Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece

Final Report

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Research

Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece

Audience   Advice and guidance organisations, Careers Wales, Colleges of Further Education, employer bodies, employers, Jobcentre Plus, schools careers advisors, training providers and DELLS programme delivery, funding and planning departments.

Overview   This report presents the findings from a study entitled 'Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece'. The study attempts to identify and examine examples of good practice, both in the UK and other countries, and consult with a series of key stakeholders in Wales to seek views on whether an Apprenticeship clearing house would be of benefit to potential apprentices and employers. As a result of these findings, a model has been developed which could provide the basis for an apprenticeship clearing house service.

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Related documents

Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece:
The Model Walkthrough
Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece:
The Model Diagrammatic Representation

Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece:
The Model Security & Access to Information

Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece:
The Model Statistical Outputs & Tracking

Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece:
Executive Summary

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1. INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings from a study commissioned by the Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills (DELLS) of the Welsh Assembly Government, entitled 'Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece'.

Background

1.2 The decision by DELLS to commission this study emanates largely from a recommendation within the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan for Wales (2005) which, inter alia, stated:

> Clear pathways to work-based learning do not always exist because various services do not co-ordinate their efforts. This presents an obstacle to many potential applicants, who are not always able to deal effectively with bureaucracy. Some unsuccessful applicants are not followed up and may be discouraged, possibly becoming part of the group who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). A further difficulty is the lack of the kind of direct market between potential apprentices and employers that exists in some other European countries: clear local information on opportunities is not always available.

> LSC is examining the potential for a 'clearing house' to match prospective apprentices to employers, providing for aspiring apprentices what the UCAS clearing system provides for aspiring students in higher education. We will introduce such a facility in Wales, building on the 'Learning Choices' database being developed in association with Careers Wales. Information sharing between providers and public agencies may need to be facilitated through new IT systems and contractual changes, and a Welsh clearing house should take specific account of Welsh language skills and needs.

1.3 Overseen by the DELLS Project Steering Group, the study would attempt to identify and examine examples of good practice, both in the UK and other countries and consult with a series of key stakeholders in Wales to seek views on whether an Apprenticeship clearing house would be of benefit to potential apprentices and employers.

Purpose

1.4 The study would, via a process of research and consultation, determine whether there was a need for such a facility and to develop a model[1] which could provide the basis for an Apprenticeship clearing house service.

1.5 Key issues to be addressed in developing recommendations included:

- An examination of current constraints;

- How the Youth Guarantee could be accommodated within any model;

- Whether the model should be one of selection and recruitment, or referral;

- What the role of Careers Wales should be in working with a clearing house system;

- How employer collaboration might be encouraged;

- How existing processes and resources could be used wherever possible;

- What additional supporting infrastructure might be required;

- How the model might be promoted and marketed;

- An indication of what resources might be needed for the model.

1.6 Much debate took place at the inception meeting with the Project Steering Group about whether the model should be a dedicated clearing house for MAs or a more ambitious model dealing with a wider range of opportunities including jobs, Skillbuild and Further Education courses as well as apprenticeships.

1.7 While some felt that an integrated opportunities' model would be preferable, it was decided that the study should concentrate on the development of a MA model, initially[2].

Abbreviations and terms used in this report

1.8 In this report, unless otherwise stated, references to:

- 'MA(s)' subsume all other forms of apprenticeships, including Modern Apprenticeships, Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and Modern Skills

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[1] Initially it was envisaged that 2 models would be drafted, but after much discussion with members of the Project Steering Group and various consultees, a single model has emerged as the leading option. Our model, however, has been developed in a series of 'layers' and we have recommended 'add ons' which effectively give more than two versions of a robust basic model

[2] However, our recommended model has been designed with the potential for future development as a key criterion

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Diplomas; where we refer specifically to the Modern Apprenticeship strand we will refer to it as 'Modern Apprenticeship' or (abbreviated) 'Mod App';

- DELLS – Welsh Assembly Government Department for Education Lifelong Learning and Skills;

- CWA – Careers Wales Association;

- CWOL – Careers Wales Online;

- 'Individuals' include young people and adults, male and female;

- 'Training Organisations' include private sector training providers and Colleges of Further Education;

- Youth Guarantee: Extended Guarantee Group[3] - All persons who satisfy the eligibility criteria and, in addition, are non-employed, are seeking entry into WBL, and:

    - have reached the age of 18 but have not been available to enter WBL or any previous youth programme for the first time because of disability, ill health, pregnancy, custodial sentence, remand in custody or language difficulties, or as a result of a care order; or
    - entered WBL or any previous youth programme for the first time before reaching the age of 18 but discontinued their learning for any of the reasons set out above and were unable to resume their learning before reaching the age of 18.

- Youth Guarantee: Guarantee Group[4] - All persons who satisfy the eligibility criteria and, in addition, are non-employed, are seeking entry into WBL or any previous youth programme, are not in full-time education, and have not reached the age of 18.

Acknowledgements

1.9   We acknowledge the contribution to this study made by a variety of people and organisations. In particular:

- Julie Owens – DELLS Project Manager - for ongoing assistance and support during the life of the project and for so swiftly dealing with any query from the project team;

- Jackie Bastock – DELLS - for her considered advice and guidance at the outset of the project and during the presentation of the first draft of the clearing house model;

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[3] Source – WAG Work Based Learning Programme Specification 2005/06
[4] Source – WAG Work Based Learning Programme Specification 2005/06

- Siân Powell – DELLS - for her ideas and thoughts on how the model should develop and how its development might link with the work being undertaken on the Learning Choices and Work-based Learning databases in Wales;

- Paul Messer – Careers Wales Online – for advice and guidance on some of the technical aspects of developing a web-based clearing house model;

- Steve Hole – Careers Wales Association – for assistance in helping the project team understand the developments being undertaken to improve and enhance Careers Wales Online;

- Terry Jones – National Training Federation - for help in setting up interviews with training providers and a focus group;

- Bridget Moseley – Coleg Sir Gâr - for help in setting up interviews with colleges and two focus groups.

1.10　In addition a wide group of key stakeholders in Wales and representatives of four exemplars have all contributed significantly to the project; we are grateful to them for their inputs. The names and organisations involved are detailed in Appendix III.

Report structure

1.11　We have produced our final report in two parts. The first part of the report will cover the following aspects of our work:

- Background and purpose;
- Methodology;
- The context;
- Overview of desk research;
- Exemplar visits;
- Overview of feedback from fieldwork;
- Costing the development of a MA clearing house;
- Costs;
- Our conclusions;
- A suggested implementation plan.

1.12　The second part of our report will go into more detail of what a clearing house model might look like once developed. It will include:

- A clearing house model – walk through;
- A clearing house model – diagrammatic representation;
- A clearing house model – security and access to information;
- A clearing house model – tracking and statistical outputs.

2.   METHODOLOGY

2.1   In this chapter we give a synopsis of what we undertook during the period of the study. This is a factual description of our activities; the *findings* from these activities are described in more detail in Chapter 6 'Overview and Feedback from Fieldwork'; a description of the emerging model is set out in Volume 2.

Research instruments

2.2   Our first task was to produce a series of research instruments for use with various stakeholders. The purpose of such instruments was to ensure that questions we were to put to stakeholders were researched, considered and covered all the aspects we were seeking to elicit views on prior to us embarking on our fieldwork; it also ensured that each consultant carried out interviews in a consistent manner and produced a similar consistent level of report after interviews had taken place.

2.3   Draft research instruments were passed to the Project Steering Group for comment before use in the field; we had helpful suggestions from members of the group and these were incorporated into final instruments. Research instruments were developed for the following key stakeholder groups:

- Focus groups – participants in MAs;
- Focus groups – non participants in MAs;
- Training organisations;
- Employers – participants in MAs;
- Employers – non participants in MAs;
- DELLS, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus organisations;
- Comparators (exemplars in England and Wales).

2.4   An example of one of these research instruments is shown in Appendix I. Others followed a similar outline but were customised to the individual contributions of each group.

Desk research

2.5   Desk research was an important early input to the study. This included web searches, literature reviews and making contact with a number of potential 'leads'. We explored more than 100 websites alone and this contributed significantly to the development of research instruments and focusing of the fieldwork.

