements by type of provision

Table 3.1 shows an analysis of timing of placements by the different approaches to organising placements. School based systems are excluded from this analysis due to the small number of areas using such an approach. The analysis indicates that placements tend to be shorter (*ie* one week as opposed to two or

Table 3.1: Average percentage of students undertaking work experience by length of placement and type of organisation

Length of placement	Centralised	Joint	Mixed
One week	17.9	32.8	23.0
Two weeks	74.3	63.2	65.9
Three weeks	7.8	3.3	11.1
Number of areas	37	*43*	*9*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

three weeks) in areas where work experience is organised jointly by schools and a central co-ordinating agency, as compared with centralised systems. A similar pattern to this was identified in the 1996 area co-ordinators survey. This may be because central co-ordinating agencies, such as Trident, tend to organise two, or in some cases three, week placements.

3.1.6 Timing of placements by type of provision

Again, reflecting findings from the 1996 area co-ordinators survey, there was less variation in timing of placements by type of approach (see Table 3.2). Nonetheless, there was some indication that within centralised systems placements are slightly less concentrated in the summer term of Year 10 and more use is made of spring Year 10 and autumn Year 11. This might suggest that external agencies using a centralised approach are better at smoothing out the bunching of placements. However, even within these areas, on average still over half of schools use summer Year 10 for work experience placements.

3.2 Role of external agencies

As in the 1996 area co-ordinators survey, the most common co-ordinating agency of work experience was the local Education

Table 3.2 Average percentage of students undertaking work experience, by academic term and type of organisation

Academic term	Centralised	Joint	Mixed
Autumn Year 10	2.0	2.0	0.0
Spring Year 10	6.9	4.9	2.0
Summer Year 10	54.1	66.9	63.3
Autumn Year 11	33.8	22.5	29.5
Spring Year 11	3.2	2.4	1.5
Summer Year 11	0.1	1.3	3.7
Number of areas	32	*41*	*6*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

Table 3.3: Co-ordinating agencies, 2000 and 1996

Work experience agency	% of areas in 2000	% of areas in 1996
Education Business Partnership	48.5	39.6
Trident	28.3	36.5
Careers Service	24.2	30.2
LEA	18.2	24.0
Local TEC	17.2	10.4
School Consortia	4.0	6.3
TVEI	n/a	11.5
Other	4.0	5.2
Number of areas	*98*	*96*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

Business Partnership (EBP), whether an independent organisation or part of another, wider, body. The findings indicate that EBPs have become more prevalent as organisers of work experience, whereas Trident has become less so. Details are given in Table 3.3.

The data show that centralised systems are more commonly operated in areas co-ordinated by the EBP or Trident. Half of the EBP co-ordinated areas used a centralised approach and 68 per cent of Trident areas did so. In contrast, LEAs and TECs are more likely to operate joint systems. Half of the LEA-run and 64 per cent of the TEC-run areas took this joint approach.

Since 1996, in the case study areas, there have been a number of changes in the agencies which have responsibility for managing and delivering work experience. As noted above, in one of the areas, a newly created EBP has taken over responsibility from the TEC. In this area, it is thought that the EBP is in a much better position to develop strategies and coherent approaches to work experience and work related learning, and also to promote good practice. In 1996, in the Trident case study area, the Careers Service managed the work experience contract. At the time of the 2000 survey, Trident was based within and managed by the TEC. However, it is now due to return to the Careers Service with the demise of the TEC and the introduction of the local Learning and Skills Council.

3.2.1 Services provided by central agencies

In terms of the services the agencies provide, respondents were asked to indicate which, from a list of key services, the agency in their area provided. Again, this question was similar to the one asked in 1996, although in 2000 more services were listed in the question. The responses from the two surveys are compared in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Services provided by a central agency, 2000 and 1996

Services provided	% of areas ticking option 2000	% of areas ticking option 1996
Provides a system for health and safety vetting	98.0	92.7
Operates a computerised database of placements	94.9	93.8
Provides for networking/INSET of school co-ordinators	90.9	81.3
Operates a quality assurance system	83.8	78.1
Supports curriculum development in work experience	81.8	80.2
Co-ordinates dates to avoid bunching of schools	73.7	82.3
Provides curriculum support materials for schools	66.7	69.8
Co-ordinates extended work experience for students under disapplication	66.7	n/a
Provides/co-ordinates community service placements	22.2	n/a
Other	14.1	17.7
Number of areas	*99*	*96*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

The most commonly provided service was a system for health and safety vetting. Reflecting the emphasis placed on health and safety over the past few years, our findings show that a slightly higher proportion of agencies provide this service than they did four years ago. Also, frequently provided by the central agency are a computerised database of placements and networking of school co-ordinators. At the other end of the spectrum, only one in five area co-ordinators provide community service placements.

Looking at the services provided by types of work experience co-ordination (Table 3.5) it can be seen that in joint areas the central agency is much less likely to co-ordinate placements to avoid bunching and to co-ordinate extended work experience, than in centralised areas. These areas are also slightly less likely to support curriculum development in work experience and to operate a quality assurance system. On the other hand, they more commonly provide for networking or INSET of school co-ordinators, as compared with centralised areas.

The services provided by the central agency in the 'joint' and 'school based' areas visited for the case study research include:

- **strategic support**, for example:

  - organising a health and safety checking system; as one school put it:

    'the thorny issue of health and safety visits has now been solved by our local EBP'

Table 3.5: Services provided by a central agency, percentage by type of organisation

Services provided	Centralised	Joint	Mixed
Provides a system for health and safety vetting	100.0	97.7	100.0
Operates a computerised database of placements	100.0	90.9	100.0
Provides for networking/INSET of school co-ordinators	87.8	97.7	81.8
Operates a quality assurance system	92.7	81.8	63.6
Supports curriculum development in work experience	87.8	75.0	100.0
Co-ordinates dates to avoid bunching of schools	95.1	56.8	72.7
Provides curriculum support materials for schools	65.9	59.1	100.0
Co-ordinates extended work experience for students under disapplication	80.5	54.5	72.7
Provides/co-ordinates community service placements	31.7	11.4	36.4
Other	14.6	15.9	9.1
Number of areas	*41*	*44*	*11*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

- providing INSET training for schools covering issues such as health and safety, preparation, teacher visits and work experience quality issues

- running cluster meetings or networking meetings in which all schools can be involved and attempt to ensure a curriculum focus for the work experience programmes in the area

- developing, supporting and accrediting quality award systems, and

- providing work experience Record of Achievement folders.

- **a labour market service**, for example:

- conducting health and safety checks, and

- maintaining and developing a database of employers providing work experience placements.

As well as finding and checking placements, in the centralised Trident area, the central agency also provides more of a **delivery service** whereby:

- they match students to placements, and

- support preparation and debriefing activities, through going into schools to conduct sessions with pupils and sometimes parents, where requested.

3.3 Management of work experience within schools

In this section we examine the extent to which schools have policies governing work experience and who take responsibility for organising it at school level.

3.3.1 School policies

The school survey found that just three per cent of schools do not have a written policy relating to work experience — 46 per cent have a policy for work experience in its own right, and a further 45 per cent have one incorporated into the careers education policy. Six per cent have one as part of another school policy.

One-third of area co-ordinators reported that all the schools in their area had their own policy statement on work experience, a further half said most schools had such a policy and 17 per cent said some schools did. These findings suggest an increase in the number of schools with such policies since the 1996 survey of area co-ordinators. In 1996, only one-fifth of area co-ordinators said all their schools had a policy statement, 45 per cent said most did and just under one-third (32 per cent) reported that only some schools had policies.

As one might expect, schools where more extensive preparation and debriefing takes place and which evaluate their work experience programmes, are most likely to have a stand alone work experience policy, as opposed to one that is part of another policy or do not have one at all.

Some of the case study schools had reviewed their policies on work experience in recent years, with some linking placements more firmly within careers education generally.

3.3.2 Management responsibility

Schools were asked to provide details of the individual (job title and grade) who has overall managerial responsibility for work experience in the school. A wide range of different job titles were given as well as levels or grades. These range from the Head (in 11 cases), the deputy (in 37), Senior Teacher (in 36), year head, heads of PSHE/careers/work experience (133) as well careers/work experience/PSHE co-ordinators (368) and a variety of other job titles from industry links co-ordinators, Key Stage 4 managers to school careers consultants.

Being a head of the faculty/department did not necessarily correlate with level or grade, as in many schools the job title Careers Co-ordinator or Work Experience Co-ordinator was a higher level/scale point than the Head of Careers in other schools. So the level or grade is perhaps more revealing than the job title, in terms of the location of responsibility for work experience.

However, a large number of respondents (120) left this question blank so the data are perhaps not entirely reliable. The data may also exaggerate the influence of senior staff in managing work experience, as these grades were self explanatory from the job title and could be automatically graded.

Summarising the data, the level at which management for work experience is located appears fairly evenly distributed across responsibility levels:

- In 19 per cent of cases it is managed by a Senior Teacher (E responsibility point/point 14) level or above.

- In the remainder, work experienced is managed by a mainscale teacher with:

  - one or no responsibility points (22 per cent of cases)

  - two responsibility points (21 per cent)

  - three responsibility points (23 per cent), or

  - four responsibility points (15 per cent).

Position in the curriculum

Area co-ordinators were asked whether schools viewed work experience as integral to careers education and guidance and PSHE. Table 3.6 shows that in 92 per cent of areas, all or most schools see work experience as part of careers education and guidance. A slightly lower proportion of area co-ordinators reported that all or most of their schools viewed work experience as integral to PSHE. These findings are broadly similar to those from the 1996 area co-ordinators survey.

In a few of the case study schools, work experience was seen as a key element of a co-ordinated work-related curriculum which included careers, aspects of PSHE and other elements of the general curriculum. In many it was linked into the careers programme and often run by careers teachers. However, in others, work experience was more 'out on a limb' as one respondent put it. The influence of the LEA was apparent in at least one of our case study areas, as it had run whole-school INSET days and

Table 3.6: Work experience viewed as part of careers education and guidance and PSHE

		All schools % of areas	Most schools % of areas	Some schools % of areas	No schools % of areas	N =
View work experience as an integral part of careers education and guidance	**2000**	**42**	**50**	**8**	**0**	**96**
	1996	34	60	6	0	92
View work experience as an integral part of PSHE	**2000**	**27**	**60**	**13**	**1**	**94**
	1996	21	64	14	1	92

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

taken other measures to enhance the integration of work experience across the school.

3.4 Costs of work experience

This section looks at the amount of resources devoted to work experience in secondary schools in England.

3.4.1 Staff time

Approximately two-thirds of schools provided data on the amount of time spent by teachers and administration staff organising work experience. The data therefore include all aspects of the administration and setting up of work experience but *exclude* curriculum issues and visiting students on placement, and so do not cover all the time devoted to work experience in schools. Respondents were asked to estimate the number of hours spent on these administrative activities both inside and outside school time — grade details of up to three teachers and one administrative person were also provided.

On average, teachers in each school spend 70 hours inside school time working on work experience each year and 50 hours outside school time. In addition, administration staff spend approximately 40 hours inside school time and three hours outside school time. In aggregate, this amounts to between 160-170 hours spent organising work experience (data provided by 499 schools). It is worth noting here that the national school business links survey found schools on average spend 38 days (DfEE, 1999) of teacher time on work experience. This included *all* aspects of the programme — matching and preparation, staff visits, debriefing and follow up, as well as all the administrative organisation. While the two figures are calculated on different bases they both show the effort involved.

Looking at variations in time spent on administering work experience, we found that:

● schools that conducted more preparation seem to spend more time on the administration of work experience — possibly devoting more time to the matching process as part of preparation. For example, those that spent more than eight classroom hours on preparation spent an average of 190 hours administering work experience, compared with 140 hours spent in schools with less than four hours preparation.

● schools finding a higher proportion of placements themselves, spend more time on administration. For example, those with more than 50 per cent of places found by school spent an average of 240 hours, compared with 108 hours where no placements were found by the school.

- administration time also varied by the volume of placements. Schools with less than 150 to place spent an average of 130 hours, while those with more than 200 to place spent an average of 200 hours.

In approximately ten per cent of schools the administration of work experience is done by a senior teacher or above, although the time spent by these teachers is slightly less than for other grades of teacher (approximately 70 hours, compared to 120 hours inside and outside school time). Across the other four grades (1-4 responsibility points), work experience is fairly evenly spread in terms of the time spent on its organisation.

School work experience co-ordinators feel that there is a lot of work involved in the task. Over three-quarters (78 per cent) agreed with the statement: 'there is too much work involved for the school in arranging work experience' — just five per cent disagreed. Interestingly, schools arranging a higher proportion of placements themselves are no more or less likely to agree or strongly agree than those using a central placing service or relying more on students to find placements. However, schools conducting more preparation work tend to feel the workload is more burdensome — 49 per cent of those from schools doing more than eight hours preparation work agreeing strongly with the statement, compared to 19 per cent of those doing less than four hours.

Of all the comments made by school co-ordinators, the administration of work experience was viewed as giving most cause for concern, after finding placements, which, it could be argued, is part of the same problem. A lot of comments were made in relation to this issue. Below we have provided a small selection of the views expressed:

'It is a very heavy workload for a teaching member of staff and a lot of the admin work could be done by an admin assistant.'

'Of the many activities that I organise, work experience is by far the most demanding and stressful. However, in terms of student benefits it is also the most rewarding and positive for most students.'

'Work experience organisation should be regarded as a separate post within schools, and not as an add-on to already administratively over-burdened teachers.'

'Work experience is a demanding job. Much time is spent on planning, reviewing products such as diary, key skills, advising parents, liasing with pupils, etc. When I first started doing work experience three years ago I was told it would only take five hours a week. That is ridiculous — it takes five times that!'

'I am in a small school with few staff and the organising role falls to me. I have clerical support as requested but it would be impossible to quantify the time I spend each year as it is always on the boil, be it telephoning, collecting, collating, issuing forms to students, following up cancellations, talking to students about their concerns, checking on

their progress etc. It is an unenviable and thankless task, but I feel an important one, which is why I have given this return my complete attention.'

3.4.2 Average cost per placement

Area co-ordinators were asked whether they knew the average cost per placement in their area. Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) said they did. This compares with 53 per cent in 1996. In centralised areas the proportion was much higher (83 per cent), as compared to areas where work experience is jointly run with schools (48 per cent).

Those that did know the average cost per placement were then asked what this average cost was and what was included in the per placement figure. Table 3.7 shows that the mean approximate cost of work experience was £24.75, whilst the median was £27.50. This compares with 1996 estimates of £22.43 for the mean and £23 for the median from the previous survey — increases of between ten and 20 per cent, broadly in line with inflation over the period. It is important to bear in mind that these are fairly approximate figures and the actual costs will vary by a range of local factors.

The lowest estimated cost was £5 whereas the highest was £45. The costs varied a little by approach to organising work experience. The highest costs were estimated in mixed areas, *ie* in areas where there was a mix of approaches to organising work experience with some schools co-ordinating placements and the central agency co-ordinating others. However, the number of mixed areas which were able to provide estimates of costs is small (eight).

In terms of what these costs cover, the responses show a wide range: from the costs of conducting health and safety checks (totalling £12 in one instance and £17 in another) to the costs of providing full placement and matching services including salary costs, accommodation, administration, stationery, training and travel (which came to £45 in one case). The area reporting that costs were £5 per placement said this included a full service from Trident, but did not provide details of what costs had been taken into account in arriving at this figure.

Table 3.7: Average cost of placement by type of delivery

Type of organisation	Mean cost per placement £	Median cost per placement £	N =
Centralised	£24.07	£22.50	*33*
Joint	£23.37	£27.50	*21*
Mixed	£31.19	£35.00	*8*
All	£24.75	£27.50	*62*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

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3.4.3 Paying a central agency for supporting work experience

Over half of the respondents to the area co-ordinators survey (56 per cent) said that schools paid a central agency for support with the provision of work experience. In centralised areas this proportion was 73 per cent and in joint areas 31 per cent. The areas where schools contributed to a central agency were asked about the approximate average payment. The mean payment was £16.05 and the median £25. This compares with figures from the 1996 survey of co-ordinators, of £14 and £15 respectively and suggests that central agencies are looking to recoup an increasing proportion of their costs from schools.

It should be recognised that different respondents have calculated the figures in different ways. Examples of some of the explanations given are set out below.

> *'£9 per student was charged as part of a pilot for the schools. This figure was found to be grossly under-estimated. A more realistic figure of £21.25 would be looked at in the future.'*

> *'School contribution covered some of the costs of administrating the database. The charge is based on the size of their Year 10, not per placement.'*

> *'The difference between the income from the contract and our expenses. It is a blanket charge which is ploughed back into work experience.'*

Schools were also asked to provide details of any payments made to central agencies in supporting work experience, and if they do not pay a central agency, whether or not they think the school would be prepared to pay a central agency in future. Forty-four per cent of schools pay a central agency and a further six per cent do not know. Obviously, those schools using a central agency are more likely to be making the payment but otherwise there was little to differentiate schools.

The average payment made by schools is £15, ranging from £1 to £60 per placement (based on 227 responses).

Of those who do not currently pay a central agency, just seven per cent of co-ordinators think their schools would be prepared to pay a central agency in future — there is no link here with the amount of time spent administering work experience.

3.4.4 Funding from central bodies to support work experience

Area co-ordinators were asked who contributes to the cost of providing work experience placements in the area and their responses are summarised in Table 3.8. The findings show that in most areas (93 per cent) the TEC contributed to work experience

Table 3.8: Who contributes to the cost of work experience?

Contributing agencies	Cash % of areas 2000	Cash % of areas 1996	In kind % of areas 2000
TEC	93	74	12
Schools	51	74	32
LEA	26	50	26
Careers service	11	24	14
Other	14	31	11
N=	*73*	*107*	*73*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

in cash. This proportion has increased since 1996, showing the important influence of funding provided by TECs on the provision of work experience.

Schools and the LEA were the most likely to contribute to the costs of providing placements in the area in kind. Responses to the change in the level of support provided by the Careers Service in the last four years were fairly evenly divided. One-third felt it had decreased (35 per cent), just over one-third said it had remained the same (37 per cent) and just over one-quarter of area co-ordinators felt it had increased (27 per cent).

In the school survey we looked at the proportion of schools receiving funding from central bodies to support work experience. We found that those schools not using a central agency for finding placements were more likely to receive support than those using the central agency — 63 per cent compared to 40 per cent for all schools. Those schools with higher work experience completion rates and conducting more extensive debriefing were more likely to be getting central funding than others. Quite why this may be the case is not clear.

For those schools able to provide data (172/260) the average amount paid by the central agency is £8 per placement.

3.4.5 Budgets

Just over half of the schools allocate a budget for work experience averaging (mean) about £1,380 for the 235 schools out of 334 able to furnish data. The median, however, was just under £600. A small number of schools allocate a large budget up to £9,000 which covers administrative salaries *etc*.

Most commonly though, these budgets are allocated to photocopying and general administration: postage, telephone, stationery *etc*. — over 80 cent of schools mentioning these

outgoings. One in three schools mention materials such as videos, log books, diaries, awards and lesson resources *etc.* Seventeen per cent mention payments to a central agency, one-third also mention travel expenses. Other things mentioned by small numbers of respondents include: cover for supply teachers, software development, lunch expenses, training and clothing allowances.

There is a feeling in many schools that work experience needs additional and ring-fenced funding and should be treated more as an integral core activity. For example:

> *'In terms of funding, work experience is seen as an "extra". It would be far better to have the necessary sum ring fenced in budget allocations so work experience is not seen as the poor relation having to fight for and justify money each year.'*

> *'We operate one of the largest work experience programmes in the UK, if not in Europe. However, I am still teaching for much of the week. My comment is that if curriculum integration, key skills, quality placements and all the other factors that make up an excellent work experience programme are to be achieved, then the careers/work experience co-ordinator needs adequate time off timetable etc. Schools are reluctant to give this time, as it costs and does not show immediately in exam result improvement etc. Secondly, there have been numerous initiatives recently – excellence in work experience award, work related curriculum etc., but funds need to be placed in schools specifically to take the co-ordinator off timetable. Head teachers, for all the pressures on them, are reluctant to do this from the ordinary "delegated budget" – hence work experience becomes a lunch time exercise.'*

> *'Most teachers I meet would gladly give this up including myself. As it is not the latest bandwagon little attention is given to the plight of teachers trying to complete this task. We should either reduce the number of pupils going and improve quality of service and placements OR more time and status should be given to teachers doing this job'.*

Also, some schools recognise the privileged position they are in by being well resourced. One detailed comment here exemplifies this:

> *'We are fortunate in my employment as full-time careers and work experience co-ordinator in school. This has enabled qualitative improvements to programme, valued by staff and students alike. I could not envisage doing the work of a work experience co-ordinator alongside a full teaching timetable – the commitment and obvious overwork of my colleagues in neighbouring schools is evident to me. I feel strongly that the DfEE should encourage more creative posts like my own to raise the profile [of work experience] and hence learning experiences of students.'*

3.5 Conclusions

Our findings suggest that there has been a convergence in the approach to organising work experience, whereby schools are more reliant upon a central agency for health and safety checking

and maintaining a database of placements. It appears to be the increased focus upon health and safety and quality standards in recent years which has led to this greater involvement of the central agency. At the same time, since 1996 there has been a reduction in entirely centralised systems, whereby the central agency not only provides strategic support (*eg* promoting good practice, supporting quality standards and providing training) and a labour market service (*eg* provision of health and safety checking and employer database) but also provides a delivery service, in particular matching students to placements. In other words, there appears to have been an increase in central agencies providing the strategic and labour market support, but perhaps a reduction in the delivery service.

This apparent trend would seem to be appropriate. The main advantage of the centralised service identified in the research was reducing the burden on the schools and providing more equal access for students to placements. However, schools clearly value being able to match students to placements, which can enable them to tailor the placement to the needs of the student more effectively.

The data also clearly show the importance of the support provided by EBPs and others and the funding provided through TECs to the provision of work experience by schools — findings which may be of particular interest to the new Learning and Skills Councils.

3.6 Key points

- Areas for co-ordinating work experience are predominantly demarcated by LEA area boundaries. However, the size of these areas in terms of numbers of students and schools varies quite widely.

- The main methods of organising work experience are 'joint': whereby schools and external agencies work together on finding, health and safety checking, and matching placements, and 'centralised' whereby a central agency is mainly responsible for each of these services. Over 80 per cent of areas and schools organise work experience in one of these two ways. It is only a very few schools that take sole responsibility for organising work experience.

- Since 1996 there has been an increase in schools relying on a central agency to provide a health and safety checking service and also maintaining a database of employers.

- The main advantage of a centralised service is reducing the burden on schools in terms of workload. A joint approach better enables schools to tailor placements to individual student needs.

- In centralised areas, work experience placements tend to be longer and more evenly distributed throughout the academic year, *ie* less clustered in the summer of Year 10.

- The most common co-ordinating agency for work experience is the local Education Business Partnership.

- Nearly half of the schools in the survey have a separate policy on work experience and most of the rest include work experience within a careers education policy, and the data indicate that more schools have developed work experience policy statements in recent years.

- There appears to be a positive link between the existence of a separate policy and more extensive preparation and debriefing.

- The level of the person in school responsible for work experience varies. For instance, in one-fifth of cases, work experience is managed by a teacher with none or one responsibility point, while at the other end of the scale in a further fifth it is the responsibility of a senior teacher.

- On average, the teacher responsible spends around 70 hours inside school time organising work experience and a further 50 hours outside school time. In addition, administration staff spend around 40 hours on work experience.

- The more time spent on administration, the greater the time spent on preparation and the higher the proportion of students getting their first choice placement. Schools tend to spend less time on work experience when they are part of a central system.

- Area co-ordinators estimate that on average each placement costs around £23 to administer. Where schools contributed to the cost of a central agency, the average payment was £15.

- TECs are the most commonly cited source of funding for support with the cost of work experience.

4. Finding, Checking, Matching and Preparation

In 1996, appropriate matching of students to placements was highlighted as one of the key elements contributing to successful work experience. In the previous study there was no survey of work experience co-ordinators in schools, so the school co-ordinators survey provides a measure of how matching is undertaken, who is responsible for co-ordinating, and views of schools in relation to the quality of matching within schools. Effective preparation is also seen as key to the success of work experience, and this has been explored in more depth in the school co-ordinators survey.

This chapter explores firstly how placements are found for students and the process of health and safety checking; second, the degree of choice students are given/have in selecting their placements, and third the organisation or extent of preparation for work experience.

4.1 Finding placements

Schools responding to the work experience co-ordinators survey were asked to indicate the source of placements for their work experience programmes and were provided with four options against which they indicated the approximate proportion of placements found by each source. These were (a) the school (b) students and their families (c) a central body/organisation (d) another source.

Overall, the average number of placements found by each source was reported by schools as follows:

1. by schools themselves — 28.5 per cent

2. by students and their families — 26.7 per cent

3. by a central body — 44.4 per cent

4. by another source — 0.2 per cent.

In 38 per cent of cases where the central body was cited (only 28 per cent of schools gave the name or type of organisation involved), Trident was named. In 30 per cent of cases the EBP was named, in 22 per cent a Careers Service, in six per cent a TEC, and four per cent the LEA. Governors and direct employer contacts were the only providers of placements given as other sources.

Table 4.1: Source of placements by age range of school and proportion of students eligible for free school meals (percentages)

Percentage of placements supplied by central body	Type of school		Percentage eligible for free school meals			All schools
	11-16	11-18	Less than 10%	10-29%	30% or more	
None	32	40	47	36	26	36
1-74 %	25	30	23	27	33	28
30% or more	43	30	30	37	41	36
Base N = 100%	*316*	*358*	*237*	*203*	*235*	*675*
Percentage of placements supplied by students/families	**Type of school**		**Percentage eligible for free school meals**			**All schools**
	11-16	11-18	Less than 10%	10-29%	30% or more	
0-9%	29	18	18	20	31	23
10-29%	43	39	40	42	42	41
30% or more	28	43	42	38	27	36
Base N = 100%	*315*	*359*	*236*	*202*	*236*	*674*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience – Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

There was significant variation in school reliance on a central body against those relying more heavily on students and their families. Although a number of variables showed variation here, the two key influencing factors identified using multiple regression techniques (Table 4.1), appeared to be:

● the age range of the school, and

● the proportion of students eligible for free school meals.

Interestingly though, the proportion of placements supplied by schools showed no significant variation by type of school.

In summary, 11 to 16 schools, especially those with high proportions of students eligible for free school meals, are most likely to use a central body to source their placements. Conversely, 11 to 18 schools in more affluent areas rely more heavily on students and their parents/families to source placements. Quite why 11 to 16 schools should act differently to 11 to 18 in providing placements is difficult to ascertain. As one might expect, in areas with a high proportion of students on free school meals, there are fewer possibilities for obtaining placements through family networks.

As well as schools sourcing their placements differently, those using a central body also display different characteristics in terms of the timing and length of placements. These findings mirror those already discussed in Section 3.1.4 and 3.1.5.

Table 4.2: School responses to the change in law allowing earlier work experience, by change in length of work experience (percentages)

	Per cent from central source			All schools
	None	**1-74 %**	**75% plus**	
One-week block	32	21	16	*23*
Two-week block	59	73	69	*67*
Three-week block	<1	3	12	*5*
Combination/other format	9	3	3	*5*
Base N = 100%	*244*	*190*	*245*	*679*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

First, schools relying more on a central body are much more likely to offer two-week and three-week placements. Second, they are less likely to be conducted in Year 10. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, for those schools who do not use a central agency at all, 36 per cent of placements end within a week of the end of Year 10. On the other hand, for those relying more extensively on a central body, only 16 per cent of schools finish their placements within a week of the end of Year 10. This suggests that where schools are using a central organisation, better quality debriefing may be conducted as there is more time in school after placement, although we found that schools with placements at the end of Year 10 did give more time to immediate debriefing (6.1.2). It also indicates that central agencies may have a role in co-ordinating the timing of placements to avoid 'bunching' at particular times.

Interestingly though, schools that do more organising of the placements themselves are more likely to be aware of the law changes allowing students to go out earlier in Year 10; the implication being that schools that are more independent in the way placements are found, have greater knowledge of issues connected with work experience. However, these schools are less likely to have acted on this change in the law.

4.1.1 Approaches to finding placements in the case study areas

Data from the survey of students, which was distributed to students in schools in the five case study areas, show that the source of placements have remained the same as in 1996. Approximately one-third find their placement through their own contacts and 28 per cent said they had been given the placement through the school. Seventeen per cent found the placement on a computer, nine per cent from an outside person and seven per cent from a list in a book.

Higher ability students were more likely to have found their placement through their own contacts − 43 per cent compared to

33 per cent overall. However, there was little association with economic status as measured by free school meals.

As one would expect, students in areas where schools are more reliant on a central body were less likely to indicate the school as a source of placements, but in addition students in larger schools were more likely to have been given their placement by the school (33 per cent in schools placing more than 200, compared to 22 per cent in schools placing less than 150).

The research with staff and students within the case study areas provided further insights into the methods of finding placements, and each approach is outlined in turn below.