2.6   As part of this exercise, we made contact with a number of university Professors who had an interest in youth transitions, some at an international level, to ascertain whether they were aware of any interesting developments both in the UK and further afield:

- Professor Watts – National Institute for Careers Education Counselling;
- Professor Raffe – University of Edinburgh;

- Professor van der Velde – University of Maastricht;
- Professor Bynner – University of London Institute of Education.

2.7   The Project Steering Group asked that, in undertaking an international search for potentially interesting models, we carry out a specific search in Canada. Our international research work included the search for and (where available) examination of websites in the following countries:

- Canada (detailed);
- Germany (detailed);
- United States of America;
- Austria;
- Australia.

Exemplar visits

2.8   As a result of our desk research and suggestions made during our early discussions with DELLS staff and the Project Steering Group, we determined that visits to and discussions with three examples of clearing house systems would be of specific interest to the study. In discussion with the DELLS Project Manager we agreed to visit the following:

- West of England LSC (Gloucester and Bristol), where a MA clearing house was emerging from their much broader and ambitious database of learners and work experience opportunities in the area. This example was cited as being an exemplary model of co-operation between local employers, schools and training providers;

- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), the UK's central organisation through which applications for full-time undergraduate courses in universities and colleges are processed. To examine and understand one of the largest, longest operating and well respected clearing house models in the UK would help in setting a context and benchmark against which to develop any proposals for Wales;

- Sussex Council of Training Providers (SCTP), where a bespoke MA clearing house had been developed in 2005 and was currently in full operation. Our early examination of this web-based model suggested that many of the issues any development in Wales would need to address had already been considered and resolved in Sussex; an extended field visit to SCTP could potentially provide us with information of interest and significance;

2.9   However, in the process of our consultation programme in Wales, a visit to GO Wales revealed an existing web based system of matching clients (students) with employers. We felt that our report on findings from our GO Wales visit might be best placed in the Exemplars section of this document. We have added a more detailed description of our visit in that section (see paragraph 5.70 et seq).

Focus groups

2.10   As individuals would be one of the principal end-users of any clearing house system it was important that their views were canvassed as to whether they would find such a system to be helpful to them.

2.11   We were interested to talk to those individuals who were already participating in MA training to gain an understanding of the processes they had experienced in achieving an apprenticeship. However, we were equally keen to discuss with a group of individuals who, for various reasons, were not participating in MAs and to ascertain whether a clearing house might be of benefit in helping them to achieve (or make the decision to apply for) an apprenticeship.

2.12   We interviewed four groups, comprising a total of 25 individuals:

- Three groups who were participating in MAs;
- One group of individuals who were not involved in MA training.

2.13   The age and gender breakdown of the groups were:

Table 1 : Participants in MAs

Age group	Males	Females	Total
16-19	3	5	8
20+	7	3	10
Totals	**10**	**8**	**18**

Table 2 : Non Participants in MAs

Age group	Males	Females	Total
16-19	5	2	7
20+	-	-	-
Totals	**5**	**2**	**7**

2.14   A further important component of our focus group discussions with individuals was to take views on a number of websites that contained elements (to varying degrees) of clearing house arrangements. We were particularly interested in the usability, relevance and design ('look') of the sites. The websites used were:

- The Sussex MA clearing house;
- The London East Connexions Partnership 16+ Course Finder;
- Careers Wales Online (Careers Wales.com);
- LANTRA's 'ajobin.com'.

Employers

2.15   We visited 10 employers. It was important to take the views of employers with experience of recruiting and training MAs to ascertain their opinions on how the current system worked and to determine whether they felt that a new clearing house arrangement might work more efficiently and effectively for them in filling future apprentice vacancies.

2.16   Equally, it was felt that the small sample should include representation from those who had not previously employed a MA, to seek views on why they had not taken on apprentices and whether the introduction of a clearing house might persuade them in the future to consider doing so.

2.17   We conducted interviews with:

- 7 employers who had recruited MAs;
- 3 employers who had not previously recruited MAs.

2.18   We attempted, within such a small sample, to interview a cross section of employers based on:

- Size;
- Sector;
- Geography;
- Areas in which the use of the Welsh language was important.

Table 3 : Employers who have recruited MAs

Sector	Large Employers[5]	Small Employers[6]	Totals
Local Authority	1	-	1
Aircraft Manufacture	1	-	1
Leisure/Hospitality/Service	1	1	2
Energy	1	-	1
Agriculture	-	1	1
Hairdressing	-	1	1
Totals	**4**	**3**	**7**

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[5] More than 100 employees
[6] Fewer than 25 employees

Table 4 : Employers who have not previously recruited MAs

Sector	Large Employers	Small Employers	Totals
Construction	-	1	1
Leisure/Hospitality/Service	-	2	2
Totals	**-**	**3**	3

2.19 Two employer consultations were conducted via the medium of the Welsh language; one other bi-lingual employer was offered the consultation in Welsh, but elected to use the English language.

DELLS

2.20 As the organisation with responsibility for commissioning training, including MAs, we felt it important to the study to take views from a range of DELLS staff on how a clearing house system might work, particularly in the strategic context, but also from marketing, commissioning, contractual and quality angles.

2.21 We held four meetings with DELLS staff, one in North Wales and three in South Wales. At the meetings 12 representatives from the following areas provided input to the study:

- Sector skills policy;
- Learning policy management;
- Learning provision management;
- Learning network development;
- Skills development;
- Marketing;
- Programme management.

Careers Wales

2.22 Careers Wales plays a pivotal role in the provision of advice and guidance to individuals seeking MAs, providing a placement and referral service for both employers and individuals. We held four meetings with Careers Wales:

- Careers Wales Chief Executives' group – five (of the six) CEOs were in attendance and provided a strategic view;
- Careers Wales North East – managers and careers advisers;
- Careers Wales South – senior management and team leaders;
- Careers Wales Association – senior management.

Careers Wales Online

2.23   One of the flagship projects of Careers Wales is the web-based resource 'Careers Wales Online' which supplements the work of their front line offices. The website has had considerable resources invested in it and is constantly being refined and further developed. The website includes the Learning Choices database, reference to which was made in the section of the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan, which suggested that any development of a clearing house might be built on this database.

2.24   The database underpinning the 'Careers Wales.com' website holds information on a large percentage of the 14-19 cohort in Wales, a number of whom will be future MAs and potential users of a MA clearing house. We held a meeting with and received a presentation from the Careers Wales Online Advisory Group. In addition we have had a series of helpful discussions and exchanged a number of e-mails with the Careers Wales Online Project Manager during the period of the study.

Jobcentre Plus

2.25   The largest proportion of individuals currently undertaking MA training is aged 19+. Many of these individuals would be natural clients of the Jobcentre Plus service. It was felt by the Project Steering Group that we should consult with Jobcentre Plus about how a clearing house system might help their client group in the context of MAs.

2.26   We proposed to visit 2 Jobcentre Plus offices in Wales; however, on advice from the organisation's regional office we held just one meeting with their External Relations Manager who advised us that any client seeking advice on, and/or entry into MAs was invariably referred to Careers Wales for that advice and any subsequent placing action; as such it was felt that a visit to a Jobcentre Plus office was unlikely to further inform the study.

Training organisations

2.27   The involvement of DELLS recognised and approved training organisations in the MA process is mandatory. Training organisations have many responsibilities, including working with employers to seek out and develop opportunities, as well as interviewing, placing, developing training plans, providing off-the-job training and carrying out regular reviews and assessments for individuals. We planned to undertake 4 consultations with training organisations – 2 private sector and 2 Further Education sector providers. We actually conducted 6 consultations:

- 2 private sector providers –1 Mid Wales, 1 South Wales;
- 1 public sector provider – 1 North Wales, 1 South Wales;
- 2 Further Education sector providers – 1 North Wales, 1 South Wales.

One interview was conducted through the medium of the Welsh language.

Sector Skills Councils

2.28   In the context of MAs, SSCs are responsible for consulting and working with employers to develop training frameworks for the range of occupations within their respective sectors. We were particularly keen to meet with representatives of LANTRA (Environmental and Land-based Industry Sector Skills Council). Our reasons were twofold:

- They had developed a website that included an embryonic clearing house arrangement. We were especially interested in the 'look' of the website as the artistic element of the design appeared to be aimed at young people. We asked individuals in our focus group sessions to give their views on the 'look' of this website.
- The land-based industry is a major sector in Wales, particularly Mid Wales; we felt that this SSC could give us some particularly helpful advice on how a clearing house might be received and utilised within this sector in Wales.