Database supplied by central agency

Within the centralised areas, most placements were found from a centrally held database. For example, one of the 'centralised' case study areas has a large database of approximately 1,500 placements for approximately 2,000 work experience students who are placed each year. The database has been built up over many years. Recently, since the central agency has been based within the TEC, there has been some cross-selling between the work experience database and the TEC database of employers of Modern Apprentices and National Trainees. The work experience database is supplied on disk to schools. It provides a job description for each placement, which is updated every time the placement is visited by the central agency, *ie* at least every four years, depending on the risk banding. Any pertinent feedback from students or teachers is also incorporated where appropriate. The job description provides such details as what the job involves, hours of work, clothing needed and lunch arrangements.

In a rural centralised area, a similar database is held by the Careers Service which co-ordinates placements for four schools. The area co-ordinator is well engaged with the small local business community. She uses every opportunity through word of mouth to recruit new employers to provide placements. However, she generally does not 'cold canvass' new employers by means of a letter as 'this tends just to get binned'. At the end of each year the central agency writes to all employers, requesting further support and providing dates for the placements the following year. Each school is supplied with either a printout of the whole database to select placements from, or an appropriate section of it, if more than one school is going out on work experience at the same time. This system works within a rural area, as there is little overlap between the schools in terms of geographic area within which students will travel to placements.

Within the joint areas there is some use of databases held centrally. In one area, practice varies between schools, but there is greater reliance upon the LEA-held database within less academic

intake schools where teachers appear to have less resources and fewer parental contacts.

School contacts or school employer database

In one of the case study areas in particular, which described itself as operating a school based system, most schools in the area have their own employer databases which contain employers that have been used in the past and have proved satisfactory. Databases are updated with employers that have been found by pupils, and tend to evolve rather than grow as a result of any proactive targeting of local employers. Schools also draw from a centrally held database, but the central database is less use for schools based further away from the central area.

In a school in another area they are able to draw heavily on teacher/school contacts with local or large employers. This is a small school which prides itself on its links with the local community. Also, the school work experience co-ordinator is a senior teacher and has been in the post for some years. These are seen as contributory factors to the success of this system.

Students

In another of the areas which described itself as having a school based system, 80 per cent of placements are found by students, but this is supported by the availability of school or centrally held lists of employers. We found similar practice in some of the more affluent parts of the other school based area. In one school, in particular, where year groups have been growing, there has been a greater emphasis on students finding their own placements due to time constraints.

Where students are responsible for finding their own placements, the student will typically write to their prospective employer (normally this takes place during English or PSHE). In one school every student thinks of ten questions that they want to ask the employer, and they are then responsible for 'phoning the employer and noting down the reply.

In an area where a combined approach is adopted, we were told by the work experience co-ordinator in one school that:

> *'I see all the students individually; some come with a placement in mind, others may know what they want to do or have a general idea and find something on the database. If there is nothing on the books they go off to try and find what they want themselves often with help from me or my Careers Adviser.'*

Within the centralised areas, some students find their own placements and some schools encourage them to do this, as they feel this can lead to a better quality placement and they see the benefits of the student making the application to the employers

themselves. The schools seem to encourage this, as it frees up placements on the database for other students. However, this practice is sometimes not welcomed by the central co-ordinating agency, as it entails extra work organising the health and safety checking, especially if it is a placement in another area. One of the central agencies tries to get repeat business the following year from placements found by students, but this has also caused problems as these employers tend to be more likely to say they cannot provide placements at the time of booking.

Parents

In the area where 80 per cent of placements are found by students, some schools have systems in place to widen the pool of placements. In a couple of schools, parents of the new intake into Year 7 each year are surveyed to help generate new placements. Parents' evenings in a number of schools are also frequently used to seek help in finding new placements. As one co-ordinator put it:

> *'Our approach is that at every available opportunity we trawl for new placements.'*

This practice is much less common in the other four areas, for instance in one area it only took place in the schools in more affluent areas.

4.1.2 Views of different systems

It is difficult to generalise school views about the efficacy of different means of finding placements. Both positive and negative responses were aired on both central and school/student based arrangements.

Central database

The main thrust of positive comments from those relying more on a central agency, centred on the volume of administration that could not be undertaken within school. As noted in Section 3.1.4, most of the co-ordinators in one of the centralised areas commented that they would struggle with the workload without the central agency. Also, positive remarks were given about the information provided from the central service. An example of a comment was:

> *'Using the service has certainly helped us find placements and if work experience was left to schools we could not cope and it would not happen − a travesty.'*

On the down side there were criticisms of too much bureaucracy and a lack of appreciation of the schools' needs in organising work experience. For example:

> *'Whilst we are grateful for the support of the health and safety vetting agency, we would prefer to organise work experience ourselves. We*

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have built good employer contacts through good faith and school relationship; [the central body] receives our original funding while we do much of the core work. Trust schools to know better what their pupils need.'

Schools in one of the centralised case study areas complained that the quality of the placements on the area database was variable and that students often did not get their preferred choice of placement. We return to this point in the section on matching (see below).

School or student contacts

Where schools are responsible for finding placements, they are often very keen to retain control over the matching of students to placements. Most schools also see it as an important part of the process for students to find their own placements, citing enhanced job search skills and widening the pool of future placements as advantages of this system. No students interviewed, who were responsible for finding their own placement, had a problem with this, although some did experience difficulty finding their preferred placement. Some schools see this as good training in job search skills and students did not disagree. For example, as noted by one student:

'I found it quite difficult to find the placement I wanted [a vets practice] but it was good experience I think – some [potential placements] said they were too busy or they don't take school kids but in the end I found one …. I think I got a good idea of what it's like to try and get a job and I got a placement I wanted which I wouldn't have done if I'd just taken one available from the list.'

This approach is supported by some employers, who prefer individual contact with students as it shows them that the student is interested in the type of work:

'I'm always more impressed by a student who comes to me of his own will saying he wants to work in engineering and have I got a placement?'

The disadvantages cited of students finding their own placements, related to employers potentially being inundated by requests from individual students, and also disadvantaging those students who do not have contacts through their parents. One area co-ordinator noted that they tried to discourage students becoming competitive about finding the most glamorous sounding placements, for example the House of Commons or motor racing, especially if they are outside the area. This was thought to be a particular danger if students were encouraged to find their own placement and often led to students becoming more focused upon the type of employer than the value of experiencing work *per se*.

Some schools and area co-ordinators generally did not like students travelling far out of the locality. They wanted to be able

to monitor the placement themselves and build a relationship with local employers. Others were happy for student to travel further afield (*eg* to major towns or cities 20 miles away) where placement opportunities were greater, as long as transport could be arranged. However, in some of these 'out of area' cases it was difficult both to confirm that the placement had been checked for health and safety and to arrange a mid-placement teacher visit.

4.1.3 Changes since 1996

Within the case study areas it seems there has been little change in the systems of finding placements since the previous survey in 1996. Nonetheless, the national surveys of co-ordinators shows that by and large, as we noted in Chapter 3, since 1996 there has been a general shift towards centralisation. It may be that this increased reliance is predominantly connected with health and safety vetting as reliance on students and their families to find placements has also increased in the last four years. Just under one-half of schools report an increase in the number of placements found by students, while just eight per cent report a decrease. One said:

> 'There has been a significant move to students finding their own placements. In 1997/8 this was 30 per cent. In the last year it was nearly 45 per cent.'

Similarly, 57 per cent of the area co-ordinators reported that there was an increase in the number of placements found by students. As one might expect, schools indicating a higher proportion of placements found by students are those most likely to report increases in this practice since 1996.

The area in which most school and area co-ordinators felt that the situation had worsened was in the number of employers in the system and the amount of choice students had in selecting placements. The latter point will be covered in Section 4.3. However, even though this was seen to be the area of work experience that had shown least improvement since 1996, views appeared to be mixed, with 36 per cent of schools thinking the situation had got worse while 32 per cent felt the position had improved. However, perhaps it is as a result of the problems caused by this change in employer supply that 49 per cent of schools report increases in the number of placements found by students and their families.

Two factors appear to be associated most with school perceptions with regard to reduced supply of placements: greater economic disadvantage/higher unemployment and the prevalence of a central agency in providing placements. Data are shown in Table 4.3. Also, there is significant correlation with the proportion of students obtaining their first choice placement. Where schools report a sharp decrease in the number of employers in the system

Table 4.3: Source of placements by age range of school and proportion of students eligible for free school meals (percentages)

The number of employers in the system has:	Places found by central agency			Percentage FSM eligibility			All schools
	None	Under 75%	75% or more	Less than 10%	10-29%	30% or more	
Decreased	31	43	37	36	33	41	*36*
Remained about the same	28	29	35	27	36	30	*31*
Increased	41	28	28	37	31	29	*33*
Base N = 100%	*232*	*184*	*232*	*232*	*196*	*222*	*650*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

the mean proportion of students gaining their first choice placement is lower (65 per cent) than where there has been an increase in supply (77 per cent). Some pointers as to why schools perceive reductions in the supply of employers offering placements are presented in the next sub-section.

4.1.4 Issues concerned with finding placements

The most common concern raised by schools related to finding of placements and the supply of placements. This gave unanimous cause for concern among those providing comments at the end of the school co-ordinator questionnaire. We outline below some of the causes identified of this reduction in supply and a range of other inter-connected issues.

● **Limited variety of placements.** A number of schools were concerned about the declining availability of certain types of placement. Among those mentioned were: health and veterinary practice, professional services, art and design, media, IT, science, several key areas of the public sector, travel and tourism, manufacturing, and leisure centres which increasingly appear not to want to take students under the age of 16. Schools noted the limited availability of more active placements and those which were more challenging for higher ability students. In contrast, there tends to be an over-supply of placements in retail and 'run of the mill office work'.

● **School competition and demand.** The timing of work experience and the number of schools seeking placements at the same time causes problems. We have already noted in Section 2.3 the concerns about the bunching of placements during the summer term of Year 10, despite the changes in the legislation. This was also raised in the 1996 evaluation and clearly remains an issue of concern. In one centralised area this problem was felt to be exacerbated by the recent increase in the number of schools across the LEA boundary using the central database. Comments from schools about this issue included:

'Difficulties are increasing — more employers are less willing to accept pupils, demand of several schools on some firms is a burden and there are more rejections and reselections each year.'

'Despite attempts to co-ordinate dates with other schools, we still find conflicts over dates.'

- **Pre-16 versus post-16, extended work experience and other programmes.** There is much anxiety among schools about the growth of post-16 provision, much of which necessitates work experience as a part of the course, which is eating into the pre-16 supply of placements. This is especially the case in certain vocational areas, such as travel and tourism. A few area co-ordinators also raised concerns about the impact that extended work experience and other work experience initiatives were having upon block work experience. The following quotes illustrate these points.

'Many local employers have withdrawn [from pre-16 work experience]; travel and tourism have been most affected as they prefer post-16 students.'

'There has been an impact on finding placements recently due to other initiatives doing work related learning. If an organisation is taking a pupil for one day a week, they may not take a pupil on work experience as well.'

- **Health and safety checking, and work experience legislation.** Although welcomed for obvious reasons, it is felt by some that the increase in health and safety vetting and other legislation and administrative work has led to employers (especially smaller ones) pulling out of work experience. Some of the schools made comments about this issue:

'Many of our best employers, particularly small employers offering exciting experience in craft or high skill areas, eg silk screen printers and small IT companies, have withdrawn because of the increasing load of bureaucracy involved.'

However, those schools in the case study areas reported few real instances of employers withdrawing; indeed others took a contrary view and one area co-ordinator argued that since health and safety vetting had been centrally organised, a wider range of placements had become available. Professional safety experts were more able to assess the risks associated with smaller non-service based workplaces.

- **Stereotypical placements.** Some area co-ordinators felt their capacity to challenge stereotypical placements was being reduced by the increase in students having to find placements for themselves. Further, schools in more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to be able to rely on parent networks to find placements. An example of a comment was:

'Extra reliance on "own find" places reduces capacity to challenge class, social, gender, location of pupils.'

- **The relative strength of local labour markets.** Related to the point above, in areas of economic disadvantage:

'Pupils are restricted to local job market opportunities which therefore restrict choices.'

- **Rural issues.** Within rural areas there are particular problems with limited number and range of placements, and travel to work, and these issues are reportedly worsening. A school co-ordinator explained:

  'We are in a rural area with few industries, small employers, and number of placements limited. Travel is a major problem and it is impossible to get two-week placements as there are insufficient places for all schools.'

- **Travel, transport and other costs.** Predominantly this is linked to issues concerned with rural environments. However, there is also an issue for students' families unable to afford travel or other expenses associated with work experience, or those not prepared to travel, for example:

  'The school is 90 per cent Asian background and students will not travel out of their local area – especially girls.'

- **Concentrations of small employers.** Although there is some contradiction here, with some schools concerned about the demise of small unique placements, most are more concerned about the lack of large employers and over-reliance on small one to four employee companies who are also finding it difficult to cope with health and safety legislation.

- **Size of school.** Where there is a shortage of employers willing to take pre-16 work experience, the problem with supply is exacerbated for schools with large numbers of students to place.

- **Boundaries and travel to work areas.** In some cases, artificial area boundaries appear to be restrictive. One response from a school was:

  'In this area the Careers Service only places students within their own borough. This means the hub city is not available to [many] students, eg a child might be sent to an irrelevant placement six miles away rather than a relevant placement in the hub city three miles away. We are highly dissatisfied customers but feel constrained to use the Careers Service for health and safety reasons.'

- **Quality issues.** Touching on many of the issues raised above there is a general feeling among many co-ordinators that quality placements are in shorter supply and there is increased use of a narrower range of placements.

4.2 Management of health and safety

Since 1996 there has been an increased emphasis placed upon health and safety checking of placements. In the following sections we outline our findings in relation to initial health and safety vetting of new placements, reassessment of placements used on an ongoing basis, the organisations responsible for the vetting and the training of those conducting the checks.

4.2.1 Initial health and safety checking

Respondents to the co-ordinators survey were asked whether workplaces providing placements for the first time were checked for health and safety. Table 4.4 shows that on average, 94 per cent of placements used for the first time were vetted by health and safety by personal visit. Three-quarters of the areas said all placements were checked by personal visit. Conversely, in ten per cent of areas, less than three-quarters of the placements were checked by personal visit, and in one area it was reported that none of the placements were checked. On average, five per cent of areas said that this initial checking was done by other means, *ie* by sending out a questionnaire or form. In five per cent of the areas the co-ordinator did not know the percentage of placements checked for the first time.

In Table 4.4, we can also see that in the centralised areas a slightly higher average proportion of placements are checked by personal visit and a lower proportion are checked by other means. Co-ordinators in areas where there is a joint approach to organising placements were more likely not to know the proportion of placements checked, with 11 per cent responding that they did not know. Presumably, this is because they are not fully aware of practice within the schools in their area.

Co-ordinators were also asked about the percentage of employers providing placements which assess the risk of the workplace, specifically for pre-16 work experience. Nearly one-quarter of the respondents said they did not know, but those that did know reported that on average 82 per cent of the employers assessed the risk. Responses ranged from none of the placements being risk assessed to all of them, but nearly one-half of the areas reported that all placements were assessed by employers. Again, the average proportion of placements risk assessed was higher in areas where there is a centralised system operating. One area noted that establishing safety documentation tends to be more difficult with small employers, of which there was a predominance in their area.

Table 4.4: Initial health and safety checks by type of work experience organisation

Health and safety checks of placements used for the first time	Avg percentage Centralised		Avg percentage Joint		Avg percentage All	
	%	N =	%	N =	%	N =
Percentage of placements vetted by personal visit	98.1	40	92.1	39	94.3	94
Percentage of placements vetted by other means	3.1	41	5.7	39	5.2	93
Percentage of employers providing placements who assess the risk of the placement for work experience	90.6	29	70.3	32	81.7	72

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

Table 4.5: Re-assessment of work experience placements in work experience areas, by risk banding

| Risk banding | Average proportions of placements in each risk banding | Average proportion of placements vetted each year | Organisation responsible for vetting | | |
| | | | The schools | The schools and an agency | An external agency |
	Average %	Average %	% of areas	% of areas	% of areas
High risk	16.6	87.1	1.0	14.3	84.7
Medium risk	25.3	43.1	2.0	14.1	82.8
Low risk	58.0	30.9	2.0	17.2	79.8
Number of areas	*79*	*69*	*98*	*98*	*98*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

4.2.2 Re-assessment of work experience placements

Area co-ordinators were asked about the risk banding of their placements. Table 4.5 shows the average proportions of placements in each risk banding in the areas. This indicates that most placements are low or medium risk. Two per cent of the co-ordinators reported that they said they did not know the risk banding of the placements in their areas. However, a large number of respondents did not answer the question, indicating that they may not have had this information.

Table 4.5 also shows the average proportions of placements vetted in each risk banding per year. As would be expected, the proportion increases the higher the risk banding. Over three-quarters of the co-ordinators (77 per cent) who responded to the question said that all their high risk placements were vetted annually. However, another 15 per cent said that one-half or less of these high risk placements were vetted on an annual basis. One-half of the areas vetted half of their medium risk placements per year, another ten per cent vetted none of these placements. It was most commonly reported that one-quarter of the low risk placements were vetted annually, with 30 per cent of the areas saying this. The findings also show that within centralised areas, on average a higher proportion of high risk placements are vetted annually.

Encouragingly, a high proportion of area co-ordinators (87 per cent) agreed with the statement that the coverage of health and safety vetting in their area is adequate. Also, 83 per cent agreed that the quality of health and safety vetting was adequate. There was not much variation by type of area in the responses to these questions.

Schools, responding to the national survey, are almost invariably satisfied with the coverage of health and safety checking: 87 per cent agree that the coverage is adequate. A similar proportion (88 per cent) also agree that the quality of health and safety checking is adequate.

4.2.3 Responsibility for health and safety

Table 4.5 shows that in most areas an external agency is responsible for health and safety vetting. Unsurprisingly, within almost all the centralised areas, the responsibility lies with an external agency for each risk banding of placement (97.2 per cent). The school survey data also show that the vast majority of schools use a central body to do the health and safety checking. Just three per cent of schools do it themselves and only another 12 per cent have any involvement in doing it jointly with a central body — 85 per cent rely on a central agency. Thus, although a high proportion of placements are found through sources other than a central agency, most rely on external support for health and safety checking.

This finding is clearly reflected in our case study areas, where we found very few examples of schools conducting health and safety checks themselves (and only in routine cases). For example, in the area where most of the placements are found by students, three fully trained (NEBOSH/IOSH) Business Liaison Officers employed by the LEA conduct the majority of health and safety checking in the area (450 new placements each per year). According to the officers this arrangement works well and covers the needs of most schools. Now that a more systematic approach has been developed, the BLOs are widening their net and targeting 'hard to find placements' and following up leads provided by schools and local EBPs to increase the supply of new placements in shortage occupational areas, especially professional, design and vets.

In this, and all the other case study areas, new systems for conducting health and safety checks had been implemented since 1996. We discuss these improvements in procedures further in Section 4.2.5. We did, however, find an example in two areas, of school work experience co-ordinators who were planning on taking back the role of checking placements from the central system. In one case this was an attempt to save money, in the other it had more to do with problems with other aspects of the centralised system — most importantly, students not getting their preferred choice of placements. However, these two cases were exceptions. In most cases teachers seem generally pleased with being relieved of the workload and the responsibility associated with health and safety checking.

With regard to placements in neighbouring areas, we came across examples of reciprocal agreements having been made with neighbouring agencies. This works well for organisations such as Trident, responsible for work experience in both areas, or where both areas have similar arrangements. In some instances, though, this causes problems, especially if there are different arrangements and fees for health and safety checks.

Table 4.6: Training received by those responsible for health and safety vetting in work experience areas, 2000 and 1996

Type of training	% of areas in 2000	% of areas in 1996
IOSH	61.7	6.9
NEBOSH certificate	39.4	11.5
TEC training course	10.6	9.2
Trident Trust	7.4	16.1
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	6.4	6.9
City and Guilds	5.3	—
LEA training course	4.3	17.2
Training updates	3.2	—
OCR386	2.1	—
Various sources	—	21.8
INSET	—	6.9
Careers Service	—	5.7
ROSPA	—	4.6
Internal training from specialist staff	—	3.4
EBP	—	2.3
TEED/ED	—	2.3
Other	4.4	7.7
Number of areas	*94*	*87*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of area co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

4.2.4 Health and safety training

Co-ordinators were asked what training in health and safety those responsible for vetting employers' premises had received. This was an open-ended question. The same question was asked in the 1996 area co-ordinators survey and the findings are compared in Table 4.6. It is encouraging to note that with the increased emphasis placed upon health and safety in recent years, a higher proportion of areas reported that qualifications such as an IOSH or NEBOSH certificate had been received in 2000, as compared with 1996. Also, whereas in 1996 over ten per cent of areas said no training had been received, none of the areas gave this response in 2000.

4.2.5 Changes in health and safety checking procedures since 1996

We have clear evidence from the surveys and the case studies that procedures for health and safety checking have improved over the last four years. A good indicator of this is the increase in health and safety qualifications detailed above. Furthermore, nearly all area co-ordinators (97 per cent) felt that health and safety vetting

of placements had improved in the last four years. One area co-ordinator noted the benefits of the increased focus on health and safety:

> *'The quality of placements has improved dramatically since health and safety visits have been made. We are able to talk to employers regarding type of tasks and key skills; also talk through the importance of risk assessment.'*

Again, affirming the emphasis since 1996 on improving the health and safety of pre-16 work experience, there is also a widespread view among schools that health and safety vetting has improved in this period. Over three-quarters said on balance it had improved, 19 per cent felt there had been no change, while five per cent felt it had deteriorated. Schools in Education Action Zones and in the more economically disadvantaged areas tended to report more negatively, but the differences were not great. Schools who were doing the health and safety checking themselves also tended to respond more negatively, but the numbers here are small as most relied on a central service.

In the boxes we present two examples of how health and safety arrangements have been improved in the case study areas.

Centralised area

One of the centralised areas has recently introduced what is regarded as a 'fail safe' system for health and safety checks. They now go through the whole database of employers (1,500 to 2,000), to see how many need visiting to bring all the placements up to date with their health and safety checks. Then all the necessary visits are scheduled to take place by the end of August each year. It is ensured that high risk placements are checked once per year, medium risk every two years and low risk every four years. All central agency team members who conduct visits are ISOSH qualified. As well as this, each time a student is booked on a placement, a letter is sent to the employer to confirm that nothing has changed since the last visit. This letter sets out the employer's obligations with regard to health and safety and the placement. No student goes out unless this letter has been returned and signed by the employer.

The initial risk assessment is done by the employer when one of the central agency team first visit a new employer. This member of the team helps and guides this process, any problems or risks identified are noted in the job description for the placement. This information is then given to the student and parent. The area co-ordinator is completely satisfied with this system and noted:

'I can now put my hand on my heart and say all placements are up to date with their health and safety checks prior to a student going out.'

All the schools surveyed in this area agreed that the coverage and quality of health and safety checking was adequate, which was a significantly higher proportion than in other areas.

Joint area

In one area, the local EBP has taken over responsibility for health and safety checking. The actual task is contracted out, through competitive tender, to three organisations (two health and safety service providers and a training provider) each covering separate areas. Nearly all schools in the area have opted into the arrangement paying £10 per Year 10 student as a 'subscription'. Schools submit their employer contacts to the local EBP who notify all employers of the new arrangements and set up an area-wide database. Schools submit placements to be visited by the vetters three months before the students are due to attend (this has meant in some cases that the timing of their preparation has had to be altered). In the first year a total of 1,705 placements in all were checked. In future all high risk, half of the medium risk places, and all new places will be visited each year. The service has been well-received by local schools. All of the two-thirds of participating schools that replied to a satisfaction survey reported that it was a 'success' and three-quarters thought it is 'value for money', with most of the rest not sure.

There was only limited evidence that the new health and safety regime has reduced the number of places available either by ruling out unsafe placements or 'choking off' employers unwilling to go through the process. Indeed, a number of interviewees in this case study area felt that one of the beneficial by-products of the new health and safety checking system was that the range of 'interesting' places had increased, as the system was far more able to cope with high risk or less standard workplaces than the previous school-based system.

These new systems seemed generally to be well received, although in one area there were clearly teething troubles which were resulting in delays. Reaction to the new health and safety system from employers was, on balance, generally neutral. Although some, particularly smaller ones, argued that compliance with health and safety was an unnecessary bureaucratic burden, most of those interviewed did not feel that the checks made were unduly onerous.

4.3 Matching students to placements

The majority of students are given a choice when selecting their placements. All bar four per cent of schools allow students a choice of placements to select from, or allow them to find their own placements. Eighty-six per cent of the students surveyed reported that they were able to choose their own placement, which is broadly the same as in 1996.

Of schools that allow students a choice of placement, just over 60 per cent allow a free choice; 39 per cent of schools restrict choice. By and large there was little difference between schools, although those with a high proportion of students with SEN or EAL needs were significantly more likely to restrict student choice (Table 4.7). The reasons given by schools for restricting choice do not really help to explain why schools with higher proportions of students with EAL/SEN needs may be more inclined to restrict choice.

Table 4.7: Schools offering a 'free/restricted' choice of placements by proportion with EAL/SEN needs (percentages)

Type of choice offered	EAL needs		SEN		All schools offering a choice
	Under 3%	3% plus	Under 22 %	22% plus	
Free choice	65	55	66	53	62
Restricted choice	35	45	34	47	38
Base N = 100%	*436*	*214*	*437*	*210*	*657*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

For most schools the main reason choice is restricted is the local labour market/availability of placements (these restrictions are addressed in more detail above) or to a number of occupational groups preferred by students — one-third of schools cite each of these as a reason for restricting choice. Approximately one in ten schools mention the ability/suitability of students as a factor in restricting choice.

Area co-ordinator survey data show that where area co-ordinators are involved with matching, all students are provided with a choice of placements and for over half this is a free choice. Where the choice is restricted, in 32 per cent of areas, students select the type of placement they want, and in a further 20 per cent of areas they select a number of placements. In other areas, the choice is restricted subject to availability. Employers are also often involved. In nearly half of these areas, employers are given the opportunity to select students in all or most cases.

Basis of student choice

Student survey data show that, since 1996, there has been a reduction in the proportion of students indicating 'interest in career' as a main reason for selecting their placement — down from 77 per cent to 67 per cent this year. It is noticeable too that students going out in Autumn Year 11 are more likely to report 'career interest' as an important factor in their choice. Approximately one-quarter (22 per cent) of students say they thought: 'work experience would help me decide what courses to take'. Interestingly, lower ability students (average SAT scores less than five) were more likely to cite this reason than higher ability students (SAT scores greater than six): 26 per cent compared to 16 per cent. Just 16 per cent already knew the employer and seven per cent said their parents had suggested the placement.

In one of the case study areas, in general, schools seem to take the stance that interest in the type of work is an important factor in the selection process. It may be that where schools have a more direct relationship with employers they are more sensitive to their needs, and in most cases employers want to see interest from the student in their type of work.

Satisfaction with degree of choice

Schools indicate that, on average, seventy per cent of students get their first choice placement. There is significant variation in the proportion getting their first choice placement by school size, the proportion of students with EAL support needs, and in relation to the way in which placements are found. Where the central agency is involved in finding placements, a lower proportion of students get their first choice of placement than where there is no agency involved. Smaller schools are also more likely to be able to meet students' first choices, whereas in those schools with higher numbers of EAL students, lower proportions of students get their first choice.

Almost two-thirds of the students (63 per cent) said their placement was their first choice, more or less the same as in 1996. However, 69 per cent of students on one week placements got their first choice placements, 65 per cent on two-week placements, but only 51 per cent of students on three-week placements got their first choice.

Overall, schools are satisfied with the level of choice their students get in selecting placements — over three-quarters (78 per cent) say they are satisfied or very satisfied with the choice offered. Similarly, three-quarters of the area co-ordinators surveyed agreed that students have a good range of choice in selecting their placements.

However, there is some variation in opinion between schools; especially, where students are finding a higher proportion of placements, schools are more satisfied. One teacher highlighted this:

> 'At least 50 per cent of students find their own placements. This means the remainder get their first choice placement.'

A number of school respondents commented on the difficulties of providing good quality matching when the supply of places is insufficient, too narrow or of poor quality; when coupled with unrealistic student aspirations this can be problematic. For example:

> 'Because of the nature of the area the range of placements is somewhat limited — mainly admin, retail and the service sector, but pre-16 students often have more grandiose ambitions and it can be difficult to reconcile some with reality.'

Furthermore, this was thought to have implications on the future supply of places, as when students are poorly matched, schools report employers not being satisfied with the placement and being inclined to withdraw their commitment.

One in four students in the process survey said that they would choose a different placement if they had their time over again. Students in retail and leisure placements were much more likely to want to have revised their choice, while the highest level of

Table 4.8: External agencies involved with matching students with placements on offer

Support central agency provides with matching	Centralised % of areas	Joint % of areas	Mixed % of areas	All areas % of areas
External agency involved in matching	75.0	11.4	81.8	45.5
Number of areas	*40*	*44*	*11*	*98*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

satisfaction was among students in public sector or office-based placements.

4.3.1 Methods of matching students to placements

The extent to which area co-ordinators are involved with matching vary quite widely by the type of area, with few area co-ordinators in joint areas having any involvement (Table 4.8). We discuss in the following paragraphs the role of central agencies in the matching process and other methods of matching.