Other organisations

2.29   We took views from two other organisations; one that had experience of operating a clearing house for graduates in Wales; the other with a remit of representing a wide range of employer views:

- GO Wales (Graduate Opportunities), Swansea;
- The West Wales Chamber of Commerce.

Process for data analysis and synthesis

2.30   The research team used the framework of the research instruments to conduct consultations; each consultation was reported using a framework that matched that of the research instrument, ensuring a consistency of format in the finished reports. Each consultant highlighted comments within the reports that:

- Had particular relevance to the design of a clearing house model;
- Were of importance to the overall findings of the study.

2.31   Copies of each report were circulated to every consultant on completion (generally immediately after the consultation had been conducted); each consultant internalised key points and used these to further expand questioning in their own subsequent consultations.

2.32   Two consultants have worked together to analyse all the reports. Two separate meetings have been held:

- One to draw conclusions in the context of designing a model;
- A subsequent one to draw conclusions in the context of producing our final report.

2.33   In terms of the former, our first draft of a clearing house model was a key output; this was circulated to all team members who had the opportunity to review it and comment on/adapt the model before it was presented to a sub-group of the Project Steering Group at a meeting in Bedwas on 10th January 2007.

2.34   A similar process has been applied to the latter; a first draft of this report being circulated to all team members for review, comment and, where appropriate, adaptation.

2.35   We believe that this comprehensive process provides a robust method of ensuring that the views of stakeholders across Wales have been fairly represented in our modelling, final reporting and recommendations.

Project management and client liaison

2.36   We developed a very helpful working relationship with the DELLS Project Manager. We met to refine our initial project plan and to agree a final project plan that provided the framework for organising the remainder of the project. Throughout the project we have provided regular updates on progress via written reports (e-mail) and telephone conversations.

2.37   As a whole team we met on two separate occasions:

- To plan and allocate the work;
- To review progress at the midway stage and to examine in depth a number of the more interesting websites we had discovered during our desk research.

2.38   As noted above, two members of the team met on two further occasions:

- To work on an incipient model;
- To undertake the final synthesis and analysis of the fieldwork we have undertaken.

2.39   We have met with the full Project Steering Group twice. The first occasion was the inception meeting which set the broad parameters for the project as a whole and the second a feedback session where we presented our final report and model.

2.40   We also met with a sub-group of the Project Steering Group to present our work on developing a model for the clearing house - to representatives from:

- DELLS;
- Careers Wales Association;
- Careers Wales Online.

3.   THE CONTEXT

3.1   As we stated in the introduction to this report, the MA clearing house's origins can be traced to the Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan 2005. The Improvement Plan made a number of references to MAs in Wales.

3.2   In this brief chapter we provide a few facts and figures about MAs in order to place the clearing house plans into a broader context. We comment on budget, age ranges and completion rates.

3.3   In the academic year 2003-2004 there were some 18,950 enrolments[7] on Modern Apprenticeships and 19,125 on Foundation MAs; in 2004-2005 numbers had risen to 21,260 and 25,305 respectively.

3.4   Expenditure in 2004-2005 was, respectively, £29.2m and £29.5m. In the period August 2005 to July 2006 forecasted spend on the programmes was £35.2m and £43.3m.

3.5   Whilst MAs have traditionally been aimed at young people aged 16-19, the strategy in Wales of developing an all-age MA Framework has resulted in more than half of all enrolments entering MAs being aged 25 and over.

3.6   In Wales completion rates for MAs are shown as 21%, and for FMAs 29%. In comparison completion rates in England are higher at 33% and 35%, whilst in Germany and France rates for similar apprenticeship programmes are 75%-80% and in the Netherlands and Denmark 65%-70%[8].

3.7   International benchmarks have shown that there are a number of characteristics that are common to countries with successful apprenticeship systems. Of particular interest to this study is the characteristic described as that of having 'good and accessible information about occupations and apprenticeship places'[9]. By contrast it is noted in Wales 'the system has disparate and poorly understood products aimed at heterogeneous target groups'[10].

Statistical data

3.8   We have added a number of tables in this chapter to highlight current trends in MAs throughout Wales. We would have liked to have included detailed information on enrolments, but unfortunately we have not been able to access the information at the level of detail we would have wished. We have therefore concentrated on 'in training' figures – these figures relate to the position in December 2006. However we have been able to access one dataset relating to starts by sector (for 2005/06), and we reproduce that below.

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[7] The term enrolment includes multiple enrolments (i.e. where an individual has enrolled on a MA on more than one occasion in a year, each enrolment is counted)

[8] Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan for Wales 2005

[9] The Way to Work. The Report of the MA Advisory Committee, chaired by Sir John Cassels (DfES, 2001)

[10] Work-Based Learning Improvement Plan for Wales 2005

Table 5 : MA starts in Wales in 2005/06 by sector (percentages)

Sector	FMA	Mod Apps	MSD	All Apprenticeships
Agriculture	0.7%	0.7%	0.9%	0.7%
Construction	10.2%	10.3%	0.0%	9.7%
Engineering	5.6%	11.4%	1.0%	7.2%
Manufacturing	10.9%	0.7%	0.0%	7.2%
Transportation	1.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.7%
Management & Professional	1.8%	11.7%	57.6%	7.6%
Business Administration	15.6%	20.9%	6.3%	16.8%
Retailing & Customer Service	21.8%	8.5%	0.3%	16.6%
Leisure, Sport & Travel	1.1%	2.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Hospitality	9.0%	4.7%	0.9%	7.3%
Hair & Beauty	4.3%	2.9%	0.0%	3.6%
Health Care & Public Services	17.9%	25.8%	33.0%	21.1%
Media & Design	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Totals	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Absolute totals	**18,215**	**8,824**	**1,408**	**28,447**

Source: Welsh Assembly Government 'Superstar' statistics – January 2007

3.9   It is interesting to note that Business Administration, Retailing and Customer Service, and Health Care and Public Services account for more than half of all MA starts in Wales. By contrast there are very low levels of starts in Agriculture, Transportation, Leisure, Sport and Travel, and Media and Design. Less than 8% of apprentices are in the Hospitality Sector, perhaps confirming the comments made to us during our fieldwork that recruitment in this sector is particularly difficult (see paragraph 6.4).

MAs in funded training by sector

3.10   An examination of numbers in funded training on foundation and modern apprenticeships and modern skills diplomas[11] by sector revealed the following information:

Table 6: MAs in funded training in Wales by sector (percentages)

Sector	FMA	Mod Apps	MSD	All Apprenticeships
Agriculture	1.0%	0.7%	0.6%	0.9%
Construction	13.1%	13.1%	0.2%	12.4%
Engineering	7.3%	16.2%	1.3%	10.6%
Manufacturing	8.7%	0.6%	0.0%	5.0%
Transportation	1.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%
Management & Professional	2.4%	13.0%	55.5%	9.4%
Business Administration	15.0%	18.3%	9.8%	16.1%
Retailing & Customer Service	19.9%	6.7%	0.6%	13.6%
Leisure, Sport & Travel	1.1%	1.7%	0.6%	1.4%
Hospitality	7.8%	3.6%	0.9%	5.8%
Hair & Beauty	4.8%	2.7%	0.0%	3.7%
Health Care & Public Services	17.7%	22.8%	30.5%	20.4%
Media & Design	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Totals	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**
Absolute totals	**16,816**	**12,334**	**1,610**	**30,760**

Source: Welsh Assembly Government 'Superstar' statistics – January 2007

3.11   This table represents the position in December 2006 of all MAs in funded training by sector. The 'in funded training' percentages largely reflect the pattern of enrolment by sector; the one point perhaps to draw attention to is the variance between starts and in funded training in the Retailing and Customer Service sector (16.1% of all MA starts; 13.6% in funded training)

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[11] Modern Skills Diploma (MSD) is an employment based programme for employed status learners. It provides opportunities for learners to improve their skills and knowledge at NVQ level 4. Entrants to this programme would normally expect to already hold technician and/or people management positions. MSD is one of the 5 strands of Work Based Learning

suggesting that there is a higher incidence of premature termination in this sector than most others.

MAs in funded training by age group

3.12   We have also examined the pattern of apprentices in funded training by age group:

Table 7 : MAs in funded training in Wales by age group (percentages)

Age Group	FMA	Mod Apps	MSD	All Apprenticeships
15 years old and under	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
16 to 18 years old	25.4%	19.4%	0.2%	21.7%
19 to 24 years old	24.4%	28.1%	9.3%	25.1%
25 years old and over	50.1%	52.4%	90.5%	53.2%
Age not known	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Totals	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Absolute totals	**16,809**	**12,330**	**1,608**	**30,747**

Source: Welsh Assembly Government 'Superstar' statistics – January 2007

3.13   Over 78% of all MAs are aged 19 and over; 53.2% are aged 25 and over. These figures suggest that policy in Wales to extend apprenticeships to adults has produced significant results. The group of young people aged 16 to 18 (arguably the traditional apprentice group) account for only 21.7% of those in funded training in Wales – a figure we find rather surprising.

MA statuses prior to entry into training

3.14   The following analysis examines the patterns of MAs statuses prior to joining MAs.

Table 8: Entrants' statuses prior to entry into MAs

Status before entry to MAs	FMA	Mod Apps	MSD	All Apprenticeships
Guarantee	12.9%	9.3%	0.1%	10.8%
Extended Guarantee	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Non Guarantee	86.9%	90.5%	99.8%	89.0%
Totals	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Absolute totals	**16,809**	**12,330**	**1,608**	**30,747**

Source: Welsh Assembly Government 'Superstar' statistics – January 2007

3.15 The table shows that almost 90% of MAs came from the group not covered by a Government guarantee of training after leaving school. Clearly the bulk of this group comprises those aged 19 and over.

3.16 One note of caution in this context is that we have been asked how a new clearing house arrangement in Wales might improve the take up of places by those covered by the Government guarantee. The term 'Guarantee Group' is accepted by most as referring to those young people who have serious difficulty in accessing any form of post compulsory education opportunity. Whilst all individuals leaving post compulsory education are immediately covered by the Government's guarantee, those shown in the table above are most likely those initially covered by the guarantee, but who had no difficulty in accessing a post compulsory education opportunity. In other references to the 'Guarantee group' elsewhere in this report, we refer to the group with ongoing difficulties in accessing opportunities.

Distribution of MAs in funded training by size of employing organisation

3.17 In the following table we look at the distribution of MAs by size of employing organisation.

Table 9 : Distribution of MAs in funded training by size of employing organisation

Size of employer	FMA	Mod Apps	MSD	All Apprenticeships
Large	37.3%	40.6%	29.3%	38.2%
Small, medium, micro	55.8%	56.2%	69.1%	56.6%
Unknown	4.2%	1.3%	0.3%	2.8%
Learner not employed	2.7%	1.9%	1.3%	2.3%
Totals	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**
Absolute totals	**16,809**	**12,330**	**1,608**	**30,747**

Source: Welsh Assembly Government 'Superstar' statistics – January 2007

3.18 It is interesting to note that SMEs and micro companies (0-9 employees) account for 99.1% of all businesses in Wales[12]; they have 56.6% of all MAs in training with them. While large companies account for 0.9% of all businesses in Wales and have over 38% of all MAs in training.

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[12] Source – WAG StatsWales

4.   OVERVIEW OF DESK RESEARCH

4.1   We conducted an extensive desk research exercise, undertaking a variety of searches using internet search engines (Google, Vivissimo, Lycos, Yahoo, Ask Jeeves) to seek out models both in the UK and on a worldwide basis. The nature of this type of search within the timescales allowed was unlikely to have been totally exhaustive; nonetheless circa 100 pieces of desk research were undertaken.

4.2   In addition we approached a number of universities, with departments having an interest in youth transitions, with anticipation that they might be aware of some developments both at home and internationally. We received responses from those we contacted; in two cases they were not able to help us further; in the other two cases we were referred to other people/organisations, but these sources did not add to the picture gleaned from the web research.

4.3   From our searches a number of potentially interesting websites were examined in more depth. These included:

- Sussex Council of Training Providers 'Apprenticeships in Sussex';

- LANTRA 'ajobin';

- West of England 'AP4L';

- London East Connexions Partnership '16+ Course Finder';

- Engineering Employers' Federation 'Engineering Connections';

- Apprenticeshipsearch.com – Canada;

- Meine Stadt Apprenticeship clearing house – Germany;

- Industrie und Handelskammern of Nord - Westfalen Apprenticeship clearing house – Germany;

- The Australian Construction Industry Apprenticeship website – Australia;

- Lehrling.at Apprenticeship website – Austria;

- Clearing house for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology – Leeds University;

- CATCH – Nursing and Midwifery education - Scotland;

- Caregiver Jobs Clearinghouse – United States of America

4.4   We provide a short synopsis of each of these websites in the following paragraphs. The desk research was carried out in October 2006 and we acknowledge that there may have been changes and developments since these comments were drafted.

4.5   **Sussex Council of Training Providers 'Apprenticeships in Sussex'**
        www.apprenticeships-in-sussex.com
        Coverage: an extremely interesting website that lists limited details of young people interested in acquiring apprenticeships (showing age of applicant, type of apprenticeship sought, areas prepared to travel to and preferred start date) and limited details of employers who have apprenticeships on offer (type and level of vacancy, location, wages and start date). The website facilitates general searches based on occupational type, location of vacancy and level of apprenticeship within Sussex. It has an extensive list of occupations in which apprenticeships are available with links to the Connexions Jobs4U Careers database, which describes in detail the occupational area and the industry in which it is located. **Security:** No passworded areas within the website, employers have access to some detail about young people (identifier being a reference number) and young people have access to employer detail, via reference number. If interested in obtaining further details users are asked to call or e-mail the clearing house. **Links:** links to testimonials from young people who have undertaken apprenticeship training and to employers who have recruited apprentices. A link to seemingly detailed information on all training providers in the area with information on occupational areas and locations covered, information on how to apply, links to the providers' e-mail and website addresses. Each provider page is date-stamped with the date of last update. There is the facility for individuals to complete an application form for an apprenticeship place using the 'Fast-Track Apply' link that takes the applicant through a process of selecting the type and level of apprenticeship sought, and the location and training provider with whom they might wish to be linked. There are further links on the website to a FAQs page and a Contact us page.

4.6   **LANTRA 'ajobin';**
        www.ajobin.com/aprenticeships.aspx
        Coverage: Linked from the Lantra site this modern and attractive website provides young people with a wealth of information regarding environment and land based opportunities. Options include a section on industry specific information, work-based training, full time study, college/training provider details, work experience/volunteering and apprenticeships within the industry. At present this leads back to the Lantra site which provides details on MAs with a link to www.apprenticeships.org.uk. **Security:** No passworded areas within the website. **Links**: to Careers Wales, Careers Scotland, Connexions and Northern Ireland Careers Service. The site appears to be in the early stages of development and, as yet, does not perform the function of a clearing house.

4.7   London East Connexions Partnership '16+ Course Finder';
www.connexions-londoneast.co.uk/clearinghouse/home.php
Coverage: covering 10 London boroughs this is a clearing house website offering general employment and training opportunities. The vast majority of the opportunities displayed are training opportunities via training providers. There were only a very small number of actual employment opportunities; each opportunity showed a potential start date, but the most up-to-date was 12 months old, suggesting that the site had not been updated for some considerable time. The site appeared to be more targeted towards young people, no function for employers to access any information on available jobseekers. **Security:** generally open access to information on jobs and training opportunities, but some pages required registration with password access thereafter. **Links:** there were links allowing the user to access basic information on local training providers (website address/e-mail address or telephone number); interesting link to 'Fasttomato' the Morrisby Group's integrated careers education and guidance system (registration required); further link to S-cool's web-based revision facility, also incorporating a CV writing package. The currency of the site is somewhat doubtful given the dates shown on actual vacancies. Site now appears to be one more dedicated to an inventory of general training opportunities listed by training provider.