Central agency involvement with matching

Overall, under half of the central agencies are involved in matching students to placements. Of these, almost two-thirds (64 per cent) appear to provide a full matching service, *ie* matching a student request or choice of work area to a placement. Twelve per cent provide an advice or support service but do not actually place students. A further ten per cent provide lists of vacancies and opportunities to schools, and another ten per cent said they do some matching.

In one of the case study areas, the central agency provides a full matching service. Each student selects six placements in order of preference from the central database. Students are encouraged to select placements on the basis of their interests, their personal goals identified in a personal learning plan, their personal qualities and strengths and weaknesses, and practicalities such as travel to work and medical conditions. The central agency is then responsible for placing each student, subject to availability. Where places are oversubscribed, the schools describe it as a lottery as to who is allocated the placement. One school commented:

> *'The central agency has no commitment to the suitability of the placement for the student.'*

The matching process tends to start about six months prior to the placement. Despite this early start, however, some students still do not have a placement arranged until the very last minute. Furthermore, many students do not get one of their first six choices and some even have to go through many iterations of reselections. This is because a high proportion of placements are not available at the time and is especially the case during peak times, *ie* the end of the summer term of Year 10. One school

reported that 60 per cent of their students get one of their first six choices and that they were happy with this; another was much less satisfied, reporting that some do not get a placement until their 30th choice. The central agency felt that the number of reselections had reduced over the past two years.

In contrast, in another of the centralised case study areas, the central agency supplies the database to the school but the schools are responsible for allocating the students to the placements. In this area there is a less of a problem of placements being unavailable, as each employer is asked to give dates of when they can offer placements at the beginning of the year. In one school, the area co-ordinator is on-hand during the session where students select placements. The area co-ordinator is able to give students more detail about each placement. The teacher together with the area co-ordinator then allocates the students to the placements. Where placements are over subscribed the teacher makes a decision on the basis of who will learn the most from the placement. This system of matching was regarded much more favourably within the schools than the centralised approach outlined above.

School based systems of matching

Where schools take responsibility for matching students to placements, again we discovered a variety of practices. As noted above, in many cases students are required to find their own placement and as such the matching process takes place between the student and the employer (although schools will include discussions about job types *etc.* and student interests as part of their preparation process). In other schools, students select from school or centrally held databases. In one area in particular, schools placed a lot of emphasis on the matching process, emphasising that:

> *'Matching students to placements is critical − we spend a lot of time and care in matching − we have excellent knowledge of every student and good knowledge of most of the placements.'*

Over-subscription for placements is dealt with in a variety of ways by schools. For example, one case study school commented that generally the more reliable students would be offered the better placements. This was to avoid disruptive students causing problems in the most popular or better quality placements. In other schools, selection is based on the reasons the student has given for choosing the placement.

A further example is where students are asked to select an occupational area, rather than a specific placement and then the school co-ordinator places the students. This school takes into account their knowledge of the student and the placement in making the match, and thinks that the student benefits from not being disappointed at not getting a specified place.

The case study below provides another example of how placements are allocated.

> **School based matching**
>
> One school visited with a large year cohort (about 300), often finds that popular placements are oversubscribed. Each student is therefore asked to suggest three choices for their placement and they are encouraged to make these as varied as possible. Students are then required to complete an application form for these places. The work experience co-ordinator within the school may check the individual's grades and ask teachers about the suitability of their choices, but the main basis of decision making is the standard of the application forms. Each of the application forms is marked and those receiving the best marks are granted the places. Students are aware of these criteria and it is felt that it helps them to take the whole process seriously, as it is as much like a real job application as possible. Marks are deducted for late submission of applications.

Students applying to employers

As noted above, many students find their own placements. One of the benefits of this system identified by schools in relation to matching is that it deals with over-subscription. For example:

> *'If a student comes to me wanting to do graphic design — I say it's unlikely I'll be able to find you one but here's a list of possible companies and you can always try them yourself — many do and are very successful at it.'*

Our student survey data shows that nearly one in five students (19 per cent) had been turned down by an employer prior to finding a place, a marginal increase on the 1996 figure of 16 per cent. Interestingly, students in schools that managed to get all their students out on work experience were more likely to report having been turned down by an employer (25 per cent compared to 14 per cent of students where more than one per cent did not go out).

4.3.2 Change since 1996

Forty-two per cent of the area co-ordinators felt that the degree of choice students have in selecting placements has increased in the last four years. One in five felt it had reduced. The area co-ordinator responses did not vary much according to type of approach used to organise placements. However, in their survey a higher proportion of schools felt the choice had reduced. Just over one in four schools report that the choice students have in selecting placements has reduced in the last four years. Those schools reporting reduced numbers of employers in the system are more likely to indicate that the level of choice has declined. Thirty per cent report an increase in choice while 43 per cent report no change.

Interestingly, single sex schools, especially girls' schools, are more likely to report increases in choice in the last four years and less likely to report decreases. In the case of girls' schools this may be the prevalence and increase in placements stereotypically taken by girls, especially in childcare. Forty per cent of girls' schools report an increase in choice, compared to 28 per cent of mixed schools and 38 per cent of boys' schools. It may be that balancing the needs of boys and girls in the matching process causes some difficulty, especially if the school is attempting to avoid gender stereotyping in placement allocation.

Again, those schools not using a central agency to find placements are more likely to report increases in the choice available to students (34 per cent, compared to 25 per cent reporting increases in choice). Again, this is connected with the amount of help received from students in finding places.

4.3.3 Selecting non-gender stereotypical placements

Just over half of the area co-ordinators have taken positive measures to avoid students taking gender stereotypical placements. The types of measures taken included coverage of gender issues in preparation activities conducted by the school or by the area co-ordinator, provision of resources to schools to help address these issues, guidance for teachers, and monitoring of the types of placements taken by students. Over half of the co-ordinators also reported that all or most of the schools in their area encouraged pupils to take non-stereotypical placements (58 per cent). A further 40 per cent said some schools encouraged pupils in this way.

Most schools (69 per cent) however, reported no change in the number of students taking non-gender stereotypical placements since 1996. The same was true of area co-ordinators: two-thirds reported no change in the number of students taking non-gender stereotypical placements (largely confirmed by the student reported in data — Section 5.2). Also, in comparison with an identical question asked of area co-ordinators in 1996 about the number of schools encouraging pupils to take non-stereotypical placements, our findings from the 2000 survey show little change.

However, the school survey shows some difference between schools. Girls' schools were marginally more likely to report less satisfaction — 13 per cent indicating that it had reduced in the last four years, compared to six per cent of schools overall. Interestingly, schools that reported lower percentages of students gaining their first choice placement were more likely to think that the number of students taking non-gender stereotypical placements had increased. This implies maybe that some students are being encouraged to take non-gender stereotypical placements when perhaps the students would prefer a more 'stereotypical' placement.

In the case studies most of the schools addressed equal opportunities in two ways: through preparation and through raising their horizons when choosing placements. One school gave an example of an activity which they run to overcome gender stereotyping:

'We run "what's my line" type sessions which are aimed at addressing job gender stereotypes — female engineers, male nurses — that kind of thing. We are also very encouraging of girls that choose non-traditional placements like the one who went to work in a motor bike garage this year, but still large numbers want fashion type placements ….'

Some schools monitored the gender distribution of placements. However, their efforts on the whole seemed fairly limited as teachers argued that students' views were very ingrained and often formed well before Years 10 and 11 and influenced more by peers and parents than school. As one school put it:

'Kids do have strong preconceived ideas about jobs and it is very difficult to shift them.'

The impression from one school is that gender stereotyping is more of a problem among the lower ability girls than is the case for higher ability, most of whom see all professions as equally accessible to girls now.

On a slightly different note, another school believes that:

'Many boys have inflated aspirations and aim higher than their ability; the opposite is true for girls with too many going for childcare and hairdressing.'

4.4 Preparation for work experience

Turning to pre-placement preparation, we look first at where in schools the responsibility for work experience lies. Respondents to the school survey were given five options. Forty-two per cent of schools said that responsibility for the curriculum aspects of work experience lies jointly within the careers/PSHE department or is an integral part of PSHE. A further 36 per cent said it is the responsibility of the careers department. Just five per cent said it is the responsibility of the PSHE department, in six per cent of schools it resides primarily with an industry link/work related learning team, and in four per cent it is a shared responsibility between a cross-curricular team of staff.

Of those schools that indicated other arrangements (five per cent) most pointed to individual staff — primarily the careers/work experience co-ordinator (69 per cent) but also year co-ordinator, deputy head, senior teacher and EBP manager.

There is little to separate schools in how they organise the curriculum aspects of work experience. Certainly, there would

appear to be no link to how they organise finding placements. Schools where high proportions were FSM eligible were less likely to have the curriculum aspects of work experience located solely within careers departments (31 per cent of schools where 22 per cent or more students are eligible for free school meals, compared to 36 per cent overall). Also, those schools with lower GCSE scores were less likely to leave the co-ordination of curriculum aspects of work experience solely within careers departments and more likely to have it reside in a joint PSHE/Careers department.

4.4.1 Amount of preparation

To allow us to estimate the volume of work experience preparation, schools were asked to indicate first the number of lessons used for the preparation of students for their Key Stage 4 work experience and secondly the length of a typical lesson, in minutes. On average, seven lessons are used by schools for preparing students for work experience and a typical lesson lasts for an hour. Schools operating two-week placements said they conduct 7.4 hours of preparation on average compared to 6.7 hours in schools organising one week placements.

Schools with higher GCSE scores tend to devote less time to preparing for work experience — just over six hours preparation time, while those schools with fewer than 35 per cent of their students gaining five grades A-C spent approximately eight hours preparing for work experience. A similar difference was apparent for community schools (7.5 hours) compared to voluntary aided and controlled schools (6.2 hours).

Where schools commented on the preparation for work experience it was generally said that problems were encountered due to timetable congestion, and several schools reported that they were not making the most out of work experience because of other pressures.

In terms of the quality and quantity of preparation in the case study schools, the key finding was that there appears to be wide variation between schools, depending on the priority given to work experience within the school. In one or two schools there was evidence of a progressive approach to preparation through the years. For example, in one school, work related learning activities in Years 8 and 9 ('The Real Game' and Industry Days) are used to build up to work experience preparation in Year 10 and placement in Year 11. From Year 9 in another school, extensive links are made to the development of key skills, self-awareness and understanding of job families in the lead up to placement selection. However, these two examples of extensive preparation activity starting at an early stage appeared to be the exception rather than the rule.

Change since 1996

Just over two-thirds of schools indicated that the amount of preparation they undertake for work experience has increased. There was little to separate schools here, notwithstanding schools who do more preparation being more likely to report an increase in the last four years. Area co-ordinators concurred, with again just over two-thirds reporting that the amount of preparation for work experience had increased. Area co-ordinators in centralised areas were more likely to say preparation had increased (78 per cent).

Within one case study area in particular, there was a general feeling from employers that students seemed better prepared than four years ago, although this varies between students coming from different schools. One of the schools in another area had actually 'honed down' their preparation activities, covering equal opportunities and expectations of work in one lesson rather than two, as other elements of the curriculum (*eg* working with IT) had to have more time.

We can compare findings from the 2000 area co-ordinators survey with that of 1996, to provide a further indication of the change in preparation activity over the past few years. Caution should be taken in interpreting these findings as some of the area co-ordinators in the qualitative research have indicated that they do not have sufficient knowledge of all their schools to be able to answer this question reliably. Nevertheless, the findings detailed in Table 4.9 do indicate that there has been an increase in the number of schools which include identification of learning objectives for and by pupils in their preparation activities. It would appear that fewer schools involve employers in the

Table 4.9: Preparation practices included in work experience programmes adopted by schools, 2000 and 1996

Preparation practices		All schools % of areas	Most schools % of areas	Some schools % of areas	No schools % of areas	N =
Involve employers in the preparation for the placement	**2000**	**3**	**18**	**68**	**11**	**94**
	1996	9	26	63	3	94
Provide parents with information about the benefits of placements	**2000**	**46**	**43**	**8**	**3**	**96**
	1996	44	46	10	1	92
Have identified specific learning objectives for pupils	**2000**	**16**	**47**	**36**	**1**	**97**
	1996	10	40	49	1	90
Encourage pupils to develop their own learning objectives	**2000**	**15**	**43**	**40**	**2**	**95**
	1996	7	32	59	2	90
Include health and safety awareness as part of pupils' preparation	**2000**	**65**	**29**	**6**	**0**	**99**
	1996	60	33	7	0	94

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of area co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

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preparation for placements. The number of schools providing parents with information and those covering health and safety in preparation activities has remained the same.

In the following section we discuss in more detail the nature of preparation activities.

4.4.2 Content and quality of preparation activities

Interest here centred on the issues covered in preparing students for work experience. Respondents were presented with four options to give an indication of the coverage of their preparation. These were: part of one lesson, one lesson, more than one lesson, not covered. The aggregate findings are presented in Table 4.10.

Most time is devoted to exploring health and safety awareness issues with all bar a very small minority of schools covering this activity. Nearly all schools also cover discussion concerned with employers' expectations, although only a small number of schools actually invite employers in to school to address this activity. Other activities covered by most schools include the application and recording of key skills, and personal and social development issues.

Not surprisingly, those schools which conducted most preparation were most likely to organise preparation activities for each of these activities. By and large schools operating one week placements covered fewer issues in slightly less time than schools operating two-week placements. There was little difference though between two and three-week placements.

In terms of the organisation supporting finding placements, there was little to choose between those schools doing more themselves

Table 4.10: Preparation for pre-16 work experience (percentages)

| Work experience preparation activities | Number of lessons devoted to each activity | | | | Base N = 100% |
	Part of one lesson	One lesson	More than one lesson	Not covered	
Exploring health and safety awareness issues	13	38	48	1	686
Discussing the application and recording of key skills	25	36	29	10	686
Exploring personal and social skills development	38	27	28	7	686
Discussions in class about employers expectations of work experience	32	42	25	1	686
Developing individual learning objectives for the placement	39	29	15	16	686
Discussions with a careers adviser from the local careers service	20	27	13	40	686
Discussing equal opportunities issues	50	31	9	10	686
Employers come in to school to talk about their expectations	6	15	7	71	686
Reviewing local labour market information	33	19	6	42	686

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

or using student contacts compared to those using central bodies. If anything, slightly more was done by those who found placements independently of central agencies. This was especially the case in relation to health and safety awareness and bringing employers into school to discuss their expectations.

One in six schools do not cover the development of student learning objectives in their preparation and where they do many only devote part of one lesson.

However, additional factors presenting significant variation on the amount of preparation in each of these areas are:

- If the location of responsibility for the curriculum aspects of work experience is in a careers department, it is more likely that the school will conduct preparation work that involves reviewing local labour market information — nearly two-thirds cover this issue where control rests with careers departments, compared to 42 per cent in PSHE departments. Also, girls' schools are much less likely to cover this issue than boys, or mixed schools (54 per cent of girls' schools not covering this issue compared to 42 per cent overall).

- Discussions with careers advisers to support the preparation of work experience are less likely to occur in schools with high GCSE scores. Fifty-four per cent of schools with 55 per cent or more attaining five or more A-C grades use a careers adviser, compared to 66 per cent of schools with under 35 per cent attaining five or more A-C grades.

- Schools undertaking one week placements do much less work in the application and recording of key skills than those offering two-, and especially three-week placements. Forty-two per cent of schools with three-week placements spend more than one lesson on this activity compared to 22 per cent of schools with one week placements. More time also seems to be spent on this activity in 11 to 16 schools than is the case in 11 to 18 schools.

- More work is done on equal opportunities issues in schools with high proportions of special needs students and ethnic minorities — one-half of the schools with the highest proportions of SEN spend at least one lesson on equal opportunities, compared to 35 per cent of those with less than 15 per cent SEN.

- Small Voluntary Aided/Controlled schools are more likely to bring employers into the classroom than other schools.

Overall, three-quarters of schools agree with the statement that the quality of preparation for work experience in their school is good. There was some variation but only in that schools where a higher volume of preparation was taking place were more likely to strongly agree with the statement. Forty-seven per cent of those doing more than eight hours' preparation agree strongly that the

preparation is 'good', compared to 19 per cent of schools who do less than four hours preparation.

Interestingly, those schools where a higher proportion of students gain their first choice placement are also more likely to agree that their preparation is good, while those schools with higher proportions of SEN students display slightly less confidence in their preparation.

Area co-ordinators were also asked to comment on the quality of preparation within schools in their area. They were slightly less positive. Fifty-eight per cent agreed that it was good and a further third neither agreed or disagreed with the statement. Over two-thirds of co-ordinators taking a centralised approach to work experience felt preparation was good.

Students' views

Three-quarters of students said they discussed the details of their placement before it took place (again these figures are more or less identical to those reported in 1996). It is noticeable that higher ability students are more likely to report having discussed the details of their placement than lower ability students — 83 per cent of those with average SAT scores of six or more, compared to 71 per cent of those with SAT scores below five.

Over one-third (37 per cent) of students discussed the placement with their employer, 33 per cent with a PSHE teacher, 30 per cent with a careers teacher and ten per cent with another teacher. Contents of the discussion included: how to dress and behave (66 per cent), the objectives of the placement (50 per cent), how to get to the placement (39 per cent), how to fill in a work diary (33 per cent), relevance of work experience to school studies (26 per cent).

Very similar to 1996 there was a high level of student satisfaction with pre-placement preparation, with approximately three-quarters disagreeing with the statement: 'I did not understand the point of my placement before I went' and about 70 per cent per cent feeling there was enough preparation. These views were more positive for those students who had discussed the details of their placement prior to going on work experience and for those who went out in Autumn Year 11 (90 per cent of students who went out in Autumn Year 11 agreed that they had sufficient preparation, compared to 70 per cent overall). It is worth noting that these students completed the form much nearer the time of their work experience than those who went earlier in Year 10, who responded least positively. In addition, those students who received more preparation were also slightly more likely to disagree with the statement, although the differences are on the margins of statistical significance.

Case study schools

As noted above, we came across wide variety in the amount and quality as well as the content of preparation in the case study schools. In some schools it was restricted to one or two lessons covering things like selection of placement, expectations of work, and health and safety. In others, there was a much fuller programme of activities and in a limited number of schools preparation was focused on the development of key skills. In some cases, schools involved employers in their preparation and preparation activities, and also included mock interviews. In one area in particular, the students interviewed felt well prepared for work experience, saying they knew what to expect. In this area all students attended an interview with their employer and this seemed to be very useful. We discuss employer interviews in the following chapter. However, some of the students in schools in more than one area noted the banality of health and safety videos. One group of students noted, in particular, how out of date these types of videos seemed. In response to this type of criticism, one school is now involving a local employer in talks covering health and safety, and undertakes a health and safety tour with videos.

In the example below, we provide details of preparation activities in a school where work experience is given a reasonably high priority within the school, and the placement itself is three weeks in length.

Example of preparation activities

Pre-selection: session on individual interests and strengths and weaknesses, booklet for students to take home and discuss with their parents providing details of available placements and points to consider in selection, individual interviews for a personal learning plan, talk from the central agency about work experience and two sessions in the computer room spent on selecting placements from the central database.

Post-selection: PSHE sessions on health and safety and what to expect on placement, a quiz on why they are going on work experience to identify objectives. Individual objectives are set for work experience and noted in the work experience diary. Practicalities relating to placements are discussed in tutor groups.

4.4.3 Support provided by area co-ordinators

Three-quarters of the area co-ordinators said they supported student preparation activities in schools in their area. This proportion rose to 95 per cent in centralised areas. In joint and mixed areas, 64 per cent of area co-ordinators provided this type of support. The type of support that area co-ordinators provide are talks at parents' evenings, supporting student briefing activities and provision of support materials. However, the type of support provided often seems to vary by school. In one of the

centralised case study areas, the central agency provides talks at assemblies, tutor groups/PSHE sessions or to parents and students together, as and when requested. In some cases, this central agency will visit a school three or four times prior to work experience to discuss work experience with smaller groups. It seemed most schools make use of this service.

4.5 Effects of introducing GNVQ

As reported above, 44 per cent of schools responding to the survey have introduced GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4. Most of these schools (56 per cent) have not made any special changes in relation to pre-16 work experience to accommodate GNVQ. Of those that have, the most common change (adopted by 44 per cent of schools offering GNVQ) is 'gathering evidence for their key skills through work experience'. Four out of ten schools report that GNVQ students gather data for assignments during their work experience and in one in four schools, placements in particular vocational areas are reserved for GNVQ students. It is worth noting that in schools where placements are reserved for GNVQ students a lower proportion of students receive their first choice placement. In those schools where placements are reserved, 44 per cent of schools report that less than 65 per cent get their first choice placement, compared to 28 per cent of schools not reserving places reporting the same.

Six per cent of schools had made other changes to accommodate GNVQ and these changes included: a longer block for GNVQ, priority in the selection process, and more preparation prior to work experience — the numbers here though are small.

4.6 Conclusion

There has been a general shift towards central agencies having responsibility for finding placements in recent years, but still a large proportion of students find their own placements. This appears to be largely a by-product of central agencies taking more of a role in health and safety checking. The advantage of central agencies finding and holding a database of placements is that it reduces the burden on schools, and in many cases it seems that it is a better use of resources for central agencies to do this. It also helps to overcome disadvantages suffered by those schools and students who have limited access to the business community. However, schools which rely on students finding their own placements find that where this occurs the placements tend to be of higher quality and students are better matched to placements. Further, where area co-ordinators are responsible for finding placements there is a stronger perception that supply has reduced in recent years.

There appears to have been a significant improvement since 1996 in health and safety checking arrangements. There is much less concern about students going to placements which have not been sufficiently checked, although over ten per cent of area and school co-ordinators still did not think that health and safety controls were adequate.

Matching students to placements appears to work better where this takes place in the school rather than by a central body, as students are more likely to get their preferred choice. This is likely to be because schools know their students better and are therefore better placed to tailor placements to their individual needs. Nonetheless, schools do need to know quite a lot about the placement, in terms of the learning opportunities it provides, to do this effectively.

On average, the amount of preparation for work experience going on in schools seems to have increased, suggesting that the priority given to work experience within schools may be increasing. However, there are still some areas that may be of concern. Despite the fact that a range of measures are being implemented to redress students' tendency to take gender stereotypical placements, these measures appear to have little effect. This suggests work experience is having a limited impact on overcoming labour market stereotypes. Secondly, a small minority of schools do not devote preparation time to the development of student learning objectives for their placement and many of those that do spend less than one lesson to this important aspect of work experience.

4.7 Key points

We have categorised the key stages of pre-placement activity as finding placements, *eg* building a database of employers offering placement, health and safety checking placements, matching individual students to placements and preparation activities for the placement. However, where students find their own placement, the process is slightly different, as the finding and matching process is one. The key findings relating to each of these stages are as follows.

Finding placements

- On average, just under half of the placements are found by a central body and around a further quarter each by schools and by students/families.

- The school survey data suggests that schools in more affluent areas, 11 to 18 schools in particular, are more likely to rely on students and their families to find placements. Our student survey data suggest that higher ability students are more likely to find their placements through their own contacts.

- The main identified advantage to schools of using a centrally held area database of placements is that it reduces the workload for schools. It also avoids disadvantaging students who do not have contacts with employers, for example through their families.

- The advantage of students finding their own placement is that it helps develop job search skills, in that the process of applying directly to an employer is similar to applying for a real job. 'Own find' placements are also often thought to be of better quality and better tailored to individual needs.

- Nationally there appears to have been a general shift towards centralisation in terms of finding placements. However, schools which are more reliant on a central database, as well as those in economically disadvantaged areas, are more likely to feel the supply of placements has reduced in recent years.

- A number of issues were raised in relation to finding placements, in particular: limited range of placements available, lack of good quality or challenging placements for high ability students, schools being in competition with each other for placements at peak times, and increased demands on employers for placements for other programmes, such as extended work experience and GNVQ courses.

Health and safety checking

- In most areas (approximately 80 per cent) a central agency is responsible for health and safety checking. On average, for over ninety per cent of placements, an initial health and safety check is conducted by means of a personal visit.

- Although nearly all high risk placements are checked annually, over ten per cent are not.

- Since 1996, the proportion of health and safety checkers who have health and safety qualifications (IOSH and NEBOSH) has increased significantly.

- Nearly all area and school work experience co-ordinators feel health and safety vetting has improved over the past four years.

- The vast majority (although not all) of area and school co-ordinators think that the health and safety checking system was adequate.

Matching

- Around one-quarter of central agencies provide a full service of matching students to placements. In other areas, matching takes place by the school or the student applies directly to a chosen employer. The research identified a number of practices in terms of how students are matched to placements.

- The majority of students are given a choice of placements, but in many cases this is a restricted choice, *eg* students select the type or occupation of the placement, rather than a specific placement, or choice is restricted by availability.

- Student survey data shows that since 1996, there has been a reduction in the proportion of students indicating interest in career as a main reason for selecting their placement (67 per cent give this as the main reason).

- On average, 70 per cent of students get their first choice of placements, but where a central agency is involved, a lower proportion of students get their first choice.

- Overall, schools and co-ordinators are satisfied with the range of choice students have.

- Just over half of area co-ordinators have taken positive measures to avoid students taking gender stereotypical placements. Further, over half of area co-ordinators report that most or all schools in their area took such measures. Despite this effort, 69 per cent of schools reported no change in the number of students taking non-gender stereotypical placements.

Preparation

- In most cases, responsibility for work experience preparation lies jointly with careers and PSHE departments within schools, or is an integral part of PSHE.

- On average, seven lessons are used by schools for preparation activity; a typical lesson is one hour in length. A greater amount of time is devoted to preparation in schools attaining lower GCSE scores.

- Just over two-thirds of schools indicate that the amount of preparation has increased since 1996, and overall three-quarters of schools agree that the quality of preparation in the school is good. Similarly, amongst students, there is a high level of satisfaction with pre-placement preparation.

- Most preparation time is devoted to health and safety, one in six schools do not discuss learning objectives with students prior to placement. In only a few cases are employers involved in placement preparation.

- Three-quarters of area co-ordinators support student preparation activities. The type of support they provide includes talks at parents' evenings, supporting student briefing activities and provision of support materials.

5. Work Experience Placements

In this chapter we look at the work experience placements themselves, beginning with data on pre-placement visits by students, before exploring the range of tasks asked of students by their schools. We also examine school and area co-ordinators views of the quality of work experience placements and issues around placement monitoring and completion of placements.

5.1 Pre-placement visits

On average, two-thirds of placements are visited by students prior to starting work experience; in 13 per cent of schools all placements are visited, and in 26 per cent of cases fewer than 50 per cent are visited (Table 5.1).

The organisation of work experience is the key determining factor in the proportion of students that visit their placement prior to starting. The longer the placement, the more likely that students will visit the employer beforehand. Similarly, students are more likely to visit an employer before the placement in centrally organised systems, compared with areas where there is no central involvement in funding places.

Table 5.1: Proportion of students visiting their placements prior to starting work experience (percentages)

	Percentage of students visiting			Base N = 100%
	Less than 50%	**50-90%**	**More than 90%**	
All schools	*26*	*48*	*26*	*654*
Two week placements	17	50	33	*437*
One week placement	48	42	10	*153*
No central organisation (finding)	33	46	21	*231*
More than 75% found centrally	16	50	34	*236*
High EAL needs	18	54	28	*222*
Low % SEN	32	44	24	*221*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Interestingly, multiple regression analysis also identifies the proportion of students with special educational and English support needs to be key variables. This suggests that schools provide additional encouragement to students with support needs to visit their placements prior to starting.

Employers generally like pre-placement interviews. They are seen to be valuable to both the employer and the student by providing an opportunity for them to meet before the placement begins. Students can be given practical information which will be necessary before they begin work (*eg* what to wear), and background information (*eg* the history of the establishment). Some employers also use the interview to give young people a chance to choose in which department they would like to work, or to discuss what they hope to gain from their placement. One employer described it as an opportunity 'to iron out the essentials'. It was also felt that students benefit from the experience of an interview in a 'real' setting. The pre-placement interview often negates the need to send out letters to the student. One particularly committed employer uses the interview as an opportunity to assess literacy (through the completion of the application form) and prepares the programme of placement activities based on the interview.

> One employer we visited, interviews every work experience applicant before they will offer a place. They believe it helps to ensure a quality placement and is worth the 20 minutes or so that each interview takes. During the interview they can assess the individual's skills and commitment; it also helps to put them at ease and to allay their fears about starting the placement. They reject very few applicants and when they do it is mainly on the grounds that they do not have enough placements, although they are prepared to reject candidates when they feel that they will not make a contribution.

Pupils generally found the interview valuable. It meant they felt less nervous when they actually began their placement, as they had a better idea what to expect.

Some schools substituted visits with 'phone calls to the employer. Pupils in one school we visited were expected to call their prospective placement to ask a set of questions. Pupils have to think about what they want to know beforehand and write down the questions and record the answers that the employer gives. This provided a purpose and focus for the 'phone call. The same school also keeps copies of evaluation forms from previous placements, so that a pupil going to that placement can read the comments, and see what activities are likely to be offered.