4.8   Engineering Employers' Federation 'Engineering Connections';
www.apprentices.co.uk/home.html
Coverage: engineering apprenticeship opportunities across the UK. Prospective apprentices can access information about available places, whilst employers (once registered and via password access) can gain information about potential candidates. A search on engineering places available in Wales revealed opportunities only from 2 national organisations, who advertised their apprenticeship vacancies 'nationwide', there were no opportunities advertised for other companies in Wales. The website appeared attractive and was easily navigated. **Security:** Passworded access to candidate information.
Links: the 'Apprenticeship Forum' provided a range of Questions and Answers aimed primarily at prospective applicants. It was noted that some of the links on the Q&A page (e.g. that to the 'Aptitude Test') did not work – possibly still in the process of development. The general 'Links' page was a portal to a wider range of engineering-related websites and was attractively laid out and easy to use.

4.9   Apprenticeshipsearch.com – Canada;
www.apprenticesearch.com/default.asp
Coverage: only certain parts of Canada, the website provides employers the opportunity to display apprenticeship opportunities and young people to register their profiles. **Security:** registration is required by employers and young people; registration is restricted to those with addresses in the designated areas. Access thereafter is via password which allows employers to view profiles of young people and young people to view opportunities.
Links: Training Provider general opportunities are displayed (without password access) as well as a number of testimonials; other links to occupational descriptions, FAQs; other websites offering self-assessment programmes, further information on broadly related employment/training

topics. The non-passworded areas of this clearing house are heavily information-based and provide the facility of a myriad of links to other sites, rather circuitous navigation.

4.10   Meine Stadt Apprenticeship clearing house – Germany;
www.meinestadt.de/deutschland/lehstellen
Coverage: offers apprenticeship places across Germany. The website shows available places, with a number of options to search by sector, location, commencement date or date of posting offer. Details include qualifications needed, how to apply and relevant contact name. Young people register their details and specific areas of interest online and are sent e-mail when a suitable vacancy is found. This is a free service. Employers are encouraged to post details of apprenticeships –a free service. According to the site there is a shortage of 50,000 apprentice places in Germany at present. Meine Stadt appears to have joined forces with many of the local papers leading a campaign to encourage employers to provide more opportunities for young people. **Security**: unlike some other German sites, no personal details in public domain. **Links**: to many information, advice and guidance sites of interest to young people.

4.11   Industrie und Handelskammern of Nord - Westfalen Apprenticeship clearing house – Germany;
www.ihk-ausbildung.de
Coverage: Website provides an A-Z of apprenticeships with details of areas of study and length of apprenticeship. Click on Ausbildungsplatze 2006 and the site provides an opportunity for employers and students in the Nord Westfalen area to post information. Employers and young people are provided with an ID number and password. **Security:** There seems little use of the password facility and young people's details are in the public domain by clicking on the ID number – addresses, telephone numbers etc. Employers are also identified. Site appears to be kept up to date with posted details valid for 3- 6 months. Interested parties are able to e-mail each other direct.
Links: into information, guidance and advice sites targeted at young people. Availability of personal information would be a cause for concern in Wales.

4.12   The Australian Construction Industry Apprenticeship website – Australia;
www.beconstructive.com.au
Coverage: Designed to help employers in the construction industry in Queensland to find the right apprentice for the job. Applicants can post their résumés on the website and employers have the ability to search by type of apprentice they need to match their vacancy. Details included on funding available to employers taking on an apprentice. Employers and apprentices are required to register. A database of vacancies is available. Employers select sector, region and level of qualifications required and names of suitable apprentices appear. Access to CV is only possible if the employer is registered with the site. The site did not appear to include a section for posting vacancies to enable young people to view and apply for jobs.
Security: registration required to enable the entry of employer and apprentice details. Password needed to access CVs. **Links**: to a range of industry related articles.

4.13   Lehrling.at Apprenticeship website – Austria;
www.lehrling.at
Coverage: apprentice opportunities posted by employers and information posted by interested applicants. Details of available apprenticeship places are displayed by region. Young persons' details appear on screen and employers are linked to their personal e-mail. **Security**: Although employers and young people need to register and select a password, personal details are still left in the public domain. **Links**: to a range of youth related websites. Availability of personal information would be a cause for concern in Wales.

4.14   Clearing house for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology – Leeds University;
www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/index.htm
Coverage: 4 main sections, covering (a) The Basics (Entry requirements, Funding and fees, Numbers of places, Equal opportunities and International applicants); (b) The Courses (Details of each clinical psychology course in the scheme); (c) Applying (Includes information for applicant on When to apply, How to apply, References and What happens next) and (d) Other (Site map, FAQs, Contact us, About us, External links). No on-line applications, but forms can be downloaded and printed off. **Security:** no requirement for registration or password access. **Links:** external links to various sites relating to Clinical Psychology.

4.15   CATCH – Nursing and Midwifery education - Scotland;
www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/child_health/currentwork/courses.htm
Coverage: the Centralised Applications to nursing and midwifery Training Clearing House, (CATCH), provides a system to process applications to Scottish Higher Education Institutions. CATCH processes applicants from their initial enquiry through to placement or otherwise at an institution of their choice. **Security:** no apparent requirement for registration. **Links:** external links to various sites relating to Health. The system appears to operate on similar lines to UCA, i.e. the application is submitted to a central point and then touted round the selected institutions, starting from the individual's first choice; the website only deals with courses, not jobs.

4.16   Caregiver Jobs Clearinghouse – United States of America
www.carecareers.net/
Coverage: a website, with Government (Department of Labor) backing for the care sector. The Clearinghouse (all one word) offers a searchable jobs database, links to employers nationwide and the facility to post résumés online. It describes itself as 'a powerful tool designed to help you find a career and meet a growing national need for caregivers and support staff'. The job seekers page allows individuals to post their résumé or carry out a search; the employers' page facilitates the notification of vacancies. **Security**: registration and password requirements, presumably then providing access to applicant details. **Links:** links to sites about careers in care and other care-related information and websites.

4.17   The preceding paragraphs provide a short, narrative description of those websites that we felt were of some immediate interest to the project. We have also provided in Appendix II a full list of all websites we examined that had some relevance to the project. Many other websites were suggested by search engines, but on closer examination were clearly not of specific relevance to the project – these have not been listed.

5. EXEMPLAR VISITS

5.1 We planned and carried out three visits to organisations that were currently operating clearing house systems, with the objectives of examining how their clearing house systems operated, seeking any advice on developing a MA clearing house in Wales and making note of examples of good practice identified during our visits. The three organisations were:

- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS);
- West of England Learning and Skills Council;
- The Sussex Council of Training Providers;

5.2 However, in the process of our consultation programme in Wales a visit to GO Wales revealed an existing web based system of matching clients (students) with employers. We felt that our report on findings from our GO Wales visit might be best placed in this chapter of our report.

Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS)

5.3 UCAS deals with some 500,000 applications for places in 320 universities each year. It has recently developed a new computerised system to replace the former paper-based process.

5.4 The main components of the system are as follows:

- Applications are made on line at school during year 12. Schools are trained in using the system; they are subsequently known as 'managed centres'. Individuals complete a standard electronic application form (which is acceptable to all institutions – but there has been considerable negotiations on this over the years) for places at up to six universities. They receive up to six provisional offers from the institutions detailing grade requirements. Individuals then select one 'firm' offer and one 'insurance' offer.

- Examination results are provided electronically to UCAS by the awarding bodies one week prior to their formal publication. UCAS 'match' grade achievement to applicants' first choices and, where successful, produce letters to confirm acceptance; a similar process is adopted for 'insurance' selections. Applicants receive their confirmation of places on the day of their results.

- Applicants can view the position of their application via the UCAS 'Track' element of the computerised system – they need to use their unique candidate number and password to gain access. This can be used to track applications and make replies to offers. Confirmation of a place can be received via the Track system on the day of release of exam results.

- Those who fail to achieve the necessary grades to gain places at their firm or insurance choices are eligible for the services of the UCAS clearing system. UCAS does not particularly like the term 'clearing' – it has connotations of 'rejection'. Some 80,000 students go through to clearing, where electronic matching is performed and revised offers made to students.

- Where students fail to achieve any place, UCAS provides no further advice and guidance; neither does it make specific referrals to other agencies.

5.5 Other aspects of the UCAS on line system include:

- Online access to the Stamford Test (personality/psychometric test battery) to help assess users' aptitudes and interests;
- Search by subjects of interest, refined by region, institution or course type;
- Course/institution search;
- A virtual advice centre with guidance on how to make applications, and what happens thereafter – includes advice aimed at parents;
- Information on costs of courses and finance available;
- Advice on managing money;
- A budget calculator;
- Dedicated pages, with a variety of links, for schools, HE staff, parents, the media;
- An information gateway including an institution guide, allowing the user to access individual details of all universities in the UK;
- A statistics section where the user can request real time, bespoke statistical reports;
- A news page;
- An online book store.

5.6 At the end of our interview UCAS expressed their interest in having the opportunity to bid for the contract to develop and manage the clearing house.

Conclusions

5.7 UCAS is a well established clearing house with a highly respected reputation among individuals, parents, schools, colleges and universities. The clearing system, however, deals only with places at universities and colleges with peak periods of activity; clearly there are no links to employers.

5.8 We wonder whether, as part of the development of a MA clearing house system in Wales, a link between it and UCAS could be developed to provide information to those UCAS registrants who fail to gain any place at university. These registrants are likely to already have the pre-requisite academic qualifications for entry into MAs – a work based option might offer them an alternative at a time of rejection from the higher education route.

West of England Learning and Skills Council

Parameters of the clearing house function

5.9   The LSC was anxious to point out that the West of England model was much more than an apprenticeship clearing house. The development had started some 4 years ago, primarily to handle the organisation of students' work experience programme during year 11.

The Work Experience system (WEX Online)

5.10   The initial approach to the LSC had come from a Bristol based software house 'S-cool' who had developed an online A level revision website. Employers had contacted S-cool asking if they could refer 'bright young people studying for A levels' to them as they had work based opportunities that might be of interest to the students - as alternatives to university. S-cool needed to develop an electronic process to link employer vacancies with interested students and approached LSC to seek funding for this. LSC saw the potential for extension to cover the organisation of work experience.

5.11   As an integral part of the development there was a need to have students provide information about themselves, their qualities, their qualifications, and their aspirations post 16. To facilitate this, a new software package was developed - 'Plan-it' - an online self assessment and individual learning planning tool. This is completed in Year 9 (in PSE[13] lessons) by every pupil, data from which is stored in a central database; this is the 'core' of the West of England model. Each student is allocated a unique identifier by the system; this remains with the pupil for the duration of life on the system; it is not reallocated. As a by-product, data also feeds into the LSC's MIS system, providing cohort information on student aspirations and choices. The requirement to complete Plan-it in Year 9 gives the LSC an extremely comprehensive body of data on virtually every 14+ year old pupil in the area. It provides a very powerful tracking facility to follow students throughout their formative learning periods (14–19 and beyond).

5.12   In parallel there was a need to develop a database of employers who were prepared to offer work experience opportunities. The LSC has subcontracted this work to an agency, initially S-cool. As this was an integral part of the development, it was felt that the software house was best positioned: however, the LSC is about to open the work up to competitive tender.

5.13   An initial bank of employers has been recruited by the agency (5,500 - some 20% of all employers in the LSC's catchment area). Individual employer data remains 'live' unless the employer has not accessed the work experience website for more than 4 months. Inactivity reports are generated by the system, at which point the agency contacts the employer to determine whether details should remain live. The agency co-ordinates the H&S element of pre-placement inspection. As with the student database, the employer

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[13] Personal and Social Education

database also feeds into the LSC's MIS providing the LSC with a good deal of information on employer activity.

5.14 Opportunity descriptions are developed by the agency and forwarded to the employer for ratification; once ratified the 'vacancy' is input to the system. Employers have the option to display their name or remain anonymous.

5.15 The work experience website has search functions to enable students to seek opportunities by sector, occupation and location. Students have the facility to apply for opportunities in which they have an interest (via electronic link). Employers receive appropriate details about the student, extracted from Plan-it, via e-mail. Students are not permitted to make any form of contact with the employer beyond this point unless the employer forwards a message to them via e-mail.

5.16 The process is security protected via individual login accounts and passwords.

5.17 The system has removed a raft of bureaucracy previously experienced by schools, employers, Connexions and the LSC. The LSC states that stakeholders are very pleased with the system, particularly schools.

The Apprenticeship clearing house

5.18 This was a natural progression for the LSC. The principles and processes are very similar to WEX Online; the core database of individuals and employers is at the centre of the clearing house; individuals' Plan-it details (facility to continually update details at school or at home via login and password) are used and employer vacancies, generated by the Contact Centre, are displayed on the website. The Contact Centre is given annual targets to find and develop new apprenticeship employers – this year 300.

5.19 Employer vacancies that require specific pre-entry qualifications have prominent annotations to this effect; whilst at school, pupils are advised of the need to take note of these and not apply for positions for which they are clearly under qualified. Verification of qualifications is undertaken by the employer (or training provider) manually, there is no electronic facility built into the system.

5.20 Applications can only be made to employers via the system; no direct applications to training providers are permitted. Employers may route applicants to a training provider for screening and assessment prior to engagement. Providers utilise a common assessment procedure.

5.21 In addition, a common online application form is utilised (developed by the LSC after lots of 'banging of heads'). There is a facility for employers to have some bespoke areas within the application form, these are only viewable by them via login and password – other organisations viewing the application form would not be aware that bespoke information was included in a completed application.

5.22   Employers who recruit MAs must link with a LSC approved training provider. There has not been any wholesale switching of training providers by employers, despite some early concerns within the network. The LSC is currently thinking through how best to link new employers with training providers; they are considering the provision of information on success rates or user reviews, but are still reviewing the options.

5.23   Training providers are also linked into the MA online system, with the LSC able to track what they are doing with each apprentice and employer. The system generates time bound 'to dos' for providers (e.g. initial contact with the employer, H&S assessments, trainee reviews) and flags up to the LSC if providers have not completed actions on these within a given timescale. The LSC feels the system has major benefits for providers in managing their apprenticeship provision with employers.

5.24   The LSC expects greater effectiveness as a result of better matches (based on choice by the individual rather than allocation by the training provider) between employer, individual and training provider.

5.25   Connexions had some initial input to the design of the model, but are not involved in any way in the management of it. Their major role within the clearing house process is to work with individuals who are not on the core database e.g. individuals who are outside the school system who have perhaps moved to the area. Connexions would provide initial verification of the person's identity and work with them to develop a Plan-it assessment. The system does not provide automatic referral back to Connexions in the event of an individual 'failing' within the system.

5.26   Marketing of the clearing house has not yet commenced, although the Contact Centre will do some of this as a natural extension of its work in generating apprenticeship places. There is the expectation that individuals will gain knowledge of the clearing house via schools and the AP4L website as they are familiar with using the website for Plan-it updating and work experience applications. The clearing house element operates in a very similar way, so there is potentially a seamless transition. Some concerns were expressed about supply and demand; the LSC is worried that a large take up would have a significant impact on a finite budget.

5.27   The MA clearing house system is very new; it had been launched only one week before our visit; it remains 'work-in-progress'.

Considerations for Wales:

5.28   The LSC suggested that the following should be considered in Wales:

- Manage the clearing house under a discrete contract with DELLS;
- How an employer database can be developed in order to populate the clearing house database;
- Contractually require training providers to work with a clearing house system;

- Contractually require training providers to enter their employer records on to the system;
- Build on existing developments.

Costs

5.29   We had a short discussion with the LSC about the costs of developing and running their system. We were unable to determine precise figures, but estimated costs suggested by the LSC are detailed later in our report at paragraph 7.2 et seq.

The Sussex Council of Training Providers

Background

5.30   The origins of the clearing house can be traced back to an early information-only website developed by SCTP to meet a growing demand from parents who were seeking advice from SCTP to help them (and their children) select suitable providers for training. The growing vision of developing a more interactive facility coincided with the encouragement to LSCs in England to develop apprenticeship clearing houses (Cassels Report[14]).

5.31   Other reasons listed as providing an impetus to develop the clearing house included:

- 'Hundreds' of duplicate enquiries from young people to the provider network about the availability of training places, often requiring the young person to complete numerous application forms and undertake the same initial assessment several times;
- Many young people were being 'held' by training providers with no opportunities being offered to them; provider A had details of the individual, provider B had a suitable vacancy for the young person – but there was no facility for the exchange of information, thus vacancies unfilled, young people unplaced;
- Connexions found it difficult to track young people's progress once an application had been made;
- A general feeling that the time had come for a rationalisation to be effected.