5.2 Placements by sector

The pattern of placements appears to have changed little since 1996, according to our student survey data. Figure 5.1 shows the

Figure 5.1: Distribution of placements by sector, 1996 and 2000
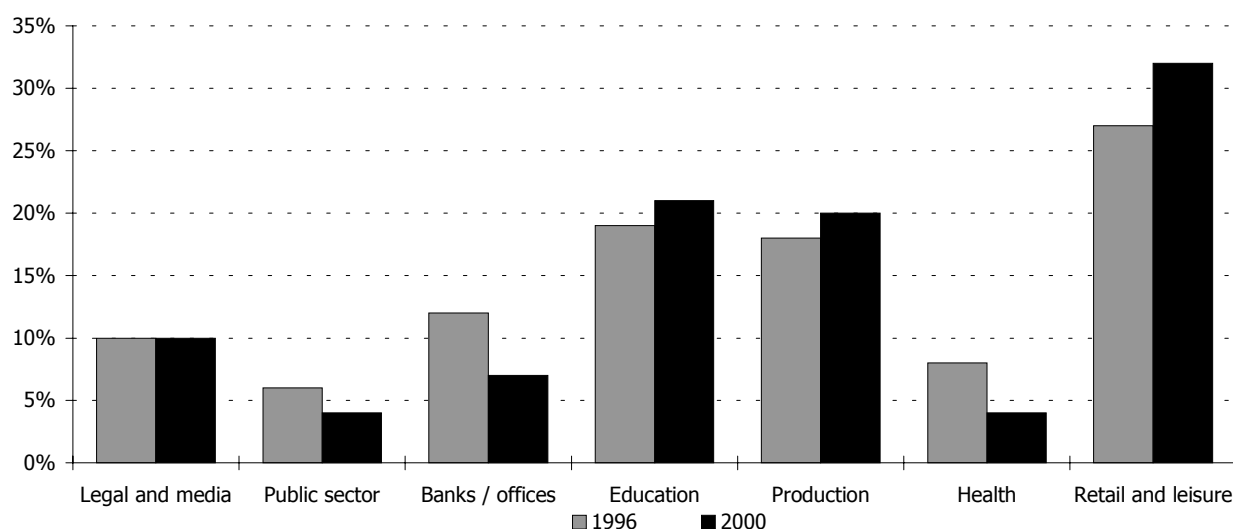
Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Students IES/ER 2000

distribution of placements by broad sector for 1996 and 2000. While there has been a modest decline in the proportion of placements taken in some sectors (*eg* banks and offices and in health) and slight rises in others (notably production and retail and leisure), the general distribution remains similar between the two years.

We have also looked at the distribution by gender (Figure 5.2 overleaf) and the overall pattern has changed a little in the past four years, despite efforts at de-stereotyping students' choices (see section 4.3.3). There has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap in some sectors, *eg* production and legal and media. However, large differences remain in education and health − placements predominantly taken by girls.

We also found that the type of placement taken varied significantly with student ability, and indeed was the main factor underlying the distribution of placements. Higher ability students tended to be clustered in professional, legal and media and office environments, while students of lower academic abilities are more likely to be found in education and production environments.

There was also some variation by the way work experience was organised. For instance, where schools found a higher than average proportion of places, students were more likely to be in production placements.

Data from the schools showed a similar pattern. For example, in one, 16 out of 18 computing and IT-related placements were taken up by boys. Conversely, all care work, hairdressing and nursery nurse placements were undertaken by girls.

Figure 5.2: Distribution of placements by gender and sector, 1996 and 2000
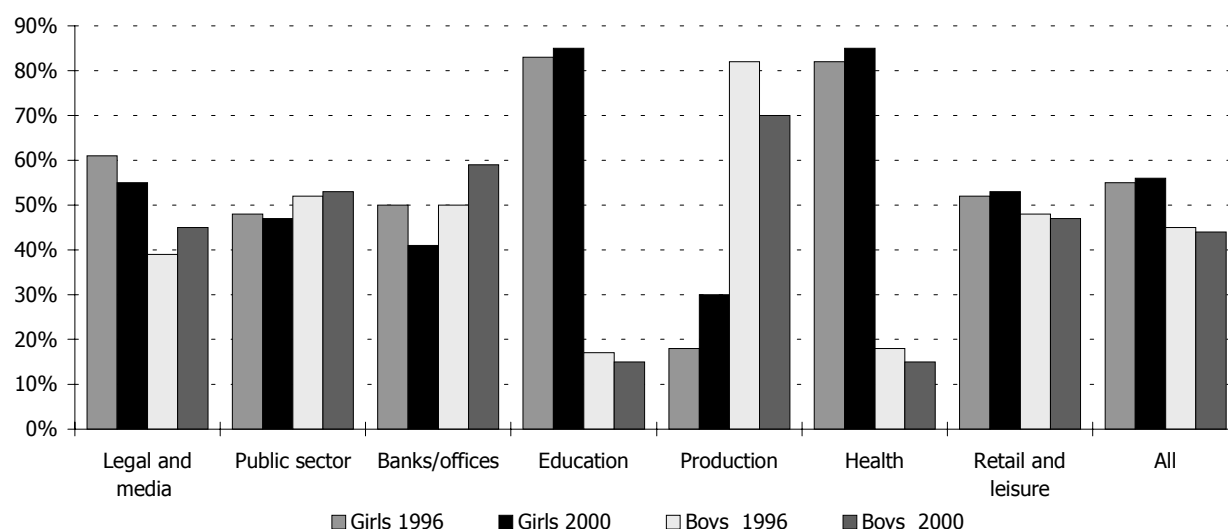
Source: *Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Students IES/ER 2000*

5.3 Tasks undertaken on placement

5.3.1 Types of experience

Students reported a variety of experiences on their placement:

● Over half reported that they spent at least some of their time helping someone else do their job, most likely in production or education, and on one week placements.

● Two in five (43 per cent) said they did an actual job — most likely to be those on longer placements and where the placement was their first choice.

● A quarter (27 per cent) moved around departments — particularly common among the more academically able students (defined as those with SATs scores of over five).

● Just over one-tenth (13 per cent) said they did a specially created job — most prevalent in professional and media placements.

Students who do an actual job are more likely to be given responsibility and say that their placement was interesting (Table 5.3) and were significantly more satisfied with their placement (Table 5.2).

Using a computer

Most students used a computer while on their placement, 30 per cent used one frequently and 28 per cent occasionally, with 42 per cent not using one at all. This represents an increase on 1996, when just over half (51 per cent) did not use a computer at all and 24 per cent used one frequently. Computer use is most likely in

Table 5.2: Student satisfaction with doing an actual job on placement

Overall I was satisfied with my placement	Did actual job	Did not do actual job	All students
Agree strongly	64	46	54
Agree	21	30	26
Neither	6	10	8
Disagree	5	7	6
Strongly disagree	4	7	6
Base N=100%	*339*	*449*	*788*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Students IES/ER 2000

professional, public sector, and bank and office-based placements. There has been little or no growth in computer use since 1996 outside these sectors.

Not only are more students using computers more intensely on placements since 1996, they are also using a wider range of applications, with a growth in the use of communications packages in particular (up from 14 per cent in 1996 to 35 per cent in 2000).

Overviews on placements

Data on other student views of their placement are summarised in Table 5.3. They make interesting reading. The main points are that:

- most students found their placement interesting and liked their work colleagues
- most students felt they were given responsibility and opportunities to show what they were capable of doing
- whilst one-third thought their placement was challenging, one-third did not and only 14 per cent through the work they were asked to do was difficult.

Two further features emerge from the more detailed analysis:

- students working with computers were generally more positive about these aspects of their placements, perhaps because they felt they were given more responsibility and freedom to do things on their own.
- students on placements in leisure and retail were generally less positive about these aspects of their placements. They tended to find their placement neither interesting nor challenging.

Table 5.3: Student views on their work experience placement

Statement	Main finding	Explanatory factors
I thought the work on my placement was difficult.	Just 14 per cent agreed with this statement.	Little difference between students.
I was given the opportunity to show people what I can do.	Just over two-thirds (67 per cent) of students agreed with this statement.	Students with frequent exposure to computers were most likely to agree (78 per cent), compared to 62 per cent of others.
I did not like the people I worked with.	Just seven per cent of students agreed with this statement.	
I found my placement challenging.	Views were evenly split — 37 per cent agreed while 35 per cent disagreed.	Type of placement explained most variation in response to this statement, with students in production (46 per cent), the public sector (43 per cent) and health (41 per cent) most likely to agree that their placement had been challenging. Students in retail (43 per cent) and leisure (49 per cent) tended to find their placements less challenging.
My placement involved doing something that interested me.	Two-thirds (67 per cent) of students did placements that interested them.	Again, most variation is explained by the type of placement. In retail and leisure, significantly higher proportions found their placements were not in something that interested them (31 per cent, compared to 18 per cent overall).
I was given opportunities to take responsibility at work.	Eight out of ten students agreed they were given opportunities to take responsibility in their placement.	Students who used computers frequently were much more likely to agree than the others (86 per cent).

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Students IES/ER 2000

5.3.2 School-based activities on placements

In the school survey, we asked what sort of tasks students were set by the school while on their placement. Four activities were listed for schools to indicate the number of students in the school involved. They were given four options: 'all students', 'most', 'some' or 'none'.

Nearly 70 per cent of schools (69 per cent) said that all their students completed a daily diary and 61 per cent of schools said all students completed a log book containing questions about the world of work (Table 5.4).

Eighty-two schools provided details of other activities conducted on work experience although many were variations of those listed in Table 5.4. Most common other activities entailed something to do with collecting information for projects, coursework or assignments. Researching the company, and identifying health and safety issues were other activities listed.

As one might expect, schools conducting the most preparation have more students undertaking all the above curriculum tasks

Table 5.4: Curriculum linked activities completed on work experience (percentages)

Activity	Curriculum related tasks completed on work experience				Base N = 100%
	All students	Most students	Some students	No students	
Completion of daily diary	69	22	2	7	*686*
Completion of log book containing questions about the world of work	61	21	5	13	*686*
Gathering evidence of key skills practice	39	26	21	14	*686*
Interviewing managers/work colleagues	31	28	29	12	*686*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

than schools doing less preparation. Other points to emerge include:

● Schools that make no use of a central agency appear more likely to give all their students a daily diary (75 per cent compared to 66 per cent). Similarly, where schools are finding most of the placements, a higher proportion of students use a daily diary and a log book.

● Students from schools on one week blocks are slightly more likely to use a diary than those on two/three week blocks but much less likely to be gathering information/evidence for key skills practice.

Students did not hold their diaries in particularly high regard. At one school less than half the group could recall what they had done with the diary since their placement, and in another only one of those interviewed had completed it. In other schools the diaries were often described as 'boring' and 'child-like'.

5.4 Placement quality

Teachers in the survey thought placements were generally of good quality: 56 per cent were satisfied and 16 per cent very satisfied with placement quality. Schools reporting the highest proportions of students obtaining their first choice placement and highest completion rates (see below, Section 5.5) are those indicating most satisfaction with the overall quality of placements. There is no link to the source of placement or school background characteristics.

The area co-ordinators also indicated high levels of satisfaction with the quality of placements: 87 per cent said that they agreed with the statement: 'the overall quality of placements is good'. The proportion agreeing with the statement was slightly higher in centralised areas (93 per cent) as compared with joint or mixed areas (both 82 per cent). The majority of area work experience co-ordinators (83 per cent) also thought that the overall quality of placements had improved since 1996. Again, those in centralised

areas were slightly more likely to be of this view than their counterparts in areas where work experience is jointly organised with schools.

Students too were generally happy with their placement. Four out of five said that they were pleased with their placement. Students who felt their placement was challenging were much more likely to be satisfied with their placement than those who did not. Also, students with access to a computer were significantly happier than those who did not use a computer. Students on retail and leisure placements tended to be the least satisfied.

The employers we talked to were also generally happy with the process, although they were a small and probably unrepresentative sample. The key elements of a good placement from an employer's perspective included:

- an interested and willing student — 'there's nothing worse than having someone who obviously does not want to be there', said one.

- a student who had done some preparation and had an idea of what they wanted to learn (and was willing to ask questions).

  'For it to be successful — need the child to be communicative. If the child doesn't look interested then the manager won't have time for them.'

5.5 Teacher visits

Most students are visited by a teacher while on their placement. According to the school co-ordinators survey, nearly 40 per cent of schools said all students were visited while on placement, while in under five per cent of schools fewer than 50 per cent were visited. The area co-ordinators appear to concur. Forty-one per cent of area co-ordinators reported that all schools ensure all students are visited by a teacher during their placement and 55 per cent reported that most schools did this. Only four per cent of area co-ordinators thought that it was only some schools that made sure all students were visited. Very similar responses were given to this question four years ago.

Lower proportions of placements are visited in schools where students find a higher proportion of placements, in boys' schools and where larger numbers are out on placement. Girls' schools, schools where high proportions of students visit their placement prior to starting it, and where there is more economic disadvantage, tend to have higher percentages of placements visited by teachers.

Four in five (78 per cent) students reported that they had been visited by a teacher while on their placement. The proportion visited was highest in schools that were most successful at getting

students out on placements (perhaps indicating their commitment to the process).

Among schools not visiting all students, the most common reason (around 50 per cent of cases) given for why not all placements are visited is distance. In about one in five cases where students are not visited, they are telephoned during the course of the placement. Other reasons include staff availability (lack of) 11 per cent, problems with the employer not being able to arrange suitable time, and illness. A few schools decided not to visit because they know the student, only conduct random visits on a sample of placements, or because it is a frequently used placement they have no concerns.

Visits are generally shared around teachers of the year group out on placements. In one school even the head teacher made visits. The way the process was managed appeared to vary between the case study schools. Most schools appeared to take care to match the teacher to either the student or the placement. However, in at least one (large) school it was clear that the teacher would not necessarily know the pupil as the visits were organised on a geographical basis, with teachers visiting placements near their homes *etc.* A couple of employers reported that some of the students they had on placement did not appear to know the visiting teacher and felt this rather defeated the object.

5.5.1 Purpose of the visit

In the school co-ordinators survey we asked what functions teachers performed during their visit. The main ones were:

- *monitoring school set tasks (diary/log book* etc.*)* — 81 per cent. In this case, where schools are more involved in the finding of placements they are also more likely to conduct monitoring of school set tasks (88 per cent compared to 73 per cent where schools are not involved in the finding process). Schools that have reduced the length of their placement are less likely to monitor school tasks.

- *monitoring placement health and safety* — 58 per cent of schools. Schools with higher percentages attaining good GCSE grades are more likely to conduct this activity during placement visits.

- *monitoring placement tasks against job description* — 57 per cent. Here schools not offering GNVQ and not finding the placements themselves are most likely to conduct this activity.

- *reviewing student learning against individual action plan* — 27 per cent. Schools that have two and three week placements were much more likely to undertake this activity during placement monitoring: 31 per cent compared to 16 per cent. Also, as might be predicted given the amount of time required to organise individual action plans, schools conducting more preparation

are more likely to review student learning against action plans (34 per cent of those doing eight hours or more preparation compared to 19 per cent of those doing less than four hours). Interestingly, those schools with higher absence rates are more likely to review learning against individual action plans.

Other activities schools mention when conducting teacher visits include: monitoring employer satisfaction/establishing a rapport with employer (45 cases), monitoring overall placement suitability (18 cases), monitoring student behaviour/attendance (17 cases). In two of the case study schools, the teacher writes a short report on the placement which is discussed with the student in the debriefing process.

One school provided teachers with a briefing note which informs them which students they will be visiting. It also provides information on the purpose of the visit which is described as follows:

> *'The aim of the visit is to check that the student is receiving a "quality" placement and to meet the employer — the employer realises that the school is interested and can also pass on any good and bad points. The student sees that he/she has a teacher to turn to if there are any problems.'*

Teachers are also advised to check that the pupil is working in safe conditions, check that diaries are being completed, and remind the student and employer that the evaluation report needs to be completed at the end of the placement. Teachers are advised to avoid visiting on the first or second day, but not to leave it too late into the placement.

5.5.2 Evidence of improvement

Schools are highly satisfied with placement monitoring — 82 per cent saying they are satisfied with the level of placement monitoring; 73 per cent are satisfied with the quality of placement monitoring and 80 per cent are satisfied with the level of support from other teachers in visiting students. Given the high level of satisfaction there is little to separate schools in their views of placement monitoring.

Sixty-five per cent of area co-ordinators agreed with the statement: 'the quality of placement monitoring is good'. This proportion was much higher though in centralised (78 per cent) and mixed areas (72 per cent) than in areas where the approach to work experience was joint (48 per cent).

Comparing this situation with four years ago, approximately two-thirds of schools think there has been no change in the proportion of students visited, while only five per cent feel it has deteriorated. The comment below is more the exception than the rule:

'Teachers generally have less time to visit than four years ago. Many visit placements on their way to work or on their way home.'

Area co-ordinators appear to believe that there has been more of an improvement over this time period. Just over half of the area co-ordinators felt that the proportion of students visited during their placements had increased. A further 41 per cent indicated that it had stayed the same. Again, it is the centralised areas which were most positive about this: 63 per cent of co-ordinators in these areas felt there had been an improvement, compared with 41 per cent in joint areas.

In one area, the employers we interviewed felt that the teacher visits had been tightened up in recent years. One said that:

'Teachers seem to take interest in the placement. They want to know more about what is going on and seem to engage a bit more with us and the student. Before it seemed more of a basic checking thing.'

In this area, two of the schools visited were actively thinking of ways to improve the teacher visits element of their scheme. One school is in the process of setting up a mentoring scheme where each member of staff would be allocated two to three students at the beginning of Year 10 with whom they would build up a relationship which could include work experience visits. The school co-ordinator said:

'This should have the benefit of getting all teachers involved in work experience and ensuring that students are visited by someone who knows them reasonably well.'

5.6 Placement completion

Schools report that approximately 98 per cent of students complete their placement — in nearly one in five schools all students completed last year and in about ten per cent of cases more than five per cent failed to complete.

As above, looking at variation between schools in their completion rates, we find that a very similar picture emerges to that found in Chapter 2, looking at the numbers of students not going out on work experience. Again, the numbers and proportions are small, but nevertheless higher non-completion rates are characterised by schools with higher absence levels and exclusion rates, and with higher proportions of more disadvantaged students.

It is also noticeable that schools more reliant on centrally found placements display higher non-completion rates than those where students find higher proportions, especially where there is a high rate of pre-placement visiting by students (Table 5.5).

The reasons why students fail to complete their work experience show some similarity to those given for non-attendance.

Table 5.5: Placement non-completion by type of school and placement organisation (percentages)

Type of school	Proportion of students not completing their placement			
	Less than 1%	1-2%	More than 2%	Base N = 100%
All schools	26	43	31	*666*
High percentage FSM (20% plus)	10	34	56	*230*
More than 5 exclusions	13	37	50	*177*
Absence rate more than 10%	10	30	60	*168*
Students visited more than 90% prior to placement	32	42	26	*170*
75% or more placements found centrally	18	41	41	*237*
More than 30% placements found by students	32	46	22	*240*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Approximately 60 per cent of all schools providing information here mention 'inappropriate student behaviour/reaction' as the main cause of non-completion. The second most often cited reason (45 per cent) was issues connected with poor placement/matching or unmet student expectations, or general problems with placement/ conflict between placement and student. Other reasons given include illness (29 per cent of schools), and non-attendance (19 per cent).

In 14 per cent of schools where students failed to complete their placement all are offered an alternative. Two-thirds of schools offer students an alternative in some cases, and in 20 per cent of cases they are not offered an alternative. The likelihood of being offered an alternative is inversely related to the non-completion rate, so if the odd individual fails to complete they may well be found an alternative, but if larger numbers are not completing it is likely that only some or no students will be offered another placement. Those schools in more affluent areas, with lower exclusion and absence rates, tend to be less likely to offer alternatives.

The reasons given by case study schools for non-completion mirrored those in the survey. The point was often made that although non-completion was a relatively small issue, it could take a lot of teacher time to resolve. Generally, if the problem was not the student's fault, then schools or central co-ordinators tried to find them an alternative. Rarely were students removed because the placement was felt to be unsafe or the student was being exploited.

Views on completion and changes since 1996

The views of teachers completing the questionnaire are very positive in relation to placement completion: 35 per cent are

satisfied and 58 per cent are very satisfied with the completion rate in their school. However, it is interesting to see again that those schools with higher GCSE scores are more likely to be 'very' satisfied. Similarly, and hardly surprisingly, those schools with the lowest non-completion rates display greater satisfaction.

Similarly, area co-ordinators are very positive about the completion rate: 87 per cent agreed with the statement that the completion rate was satisfactory. Only two per cent disagreed. There was little variation by type of area.

Compared with 1996, schools on the whole feel that the completion rate has at least remained the same (62 per cent) with 35 per cent indicating improvements. Those schools who experience higher levels of non-completion are more likely to report improvements in the last four years. This is especially the case for schools with high proportions of free school meals, schools with higher absence rates, and lower GCSE scores, where between 40 and 45 per cent report increases in the completion rate.

Area co-ordinators appeared to have more positive views: 57 per cent thought there had been improvements in completion rates and a further 40 per cent said there had been no change. Those area co-ordinators in centralised and mixed areas are slightly more likely to have perceived improvements than those in jointly run work experience areas.

5.7 Conclusions

Given recent attention to the issue of gender stereotyping at work and the publication of a new resource pack aimed at promoting equal opportunities in work experience (Feihn J, 2000) it is interesting to note that the pattern of placements has only changed a little since our 1996 survey. In particular, while there has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap in some sectors, *eg* production and legal and media, large differences remain in some sectors. Changing this pattern is likely to take a long time, as young people's views of work are set at an early age (and most teachers argued were fairly well set by the time work experience preparation began). Persuading students to take a placement which may 'raise their horizons' but in which they were not interested could be self-defeating. As most employers would argue (and our data would generally support them) there was a direct correlation between a student's interest in a placement and its success.

We also found a clear and positive relationship between use of a computer and student satisfaction with their placement — a point which work experience organisers may like to note. Whether this is due to enjoying IT work in particular, or more indirect sources of satisfaction associated with being given more responsibility and/or discretion in what they were doing, is not clear. By contrast, students on placements in the retail and leisure sectors

generally reported lower than average levels of satisfaction. This is of some concern as these are sectors where the proportion of placements appear to be on the increase, yet at the same time were sectors where we had reports of particular difficulties finding placements, *eg* in leisure centres or in travel and tourism workplaces. It may be that the quality of supply is falling or maybe a problem with a different origin, *eg* managing student expectations about work in the sector.

On balance, is the quality of the work experience process improving? In this section we saw a range of evidence that in a number of ways (*eg* in making best use of the teacher visit and maximising student placement completion) things were indeed getting better.

5.8 Key points

- Two-thirds of students visit the workplace prior to their placement — more where the placements are organised centrally.

- The pattern of placements appears to have changed little since 1996, according to our student survey data. While there has been a decline in the proportion of placements taken in some sectors (*eg* banks and offices and in health) and rises in others (notably production and retail and leisure), the general distribution is similar between the two years.

- There has been a slight narrowing of the gender gap in some sectors, *eg* production and legal and media. However, large differences remain in education and health, where placements are predominantly taken by girls.

- Higher ability students tended to be clustered in professional, legal and media and office environments, while students of lower academic abilities are more likely to be found in education and production sectors.

- The most common activity for students on placement (50 per cent of cases) was to help someone else do their job, while 43 per cent said they did an actual job, 27 per cent moved around departments and 13 per cent said they did a specially created job.

- Most students used a computer while on their placement, 30 per cent used one frequently and 28 per cent occasionally, with 42 per cent not using one at all — an increase on the 1996 survey.

- Most students felt that they were given opportunities to show what they could do and take responsibilities on their placement.

- One-third of students thought their placement challenging. One-third did not, and only 14 per cent thought the work they

were asked to do was difficult. We found a strong positive correlation between student satisfaction and whether they found their placement challenging.

- While on their placement most students complete a daily diary and a log book. Fewer gather key skills evidence or interview people in the workplace. The more pre-placement preparation students do, the more likely they are to undertake a wider range of formal learning activities on placement.

- Most respondents from schools and area agencies were satisfied with the quality of the placements provided.

- Four out of five students said that they were happy with their placement. Students with access to a computer were significantly happier than those who did not use a computer. Students on retail and leisure placements tended to be the least satisfied and were less likely to find their placement interesting or challenging. The more challenging the placement, the more students were satisfied.

- Most, but not all, students are visited by a teacher while on their placement; fewer where students find the placement themselves, probably because of the distance involved.

- Visits generally focus on ensuring diaries *etc.* are being completed, health and safety and the placement matches up to the job description. There is evidence that schools are improving this element of the process.

- Nearly all (98 per cent) of placements are completed, with lower proportions in schools with higher absence or exclusion levels. The main reason for non-completion was 'inappropriate student behaviour'.

6. Debriefing and Follow-up

Continuing chronologically through the placement process, in this chapter we explore what happens when the students return to school. We examine the extent of debriefing conducted in schools, who is involved in it, the nature of any follow-up and the role of assessment and accreditation in work experience.

6.1 Debriefing after work experience

6.1.1 Who is involved?

According to the school co-ordinators survey, nearly all schools are involved in debriefing, although one per cent of schools were not, leaving it to the central body or employer in those few cases. In just over one-third of schools (35 per cent) Careers Services are involved in debriefing, employer placement providers are invited to take part in 32 per cent of schools and in 15 per cent parents are involved in the process. In 12 per cent of schools a central body has an input, and in seven per cent of cases some other individual or organisation is involved.

In only some of the cases where a central body was identified was the name or type of organisation given. These included Trident, EBP and the TEC. Of the others listed these included: Compact partners, Rotary Club, governors, specific individuals in the schools and external mentors.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the variation between different types of schools presented in the above chapters, there is little to separate schools in who they involve in the debriefing process. The only area presenting significant difference was in the involvement of a central body. Here, schools who rely on a central body involve them more but this would be expected. Similarly, schools organising two/three week placements are more likely to involve central agencies in debriefing, but this is largely because it is central agencies who are most involved in finding two/three week placements.

The area co-ordinators survey paints a slightly different picture, with two-thirds (66 per cent) reporting that they supported student debriefing activities in schools in their area. This

proportion rose to 81 per cent in centralised areas and was only just over half in areas where work experience was jointly organised with schools.

The types of activities central agencies support include:

- attending or facilitating debriefing sessions in schools

- providing materials to support debriefing activities

- consultancy or training for teachers

- supporting or running accreditation and assessment projects (*eg* the NRA statements, log books, diaries, work experience or Key Skills certificates) or quality awards, and

- evaluating work experience using employer reports, questionnaire surveys or post placement assessment forms.

Some co-ordinators indicated that their involvement was more *ad hoc*, and that they only supported activities such as attending debriefing sessions when invited to do so. Others said they could provide a tailor made service based on the school's requirements.

6.1.2 Amount of debriefing

Schools were asked to indicate their debriefing arrangements by selecting from one of eight options (listed in Table 6.1 below). Summarising the data, 43 per cent of schools debrief in one or more form tutor periods, 33 per cent have two lessons set aside for debriefing immediately on return to school, 11 per cent of schools use a half day set aside for debriefing, six per cent a full day and six per cent do not conduct any formal debriefing.

Table 6.1: Debriefing arrangements by amount of preparation for work experience (percentages)

Debriefing arrangements	Amount of preparation			All schools
	Less than 4 hours	4-8 hours	More than 8 hours	
Students debriefed in one or more form tutor periods	60	42	35	44
Two lessons are set aside immediately on return to school	23	35	37	33
Half a day is set aside	8	10	14	11
Full day is set aside	3	6	7	6
More than one day is set aside	0	1	2	1
No debriefing as work experience ended with a holiday	2	1	2	1
Informal debriefing	3	4	3	4
There is no debriefing	1	1	0	<1
Base N=100%	*119*	*318*	*213*	*650*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Table 6.1 shows the relationship between the amount of preparation for work experience and the arrangements for debriefing. Schools taking preparation most seriously, in terms of doing more of it, also have more comprehensive debriefing arrangements.

In the main there were not many differences between groups of schools. However, single sex schools appear more likely to undertake half- or full-day debriefing (28 per cent of single sex schools compared to 15 per cent of mixed schools). Also, schools with smaller numbers of students on work experience were more likely to undertake half/full day debrief sessions.

Interestingly, schools which finish within a week or two of the end of the summer term are more likely than others to have conducted a half- or full-day debrief (29 per cent compared with 13 per cent) and are no more or less likely to conduct a formal debrief.

Area co-ordinators were also asked about the number of schools which have a debrief on return to school and which involve employers in the debrief. These findings are compared with 1996 survey data in Table 6.2. This shows that most schools have a debrief on return to school but it is only some schools that include employers in the debrief. The findings are very similar to the 1996 area co-ordinators survey.