5.32   In partnership with Sussex Connexions, SCTP put forward a proposal to the Sussex LSC for funding to develop an apprenticeship clearing house. The proposal was made in August 2005, approval quickly followed and development work commenced immediately thereafter. The website was fully operational by November 2005.

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[14]   The Way to Work. The Report of the MA Advisory Committee, chaired by Sir John Cassels (DfES, 2001)

5.33   Development costs circa £150,000 (but the earlier website development meant that the clearing house work did not commence from a 'standing start' – so the figure is likely to have been some £30k greater without this). A local software/web design house (Latitude Design, Brighton) was used for the development of the clearing house.

5.34   Funding in the first year was provided on the following basis - 70% LSC, 25% Connexions, 5% SCTP; 2nd year 75% LSC, 25% SCTP – Connexions not able to make a contribution. Ongoing costs are circa £90k – staffing, domain costs, ongoing development work and general overheads.

5.35   The clearing house is supported by 2.5 full time equivalent adviser staff; recently the clearing house has contracted with a freelance consultant to visit employers in Sussex to help generate more apprenticeship places (currently there is a significant mismatch between number of registered applicants and vacancies). The clearing house is sited with SCTP (based in the same building as the LSC) and shares an open plan office with Connexions. This is seen as facilitating and encouraging ongoing partnership through good working relationships as well as making communications extremely easy.

5.36   As with the West of England LSC, SCTP was unable to give us precise costs. We provide further commentary on costs in paragraph 7.2 et seq.

5.37   Since November 2005 the clearing house has:

- Registered 3,000+ applicants;
- Attracted 308 vacancies;
- Facilitated 200 MA starts;
- Had 35,000+ visits to its website.

Marketing

5.38   The SCTP has used a number of marketing activities including:

- To employers - working with the Sussex Chamber of Commerce and having articles placed in their newsletters and magazines; providing articles for a variety of Apprenticeship publications on a local and, where possible, national basis; asking training providers to bring the clearing house to the attention of their employers during visits via discussion and distribution of a bespoke postcard-sized, glossy card which comprises a 'screen dump' from the main website page with a few 'snappy' messages.

- To individuals – via Connexions' Personal Advisers during advice and guidance sessions; but the main thrust has been to contact each school to introduce the clearing house and ask them to distribute the cards to all 14+ year old students. The clearing house provided sufficient cards to the schools and made follow up calls to check that they had been distributed.

Applicants

5.39 Apprenticeships are open to 16–19 year olds, but a recent relaxation by the LSC has opened the way for the 19–25 cohort to enter the programme. The clearing house tends to restrict applications to those geographically situated in Sussex, although the advisers do use some discretion in the case of applicants from adjoining counties who can confirm that they are able to travel to the job/training provider. This is normally cleared either by a telephone call or an e-mail exchange. In the case of an applicant from a more distant location (e.g. Glasgow) who was looking to move to the area, this would result in 'rejection', the applicant being told to re-apply once relocation had occurred.

5.40 Where a Connexions Personal Adviser (PA) advises a young person to consider MAs, in every case an online application is completed at the time. Young people who access the website independently also have the option to complete an online application form.

5.41 The application is a five-stage process:

1. Selecting the occupation in which the young person wishes to undertake training, the level of apprenticeship and the towns he/she can travel to – the system then reveals a list of the providers covering the chosen occupation and towns;

2. Selecting a maximum of three providers from the list;

3. Entering personal details – name, address, date of birth, NI number;

4. Entering education details – qualifications and grades (actual or anticipated);

5. Entering other general details – name of Connexions Personal Adviser, date of availability to commence training and reference number of any displayed vacancy to which they would like to apply.

5.42 On completion of the online application form the clearing house advisers receive a notification message via the system and a manual check of the data is undertaken. Checks would include the young person's authenticity via confirmation with Connexions, ensuring that academic qualifications and grades listed are correct (via Connexions) and checking applicant's location. Where an application is made for one of the jobs shown on the website, a careful check is made to ensure that all criteria listed by the employer are satisfied. Where criteria are not satisfied the applicant receives an e-mail to notify 'rejection' and asked to contact his/her Personal Adviser.

5.43 Where all criteria are satisfied, the electronic application form is converted to a PDF file and forwarded to the three chosen providers. Where an employer vacancy has also been selected the PDF file is forwarded to the employer.

Training providers

5.44   All training providers (with the exception of one 'national' training provider, who, because of the 'national' nature of their operations and systems, have been unable to fit in with the Clearing House requirements at the present time) are 'signed up' to the principles of and working with the clearing house. Each provider has formally signed a 'Provider Protocol' detailing the standard agreements between providers and the clearing house.

5.45   The issue of inter-provider 'poaching' was addressed at an early stage. Providers were consulted and there was some degree of reluctance on their part to divulge the name of the employer with whom they had negotiated a vacancy. Eventually an agreement was reached whereby once an employer had signed up with a provider, that provider would have 'sovereignty' over any vacancy notified. However, and an important point, providers never have 'sovereignty' over an applicant; the clearing house has the right to transfer applicant details from one provider to another if there is a reason to consider that the first provider is unable to provide sufficient help to the applicant.

5.46   When an application for registration is received by a training provider there is an agreed timetable by when certain events are required to take place (as per Protocol):

- Acknowledge receipt of application to applicant – 2 working days;
- Make contact with applicant and arrange an interview appointment – 10 working days;
- Confirm to clearing house the outcome of the applicant's interview – within 5 working days of the interview;
- Continue to provide feedback on a 10 working day cycle of ongoing progress of each applicant.

5.47   The clearing house logs all applications on spreadsheets and on a regular basis sends respective spreadsheets to providers seeking updates on meeting timescales above. These are returned via e-mail attachment to the clearing house and are stored on the system. Connexions PAs have (passworded) access to these spreadsheets, thereby having the ability to track the progress of their clients via the system.

Employers

5.48   On receipt of the .PDF file containing the young person's details the employer will decide whether to interview the young person and make necessary arrangements with him/her; in the event of rejection the employer is required to write directly to young person. Clearing house staff follow up progress with the linked training provider (not directly with the employer – but can do if felt necessary).

5.49   New employers (i.e. those who have never been involved previously) who make contact with the clearing house are interviewed by telephone by the clearing house adviser, vacancy details are taken and (conditionally) displayed on the system ('Preferred Training Provider' box left blank and 'Vacancy checked by Provider' shows 'No'). The employer is recommended a suitable training provider (based on location, ability to organise the frameworks etc); the clearing house contacts the appropriate provider to notify them of the employer's interest; the provider makes contact, checks employer commitment and health and safety conditions and contacts the clearing house to confirm the vacancy on the system. The clearing house monitors progress towards filling the vacancy.

Details displayed

5.50   The clearing house website provides details in various sections.

5.51   'Available Applicants'. This is an anonymised list of those young people registered (until successfully embarked on an apprenticeship). Details include:

- Reference number;
- Age today (but may have to be removed in light of Age Discrimination restrictions);
- Occupational Choice;
- Apprenticeship level sought;
- 'Travel to' areas;
- Date available to start.

5.52   Only clearing house advisers and Connexions Personal Advisers have access to all recorded details of all registered young people. Providers are able to view the public page of all young people; they have PDF files of application forms of only those young people who have selected them as one of their preferred providers. Employers have access only to public pages; they receive PDF files of those young people who have shown an interest in their vacancy.

5.53   'Employer Vacancies'. This is an anonymised list of all employer vacancies registered on the site (until filled). Details include:

- Reference number;
- Job Title;
- Occupational area;
- Apprenticeship level;
- Location;
- Pay;
- Preferred start date.

5.54   A further link is available from this page (via Job Title) which takes the viewer to a job specification (written by the clearing house advisers). This gives more detail on the vacancy and the person specification; it displays the name of the linked training provider and confirms whether the provider has yet checked the vacancy (shorthand for checking employer commitment, bona fides and health and safety conditions).