Some of the schools in the case studies had changed their approach to debriefing in recent years, reducing the time involved. One school had a whole day debriefing on a collapsed timetable, but this year found it was too long and that the afternoon dragged. Another school had 'made the process more efficient' and reduced the time of the immediate debrief from half a day to two and a half hours. A third school had stopped organising a drama day as part of the debrief as, on evaluating their programme, they found that students wanted much more individual attention:

> *'Now every student has a 10-15 minute interview and we devote two lessons through tutor groups to debriefing – each teacher is given discussion guidelines and from the individual sessions targets are generated for each student in relation to work related learning and key skills.'*

Table 6.2: Number of schools providing debriefing activities

Debriefing activities		All schools % of areas	Most schools % of areas	Some schools % of areas	No schools % of areas	*N=*
Have a debrief on return to school	**2000**	**36**	**55**	**9**	**0**	***98***
	1996	49	48	3	0	*94*
Include employers in the debrief	**2000**	**1**	**10**	**78**	**12**	***95***
	1996	2	15	75	8	*92*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience – Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

This was seen as especially important if a student did not have a good experience in an area of work that before the placement was thought to have been of interest to them.

Is it enough?

A quarter (23 per cent) of students in the survey would have liked more opportunity to discuss their placement after it had happened. Less academically oriented students felt significantly more dissatisfied with the level of debriefing they received than others. Certainly in qualitative interviews we detected an element of unmet demand among students and teachers for a more personalised approach to debriefing.

6.2 Assessment and accreditation

To provide an indication of the level and nature of curriculum integration of work experience, schools were asked to provide details of any assessment and accreditation that takes place following work experience. Table 6.3 shows the overall findings, showing the proportion of schools reporting whether all their students, most, some, or none are assessed or accredited on each of the curriculum areas listed.

Three-quarters of schools report that students refer to their placement in their record of achievement, mainly through a written assessment of their experience by the student, but which could include more systematic evidence of achievement (see box).

> In one case study area, employers are issued with a 'skills profile'. This comprises list of skills in a certain area (for example childcare) and the employer can indicate whether the student has 'gained experience' or 'gained proficiency' in areas such as 'communicating with staff' and 'supervising games and activities'. Students can then place the completed profile in their Record of Achievement.

However, such formal assessments were not the norm and the survey found that very few schools conduct any more formal assessment of the log book via examination boards or central agencies.

The student survey found that in nearly three-quarters of cases (73 per cent) a written review was made of the placement to be included in the NRA. This represents a small increase from 69 per cent in 1996. There was a small decrease in use of other records, and no change in the proportion of students indicating no formal review took place after it had finished. Variation was most significant by case study area, with students in school based systems seeming to be least likely to have used a record.

In relation to assessment of the diary/log book by schools where more debriefing is taking place, there are higher proportions of

schools assessing the log book: one-third of schools with no formal debrief assess all students' log books, while over one-half of those conduct a formal debrief assessment of log books/diaries.

Area co-ordinators were also asked about their perceptions of the number of schools which were involved in assessment and accreditation of pre-16 work experience. Their responses are summarised in Table 6.4. These data are likely to be less reliable than the schools survey data, as area co-ordinators may not have sufficient knowledge to comment on all their schools' practices. However, they appear to indicate a similar trend to the schools' data in terms of the activities schools are more involved with, *ie* recording work experience achievement in the Record of Achievement and those they are less so, for example GNVQ assessment.

6.3 Links to the wider curriculum

Most schools used work experience during the course of GCSE coursework with at least some students and many, albeit with fewer students, making a link with an oral assessment as well (Table 6.3). Looking more closely at these data, it is noticeable that schools providing GNVQ at Key Stage 4 were more likely to conduct assessment in:

- **business studies** — 36 per cent compared to 24 per cent of schools not offering GNVQ

Table 6.3: Post work experience assessment (percentages)

Post work experience assessment	Number/Proportion of students involved				
	All students	**Most students**	**Some students**	**None**	**Base N = 100%**
Record of Achievement (NRA)	74	13	2	11	*685*
Diary/Log book assessment	51	18	3	28	*685*
GCSE English coursework assessment	23	16	21	39	*685*
GCSE English oral assessment	17	12	21	51	*685*
Business Studies course work assessment	1	2	26	71	*685*
Key Skills assessment (*eg* ASDAN)	9	4	13	74	*685*
GNVQ assessment	1	3	20	76	*685*
IT coursework assessment	1	3	17	79	*685*
Modern Languages coursework assessment	3	3	10	84	*685*
Diary/log book/portfolio assessment by central body (*eg* Trident)	7	2	5	86	*685*
Other GCSE assignments	1	1	9	89	*685*
Diary/log book/portfolio assessment by examination board	4	2	3	91	*685*
Assessment for other qualifications	3	1	4	92	*685*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighed data)

Table 6.4: Assessment and accreditation of work experience, 2000 and 1996

Assessment and accreditation		All schools % of areas	Most schools % of areas	Some schools % of areas	No schools % of areas	N =
Record pupil achievement from work experience in the Record of Achievement (NRA)	**2000**	**51**	**39**	**9**	**1**	**98**
	1996	53	43	4	0	93
Record pupil achievement in a diary/logbook/portfolio assessment	2000	64	33	2	1	98
Use pre-16 work experience accreditation for GCSE coursework assessment	2000	4	22	64	11	85
Use pre-16 work experience accreditation for GNVQ coursework assessment	2000	3	16	67	14	87

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES, 1995/96

- **GNVQ courses in general** — 53 per cent compared to two per cent, and also in

- **GCSE English coursework** — 77 per cent compared to 66 per cent of non-GNVQ schools.

Schools completing their work experience within the last two weeks of term are much less likely to use work experience as part of English GCSE coursework assessment. In 48 per cent of schools doing their work experience at the end of the summer in Year 10, no students use work experience in this way, compared to 36 per cent of schools finishing at other times (Table 6.5).

Further variation is noticeable in relation to English oral assessment. Sixty-three per cent of schools which did less than four hours preparation for work experience did not undertake this form of assessment, while 53 per cent of schools doing more than four hours preparation do conduct assessment for GCSE English oral. Schools on two- and especially three-week placement were also more likely to organise GCSE English oral assessment after work experience.

Table 6.5: GCSE English coursework assessment and timing of work experience

	Last two weeks Summer Year 10	Other schools	All schools
All students	17	26	23
Most students	9	19	16
Some students	26	19	21
No students	48	36	40
Base N=100%	*181*	*485*	*666*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Figure 6.1: Work experience and the mainstream curriculum 2000
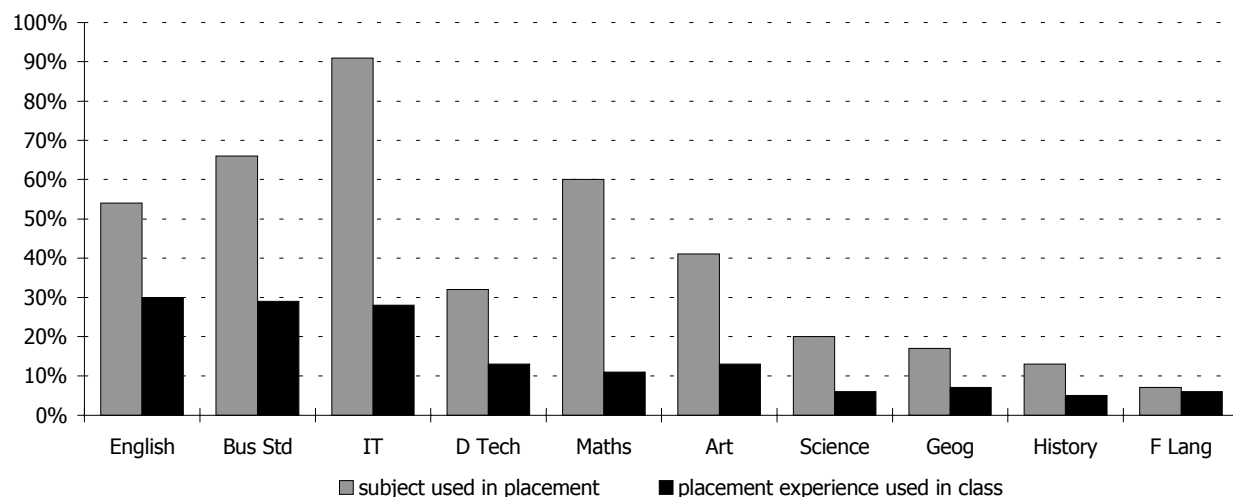
Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Students IES/ER 2000

Teachers in one school agreed that there could be a danger of overkill with work experience referred to too many times. It was better when reference was made in a co-ordinated and more integrated fashion.

6.3.1 Student data

As in the previous study, we asked students in their survey about the links between their work experience and their school studies. In particular we asked whether they had used knowledge gained through studying a subject during their placement and whether they had used the experience gained in their placement in class work. The results are summarised in Figure 6.1. The comparable data for 1996 are shown in the next section.

It shows that the main subject areas that students drew on during their placement were Information Technology and Business Studies (both studies by only a minority of students) and two of the core subjects: Mathematics and English. To a lesser extent students also found Design Technology and Art useful. Back in school, their placement experience was far less frequently used, and then mainly in English, Business Studies and IT. Despite the fact that 60 per cent of students used Mathematics while on placement, only 11 per cent referred to their experience in their subsequent maths lessons.

6.4 Changes since 1996

Figure 6.2 shows the equivalent data to that in Figure 6.1, but for 1996. A comparison of the two suggests that there has been a significant increase since 1996 in the proportion of students who make the connection between their school work and their work experience while on placement. This is especially the case in IT, Business Studies, Art and Design Technology.

Figure 6.2: Work experience and the mainstream curriculum 1996
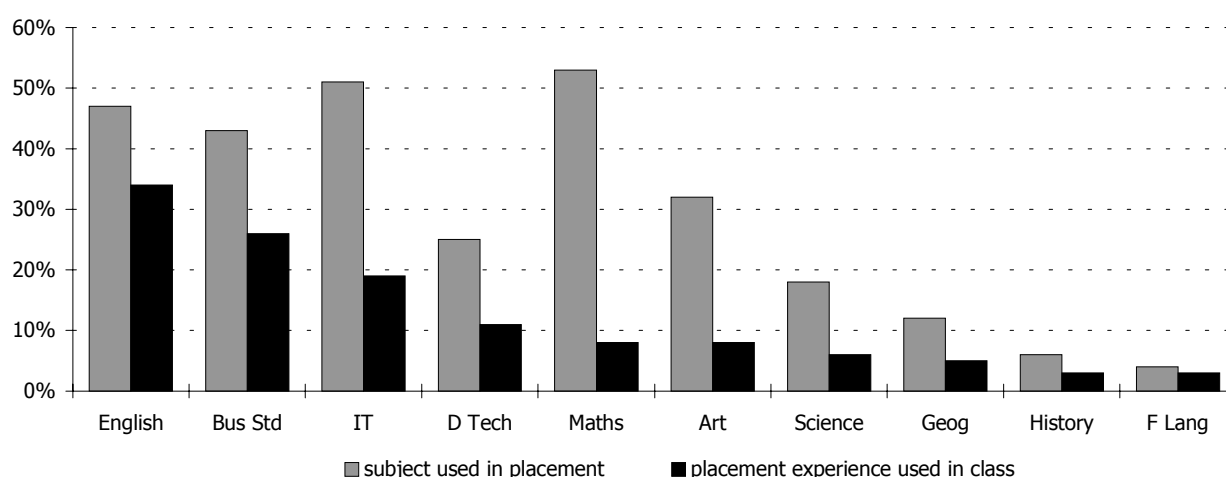
Source: IES survey, 1996 (Hillage et al.)

However, a comparison of the two surveys does not show a corresponding increase in the extent to which students' experiences while on placement have been used in school after the placement: only in IT has there been a significant increase in the proportion of students saying that their experience was used in school afterwards. Indeed, in English there would seem to have been a reduction in use of work experience since 1996.

Some of the case study interviewees suggested that work experience was being increasingly integrated into more vocational areas of the curriculum such as business studies. In one school for instance, both business studies and health and social care made extensive use of work experience in coursework. In others, work experience was used as a basis for foreign language oral assessments. However, we found little overall evidence of a more systematic approach to embedding the learning value of placements more firmly in the curriculum.

Comparing schools' position in relation to debriefing and follow-up with their position four years ago, there has been no significant change in terms of the integration of work experience into the curriculum or in employer involvement in debriefing (several case study schools were struggling to engage significant number of employers in post-placement events). But as a means of developing key skills there would appear to have been significant improvements, with 85 per cent of co-ordinators and 60 per cent of schools saying that work experience had increased as a means of developing key skills. Schools also feel that the quality of debriefing has improved. Table 6.6 highlights the main changes as perceived by school and area co-ordinator respondents and shows that:

● half of the school and area co-ordinators think that the quality of debriefing has improved — rising to almost three-quarters of school co-ordinators where students have at least a half-day debrief

Table 6.6: Percentages indicating an improvement in school involvement in/organisation of each debriefing/curriculum integration activity

Change in school involvement	Percentages indicating improvement/increase				
	8+ hours preparation	Half/full day debrief	All students GCSE English assessed	All schools	All area co-ordinators
Quality of debriefing conducted after work experience	58	73	51	51	52
Employer involvement in debriefing	12	16	9	11	20
Integration of work experience into the curriculum	31	30	38	26	51
Use of work experience as a means of developing key skills	70	60	66	60	85

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools and Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

- only ten per cent of school and 20 per cent of area co-ordinators think that employer involvement in debriefing has improved

- a quarter of school and half our area co-ordinators felt that the integration of work experience had improved — more in schools with higher than average time devoted to preparation and debriefing or where all students used their pre-16 work experience in their GCSE English coursework

- some 60 per cent of school and 85 per cent of area co-ordinators thought the use of work experience as a means of developing key skills had improved.

It can be seen that area co-ordinators tend to be more positive than school co-ordinators in their perceptions about improvements in these aspects or work experience provision.

In addition, schools operating a two- or three-week placement were much more likely to report improvements in the use of work experience as a means of developing key skills (66 per cent compared to 47 per cent of those schools organising one-week placements).

6.5 Conclusions

The amount and form of debriefing and post-placement activity in schools appears to vary considerably. A few schools appear to do very little. Some — interestingly, particularly those where placements finish near the end of the summer term — do quite a lot of immediate feedback, but less longer-term integration. Others both take time to consolidate the immediate experience on return to school and then drew out the learning lessons in other elements of the school curriculum.

Generally however, schools appear to continue to struggle to make the most of work experience once the students return to school. The evidence suggests that immediate year-wide debriefing has an important but perhaps limited value and schools are looking to organise the 're-entry' element of debriefing as efficiently as possible. It was interesting to note the comments of a few schools that some students needed more individual attention and that 'one size fits all' debriefing was perhaps not the most appropriate way of organising it. Less academically able students in particular appear to want a more extensive and personalised debrief than they get.

We found little evidence of more longer-term integration of work experience into the curriculum outside the obvious connections of English and vocational courses. The links with IT are expanding, which is interesting. However, in relatively few cases are links made between maths and work experience, despite the emphasis on numeracy (*eg* in key skills) and the fact that students are most likely to use their mathematical skills compared with any other subject while on placement. However, it may be that the numeracy used on a placement is very different to the maths required by the GCSE syllabus.

Central support agencies do recognise the importance of such links and many are trying to help schools integrate work experience more closely with the mainstream curriculum. However, despite their efforts there still seems a long way to go. One comment serves to illustrate the problems schools face in integrating work experience:

> *'At the end of the day, although we keep encouraging staff to use work experience some just don't have the imagination or, to be honest, ability to make use of it − either that or they don't want to put in the effort.'*

6.6 Key points

- In most schools, post-placement debriefing lasts at least two lessons, although rarely more than half a day. Forty-three per cent of schools debrief for one or more form tutor periods, 33 per cent have lessons set aside for debriefing, 11 per cent have half a day allocated to debriefing and six per cent a full day. A further six per cent do not conduct any formal debriefing. The more time a school allocates for preparation, the more time is spent on debriefing.

- Employers are included in debriefing arrangements in only a minority of cases, although where they are only a few have time to get involved.

- Most students use their placement experience in their Record of Achievement and there is some form of assessment incorporated into the completion of their log book or diary.

- English, Business Studies and Information Technology are the GCSE courses most likely to build on the placement experience, either in student discussion or coursework.

- While 60 per cent of students used Mathematics on their placement, only 11 per cent referred to their experience in subsequent maths lessons.

- The proportion of students making a connection between their school work and work experience while on placement has increased, especially in IT, Business Studies, Art and Design. However, only in IT has there been a significant increase in the proportion of students saying their experience was used in school afterwards.

- Work experience has increased significantly as a means of developing key skills.

Pre-16 Work Experience Practice in England: An Evaluation

7. Value, Quality and Impact

Having examined and described the process in some detail in the foregoing chapters, in this chapter we look at what we have found on three related underlying issues:

- the priority schools attach to work experience — whether they think it a worthwhile activity or not

- the quality of work experience provision, and

- the impact of work experience on students' attitudes and behaviour.

7.1 Priority

To provide a general indicator of schools' attitude to work experience, respondents to the school co-ordinators survey were asked to give their opinion as to the priority given to work experience and how worthwhile it is, given all the costs and effort involved in its administration. Two-thirds thought it a high priority, with:

- 16 per cent of schools saying it was a 'very high priority'

- 47 per cent that it was a 'high priority'

- 31 per cent saying a 'medium priority', and

- six per cent saying a 'low priority'.

Those schools that conducted more preparation for work experience — where students were most likely to visit prior to placement, teachers visiting higher numbers during the course of the placements, and where formal debriefing was conducted — were most likely to indicate that work experience is high priority.

In a related question, 46 per cent of respondents said they thought work experience was 'very worthwhile', 51 per cent thought it 'worthwhile', three per cent said it was 'not worthwhile' while just two schools said it was a 'waste of time'. This shows a high level of value attached to work experience at least by respondents, despite the often considerable effort involved in delivering work experience programmes.

Schools with placements finishing in the last week of Year 10 attach a lower priority to work experience and are more likely to feel it less worthwhile than others.

Schools putting the most effort into the curriculum and quality aspects of work experience attach greater worth to the activity. In addition, those schools spending most time on the administration of work experience were most likely to see it as very worthwhile. It is noticeable that schools with either low or high GCSE results and absence records are less likely to see work experience as worthwhile compared to those schools with more average scores. For example, on average, selective schools attach least worth to work experience — 35 per cent seeing it as very worthwhile compared to 46 per cent overall; and similarly, schools in special measures also attach less worth — 30 per cent seeing it as very worthwhile.

Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of schools felt that the priority given to work experience had remained unchanged since 1996 — one in ten schools thought the priority given to it had decreased, while 26 per cent think it has increased. Under half the area co-ordinators surveyed (42 per cent) felt the priority given to work experience in schools in their area had increased, while 48 per cent thought the priority given had remained the same. Ten per cent of area co-ordinators were of the opinion that work experience is given less priority in 2000 than it was in 1996.

7.2 Evidence of a better quality approach

A further indication of the status and priority given to work experience in schools lies in the work experience practices adopted in schools. In both the 1996 and the 2000 survey, area co-ordinators were asked about the extent to which a range of practices had been adopted in their schools. This list of practices was drawn up in 1996 to be used as an indicator of quality. The practices in the list are identified in Tables 4.10, 6.2, 6.4. Those which were included in both surveys were the extent to which schools:

- have their own policy statement on work experience
- view work experience as an integral part of PSHE
- view work experience as an integral part of careers education and guidance
- involve employers in the preparation for the placement
- encourage pupils to take non-stereotypical placements
- provide parents with information about the benefits of placements
- have identified specific learning objectives for pupils
- encourage pupils to develop their own learning objectives

- include health and safety awareness as part of pupils' preparation

- ensure that all pupils receive teacher visits during their placement

- have a debrief on return to school, and

- record pupil achievement from work experience in the Record of Achievement (NRA).

A comparison of the mean number of practices which have been adopted by all schools by area shows a slight increase between 1996 and 2000 (from a mean count of 3.0 in 1996, to 3.9 in 2000). Our findings show that the proportion of area co-ordinators who reported that five or more of these practices have been adopted in all of their schools has increased from 30 per cent in 1996 to 40 per cent in 2000. The proportion who said that none of the practices have been adopted in all schools has fallen from 28 per cent to 14 per cent. It is also interesting to note that as in 1996, area co-ordinators in centralised areas reported a greater number of these practices having been adopted in their schools, as compared with joint or mixed areas.

This provides corroborating evidence to the other findings in previous sections where schools and/or area co-ordinators perceived improvements in:

- placement completion rates (Section 5.6)

- teacher visits (Section 5.2)

- preparation (Section 4.4)

- existence of school policies (Section 3.3)

and the improvements we noted from other data in:

- the links students made between subjects and their experience (Section 6.3) and

- health and safety (Section 4.2).

7.3 Use of quality frameworks

A growing number of quality frameworks had been published in recent years both at national and local level. One of our case study areas had a well-established local scheme and another had developed based on the QCA guidelines involving a cross-section of individuals and organisations (including employers) in the assessment process.

Awareness and use of work experience quality guidelines, frameworks and publications is extensive amongst school co-ordinators and even more so amongst area co-ordinators, as shown in Tables 7.1 and 7.2.

Table 7.1: Awareness and usefulness of quality frameworks — schools (percentages)

Publication	Percentage seen publication	*Base N = 100%*	Usefulness to School		
			Not useful	Useful	Very useful
Learning from Work Experience (QCA)	75	*669*	8	84	8
National Quality Standards (QCA)	60	*669*	10	84	6
Improving Work Experience (DfEE)	70	*669*	8	83	9
Work Experience: A Guide for Schools (DfEE)	85	*669*	6	83	11
Work Experience: The Learning Frameworks (CEI/DfEE)	66	*669*	10	69	21
Local Quality Standards	29	*669*	4	52	44

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Of the national publications, schools and area co-ordinators are most aware of *Work Experience: A Guide for Schools* (DfEE) (85 per cent of schools having seen the document and 94 per cent of area co-ordinators). Schools are least aware of the *National Quality Standards* (QCA) (60 per cent). Just under 30 per cent of schools use local quality standards, most often unspecified local authority guides. *North Yorkshire BEP Guidelines* were the most often mentioned of those named (12 respondents). Just under half of the area co-ordinators reported that they had seen local quality standards. Those mentioned were Pan London Standards, employer guides or quality awards, TEC, LEA or EBP policies or awards, and Trident Skills for Life.

In terms of their usefulness to schools, local standards and guidelines were the most valued (44 per cent of those using them finding them very useful). Area co-ordinators also saw these as the most useful. *Work Experience: The Learning Frameworks* (CEI/DfEE) were the most highly valued national guidelines by

Table 7.2: Awareness and usefulness of quality frameworks — area co-ordinators (percentages)

Publication	Percentage seen publication	*Base N = 100%*	Perceived usefulness		
			Not useful	Useful	Very useful
Learning from Work Experience (QCA)	88	*98*	5	68	28
National Quality Standards (QCA)	88	*98*	6	53	41
Improving Work Experience (DfEE)	82	*99*	8	61	31
Work Experience: A Guide for Schools (DfEE)	94	*99*	1	46	53
Work Experience: The Learning Frameworks (CEI/DfEE)	90	*99*	8	48	44
Local Quality Standards	49	*91*	2	34	64

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Area Co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

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schools with the others all seen, by and large, as 'useful'. Area co-ordinators indicated that *Work Experience: A Guide for Schools* (DfEE) was also particularly useful.

7.3.1 Employers' standards

Quality standards for employers had also been developed in recent years in some of our case study areas. Generally the take-up appeared to have been lower than school-based systems, although in one area an employer we visited who had already been accredited felt such a process was extremely worthwhile:

> *'It makes companies feel that there is something in it for them, and is a recognition from outside.'*

7.4 Evaluation of work experience

As recommended in many of the quality frameworks, many schools (just under 70 per cent) conduct evaluations of their work experience programmes. Schools offering GNVQ courses, who conduct debriefing sessions and use the experience in GCSE English coursework are more likely to undertake evaluations; otherwise there was little to differentiate schools. The nature of school work experience evaluations was wide ranging, with a lot of schools doing several different forms of evaluation.

Most commonly, schools conducted reviews/surveys of staff within the school to explore how work experience could be improved, identify weak placements and assess the benefits of the programme (45 per cent of schools conducting evaluations mentioned activities in this vein).

Nearly four in ten schools (38 per cent) undertook reviews and surveys of students, sometimes part of post-work experience discussion and sometimes involving parents as well. One-third used review meetings/working parties inside school, often including the central body co-ordinating placements, and sometimes forming part of a departmental or whole school review. Some 15 per cent specifically mentioned involving employers in their evaluation activity.

7.5 The impact of work experience

We attempted to assess the impact of work experience on young people in three main ways.

● First, we asked school and area co-ordinators (case study and interviewees) for their views on the impact of work experience on student learning and development. Respondents to the surveys for instance were asked to indicate how much they

agree with a series of statements concerning student, learning, development and attributes.

- Secondly, we asked our sample of students for their views on the impact of work experience.

- Additionally, we surveyed our sample of students, before and after their work experience placement, to assess changes in their views and perceptions of their skills, employability and understanding of the world of work.

Below we look at the results from each exercise in turn.

7.5.1 School and area co-ordinators' perceptions

Tables 7.3 and 7.4 present the summary findings of the two co-ordinators surveys on the perceptions of the impact of work experience — which may or may not be based on empirical evidence.

Most impact is perceived to be in promoting student personal and social development and enhancing maturity. Over 90 per cent of schools and area co-ordinators also feel that work experience develops student understanding of the world of work. However, there is less certainty from schools in the degree to which work experience leads to good quality GCSE coursework (28 per cent disagreeing with the statement). Fifteen per cent of area co-ordinators also disagreed. This will reflect in part the fact that many schools do not use work experience to support coursework.

Table 7.3: School perceptions of the impact of work experience (percentages)

	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly	*Base N = 100%*
Promotes student personal and social development	1	6	46	47	*676*
Enhances student maturity	1	6	46	47	*678*
Develops student understanding of the world of work	1	8	49	42	*676*
Develops student employability	5	23	47	25	*674*
Provides an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest	7	25	44	24	*676*
Enhances the key skills of students	6	28	46	20	*677*
Motivates students to work harder in school	7	27	51	16	*673*
Broadens the range of occupations they may consider for a career	10	36	38	16	*677*
Leads to good quality GCSE coursework	28	52	15	5	*671*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

Table 7.4: Area co-ordinators' perceptions of the impact of work experience (percentages)

	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	Neither Agree/ Disagree	Agree	Agree Strongly	*Base N = 100%*
Promotes student personal and social development	1	3	32	64	*97*
Enhances student maturity	0	5	31	64	*96*
Develops student understanding of the world of work	0	5	36	59	*97*
Develops student employability	1	20	41	38	*97*
Provides an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest	3	24	38	35	*97*
Enhances the key skills of students	2	12	42	45	*96*
Motivates students to work harder in school	2	30	45	23	*96*
Broadens the range of occupations they may consider for a career	6	35	31	28	*97*
Leads to good quality GCSE coursework	15	56	17	13	*95*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Area co-ordinators, IES/ER 2000

The main factors influencing school views on the impact of work experience include their student backgrounds and GCSE attainment and prevalence of using work experience to support coursework. Table 7.5 presents the same data as in Table 7.3 but with mean scores for each area of impact (based on the one to five scale). The nearer the score is to five the more agreement displayed.

In the main, schools with higher GCSE attainment rates tend to respond more positively on most of the impact variables than is the case for those schools with lower GCSE scores. This is especially the case in relation to enhancing student maturity, promoting the student, and in motivating students to work harder in school.

Although most schools clearly see work experience as a valuable activity, questions were raised by some respondents, particularly in relation to the impact of work experience on more academically able students. The following views are worth noting:

'I wonder how important [pre-16 work experience] is now that 80 per cent plus of our pupils go on to college. I feel more effort should go into providing a more significant experience for these near to transition and would like to enter employment.'

'For students at selective schools with 90 per cent going on to further/higher education (ie only employed at 21 plus) the work experience at 14/15 is largely useless.'

'The value of work experience is not understood by staff because staff involvement is sporadic. Pupils "do" work experience because they are expected to but often question its value. If they take two weeks holiday

instead, how does this disadvantage them? Although a 40 hour week work experience for two weeks is equal to time spent on GCSE there is no national award equal to GCSE. Is it therefore a good use of time? This is the thinking behind some teachers pushed to get coursework completed, and some pupils.'

By contrast we encountered many references to students under-achieving at school but doing really well on work experience.

Those schools which conduct evaluations of their work experience programmes are significantly more likely to perceive a positive impact on their students through work experience (Table 7.5). It is possible that this means that although the nature of the enquiry is based upon perception and views, the individual responses from teachers are in many cases based upon more objective assessment of impact via the evaluations. This suggests that where schools take the trouble to find out what their students, staff, and employers think of work experience and its benefits, there is a much more positive view (measure) of its impact; perhaps even based more on evidence than is the case for those schools not conducting evaluations.

Schools with high proportions of students using work experience to support their GCSE English coursework assessment are more likely to see work experience leading to good quality GCSE

Table 7.5: School perceptions of the impact of work experience — mean scores for different groups of schools

	Less than 35% GCSE A-C grades	More than 55% GCSE A-C grades	School undertaking evaluations	Schools *not* undertaking evaluations	All Schools
Promotes student personal and social development	4.2	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.3
Enhances student maturity	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.3
Develops student understanding of the world of work	4.2	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.3
Develops student employability	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.9
Provides an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest	3.8	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.8
Enhances the key skills of students	3.7	3.8	3.9	3.6	3.8
Motivates students to work harder in school	3.5	3.8	3.8	3.5	3.6
Broadens the range of occupations they may consider for a career	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.6
Leads to good quality GCSE coursework	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.7	2.9

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 (weighted data)

coursework. The mean score for schools where all students use work experience for GCSE English coursework assessment is 3.3 compared to 2.7 among schools where no students use it for GCSE English.

Similarly, where more students have their diary/log book assessed, schools are more likely to perceive positive impact on student personal and social development, and the enhancement of their key skills.

Schools that do not use a central agency at all in the selection of placements are more likely to feel students are 'provided with an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest'. Over three-quarters of schools where there is no involvement in finding placements from a central agency agree with the statement, while just 60 per cent of those where an agency is responsible for finding more than 75 per cent of places agree. This is likely to be connected with the relationship between students gaining their first choice placement and the involvement of a central agency in finding places.

In the case studies, teachers reported numerous instances where under-achieving students in particular found work experience a real spur to development. Students also found permanent or part-time jobs as a result of their placement.

7.5.2 Students' views

In the 'process' element of the students' survey we asked for their views on a number of aspects of work experience, including the extent to which:

- their placement helped them decide about their career — 57 per cent agreed it had helped, particularly those with placements in health and professional areas. Students with placements in hospitality and retail were much less likely to agree.

- their placement gave them a good idea of what work was like — 82 per cent thought it had, with little to separate students in their response

- after their placement they felt more interested in doing well at school — to which just over half, 52 per cent, agreed.

One-fifth (19 per cent) of students felt that their placement experience was relevant to their school work. Students who had used a computer responded more positively.

In terms of immediate outcomes, 40 per cent of students thought they might get a job where they did their placement (most common among boys and among production and leisure placements). Conversely perhaps, while 35 per cent said they

would be happy doing the same work when they finished education, 41 per cent disagreed — more where the placement was in retail and leisure.

7.5.3 Students' attitudes

An additional element of this research was to examine changes in views of students from early in the study and again towards the end, when most case study schools had completed their work experience programmes. Students in four schools had not completed their work experience at the time of the second survey and were used as a control group.

A four-page form was designed to be as straightforward to complete as possible. It sought to explore change in student views across five main areas:

- the importance students attach to different key skills

- the ease with which students feel they could execute certain work related tasks if they had to start work the next day

- their self-rated knowledge of a range of work related issues

- the extent to which they perceive school to have helped them to develop a range of work related skills

- more general student attitudes and attributes, extent of homework, and post-16 decision making.

Overall, there was surprisingly little change in student views between the surveys across most of the items; possible explanations for this lack of change are given at the end of the chapter. First though, we present the main findings, including both statistically significant changes and those nearing statistical significance.

Importance attached to key skills/attributes

Little change in student views was apparent between the two surveys in respect of skills. After work experience:

- a statistically significant increase was recorded in the proportion of students indicating the importance of being able to: 'sort things out and solve problems on my own' (statistically significant difference between the group who had completed work experience and the control group)

- a small and not quite statistically significant increase was apparent in student responses to the need to be 'able to do things on my own'.

- 'talking confidently with different people' also assumed marginally greater importance for students after work experience.

After work experience there was also a small shift away from attaching importance to the need for qualifications, towards being able to do things independently, talking confidently with different people and working well in teams. Again, however, the differences are marginal.

Comparing different groups of students, it is noticeable that boys seem to see dealing with numbers and computers as more important in their working lives than do girls, who in turn see teamworking and communication skills as more important than do boys. Also, for students who are more academically oriented, dealing with numbers and communicating in writing are both viewed as more important. Academically less able students attach significantly more weight to looking smart and being well presented.

Executing work related tasks

Overall, there was an increase in confidence among the group of students who had completed their work experience across all items taken together, when compared to the students yet to take their work experience. However, again, the difference is not quite statistically significant. Looking at each item in turn, significant increases in students after their work experience (when compared to those that have not been on work experience) were witnessed in relation to 'working with other adults' and in 'making friends at work'.

Looking at the effect work experience has on student perceptions, of which skills are seen as most difficult, a significant increase was apparent in the proportion who view 'having to use the telephone' as one of the three most difficult tasks (from 19 to 28 per cent). A smaller increase was also noticeable in the numbers that think 'doing a full days work' is one of the more difficult tasks (from 33 per cent to 37 per cent). There were small reductions in the proportions viewing:

- the prospect of 'learning new skills and how to do things' as one of the more difficult tasks (from 16 to 12 per cent), and

- 'being confident about what I do at work' as one of the three most difficult aspects of work (from 19 to 16 per cent).

Having to study in the evenings while at work was viewed as the most difficult aspect of working life (62 per cent ranking it as one of the three most difficult tasks of work).

Looking at differences between groups of students, it is noticeable that girls saw the prospect of 'taking responsibility for what they do' as easier than boys. A similar difference is apparent for 'communicating to others at work in writing' and in 'making friends at work'. Boys appeared more confident in relation to 'making sure that numbers are correct' and in 'having to use

computers at work'. Academically more able students saw communication in writing and using computers as likely to be easier than was the case for the less academically able.

Student attributes and attitudes

Change between the two surveys, in student attitudes and aspirations, was negligible. However, there was a small shift in post-16 decision making, with slightly fewer students indicating that they 'have no idea at the moment' in relation to their post-16 intentions and fewer intending to 'stay at school', but again the differences were marginal.

Variation in most of the educational motivation questions, including the volume of homework done by students, was most correlated with academic ability, with the more academically able appearing more motivated.

Experience of work and knowledge of work related issues

Again, little difference emerged in student self-rated experience of the world of work and knowledge of work related issues.

As one might expect, most change in views was apparent in ratings of 'what it is like to go to work' where there was a significant difference between those who had been on work experience, compared to those that had not. Before work experience approximately 29 per cent of both groups indicated they 'knew a lot' about what it is like to go to work. Among those who had been out on work experience the proportion went up to 47 per cent but remained the same for the group that had not yet been out on work experience. Students with part-time jobs were more likely to indicate they know a lot about what it is like to go to work, especially those where the job is not just a paper round or domestic work. The gap narrows after work experience however, to the point where there is no significant difference between those with part-time jobs and those without.

Otherwise, though, across the other items little change was discernible between the two groups.

Student views of the contribution of school

Once again, little change in student views between surveys was recorded here. Indeed, taking all variables together there was a marginal reduction in positive responses between the surveys, both for those who went on work experience and those who did not.

Methodological issues

The main objective of this research was to explore possibilities for assessing the impact of work experience. While our research finds little evidence of the impact of work experience on students' views, and self-rated knowledge and competence in relation to key skills and the world of work, these results contradict the findings produced in central London using a very similar tool and methodology (Pike G, 2000). This could be for a number of reasons:

- **The samples** in the two studies were very different — in this research the student sample was of higher academic ability, lower proportions of ethnic minorities, from more affluent socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. In itself these differences do not explain the variation in results but help to provide a context.

- In **London** the sample was smaller and concentrated on fewer schools — it is possible and found to some extent in this research, that most variation is explained by school differences rather than as a result of work experience.

- **The timing** of the research differed — here both surveys took place within four months. In the London study the baseline survey was conducted in Year 9 and followed up in mid-summer Year 10.

- The **'before work experience'** survey was organised in March/April Year 10. At this time in three cases schools were soon to go on work experience (within a couple of weeks) while in others work experience would be nearer the end of the summer term or Autumn Year 11. At this point schools would be at different stages in work experience preparation.

- The **'after work experience'** survey was administered very near the end of term in summer Year 10; in all cases after July 4 and in at least five cases in the last three days of term. It is likely that this will influence student responses in relation to their motivation to learn and the amount of homework they claim to do. It is possible that the timing also influences the degree of seriousness with which the survey is taken.

- Although there was little difference between the 'work experience group' and the 'control group' in this study there were nonetheless differences between schools. We attempted to establish some patterns to these differences, but have not found there to be any significant correlation to any of the work experience quality variables or other known characteristics.

Although as far as possible within the timescale the research replicated the study in London, one further possibility is that the rating system for students to respond provided insufficient options. There is a tendency among young people in completing these questionnaires to respond positively. If more options were provided this may allow for more discrimination in response.

7.6 Conclusions

Teachers perceive that work experience makes a difference, particularly to students' personal and social development and maturity and, to a lesser extent, their understanding of the world of work and general employability. Students tend to agree, particularly that work experience helped them understand the world of work better — but that is not particularly surprising. However, we were unable to provide more substantial evidence of impact on student behaviour, *eg* in terms of their detailed understanding of work or their approach to their school work or future career. Similarly, teachers feel that work experience offers many opportunities for students to improve their key skills, but our student data were unable to corroborate this finding — although we did not measure key skill attainment directly. The absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, and there may be a number of technical reasons why our findings were fairly limited in this respect.

7.7 Key points

- Most schools, according to the survey of work experience co-ordinators, attach a high priority to work experience and think the process worthwhile.

- While two-thirds of area co-ordinators believe that the priority given to work experience has remained the same since 1996, a quarter think it has risen.

- We have some general evidence that the quality of work experience is improving at least in terms of inputs as, in comparison with 1996, schools have a larger number of practices associated with a good quality work experience process. Schools where work experience is centralised are likely to have a greater number of practices associated with a good quality work experience process than schools in other areas.

- Awareness and use of quality guidelines and frameworks is extensive among schools. There was widespread awareness of most of the main publications and they were generally felt to be useful. Although less prevalent, local quality standards were rated particularly highly.

- Around 70 per cent of schools had evaluated their work experience programmes. Reviews commonly involved an assessment of staff and students' views.

- Schools generally felt that work experience promoted students' personal and social development, enhanced their maturity and helped them develop an understanding of the world of work.

- Fewer saw impacts in terms of broadening students' career horizons or helping their GCSE coursework.

- Schools with higher GCSE attainment rates saw greater impact than those with lower scores, particularly in relation to promoting students' personal and social development, enhancing their maturity and motivating students to work harder in school.

- Students also thought that work experience had an effect, particularly in terms of giving them a good idea of what work was like in their placement and, to a lesser extent, helping them decided about their career.

- Just over half (52 per cent) said that after their placement they felt more interested in doing well at school. Only one-fifth felt their placement was relevant to their school work.

- Comparing students' views and attitudes to work and school before and after they went on work experience showed little differences apart from increases in the proportions who:

  - felt it was important to sort things out and solve problems on their own at work

  - were confident of working with adults and making friends at work

  - recognised that having to use the telephone was a difficult task

  - knew what it is like to go out to work.

8. Work Experience and Part-Time Work

In developing the project, interest was expressed in the steering group about the relative merits of part-time work and work experience as a means of learning about work and skill development. In this chapter we look at our findings on this specific issue.

8.1 Extent of part-time working

Three in five (61 per cent) of the students surveyed in the case study areas either currently had or had in the past some form of part-time job. In one-third of these cases the job comprised either doing a paper round or baby-sitting only. The other two-thirds were in paid work of some form (20 per cent of whom also had a paper round and seven per cent did baby-sitting as well). Taking these data together, 40 per cent of the sample had a part-time job, 17 per cent had a paper round (and no other form of employment) and three per cent only did baby-sitting (Table 8.1).

On average, students who have part-time jobs work four days a week and 2.8 hours a day, *ie* they spend approximately 11 hours a week at work.

Table 8.1: Part time work by ethnicity and free school meals (percentages)

	Ethnicity		Free School Meals		All
	White	Non-White	Yes	No	
Part-time job	43	23	26	41	40
Paper round (no pt job)	17	8	15	18	17
Baby-sitting (no pt job or paper round)	3	2	9	2	3
No part-time job at all	37	67	50	39	40
Base N=100%	*664*	*60*	*54*	*551*	*724*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience – Survey of Students IES/ER 2000

8.2 Differences between part-time work and work experience

We were interested to examine what young people gained from part-time employment, relative to work experience. In the focus groups and interviews most young people drew a clear distinction between the two, basically arguing that part-time work was a narrower more instrumental experience, while placements tended to be more wide-ranging and stimulating.

> *'They treat you like adults on a placement, while at my job I'm treated as a skivvy.'*

> *'Work experience can help you decide what you want to do after school; I work part time as a washer-up just to get some money.'*

One student interviewee intended to give up her part-time job working in a burger van to do voluntary work at the exotic pet refuge where she had experienced a very enjoyable placement.

However, a few students did emphasise that they had learnt about money from their part-time work.

> *'Part-time work probably gave me more confidence than work experience – finding work, getting it and then being paid for it is a great feeling.'*

> *'Learning about money is another thing you learn in your part-time job that you don't get from work experience. I had no idea how much time you needed to work to pay for things. It's hard!'*

In the survey, students were asked to give their views on the value of part-time work in relation to work experience. The data are summarised in Figure 8.1 and indicate that on the whole students see benefits to work experience over and above those gained in their part-time work. For instance:

- Three-quarters disagreed with the statement: 'I learnt nothing new from work experience'.

- Two-thirds thought work experience gave them a better idea of what work was like than their part-time work.

- Sixty per cent felt that they learnt more new skills on work experience than they did from their part-time job.

The only area where the relative merits of the two were more in balance was on which form of experience gave students a better idea of how to behave at work, with 40 per cent feeling that work experience was most influential, compared with 30 per cent favouring part-time work.

Further analysis of the data indicated a correlation between a student's satisfaction with their work experience placement and their views on the relative merits of part-time work. For example,

Figure 8.1: Relative merits of part-time work compared with work experience

Horizontal stacked bar chart showing survey responses for four statements:

- learn more how to behave at work in my part-time job
- work experience gave me a better idea of what work is like
- learnt nothing new from work experince
- learnt more new skills on work experience

X-axis: 0% to 100%

Legend: ■ strongly agree ■ agree □ neither ■ disagree □ strongly disagree
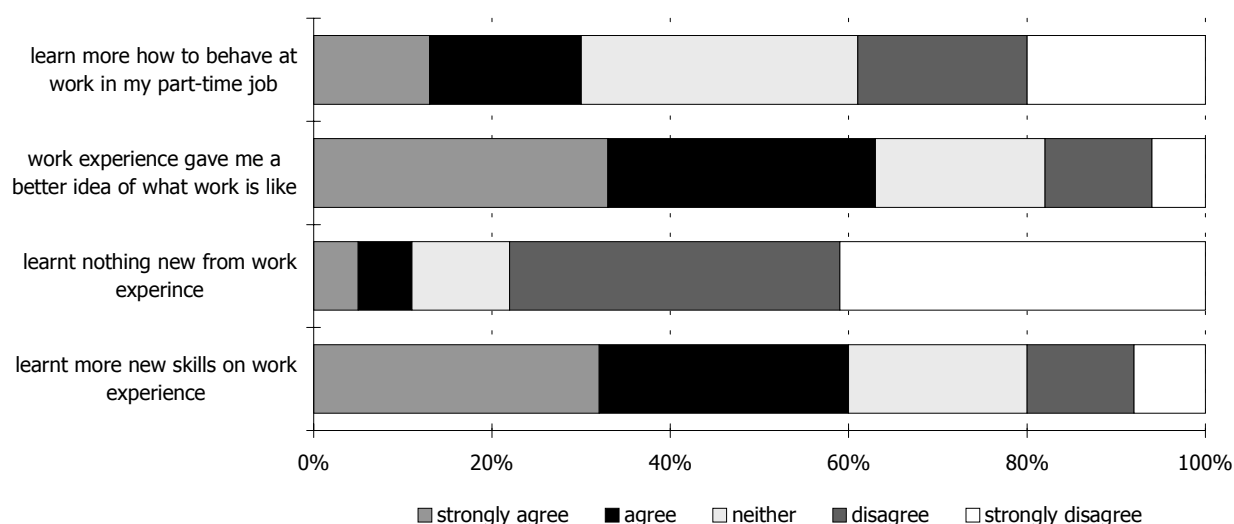
Source: Pre-16 Work Experience − Survey of Students, IES/ER 2000

43 per cent of students who strongly disagreed with the statement: 'overall I was happy with my placement', agreed that they had learnt more about how to behave at work from their part-time work than their placement. On the other hand, only 22 per cent of those who strongly agreed that they were happy with their placement felt part-time work had been most beneficial in this respect. This pattern was repeated with the other statements, and students who were least satisfied with their placement were most likely to see part-time work as having been more useful to them as a learning environment.

Interestingly, we also found a significant influence from the use of computers on a placement. Some 38 per cent of students not using a computer on their placement agreed that part-time work was more beneficial than work experience in learning how to behave at work, compared with 17 per cent of those who had used a computer frequently.

The students' views were largely echoed by the teachers and work experience co-ordinators in schools.

'Work experience is different. They go to work with everyone else and come home at the end of the day. They are generally the only young person there. It is more like being an adult.'

'Generally placements are more wide-ranging and interesting than the average Saturday job.'

'Part-time jobs are generally unskilled and give kids a narrow segmented view of the labour market.'

Some teachers felt that the fact that work experience was school-based, not 'home-based', marked it out from part-time work, as it gave the students more of a learning context, a chance to try out career options and the opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

This led some to argue that work experience needed to be planned more with these wider objectives in mind and that the mere experience of any work was not an end in itself. For instance, one respondent argued that:

'The growth of part-time work should lead to a reduction in the importance of experiencing the workplace as an objective of pre-16 work experience and it should be more about careers tasting and work shadowing. Too often kids don't get their horizons widened by their work experience which I think should be an important outcome from work experience.'

8.3 Conclusion

The evidence we have collected indicates that although the majority of work experience students also have experience of part-time work, their jobs tend to be fairly narrow and uninspiring. As such they do not provide the same opportunities for skill development nor do they build confidence or help with career-decision making in the same way as block placements. However, we found little evidence of schools using their students experience of part-time work in work-related learning and there may be unexploited opportunities to capitalise on students' real work experiences.

8.4 Key points

- Three-fifths of students in our survey had some form of part-time job, generally something other than a paper round or baby-sitting.

- Most students thought work experience gave them a better idea of what work was like and more opportunities for skill development than part-time work.

- Teachers agreed, arguing that part time jobs tended to be more narrowly focussed and much less interesting than work experience.

- Few schools sought to capitalise on students' experiences of part-time work in work-related learning activities.

9. Conclusions

In Chapter 1 we set out the main objectives for the study. In this final chapter we return to where we started, to pull together our findings on each of the main questions we were asked to address.

In essence we were asked to look at five issues:

- the quality of work experience placements and awareness and impact of QCA/DfEE guidance
- the effect of the new flexibility on the timing of work placements
- the relationship between the 'traditional' block placements and other similar activities, and the value of a block experience compared with either a more flexible arrangement or the learning opportunities offered by part-time work
- the costs benefits and drawbacks of various approaches to the organisation of work experience, and
- the overall impact of work experience on students.

We were also asked to make recommendations for the enhancement of future work experience policy and practice.

Below we draw on all aspects of the study to synthesise what we found on each of these point in turn.

9.1 Good quality placements

Generally, the view of the key participants is that the quality of work experience placements is quite good. We recorded high levels of satisfaction among school and area co-ordinators (section 5.4) and four out of five students said that they were happy with their placement. Seven in ten students thought that they should do more work experience. Although for some 'anything other than school' was in their minds when answering this question, it was clear from our qualitative work with students that they liked their placement and felt they benefited from it.

It is also clear from the research that as far as the students go:

- the more they do real work while on placement the more they value their placement. Students get less bored, find the placement more challenging and relish the responsibility where they feel they have a proper role to play.

- we also found the more that students use a computer on a placement the better, as satisfaction is significantly higher where placements had an IT element to them

- on the other hand, placements in leisure and retail tend to be considered less satisfactory than placements in other sectors, although even here three-quarters of students were happy with their experience. We have not been able to study in detail why this appears the case, but the data do suggest that:

  - retail and leisure placements are felt to be less interesting and challenging than others, with some providing little variety or chance of taking responsibility.

  - they are also more likely to involve the student doing odd jobs, which is negatively correlated with satisfaction.

  The consequences of this finding may be of concern to the sectors themselves, both heavily dependent on young people as a source of labour supply. Half the students with placements in leisure or retail said that they did not want to work in that sector when they finished their education.

9.1.1 Getting better all the time

It is also clear from our research that quality in most places is improving. In section 7.2 we presented a range of evidence that, both in the perceptions of those involved and in the range of inputs, the process is getting better. The specific areas we have identified include: pre-placement preparation; health and safety checking; teacher visits; placement completion rates; and integration with the curriculum. We also noted that on the back of health and safety arrangements, more efficient employer databases are being created which should provide better opportunities for cementing their involvement.

However, our results are not all positive. Employer involvement in both preparation and in debriefing appears in some cases to be on the wane. There is still scope for improvements in integrating work experience within the curriculum, on health and safety and on equal opportunities (where the recently launched *Go for it!* publication [Fiehn J] may help).

While on balance we conclude that positive progress is being made, there are still a minority of schools and a minority of placements which do not provide a good quality experience.

Generally, schools are well aware and appreciative of the various guidelines and quality standards that have been developed, especially locally based ones. While we cannot demonstrate direct

causality between the publication of guidelines and improving quality, there is a clear association and a general perception that they have helped.

There seems to be scope for further development of support materials for employers, especially small employers. In our view it is unlikely that many will have the time or even the inclination to go through a quality award process, so further standards may not be the way forward, unless they are simple to implement and verify. However, we do think there is scope for more 'user-friendly' guidelines for employers, or for materials which schools could easily use to help employers shape a good quality placement.

9.2 Timing flexibility does not prevent summer bunching

Schools are generally aware of the new scope to organise placements earlier in Year 10 (section 2.3). While some have moved their placements to the spring or even the autumn terms in Year 10, many think students are not of sufficient maturity (mentally or physically) to gain maximum benefit from their experience at that age. However, while some students felt the same, not all did and it would be interesting to explore this point further.

Although moving the time or changing the length of work experience placements can be an organisational nightmare for schools, around 30 per cent have done so over the last four years (section 2.4). The result has been a convergence towards placements taking place in (the latter half of) the summer term. While this suits schools organisationally, it does present a number of difficulties in terms of choice of placements and integration of the experience into the wider curriculum. Schools need further encouragement to avoid this particular time of year.

9.3 Are block placements still appropriate?

The other aspect of convergence we have noticed is a tentative move towards a two-week norm for the length of placements (section 2.2.5). We did find some interesting variations around the norm, including schools operating two one-week placements which helped where employer supply of places was tight. Another operated a three-week system, but the third week was 'optional' and some students could undertake a different challenge rather than continue with their employer.

We also found quite a high take-up of extended placements, with 55 per cent of schools providing them (section 2.2.3), though generally only for a few pupils. Generally, block placements were offered to people on extended placements, but not always at the same workplace and not always taken up.

The scope for further flexibility in arranging placements seems limited. While extended placements appear on the face of it to work well (but we only have limited evidence on which to base this judgement and it does not constitute a finding of the study), they did pose organisational difficulties for the school — both in finding employers to offer placements and then arranging an appropriate timetable for the students on their return to school. A more extended programme with a wider range of school/placement options was generally felt to be one step too far to organise.

However, some schools did find ways of creating more flexibility within the block approach, and perhaps guidance could be developed and/or good practice identified to help schools in this regard.

9.3.1 Part-time work is not the same

In Chapter 8 we found that most young people felt work experience gave them a better understanding of what work was like, more career insights and more opportunities for skill development, than part-time work. Teachers largely agree. It is not a surprising conclusion given that most part-time jobs that young people do are fairly narrowly focused and menial, and that most work placements are more wide-ranging and interesting. However, there does seem to be scope for schools to make more use of the experiences young people gain from their part-time work in work-related learning.

9.4 The best approach

We were also asked to examine the costs and benefits of the various approaches to the provision of work experience — particularly the balance between systems largely run by the school and systems run by a central agency. However, in fact very few schools organise work experience just on their own and differences between the systems are largely a matter of degree.

Here the data are not totally clear cut. Systems are run by people and skilled and dedicated staff can make a weaker system seem effective. There are also advantages and disadvantages to both school-based and central-based systems. For instance, it seems to be the case that the greater the school involvement in matching student to placement the more satisfactory those placements turn out to be, from all perspectives. On the other hand, centrally run health and safety systems and employer finding systems can be more efficient. There is evidence that centralised systems are of a better quality in other respects too, *eg* in terms of preparation and the timing of placements. We found little difference between the various systems in terms of cost, though the data are not very

clear or reliable, particularly as centralised systems have a much better idea of what it costs than more devolved systems.

Our findings suggest that there has been a convergence in the approach to organising work experience, with schools more reliant upon a central agency for health and safety checking and maintaining a database of placements. While there appears to have been an increase in central agencies providing the strategic and labour market support, we have also detected a reduction in them providing a delivery service. This seems to offer the best of all worlds and represents a good balance between costs and benefits and between quality and efficiency.

9.5 What's the impact?

The evidence we have collected suggests that work experience contributes to the development of students and in particular their employability.

Work experience clearly helps students to understand the world of work better, *ie* to gain insights into what it is like to go to work every day. It helps them with their career choice, even in a positive/negative way by pointing out paths that the student may not want to pursue in the future. In both these ways work experience contributes to employability.

However, it does more than that. Work experience helps students gain confidence in themselves to work with adults and to talk confidently with different people, to sort things out and solve problems on their own. These are essential skills for people wishing to enter the labour market and could be seen as 'employability skills'.

At a more fundamental level still, the evidence is weaker. We were not able to demonstrate conclusively that work experience either contributes to key or vocational skill development. Teachers generally believe it does and there is a consensus that placements do provide a vehicle for demonstrating key skill attainment. However, perhaps because of the design of this study, we were unable to find a direct impact in this respect. Nor were we able to show that work experience contributes to academic performance. However, it may do so for some individuals, albeit indirectly, through stimulating confidence and motivation, rather than directly by providing a platform for developing curriculum-based learning. We also found that schools with higher than average GCSE scores were more positive about the impact of work experience than others, but this may reflect their general success rather than be due to unique features attached to work experience.

The lack of apparent impact in the classroom may be because of the limited integration between work experience and the mainstream curriculum. In particular, we found that while

students use their numeracy skills while out on placement, they seldom referred to work experience in maths lessons and therefore placed their academic learning in a workplace context.

Finally on impact, there are a number of suggestions in the data that block work experience has most impact on the middle rung of students, *ie* the 'silent majority' of achievers, rather than under-achievers for whom extended placements may be more appropriate, or high achievers for whom work experience may be more suitable later on in their academic lives.

9.6 Recommendations

A number of recommendations flow from the study.

We believe that the study has demonstrated the value of work experience not only as a means of developing students' employability, but also as a way of helping students address all aspects of approaching adult life. However, for that value to be fully realised the **organisation of placements (in schools and through their partners in agencies) needs sustained funding and consistent messages of support**. Schools increasingly rely on support from central agencies and it will be important that they are in a position to sustain that assistance in years to come.

There is often an apparent conflict between schools' academic goals and their wider contribution to people's personal and educational development. Educational attainment is more than just the accrual of GCSE certificates and there is scope for more recognition of the student achievement at activities such as work experience. We would therefore like to see **wider recognition of work experience achievements** through existing or, only if necessary, new mechanisms.

We have found that schools do not always make the most of work experience in the mainstream curriculum, and in particular feel that better links could be made between numeracy in the workplace and mathematics. There would seem to be scope for **further guidance to teachers on the integration of work experience into the wider curriculum,** both from work experience agencies and other bodies such as the QCA. In so doing it will be important to get the balance right between preserving the uniqueness of work experience and its contrast to school on the one hand, and maximising and capturing the learning opportunities on the other. It would appear to us that work experience could provide a vehicle for developments such as the citizenship qualification.

We would also like to see **a more coherent approach to work-related learning in schools** up to and beyond work experience, with **more progression between Key Stages 3 and 4 and better links between pre- and post-16 placement programmes**.

While we have found that block placements are an efficient way of organising work experience and work for most students, they may not be appropriate for all, especially those at either end of the achievement spectrum. We would like to see **further development of different models of experience** that would be appropriate particularly **for higher achievers** within the framework of a block approach.

A related issue for high achieving students is an apparent shortage of appropriate places in stimulating professional environments. There are also chronic shortages in areas such as IT and design and other segments of the 'new economy'. **Employers in these sectors should be encouraged to offer places and be targeted by agencies and others responsible for placement supply**. Furthermore, **central agencies should be further encouraged to develop and regularly update databases of placement providers (*ie* employers) in their area — providing access to them on-line to schools.**

Employers could do with more support to help them provide the most suitable experiences for young people. We therefore suggest that **further guidelines are developed and best practice models disseminated showing employers, particularly smaller ones, easy ways to enhance placements**. It is suggested that these are developed in conjunction with employer bodies, *eg* trade federations and NTOs, and could perhaps best start in the leisure, hospitality and retail sectors.

By the same token, schools could do with more support from employers in delivering preparation and debriefing programmes and evaluation. **Employers should be encouraged to participate in the whole work experience programme, not just placement provision.**

One of the features of a satisfactory placement from a student point of view is using a computer. **Employers should be encouraged to provide access to IT**. Schools or work experience agencies could support this by **developing materials for students to do on computer —** *eg* completing diaries or log books.

The other issues for employers, and indeed for all those engaged with the supply of placement, is the increasing concentration of placements at the end of Year 10. **Schools should be encouraged, with funding if available, to avoid this time of year**.

One way in which good practice can be promulgated at school level is through effective networking, and we would encourage the new **education business link organisations in each area to organise and run good practice exchanges** between school (and area) co-ordinators.

Quality programmes, nationally and particularly locally, appear to be helpful in raising the standards of work experience

provision. We support their continuation and improvement, but particularly **encourage central agencies to identify and work with schools where provision remains inadequate,** as we believe that eliminating the minority of poor practice will have a significant effect on continuing the general improvement trend.

Finally, the research has raised a number of questions which could warrant further study.

● While we have tried to assess the impact of work experience, alternative approaches could be adopted, including a more longitudinal study of students, beginning in Year 9 and following them through to entry into the labour market, to understand better the influence of work experience on career choices and pathways.

● A number of interviewees suggested that students were not mature enough to benefit from work experience early in Year 10 — is this actually the case and what is the relationship between personal maturity and the outcomes of placements?

● The issue of the value of work experience for high achievers would seem to warrant further study, particularly to identify models of experience that appear most appropriate.

● Why do students using a computer on a placement report higher levels of satisfaction than others?

● Is there a real issue with employer supply of placements and if so, what are the most appropriate solutions?

● Does work experience contribute to key skill development and if so how?

● What are the ways in which schools could best capitalise on the experiences their students have of part-time work?

● What influences gender-based views of the labour market among students and therefore their placement choice?

Appendix 1: Research Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based upon data from two main sources.

1. Surveys of (a) school and (b) area based work experience co-ordinators.

2. Case study research in five areas. Within each area five schools, five employers and five intermediary organisations were visited or interviewed by telephone. This element of the research also incorporated surveys of, and discussions with, students in each participating school.

A1.1 School co-ordinators survey

The main purpose of this survey was to map the extent and nature of work experience across maintained secondary schools in England.

The sample for the survey of work experience co-ordinators in schools (henceforth referred to as the *school co-ordinators survey*) was taken from the Register of Education Establishments (REE). One in three secondary schools were randomly selected and were provided with a Unique Record Number (URN). Using the URN, additional data was collated for each school from the Analytical Services Division of the DfEE and the School Performance and Statistics teams. These data included:

- background information on school size and type of school, admissions policy, geography, percentage of students eligible for free school meals, percentage with Special Educational Needs (SEN), proportion of students from minority ethnic origins, English as Additional Language (EAL), and

- general performance information, such as percentage gaining five or more grades A-C/no pass grades at GCSE and absence/exclusions data.

In addition, we surveyed all the schools in the five case study areas being visited during the course of the qualitative fieldwork research. The final sample included 1,091 schools. In the absence of a database giving names of the work experience co-ordinators in each school, all questionnaires were mailed to 'The Work Experience Co-ordinator'.

The questionnaire, in the form of a 12 page booklet (including a cover letter), sought information on all aspects of schools delivery, organisation and management of work experience (a copy is in Appendix 2). The survey was mailed in March, spanning the Easter break, and closed at the end of May 2000 after two full reminders and a postcard reminder.

A1.1.1 Response details

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent — 684) of all schools in the sample returned their questionnaire. This represents a high response rate for a survey of this nature, especially given the amount of detail sought in the questionnaire, no individual names were available in the sample, and many co-ordinators were in the midst of organising their work experience at the time of the survey.

One advantage in being provided with detailed school background information and performance data is that we were able to assess the degree to which the respondents to the survey represent all maintained secondary schools in England. Where there is any distortion it is then possible to accurately weight the data in order to compensate for this response bias.

All school background variables were analysed to assess the degree of response bias in the survey respondents. For most variables, *eg* school type, there is little or no discernible variation between respondents and non-respondents. However, it transpired that schools with a high proportion of students eligible for free school meals were significantly less likely to have responded to the survey, and conversely those schools with low free school meal eligibility were more likely to have responded (Table A1.1 summarises this).

As a result of this bias in the response set, respondents to the survey have higher GCSE attainment rates, slightly lower absence and exclusion levels, lower proportions of students with Special

Table A1.1: Response to the school co-ordinators survey, by proportion of students eligible for free school meals (percentages)

	Responded to the survey		
Percentage of students eligible for FSM	**Yes**	**No**	**All schools**
Less than 5%	23	15	19
5-9%	17	14	16
10-19%	29	31	30
20-29%	15	16	16
30% or more	16	24	19
Base N = 100%	*684*	*407*	*1,091*

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience –- Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000

Table A1.2: Free school meals and relationship to other school background variables — maintained secondary schools: England (percentages)

School type/variables	Percentage of students eligible for FSM			All Schools
	Less than 10%	10-19%	20% or more	
Percentage 11-16 age range	32	46	60	*47*
Mean school size (no. of students)	1,029	978	864	*957*
Percentage 'selective' admissions	11%	0%	0%	*3%*
Percentage in Special Measures	0.6%	1.8%	4.5%	*2.4%*
Percentage in Education Action Zone	1%	4%	12%	*6%*
Percentage students with SEN	14%	19%	27%	*20%*
Percentage ethnic minority students	4%	8%	23%	*12%*
Percentage with EAL needs	2%	5%	16%	*8%*
Av. no. exclusions	1.6	3.1	4.9	*3.3*
Av. Absence rate	7	9	11	*9*
Av. % gaining 5 A-C GCSE grades	64%	45%	29%	*46%*
Av. % gaining no GCSE passes	2%	4%	7%	*4%*

Source: DfEE Register of Education Establishments and Analytical Services Division

Educational Needs (SEN) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) support needs, and marginally lower proportions of ethnic minorities. In addition, schools who have responded tend to be larger, perhaps being in slightly higher demand.

Free school meals (FSM) is clearly a key variable and is demonstrably correlated with a number of other school background variables and school outcome variables. For this reason, and the fact that some important research issues are associated with issues of disadvantage, there is a potential bias in the data.

To compensate for this difference between the respondents and the population of schools in England it was decided to weight the data. This results in a response set that much more closely reflects the population of schools in England. All data presented for the school co-ordinators survey in this report are weighted to account for these differences.

A1.1.2 Respondents to the school survey

Using weighted data, the respondents to the survey much more closely match the population on all the above variables. In particular, where the most significant bias was visible, *eg* GCSE attainment rates and percentage SEN, differences between the response set and the population have all but been eliminated. For most of the analysis presented in the substantive sections of this report, the data was weighted to account for the response bias.

Table A1.3 provides background information on schools responding to the survey, weighted to account for the bias noted above, alongside data covering the population of secondary schools in England to demonstrate the degree to which the respondents to our survey match the population.

This matching of respondents to the population suggests that findings from the survey can be generalised to represent all maintained community and voluntary aided/controlled secondary schools.

In relation to the survey coverage, the total number of 15 year olds at schools responding to the survey represents 22 per cent of all 15 year olds in maintained secondary schools in England.

In addition, given the focus of the research, it is worth noting that 44 per cent of the schools responding to the survey offer GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4. Schools that offer GNVQ:

- are less likely to be girls' schools (28 per cent compared to 44 per cent overall offering GNVQ courses)

- are more likely to have comprehensive admissions policies and be situated within Education Action Zones

- in terms of the students' profiles, schools offering GNVQs have higher percentages of students with free school meals (21 per cent compared to 16 per cent). Also, these schools have

Table A1.3: School data for survey respondents and all maintained secondary schools in England

School information	Respondents	All schools
Average school size	962 students	957
School age range	46% 11-16 yrs	46%
Type school (single sex/mixed)	86% Mixed 9% Girls	86% 8%
Denomination	18% VC/VA	19%
Av. percentage ethnic minority	12%	12%
Admissions policy	96% Comprehensive	96%
Special measures	2%	2%
School in Education Action Zone (EAZ)	6%	6%
Absence rate (authorised + unauthorised)	9% sessions missed	9%
No GCSE passes 1999	4%	4%
5 GCSE A-C passes 1999	47%	46%
Av. no. permanent exclusions	3	3
Av. percentage with EAL support needs	8%	8%
Percentage with SENs	20%	20%

Source: Pre-16 Work Experience — Survey of Secondary Schools, IES/ER 2000 and DfEE Register of Education Establishments and Analytical Services Division

lower GCSE attainment rates and higher absence rates, as shown in Table A1.3).

A1.2 Area based co-ordinators survey

With similar objectives, a separate survey of work experience co-ordinators working from Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), Trident and Career Services (known as the *area co-ordinators survey)* was also carried out. Here an additional aim was to examine change in the provision of work experience across England since 1996.

All area work experience co-ordinators identified from DfEE records were sent a specially designed questionnaire. The questionnaire was mailed in April 2000 and following two postal reminders and well as some telephone reminders was closed in early June 2000. A total of 127 area co-ordinators were sent a questionnaire, of whom 99 responded to the survey, giving a response rate to the survey of 78 per cent.

An eight page questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was designed in consultation with the DfEE and the steering group. It was designed so that many of the questions would be comparable with the school co-ordinator survey and also with the survey of area co-ordinators conducted in 1996 (Hillage *et al.* 1996) (which we refer to in this report as the *1996 area co-ordinators survey)*. The questionnaire covered a range of issues including:

- background information about the area covered
- provision of work experience placements; number and timing of placements
- approaches to organising work experience placements in areas
- management of health and safety
- support provided by central agencies to schools
- costs and funding of placements
- quality issues and outcomes, and
- changes to work experience since 1996.

A1.3 Case study research

A key aspect of this research was to enable comparisons in both the extent and nature of work experience across England with the situation in 1996. It was decided to replicate as far as practicable the qualitative research conducted in 1996, when six areas were identified to reflect a range of work experience provision and organisation, *ie* a mix of school based, centralised and joint systems. In addition in 1996, a balance was sought in the geography, size and region of the areas selected. It was found that

the areas and schools represented a broad mix of both practice and quality of work experience provision.

This approach allowed us to collect data comparable with the previous evaluation, also allowing some longitudinal assessment of progress within the same schools as visited in 1996.

For this study, we therefore revisited the first areas in England (Wales was excluded from this piece of research). The key participants in this research were:

- work experience co-ordinators in each area

- representatives from other key agencies as appropriate for each area, *eg* the LEA, careers service, TEC, EBP *etc.* (five individuals were interviewed in each of the five areas)

- five schools with each area — including a senior teacher, the work experience co-ordinator, other teachers as identified within the school and students (discussed in more detail below).

- five employers involved in providing work experience placements in each area (in some cases this included the same employers as visited in the baseline evaluation).

In all bar two cases the same schools were visited as in the baseline evaluation, and in many instances the same intermediary agencies and personnel were visited. A further factor assisting the longitudinal nature of this research is that in three of the five areas the same researchers visited as in 1996.

The case study research consisted of interviews tailored to be relevant to each organisation and individual, but covering during the course of the research the following issues:

- programme organisation and management (area-wide and within each school attention was also given to other work experience formats, *eg* disapplication and extended placement)

- co-ordination of work experience within each area and involvement of different agencies

- quality issues associated with the delivery and co-ordination of work experience, including the impact of QCA/DfEE quality frameworks

- influences on the success and failure of work experience

- costs, funding and staffing of work experience

- the impact of work experience on student learning, skills, attainment and attitudes

- future developments in relation to the organisation, management and delivery of work experience.

In revisiting the same five areas and schools, with each area we were able to assess more systematically the extent to which schools had adapted their work experience programmes, particularly in light of any funding and policy changes since the last evaluation.

In each school we also surveyed a group of students to examine both their views of all aspects of work experience and to assess the impact of work experience on their learning, skills and attitudes.

A1.4 Student surveys

The student surveys served two main purposes:

1. To explore the impact of work experience on student skills, understanding of the world of work and attitudes and attributes *(hereafter referred to as the student impact survey)*.

2. To examine views of the placements themselves and the process of conducting work experience *(referred to as the work experience process survey)*. Here we also looked at changes in student views by comparing responses to the data collected in 1996.

A1.4.1 Student impact survey

The design of the study was based on a replication of a similar study conducted in central London (Pike G, 2000) which suggested a significant impact resulting from work experience, albeit providing comparisons between a small number of schools. The advantage of this approach was that a research tool had already been designed and tested. The method used in this evaluation however, was constrained by the timing of the research but included a 'before work experience' survey, conducted in March Year 10 and an 'after work experience' survey, completed in July Year 10.

The design (a quasi-experimental design) was such that schools who completed their work experience between March and July in Year 10 acted as the 'treatment group' while students from schools doing work experience in Autumn Year 11 acted as the 'control group'. This allows both an analysis of change in views over time, with work experience being one of the main activities conducted between times, and a comparison between students who have completed work experience with those who have not.

The four-page form was designed to be as straightforward to complete as possible. It sought to explore change in student views across five main areas:

- the importance students attach to different key skills

- the ease with which students feel they could execute certain work related tasks if they had to start work the next day

- their self-rated knowledge of a range of work related issues

- the extent to which they perceive school to have helped them to develop a range of work related skills

- more general student attitudes and attributes, extent of homework, and post-16 decision making.

In addition the before survey collected some biographical information, *ie* gender and ethnicity.

The main stages of the student research were as follows.

- In March the 'before work experience' survey of approximately 55 students in each of the 25 case study schools was conducted. This was designed so that in each school two tutor groups could be used as participants. Parents were consulted to give their consent, and students provided their name on the questionnaire so that follow up questionnaires could be sent in July and September. Questionnaires were received from 1,154 students from 24 of the 25 schools.

- Schools were then asked to provide some background biographical data for each student participating in the study. This included SAT scores and, as an indicator of socio-economic status, free school meal information (data was received for 750 students — 65 per cent of those returning forms). We also asked for absence data but these were provided by only a small number of schools and have not been used in the subsequent analyses.

- The 'after work experience' survey was administered in July. Schools were sent batches of questionnaires addressed individually to each participating student, for completion before the end of term. Four schools where work experience was timed for autumn Year 11 acted as the control group for the research, completing both surveys prior to their work experience. In total, 826 students completed the after survey (72 per cent), of which 666 completed their work experience before the second survey and 120 were yet to do their work experience (the control group). There was some bias in the data, with boys and academically less able students slightly less likely to have responded to the second questionnaire.

Overall, the response rate achieved for these surveys was higher than anticipated.

A1.4.2 Views of work experience survey

After their work experience (in most cases within a few weeks) students completed a third questionnaire, seeking information about their placement — *the work experience process* survey. In all, 801 students (nearly 70 per cent of all students participating in the first survey) completed the process survey and 742 students

completed all three questionnaires (64 per cent). Again, boys and students of lower academic ability were less likely to have completed this questionnaire.

The questionnaire sought information on:

- the process of placement selection (influences, and methods)
- details of the placement itself (employer and nature of activities)
- student perceptions of use of their school work on placement and use of work experience in school afterwards
- student satisfaction with different aspects of their work experience
- finally, information on part-time work conducted by students and their views of comparable learning outcomes between part-time work and work experience.

A1.4.3 Student discussion groups

To support the survey data and provide more depth to the analysis, semi-structured discussion groups were set up through the school case study research and were held in 23 schools. Between four and ten students participated in each case and the discussions covered student views of the placement process similar to the issues covered though the questionnaire survey listed above.

Appendix 2: Questionnaires
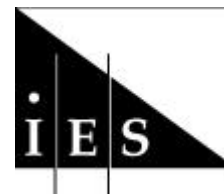
Pre-16 Work Experience Practice in England: An Evaluation

Area Co-ordinators Survey

PRE-16 WORK EXPERIENCE

Confidential to the Institute for Employment Studies

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by someone with knowledge of how work experience is organised in your locality (which may be based on a local authority area, TEC area, or some other boundary). Please answer the questions as fully as possible by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided. Don't worry if you cannot answer all the questions, although you may like to pass the form on to someone else if you fell they would give a fuller reply. Please return the completed questionnaire to IES in the reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any queries, please contact Jenny Kodz or Jim Hillage at IES: telephone 01273 686751. Thank you for your co-operation.

1. Background

1.1   What is the geographical area covered by your answers to this questionnaire? *(please write in)*

    ....

1.2   What is the basis for this area? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

    Local Education Authority ☐   TEC area ☐   EBP area ☐

    Other *(please specify)* ☐   ....

1.3a   Has the geographic boundary of this area changed since 1996? *(please tick one box)*

    yes ☐   no ☐   don't ☐

1.3b   If yes, please give details of the nature of this change in the space below.

    ┌───┐
    │   │
    │   │
    │   │
    └───┘

1.4   Who contributes to the costs of providing work experience placements in your area (both directly and indirectly, *ie* in cash and/or in kind)? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

	Cash	In Kind		Cash	In Kind
Schools	☐	☐	LEA (centrally held funds)	☐	☐
TEC	☐	☐	Careers Service	☐	☐
No-one	☐	☐	Other *(please specify)*	☐	☐

    ....

1.5   In this academic year (99/00) approximately how many pupils are there in Year 10 and Year 11, in the area covered by this questionnaire? *(please write in)*

    Year 10 pupils ☐   Year 11 pupils ☐

2. Provision of work experience placements

2.1   How many secondary schools (**excluding** independent and special schools) with Year 10/11 pupils are there in the area covered by this questionnaire?

    ☐

2.2   For the current Year 11 pupils in the area (**excluding** those attending independent or special schools), approximately what proportion will have been on work experience placements by the end of 99/00 academic year? *(please write in)*

<div style="text-align:center">

%

</div>

2.2a   Of this Year 11 group, approximately what proportion took, or are due to take, their work experience in the following academic terms? *(please write in)*

Autumn term, Year 10	%	Autumn term, Year 11	%
Spring term, Year 10	%	Spring term, Year 11	%
Summer term, Year 10	%	Summer term, Year 11	%

2.2b   Are you aware that the law has changed to allow students to go out on work experience from the beginning of Year 10?

yes ☐   no ☐

2.2c   Have any schools in the area responded to this change in the law by moving work experience to earlier in Year 10?

yes ☐   no ☐   don't know ☐

2.2d   If yes, how many schools have responded in this way? *(please write in)*

2.3   For the current Year 11 group, approximately what proportion of work placements were, or will be, for one week, two weeks *etc.*? *(please write in)*

One week	%	Two weeks	%
Three weeks	%	Other *(please specify)*	%

……………………………………………….

2.4   On average, what proportion of pupils complete their placements? *(please write in)*

<div style="text-align:center">

%

</div>

3. About the programme

3.1   Are placements predominantly organised at school level, centrally, or some combination of the two? *(please tick one box against the definition which best summarises the organisation of work experience in your area)*

     a) Centralised (*ie* an external agency is mainly responsible for finding, health and safety checking and matching placements)   ☐

     b) School based (*ie* the organisation for finding, health and safety checking and matching placements takes place mainly in school)   ☐

     c) Joint (*ie* schools and external agencies work together on finding, health and safety checking and matching placements)   ☐

     d) Mixed (an external agency is responsible for finding, health and safety checking and matching placements for some schools in the area, while other schools organise their own placements   ☐

     e) Other *(please specify)* ………………………………………………………………………..   ☐

3.2   If an external agency is involved in the organisation of placements in all or part of the area:

a) Which agency (or agencies) co-ordinates the work experience? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Local TEC	☐	Education Business Partnership	☐
Local Education Authority	☐	Careers Service	☐
Trident	☐	Other *(please specify)*	☐
School consortia	☐	....	

b) What services does the agency (or agencies) provide? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Co-ordinates dates to avoid bunching of schools ☐

Operates a computerised database of placements ☐

Provides a system for health and safety vetting ☐

Provides for networking/INSET of school co-ordinators ☐

Operates a quality assurance system ☐

Supports curriculum development in work experience ☐

Provides curriculum support material for schools ☐

Co-ordinates extended work experience for students
under disapplication ☐

Provides/co-ordinates community service learning placements ☐

Other *(please specify)* .... ☐

3.3a   Is an external agency involved with matching students with placements on offer?

      yes ☐   no ☐

If no, go to Q.3.7

3.3b   If yes, please give details of the external agency's involvement in the matching process.

3.4   Are pupils offered a choice of placements? *(please tick one box)*

      yes ☐   no ☐   don't know ☐

If yes, what degree of choice do pupils have? *(please tick one box)*

Free choice   ☐   Restricted choice   ☐

If restricted choice, please give details ....

....

3.5a   Are any positive measures taken to avoid students taking gender stereotypical placements?

      yes ☐   no ☐   don't know ☐

3.5b   If yes, please give details of these measures.

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3.6   Do employers have the opportunity to select their work experience pupils? *(please tick one box)*

Yes, in most or all cases ☐   Yes, in some or a few cases ☐   No ☐   Don't know ☐

3.7a   Does an external agency support pre-16 work experience student preparation activities in any schools in the area?

yes ☐   no ☐

3.7b   If yes, please give details of the activities the agency supports.

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3.8   Does an external agency support pre-16 work experience debriefing activities in any schools in the area?

yes ☐   no ☐

3.8b   If yes, please give details of the activities the agency supports.

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3.9   **Approximately**, what percentage of workplaces providing placements for the first time are vetted for health and safety? *(please enter a percentage in each box)*

By personal visit [%]   By other means [%]   Don't know ☐

3.10   **Approximately**, what percentage of employers providing placements for students in the area assess the risk of the workplace for work experience? *(please enter a percentage in the box)*

Don't know ☐

[%]

3.11   **Approximately**, what percentage of workplaces used for placements in the area are high risk, medium and low risk? *(please enter a percentage in each box)*

High risk [%]   Medium risk [%]   Low risk [%]   Don't know ☐

3.12a   **Approximately**, what percentage of workplaces already used for placements in the area are vetted each year? *(please enter a percentage in each box)*

High risk [%]   Medium risk [%]   Low risk [%]   Don't know ☐

3.12b Who is responsible for the health safety vetting in the area? *(please tick one box for each type of placement)*

	The schools	The schools and an external agency	An external agency
High risk	☐	☐	☐
Medium risk	☐	☐	☐
Low risk	☐	☐	☐

3.13 What training in health and safety have those responsible for vetting employers' premises received? (*please write in and specify any qualification, with the level and awarding body*)

....

....

....

3.14 To what extent do work experience programmes at schools in your area adopt the following practices? *(please tick one box per line to indicate what proportion of schools adopt each feature of work experience practice)*

	All	Most (*ie* half or more)	Some (*ie* under half)	None
Have their own policy statement on work experience	☐	☐	☐	☐
View work experience as an integral part of PSHE	☐	☐	☐	☐
View work experience as an integral part of careers education and guidance	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involve employers in the preparation for the placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage pupils to take non-stereotypical placements	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provide parents with information about the benefits of placements	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have identified specific learning objectives for pupils	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage pupils to develop their own learning objectives	☐	☐	☐	☐
Include health and safety awareness as part of pupils' preparation	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ensure that all pupils receive teacher visits during their placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
Have a debrief on return to school	☐	☐	☐	☐
Include employers in the debrief	☐	☐	☐	☐
Record pupil achievement from work experience in the Record of Achievement (NRA)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Record pupil achievement from work experience in a diary/logbook/portfolio assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use pre-16 work experience accreditation for GCSE coursework assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
Use pre-16 work experience accreditation for GNVQ coursework assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐

3.15 To what extent do you agree with the following statements about pre-16 work experience in your area? *(please indicate your views by circling one number on each row to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement, where 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = you are unsure, to 5 = strong agree)*

		Disagree				Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	Students have a good range of choice in selecting their placements	1	2	3	4	5
b.	The coverage of health and safety checking is adequate	1	2	3	4	5
c.	The quality of health and safety checking is adequate	1	2	3	4	5
d.	The quality of preparation for work experience is good	1	2	3	4	5
e.	The overall quality of placements provided is good	1	2	3	4	5
f.	The quality of placement monitoring is good	1	2	3	4	5
g.	The placement completion rate is satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Debriefing and follow up is good	1	2	3	4	5

4. Costs

4.1 Do you know the average cost per placement in the area covered by this questionnaire? (*please tick one box)*

yes ☐   no ☐   **go to Q4.4**   don't know ☐   **go to Q4.5**

4.2 If yes, what is the approximate average cost per placement? (*please write in)*

£ .... per placement

4.3 What is included in your cost per placement figure, *eg* admin costs, salaries, school-based costs including teachers' time *etc.?* (p*lease write in)*

....

....

....

Don't know ☐

4.4 Do schools pay a central agency for support with the provision of work experience?

yes ☐   no ☐   **go to Q5.1**   don't know ☐   **go to Q5.1**

4.5a If yes, what is the approximate average payment? *(please write in)* £ .... per placement

4.5b What does this payment cover? *(please write in)*

....

....

....

5. Quality issues and outcomes

5.1 A number of publications have been produced, designed to help schools improve the quality of pre-16 work experience. Please indicate whether or not you have seen any of the following and the degree to which you found them useful.

		Seen	Not at all useful	Not useful	Useful	Very useful
a.	Learning from Work Experience (QCA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	National Quality Standards (QCA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	Improving Work Experience (DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Work Experience: A guide for schools (DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	Work Experience: The Learning Frameworks (CEI/DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	Local quality standards *(please specify)*	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

....

5.2 To what extent do you think work experience contributes to student development? (*Please indicate your views by circling one number on each row to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement, where* 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = you are unsure to 5 = strongly agree)

Disagree ← → **Agree**

Pre-16 work experience ...	1	2	3	4	5
a. Motivates students to work harder at school	1	2	3	4	5
b. Promotes student personal and social development	1	2	3	4	5
c. Enhances student maturity	1	2	3	4	5
d. Develops student understanding of the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
e. Broadens the range of occupations they may consider for a career	1	2	3	4	5
f. Provides an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest	1	2	3	4	5
g. Develops student employability	1	2	3	4	5
h. Enhances the key skills of students	1	2	3	4	5
i. Leads to good quality GSCE coursework	1	2	3	4	5

6. Changes to work experience

6.1 We are interested in **changes** that may have occurred **over the last four years** to the way work experience is managed within schools in the local area. Giving your honest view, please indicate on each scale, as appropriate, the degree of change that has taken place in schools on average across your area in the following aspects of work experience (*3 would represent 'no change'*)

								Don't know
The number of employers in the system has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
Health and safety vetting of placements has:	*got worse*	1	2	3	4	5	*improved*	☐
Reliance of the school on a centralised service for organising work experience has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The amount of choice students have in selecting placements has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐

								Don't know
The amount of preparation for work experience has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The number of placements found by students has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The priority given to work experience in the school has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
Students taking non-gender stereotypical placements has	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The proportion of students visited during their placement has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The work experience completion rate has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The quality of debriefing conducted after work experience has:	*declined*	1	2	3	4	5	*improved*	☐
Employer involvement in debriefing has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The integration of work experience into the curriculum has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The use of work experience as a means of developing key skills has:	*declined*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The amount of support provided by the Careers Service for work experience has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*	☐
The overall quality of placements has:	*got worse*	1	2	3	4	5	*improved*	☐

7.   General comments

7.1   Do you have any other comments regarding pre-16 work experience in your school and local area? (p*lease write in)*

....

....

....

7.2   In the near future, are there likely to be any changes in the way pre-16 work experience is managed in your local area? *(**if yes**, please briefly outline what they are)*

....

....

....

Thank you very much indeed for participating in this survey. Please return the questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope or to IES at the Freepost address below.

All questionnaires will be treated in confidence.

**If you have any queries about the study, please contact
Jenny Kodz or Jim Hillage on: (01273) 686751:**

Institute for Employment Studies/Employment Research Freepost SEA 1044, PO Box 2106, Hove, BN3 3ZZ

School Co-ordinators Survey

PRE-16 WORK EXPERIENCE

Confidential to the Institute for Employment Studies

This questionnaire is designed to be completed by someone with knowledge of how pre-16 work experience is organised in your school. Please answer the questions as fully as possible by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided. Most of the questionnaire is concerned with your school's main pre-16 work experience programme.

Please return the completed questionnaire to IES/Employment Research in the reply-paid envelope provided. If you have any queries, please contact Geoff Pike at Employment Research on (01273) 299719. Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Work experience is defined as a placement on employers' premises taken by all or most students in Year 10 or Year 11, where the student carries out tasks or duties more or less as would regular employees. The emphasis is on the learning aspects of the experience.

A. Student numbers and organisation

1. How many students went out on pre-16 work experience in the **1998/99 academic year**? *(Please enter number in box)*

2. Approximately what **percentage of the year group did not go out** on work experience? (*Enter percentage in box*) %

3. What are the main reasons why students do not go out on work experience? (*Please give brief details in the space below)*

4a. How is your pre-16 work experience organised? (*Please tick one box that most closely represents the organisation of work experience in your school)*

a. One week block ☐   b. Two week block ☐   c. Three week block ☐

d. Combination ☐   e. Other format ☐
(*eg* some 1 week, some 2 weeks)

4b. If other format, *please give brief details of the form of work experience, length and when it is conducted.*

Form: Length: Timing:

5. Please give the dates and year groups (*ie* 10 or 11) the school is sending students out on block **pre-16 work experience this year *ie* 1999/2000?** *(If the students are split into two or more groups, please give the dates for each group)*

From [/] *(day/month)*   To [/] *(day/month)*   in Year ☐

From [/] *(day/month)*   To [/] *(day/month)*   in Year ☐

6a. Has the length of placement changed since 1995/96?   yes ☐   no ☐

6b. **If Yes**, please state how it has changed: from: .... days   to: .... days

6c. Why did the school decide to change the length of work experience in this way? *(Please write in)*

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                               │
│                                                                               │
│                                                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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7a. Are you aware that the law has changed to allow students to go out on work experience from the beginning of Year 10?

yes ☐   no ☐   **(If No go to QA8)**

7b. How has your school responded to the change in this law? *(Please tick one box)*

a. We have already moved our work experience   ☐

b. We are considering moving our work experience   ☐

c. We have no plans to move work experience   ☐

7c. Please give brief reasons in the space below as to why you decided either to change the dates of your work experience or not move your dates.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                               │
│                                                                               │
│                                                                               │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

8. Who finds placements for your school? *(Please enter in each box the __approximate percentage__ of all placements found by: [Please ensure the percentage adds up to 100])*

a. The school   [%]

b. Students/their families and friends   [%]

c. A central body/organisation
   (EBP/Trident/Careers Service/LEA/*etc. please state which)*   [%]   ....

d. Others *(Please specify)*   [%]   ....

9. Who is responsible for the health and safety checking of **high risk** work experience placements? *(Please tick one box)*

a.   The school ☐   b. The school and a central body ☐   c. A central body ☐

10a. Does the school offer extended work experience (one day or more per week with an employer/training organisation for several weeks or longer)?

yes ☐   no ☐   **If No go to Section B**

10b. **If Yes**, approximately how many students participated on **'Extended Placements' in 1998/9?**

(Enter number in box)   [   ]

10c. For what type of students is extended work experience provided? *(Please write in space below)*

....

10d. Do students on extended work experience also do 'traditional' block work experience? *(Please tick one box)*

yes, in all cases ☐   yes, in some cases ☐   no ☐

B. Matching and preparation

1a. Are students offered a choice of placements? *(Please tick one box)*

yes ☐   no ☐

1b. **If Yes,** what degree of choice do students have? *(Please tick one box)*

free choice ☐   restricted choice ☐

If restricted choice, please give details as to how the choice is restricted

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2. **Approximately,** what percentage of students get their first choice placement? (*Please enter percentage in box*)

☐ %

3. Which of the following best describes the location of responsibility for the curriculum aspects of pre-16 work experience in your school? *(Please tick one box)*

a. It resides primarily with the Careers department ☐

b. It resides primarily with the PSHE department ☐

c. It is the joint responsibility of Careers and PSHE/ Careers is an integral part of PSHE ☐

d. It resides primarily with the Industry link/work related learning or curriculum team ☐

e. It is a shared responsibility of a cross-curricular team of staff ☐

f. Other *(Please specify)*..

4. Please indicate which of the following activities are included in your **pre-16 work experience preparation** and the approximate amount of lesson time devoted to each activity. *(Please tick one box in each row)*

	Part of one lesson	One lesson	More than one lesson	Not covered
a. Reviewing local labour market information	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Discussions with a careers adviser from the local careers service	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Exploring health and safety awareness issues	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Discussing the application and recording of key skills during the placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Discussing equal opportunities issues	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Developing individual learning objectives for the placement	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Exploring personal and social skills development	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. Discussions in class about employers' expectations of work experience	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Employers come in to school to talk about their expectations	☐	☐	☐	☐

5a. Please estimate the **total number of lessons** used for the preparation of students for their Key Stage 4 work experience *(Please put number of lessons in the box)*

[ ]

5b. How long is a typical single lesson at your school? *(Please enter number of minutes)*

[mins]

6. Please estimate the percentage of placements that are **visited by students prior to starting** the placement? *(Please enter percentage in box)*

[%]

7. Does the school offer GNVQ courses at Key Stage 4? *(Please tick one box)*

yes [ ]   no [ ]

8. What changes (if any) have been made to your pre-16 work experience programme to accommodate GNVQ courses? *(Please tick all that apply)*

a. No special changes have been made to accommodate GNVQ courses [ ]

b. Placements in particular vocational areas are reserved for GNVQ students [ ]

c. GNVQ students gather evidence for their key skills through work experience [ ]

b. GNVQ students gather data for assignments during work experience [ ]

c. Other *(Please specify)* .... [ ]

9. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about pre-16 work experience in your school?
(Please indicate your views by circling one number on each row to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement, where 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = you are unsure, to 5 = strong agree)

		Disagree				**Agree**
		1	2	3	4	5
a.	Students have a good range of choice in selecting their placements	1	2	3	4	5
b.	The coverage of health and safety checking is adequate	1	2	3	4	5
c.	The quality of health and safety checking is adequate	1	2	3	4	5
d.	There is too much work involved for the school in arranging work experience	1	2	3	4	5
e.	The quality of preparation for work experience is good	1	2	3	4	5

C. The Placement

1. During their placement what curriculum-related tasks do students undertake? *(Please tick one box in each row)*

		All students do it	**Most students**	**Some students**	**No students do it**
a.	Completion of daily diary	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
b.	Completion of a log book containing questions about the world of work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
c.	Interviewing managers/work colleagues	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
d.	Gathering evidence of key skills practice	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
e.	Other *(Please specify)*				

2a. Last year (1998/99 academic year) **approximately** what proportion of students **failed to complete their placements?** *(Please enter percentage in box)*

[ ] %

2b. What are the main reasons for students failing to complete their work experience? (*Please describe briefly in the space below*)

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3. If a student does not complete a placement, is an alternative placement offered? *(Please tick one box.)*

Yes, in every case [ ]   Yes, in some cases [ ]   No [ ]   Don't know [ ]

4. Approximately, what proportion of students are visited by a teacher while on placement? *(Please enter percentage in box)*

[ ] %

5. If not all placements are visited how are those visited/not visited selected? *(enter brief details in the space below)*

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6. What functions are teachers asked to perform during the placement visit? *(Please tick each box as appropriate)*

a. Monitor student welfare [ ]   d. Monitor school set tasks (diary/log book *etc.*) [ ]

b. Monitor placement health and safety [ ]   e. Review student learning against individual action plan [ ]

c. Monitor placement tasks against job description [ ]   f. Other (*Please specify*) .... [ ]

7. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of pre-16 work experience placements? (*Please indicate your satisfaction with 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied*)

	Very dissatisfied				**Very satisfied**
	1	2	3	4	5
a. The overall quality of placements provided	1	2	3	4	5
b. The proportion of placements the school/you are able to visit	1	2	3	4	5
c. The quality of placement monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
d. Support from other staff in visiting students	1	2	3	4	5
e. The placement completion rate	1	2	3	4	5

D. Debriefing and follow-up (1998/99 programme)

1. Who is involved in the student debriefing process? *(Please tick each box as appropriate)*

   a. The school ☐   b. Careers Service ☐

   c. Parents ☐   d. Employer placement providers ☐

   e. Other Central body ☐   f. Others *(Please specify)* ☐

   ....

2. Considering the **1998/99 work experience** process, which of the following **best describes the debriefing** arrangements for your school's pre-16 work experience programme? *(Please tick one box only)*

   a. Students are debriefed in one or more form tutor periods ☐

   b. Two lessons are set aside for debriefing immediately on return to school ☐

   c. Half a day is set aside for debriefing ☐

   d. A full day is set aside for debriefing ☐

   e. More than one day is set aside for debriefing ☐

   f. There is no debriefing as work experience ended with a holiday ☐

   g. No specific debriefing – occurs informally in school ☐

   h. There is no debriefing ☐

3. What type of assessment and accreditation is used for pre-16 work experience? *(Please tick one box on each row)*

	All students	Most students	Some students	No students
a. GCSE English coursework assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. GCSE English oral assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Business studies coursework assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. IT coursework assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Modern foreign languages assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Other GCSE assignments *(Please specify)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
g. Key skills assessment (g ASDAN)	☐	☐	☐	☐
h. GNVQ assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
i. Assessment for other qualifications *(Please specify)*	☐	☐	☐	☐
j. Diary/log book assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐
k. Diary/log book/portfolio assessment by examination board	☐	☐	☐	☐
l. Diary/log book/portfolio assessment by central body *eg* EBP/Trident	☐	☐	☐	☐
m. Record of Achievement (NRA)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Pre-16 Work Experience Practice in England: An Evaluation

E. Management and costs

1. Does the school have a **written policy** covering the provision of pre-16 work experience? *(Please tick one box)*

yes, policy in its own right ☐   yes, part of careers education policy ☐   yes, part of other school policy ☐

no policy covering work experience ☐

2. Who in the school has **overall management responsibility** for work experience? (*Please give their job title and grade*)

Job title: ....   Grade: ....

3a. Does your school formally evaluate the whole work experience programme each year? (*Please tick one box*)

yes ☐   no ☐

3b. **If Yes** what form does this evaluation take? (*Please give brief details in the space below*)

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│                                                                   │
│                                                                   │
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4. In your opinion what is the overall priority given to work experience in the school? (*Please tick one box*)

Very high priority ☐   High priority ☐   Medium priority ☐   Low priority ☐

5. On balance taking into account all the costs and effort required in organising work experience how do you feel the school values the benefits to students of pre-16 work experience? (*Please tick one box*)

Very worthwhile ☐   Worthwhile ☐   Not worthwhile ☐   A waste of time ☐

6. In terms of the **administration and setting up of work experience** (*ie* excluding curriculum issues and visiting students on placement but including consent arrangements/admin, database management and Health and Safety checks, and finding employers) **very approximately** how much time inside and outside school hours is allocated to work experience over the **course of the year**? (*Please enter **approximate** number of hours from teaching and administration staff. Please also enter the grade of each teacher involved*)

a. **Teaching staff**	Hours inside school time per year	Hours outside school time per year
i. Grade	☐	☐
ii. Grade	☐	☐
iii. Grade	☐	☐
b. **Administration staff**		
Grade	☐	☐

7a. Does the school pay a central agency for support with the provision of work experience?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Don't know ☐

7b. **If Yes**, what is the approximate average payment? *(Please write in £ .... per placement)*

7c. **If No**, would your school be prepared to pay a central agency for support with the provision of work experience?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Don't know ☐

8a. Does the school receive any funding from central bodies to support work experience?

Yes ☐   No ☐   Don't know ☐

8b. **If Yes**, how much does the school receive? *Please write in £* .... *per placement*

9a. Does the school allocate a budget for work experience?   yes ☐   no ☐

9b. **If Yes**, how much is this budget? (*Enter amount in box*)   £ ☐

9c. And what is it used for? (*Please write in the space below*)

☐

F. Quality issues and outcomes

1. A number of publications have been produced, designed to help schools improve the quality of pre-16 work experience. Please indicate whether or not you have seen any of the following and the degree to which you found them useful.

	Seen	Not at all useful	Not useful	Useful	Very useful
a. Learning from Work Experience (QCA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. National Quality Standards (QCA)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Improving Work Experience (DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Work Experience: A guide for schools (DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Work Experience: The Learning Frameworks (CEI/DfEE)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Local quality standards (*Please specify*)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

....

2. To what extent do you think work experience contributes to student development? (*Please indicate your views by circling one number on each row to indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement, where* 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = you are unsure to 5 = strongly agree)

Disagree ←————————————→ **Agree**

Pre-16 work experience ...	1	2	3	4	5
a. Motivates students to work harder at school	1	2	3	4	5
b. Promotes student personal and social development	1	2	3	4	5
c. Enhances student maturity	1	2	3	4	5
d. Develops student understanding of the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
e. Broadens the range of occupations they may consider for a career	1	2	3	4	5
f. Provides an insight into a job or career in which the student has an interest	1	2	3	4	5
g. Develops student employability	1	2	3	4	5
h. Enhances the key skills of students	1	2	3	4	5
i. Leads to good quality GSCE coursework	1	2	3	4	5

G. Changes to work experience

1. We are interested in **changes** that may have occurred **over the last four years** to the way work experience is managed within the school and local area. Giving your honest view, please indicate on each scale, as appropriate, the degree of change that has taken place in the following aspects of work experience *(3 would represent 'no change')*

The number of employers in the system has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
Health and safety vetting of placements has:	*got worse*	1	2	3	4	5	*improved*
Reliance of the school on a centralised service for organising work experience has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The amount of choice students have in selecting placements has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The amount of preparation for work experience has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The number of placements found by students has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The priority given to work experience in the school has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
Students taking non-gender stereotypical placements has	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The proportion of students visited during their placement has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The work experience completion rate has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The quality of debriefing conducted after work experience has:	*declined*	1	2	3	4	5	*improved*
Employer involvement in debriefing has:	*reduced*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The integration of work experience into the curriculum has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The use of work experience as a means of developing key skills has:	*declined*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*
The amount of support provided by the Careers Service for work experience has:	*decreased*	1	2	3	4	5	*increased*

H. General comments

1. Do you have any other comments regarding pre-16 work experience in your school and local area? (*Please write in*)

....

....

....

....

2. In the near future, are there likely to be any changes in the way pre-16 work experience is managed in your school and the local area? (***If Yes***, *please briefly outline what they are*)

....

....

....

....

Thank you very much indeed for participating in this survey. Please return the questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope or to IES at the Freepost address below.
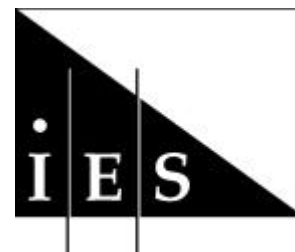
All questionnaires will be treated in confidence.

If you have any queries about the study, please contact
Geoff Pike (01273) 299719 or Jenny Kodz (01273) 686751:

Institute for Employment Studies/Employment Research Freepost SEA 1044, PO Box 2106, Hove, BN3 3ZZ

February, 2000

the INSTITUTE *for*
EMPLOYMENT
STUDIES

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Dear Student

Student Views of School and Work

This form asks you questions about skills you might need in work and your views of and attitudes to school and the world of work. It is a big national study and your school is one of 25 schools across England who have agreed to help us with the research.

It is very important that we get as many completed questionnaires as possible. We also intend to survey you again at the end of the year, so we need your name and school filled out at the bottom of this page. To show our thanks we are offering a **£15 HMV voucher** to each school to be drawn at random from each of the 50 completed questionnaires. **Remember to put your name and school at the bottom of this page if you want to be included in the draw.**

We are only interested in YOUR views. **There are no right or wrong answers**. Please try and answer the questions as fully and honestly as you can.

You can put the completed form in the envelope provided. **No one from the school will be shown your answers —** they are strictly confidential.

If you have any questions you can ask your teacher, who is there to help you.

Thank you very much for your help with this research.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Kodz
Research Fellow

Name: .... **School:** ....

1. When you get a job, how important do you think each of the things below will be for YOU IN YOUR WORK? *Circle one number on each row to show how important you think each will be.*

1 = not at all important   2 = not very important   3 = important   4 = very important

	Not important			Important
I will need to be able to . . .	1	2	3	4
a) deal with numbers	1	2	3	4
b) use computers for work	1	2	3	4
c) get good qualifications from school	1	2	3	4
d) work well in teams with other people	1	2	3	4
e) do things on my own	1	2	3	4
f) communicate in writing with others at work	1	2	3	4
g) talk confidently with different people	1	2	3	4
h) get to work on time and meet deadlines	1	2	3	4
i) sort things out and solve problems on my own	1	2	3	4
j) be reliable	1	2	3	4
k) look smart and be well presented	1	2	3	4

2 Which of the above do you think will be most important to you? *Read the list again and put a letter from 'a' to 'k' in the three boxes, with your most important one in the first box, second in the next and so on.*

Most important [　]   2nd most [　]   3rd most [　]

3. How do you think you would feel if you had to go to work tomorrow? *Circle one number on every row to show us how difficult or easy you would find each of the following.*

1 = very difficult   2 = difficult   3 = easy   4 = very easy

	Difficult			Easy
If I had to start work tomorrow, I would find . . .	1	2	3	4
a) getting to work on time every day	1	2	3	4
b) working with other adults	1	2	3	4
c) taking responsibility for what I do	1	2	3	4
d) asking people how to do things	1	2	3	4
e) communicating to others at work by writing	1	2	3	4
f) telling other people at work what I am doing	1	2	3	4
g) learning new skills and how to do things	1	2	3	4
h) making sure that numbers are correct	1	2	3	4
i) doing a full day's work (eight hours)	1	2	3	4
j) having to use computers	1	2	3	4
k) having to study in the evenings while I was at work	1	2	3	4
l) making friends at work	1	2	3	4
m) being confident about what I do at work	1	2	3	4
n) getting things done on time	1	2	3	4
o) having to use the telephone a lot	1	2	3	4

4. Of the above, which do you think you would **find most difficult**? *Read the list again and put a letter from 'a' to 'o' in each of the three boxes with the most difficult task in the first box, second in the next and so on.*

Most difficult [　]   2nd most [　]   3rd most [　]

5. How much do you think you know about the following things? *Again, circle one number in each row. Remember, it does not matter if you don't know about some of these things.*

1 = nothing   2 = not much   3 = some   4 = a lot

How much do you think you know about . . .	Nothing			A lot
	1	2	3	4
a) jobs with training	1	2	3	4
b) how to behave in a place of work	1	2	3	4
c) what it is like to go to work	1	2	3	4
d) the skills you need to get a job you want	1	2	3	4
e) how easy or difficult it will be to get a job	1	2	3	4
f) the sorts of jobs that you might be able to do	1	2	3	4
g) the differences between 'A' levels and GNVQs	1	2	3	4
h) the sorts of skills needed in different jobs	1	2	3	4
i) how businesses work	1	2	3	4
j) what manufacturing industry is	1	2	3	4
k) opportunities open to you in further education	1	2	3	4
l) equal opportunities issues at work	1	2	3	4
m) health and safety at work	1	2	3	4

6. How much do you think your **last year at school** has helped you to do the following things? *Again, please circle one number in each row.*

1 = not at all   2 = a little   3 = some   4 = a lot

My last year at school has helped me to . . .	Not at all			A lot
	1	2	3	4
a) work well with other people	1	2	3	4
b) think and act on my own	1	2	3	4
c) learn how to solve problems	1	2	3	4
d) speak in front of groups of people	1	2	3	4
e) learn how to use a computer properly	1	2	3	4
f) gain confidence in making decisions	1	2	3	4
g) organise myself and manage my time	1	2	3	4
h) express myself better	1	2	3	4
i) know better what I'm good at and not so good at	1	2	3	4
j) act responsibly (as an adult)	1	2	3	4
k) know what skills I need to have a good career	1	2	3	4
l) think about types of work I may be good at	1	2	3	4
m) think more positively about myself	1	2	3	4
n) know what sorts of work I may not be so good at	1	2	3	4
o) understand the world of work	1	2	3	4
p) know about different kinds of work	1	2	3	4

7. Below are some comments that people have made about school and life after school. Read each carefully, how much do you agree or disagree with each? *Circle a number on each row where:*

1 = strongly disagree   2 = disagree   3 = agree   4 = strongly agree

	Disagree			**Agree**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
a) I am ambitious to do well in my future job and work---------	1	2	3	4
b) school is a good way to prepare me for my future ----------	1	2	3	4
c) I am worried about going for an interview for a job----------	1	2	3	4
d) if you don't get good GCSEs you can't get a good job-------	1	2	3	4
e) I sometimes bunk off school ---------------------------	1	2	3	4
f) I think I will get good GCSEs---------------------------	1	2	3	4
g) a job with training is a waste of time----------------------	1	2	3	4
h) I try my best most of the time--------------------------	1	2	3	4
i) I am worried about not being able to get a job--------------	1	2	3	4
j) I am keen to get good grades in my GCSEs-----------------	1	2	3	4
k) I want a fairly easy job -------------------------------	1	2	3	4
l) I would like to do something similar to my Mum or Dad------	1	2	3	4
m) I would be prepared to move away to get a good job--------	1	2	3	4
n) my parents have a different view of my future to me---------	1	2	3	4
o) I usually get my homework in on time---------------------	1	2	3	4
p) eventually, I hope to go on to university-------------------	1	2	3	4
q) I am not bothered about passing exams-------------------	1	2	3	4
r) most of the time I pay attention in class-------------------	1	2	3	4
s) once I finish school I don't want to do any more education----	1	2	3	4

8. Roughly how many hours homework do you do outside school in an average week?

☐ hours per week

8a. Do you do homework at the weekends?   Yes ☐   No ☐

8b. How often do you do homework? *(tick one box)*

Every evening ☐   Most evenings ☐   Occasionally ☐

9. We are interested in any work you may do outside school. Please remember that all this information is strictly confidential and no one will be told what you have said.

a. Do you do any work through your family?
(for example, babysitting, washing cars *etc.*)   Yes ☐   No ☐

b. Do you have a part-time job? (*eg* paper round, working in a shop *etc.*)   Yes ☐   No ☐

10. What type of part-time work do you do? *eg.* paper round, washing cars, helping in a shop *etc. Please describe in the space below.*

....

11a. Roughly, how many hours part-time work do you work per week? *Enter number of hours in box.*   ☐

11b. Do you work part-time at weekends? T*ick one box.*   Yes ☐   No ☐

11c. Do you work part-time during the week? *Tick one box.*   Yes ☐   No ☐

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12. At the moment, what do you think you are most likely to do when you finish your GCSEs? *Please put a '1' in the box next to the one you are most likely to do and a '2' next to your second choice.*

a. Go to a Sixth Form college ☐   b. Go to a Further Education college ☐

c. Get a job with training ☐   d. Stay at school ☐

e. Get any job ☐   f. Be unemployed ☐

g. No idea at the moment ☐

13. If you intend to stay on at school or go to college after your GCSEs, what type of course do you think you will do? *Again, please put a '1' next to the one you are most likely to do and a '2' next to your second choice.*

a. Mainly vocational courses to prepare for a job ☐   b. Mainly A levels ☐   e. Don't know ☐

c. A mixture of A levels and practical courses ☐   d. Something else ☐

To help us analyse the results we would like to know a little about your family background. Again, we would like to stress this information is strictly confidential.

14. What is your date of birth?   Month ☐   Year ☐

15. Are you? *Please tick one box.*   Female ☐   or   Male ☐

16. Which of the following groups would describe yourself? *Please tick one box.*

White ☐   Black-African ☐   Black-Caribbean ☐

Black-other ☐   Pakistani ☐   Indian ☐

Bangladeshi ☐   Chinese ☐   Other-Asian ☐

Other   *Please write in.*   ....

Thank you very much for your help with this project.

Please now put your form in the envelope provided and give it to your teacher.

Don't forget to put your name and school on the front so you can be included in the prize draw.

Pre-16 Work Experience Practice in England: An Evaluation

Student Process Survey

YOUR VIEWS ON WORK EXPERIENCE

Confidential to the Institute for Employment Studies

Please answer the following questions as fully as you are able by ticking the boxes or writing in the spaces provided.

Selecting Your Work Experience Placement

1. Were you able to choose your own placement? *Please tick one box.*

   Yes ☐   No ☐

2. If yes, why did you choose this placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

   I was interested in the career ☐   I thought it would help me decide what courses to take ☐

   My parents suggested it ☐   I already knew employer ☐

   Other *(please write in)* ....

3. Was your placement your first choice? *(please tick one box)*

   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. How did you select your placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

   From a list on a computer ☐   From a list in a book ☐

   Family/friend suggested it ☐   It was given to me by the school ☐

   It was arranged by an outside person ☐   From a Job Centre noticeboard ☐

   Other *(please write in)* ....

5. Did you discuss the details and purpose of your work experience placement with anyone before it took place? *(please tick one box)*

   Yes ☐   No ☐   **If No, go to Q8.**

6. If yes, who? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

   Someone from the employer ☐   Careers teacher ☐

   PSE Teacher ☐   Another teacher ☐

   Someone else *(please write in)* ....

7. What did you discuss? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

   How to get to the placement ☐   Objectives of the placement ☐

   How to dress and behave ☐   How to fill in a work diary ☐

   Completing school assignments ☐   Relevance of the work experience to school studies ☐

8. Were you turned down by any employers when trying to find your placement? *(please tick one box).*

   Yes ☐   No ☐

About Your Work Experience Placement

9. What type of employer or industry did you go to for your placement? For example, a shop, an engineering company, a hospital, the council *etc. (please write in)*

   ....

10. What did you do on your placement? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

An actual job ☐   Helping someone do a job ☐

Moving around different departments ☐   Doing a specially created job ☐

Doing odd jobs ☐   Something else *(please write in)* ....

11. If you did one main job on your placement, what was it? *eg* hairdresser, mechanic, typist, sales assistant, clerical/office worker *etc. (please write in)*

....

12. How long was your placement meant to be? *(please tick one box)*

One week ☐   Two weeks ☐   Three weeks or more ☐

13. Did you complete your placement? (p*lease tick one box)*

Yes ☐   **If Yes, go to Q16.**   No ☐

14. If no, how many days did you miss? *(please enter number in box)* ☐

15. Why did you not finish your work experience placement*? (please tick as many boxes as apply)*

I did not like the work ☐   I did not get on with my employer ☐

I was ill ☐   I did not think the work was relevant to me ☐

Other *(please write in)* ....

16. Were you visited by your teacher while you were on your placement? *(please tick one box)*

Yes ☐   No ☐   **If No, go to Q18.**

17. If Yes, what did you discuss with the teacher during the visit? *(please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Whether I enjoyed it ☐   Whether I had any problems ☐

Whether I was meeting my placement objectives ☐   Whether I could use my experience for school work ☐

Other *(please write in)* ....

18. How relevant was your work experience to your school studies?
(A) *Please tell us what subjects you are studying by ticking the appropriate boxes in column (A)*

For each subject you have ticked, please tick a further box if appropriate
(B) *in column (B) if you used your knowledge of the subject during your placement, and in*
(C) *in column (C) if you used the experience gained in your placement in class work after your work experience.*

	(A) Yes, I am studying this subject	(B) I used it during my placement	(C) I used my work experience in classwork
Business studies	☐	☐	☐
Design and Technology	☐	☐	☐
IT	☐	☐	☐
Mathematics	☐	☐	☐
Science	☐	☐	☐
Foreign Languages	☐	☐	☐
English	☐	☐	☐
History	☐	☐	☐
Geography	☐	☐	☐
Art	☐	☐	☐

19. How often did you use a computer during your placement? *(please tick one box)*

Never ☐   Occasionally ☐   Frequently ☐

20. If you used a computer did you use: *(please tick all that apply)*

A word processing package ☐   A spreadsheet package ☐

A database package ☐   Communications (e-mail, Internet *etc.*) ☐

Other *(please write in)* ....

21. Was a written review of your placement made when it was finished? *(please tick one box)*

Yes, for my Record of ☐   Yes, for some other ☐   No ☐
Achievement   record

22. The following are statements about work experience. We want you to say how strongly you <u>Agree</u> or <u>Disagree</u> with each statement by circling the appropriate number. Please read each statement carefully before responding and circle one number only per line.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	1	2	3	4	5
I did not understand the point of my placement before I went	1	2	3	4	5
There was not enough preparation before my placement began	1	2	3	4	5
If I had my time again I would choose a different placement	1	2	3	4	5
I thought the work on my placement was difficult	1	2	3	4	5
I was given opportunity to show people what I can do	1	2	3	4	5
I did not like the people I worked with	1	2	3	4	5
The placement helped me decide about my career	1	2	3	4	5
I found my placement challenging	1	2	3	4	5
My placement involved doing something that interested me	1	2	3	4	5
My placement was not long enough	1	2	3	4	5
I was given opportunities to take responsibility at work	1	2	3	4	5
My placement gave me a good idea of what work is like	1	2	3	4	5
I don't want to end up doing the same work when I finish my education	1	2	3	4	5
My work experience was relevant to my school classwork	1	2	3	4	5
After my placement I felt more interested in doing well in school	1	2	3	4	5
I think we should do more work experience	1	2	3	4	5
I might get a job where I did my placement	1	2	3	4	5
I would have liked more opportunity to discuss my placement afterwards	1	2	3	4	5
Overall I was happy with my placement	1	2	3	4	5

23. Do you have, or have you ever had a part time job?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no this is the end of the questionnaire, thank you for completing this form

If yes, what type of part time work do you do/have you done? *eg.* paper round, working in a shop? *Please describe in the space below*

....

24. Please give details of the normal working hours of this part time job, *ie* hours per day, days per week, dates *etc? Please write in the space below*

....

....

25. In the last week approximately how many hours work did you do in your part time job? Please enter the total number of hours below, if you did no work enter zero.

Monday to Friday .... hours   Saturday to Sunday .... hours

26. The following statements are about your part time job as compared with work experience. We want you to say how strongly you Agree or Disagree by circling the appropriate number. *Please read each statement carefully before responding and circle one number per line.*

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**
	1	2	3	4	5
I have learnt more about how to behave at work in my **part time** job than I did on **work experience**	1	2	3	4	5
Work experience gave me a better idea of what work is like than my **part time job**	1	2	3	4	5
I learnt nothing new from **work experience**	1	2	3	4	5
I learnt more new skills on **work experience** than I have in my **part time job**	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for completing this form.

Please place the questionnaire in the envelope provided and give it to your teacher.

Appendix 3: References

DfEE (1999), *Survey of School Business Links in England: 1997/98*, Statistical Bulletin 2/99 DfEE

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Pike G (2000), *Skills for Work: The Impact of Work Experience*, FOCUS on Schools Briefing Paper 04, Focus Central London TEC, 2000-12-07