5.55   'Fast Track Apply'. This link takes the applicant to a page with 3 further links:

- 'Are you ready' – a document that asks the applicant a series of questions to consider before making an application for the apprenticeship;
- 'Before you start' – details of how to make an application and the information the applicant will need to have available when completing the application form;
- 'Start your application'
    - Step 1 - the applicant selects from drop down boxes the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship (Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship) in which they wish to train; from a list of towns in Sussex, applicants are asked to tick the boxes against every town in which they would be prepared to consider training;
    - Step 2 – a list of providers, covering the occupational route, the level of apprenticeship and the towns selected, is shown; the applicant is asked to select up to three providers from the list and select from a drop down box the date on which they can commence their apprenticeship; there are a number of further 'radio buttons' for the applicant to indicate answers to a range of other questions; there are 'free text' boxes provided for most of the radio buttons to enable the applicant to provide more details;
    - Step 3 – personal details including name and address, date of birth, NI number, telephone numbers and e-mail address;
    - Step 4 – this is a more detailed page requiring details of education, qualifications gained, work experience, personal assessment of strengths and weaknesses and information about hobbies; there is also a box in which any special needs can be detailed;
    - Step 5 – pressing the button on this page forwards the application form to the clearing house.

5.56   'Training Organisations' – a separate page provides a list of all training providers registered with the clearing house. Access to more details about each provider is facilitated by clicking on the provider name. Provider details are input by the provider, but closely checked by clearing house advisers before display. There is no facility for dynamic updating. Provider details include:

- Training routes offered;
- Towns served;
- Further information in the form of Questions &Answers including:
    - How to apply;
    - Interview conditions;

- Training locations;
- Training start point;
- Pay;
- Employment status;
- Help with finding a job;
- Does the provider hold lists of current vacancies;
- Whether training programmes are open to employed individuals;
- Waiting lists;
- How employers should make contact ;
- Employer charging strategy;
- Other services offered;
- Whether special entry requirements apply.

5.57   'Apprenticeships'. This is a separate page which provides two link buttons - 'An Apprentice' and 'Employers'. These links provide access to concise details about the conditions of an apprenticeship and what is required of each party.

5.58   'Occupations'. This is an extensive list of general occupational titles, running the mouse pointer over each title produces a 'notes box' with a list of the jobs covered by the title. Clicking on the button alongside each title connects the viewer to the Connexions Jobs4U occupations database which provides extensive details of job requirements within the sector and with further ongoing links to other related sites.

5.59   'FAQs and Links'. This page provides answers to a range of MA-related frequently asked questions. It also offers two further options, one for apprentices and one for employers, to access links to other organisations that might provide information and/or advice about apprenticeships.

5.60   'Success Stories'. This contains a small number of testimonials from apprentice and employer angles (the clearing house admitted these are a little dated now and new material is needed).

5.61   'Contact Us'. This provides details of individual business telephone numbers and names of clearing house advisers and the manager of the SCTP, e-mail addresses and general information about the Sussex Council of Training Providers.

Matching

5.62   The system undertakes an electronic initial sift of registered applicants against any new vacancy. Sift criteria are based on:

- Geography (location of the vacancy matched against those applicants who have indicated an interest in working there);
- Occupation;
- Available start date.

5.63   The clearing house adviser examines details of those applicants flagged up
by the matching process, refines the sift further, then forwards a .PDF file of
individual applicant details to the employer who makes arrangements to call a
final short list to interview. In general, applicants are not told that their details
have been sent to the employer.

General site security

5.64   Login and passwords are required by:

- Clearing house staff;
- Training providers;
- Connexions Personal Advisers.

5.65   Neither employers nor young people have any more detailed access to
clearing house information other than that contained in the public facing
pages.

5.66   Passwords remain current until a member of staff with access leaves an
organisation; the password is then changed.

Evaluation

5.67   No formal evaluation has been undertaken, but the clearing house believes
that there have been significant benefits to young people, providers and
Connexions. Duplication has been reduced; the process has helped everyone
to focus on the job in hand; and there is a very powerful tracking mechanism
that was previously not available.

NEETS[15] Group

5.68   Whilst there has been no extraordinary impact, the clearing house believes
that the tracking potential of the system allows Connexions PAs and clearing
house staff to closely monitor the progress of registered applicants thus
avoiding the danger of young people being left in an indeterminate state,
inadvertently falling into the NEETS category.

Issues to address in any development

5.69   SCTP suggested the following advice might be considered in any
development in Wales:

- Having a development manager to plan and oversee the work from the
outset is very important;
- Having a centralised clearing house, under contractual terms and with
discrete staffing is imperative;

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[15] Acronym used to denote those individuals who are not in education, employment or training.

- Significantly important that all partners 'buy in' to the concept and its development; partners need to be kept up to date on thinking and development; consult at all stages;
- User input to designing the 'look' of the site is essential; avoid patronising and keep the language short, simple and understandable;
- The system should have a process whereby any rejection of an applicant at any stage must be accompanied by advice to contact a careers adviser;
- Despite a growing reliance on technology to drive the clearing house, the importance of offering the facility for personal contact with the clearing house was stressed;
- Working with a <u>local</u> software house is extremely beneficial.

GO Wales

5.70 We visited GO Wales to discuss with them their experiences of running a graduate recruitment website and clearing house and to examine whether there were any lessons to be learned from them.

5.71 The Graduate Opportunities Wales project was known originally as Cymru Prosper Wales - established in 1995. Now known as GO Wales, the project helps students, graduates and businesses in Wales to work together for mutual benefit. The project is funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and is delivered by higher education institutions across Wales with the head office at Swansea University Careers Centre. Project staff at universities work with businesses, particularly SMEs. They assist them to access higher level skills and to help students and graduates make the best start to their career in Wales.

5.72 The GO Wales services include:

- Work placements;
- Managed, work experience placement based around the completion of a specific project;
- Work tasters;
- Flexible periods of unpaid work organised by university careers services to help students gain experience of a particular career or industry;
- GO Wales Jobs - an all-Wales free recruitment service working for graduates and employers in Wales. Employers advertise their graduate vacancies free of charge accessing graduate job-seekers wishing to work in Wales;
- Continuing Professional Development;
- Advice and support on training and development for SMEs with graduate staff;
- Advice on working in Wales;
- Practical advice on job-hunting in Wales;
- Labour Market Information;
- Information about the structure and workings of the labour market in Wales.

Brief background to the website

5.73   Cymru Prosper Wales began developing an online database in 1998 as a means of accurately accounting for students/graduates assisted by the project.

5.74   The system was slow, 'timed out' often and as a consequence there were a vast number of complaints. The inefficiency of the site became a major PR issue for the project. Encouraging people to use the website was difficult as a result of the teething troubles encountered.

5.75   The original website only provided students/graduates with information. They did not register online at that stage. It was recognised that that an online model needed much work.

5.76   In 2001 a concerted effort was made to change the situation and IT experts from Swansea University were recruited to improve the service. This meant starting from scratch.

5.77   The GO Wales system includes a student and graduate registration section.

5.78   The system includes a back office section for staff where they are able to track students' progress.

5.79   A matching service is being developed at present but it is a difficult process. There is difficulty in selecting criteria. From past experience, accurate matching is complex. For example, if an employer states they need a 'French speaker', the process works well, but when an employer uses a less precise phrase such as a need for 'good communication skills', the results are unhelpful as nearly all students state they have these key skills.

Students/Graduates

5.80   Students register with the project and CVs are added online. These include personal details; address, e-mail, telephone numbers. The website includes a privacy statement. Students are assured that these details will be dealt with in confidence. Students are confident enough to post details as they are doing so in a trusted careers setting.

5.81   Students/graduates are updated with e-mails of vacancies available but not on a matched basis. All vacancies are sent to registered students seeking placements.

5.82   They have developed a section for a reflective diary online but have experienced a very low take-up for this. They feel that students are reluctant to post confidential material online.

5.83   A 'placee' discussion board has also not worked. They feel the reason for this is that once a student/graduate is working for a specific SME they become an employee of the company and do not regard themselves as 'GO Wales placees'.

Role of the Placement Organiser

5.84   Each University/College has a placement organiser who works with students/employers to establish quality work experience. The placement organiser registers the student/graduate and registers the employer.

5.85   The matching of student and employer happens through the proactive work of the placement organiser – not online. They shortlist and forward details of suitable candidates to the employer and are available to help in interviewing with the employer. They are also responsible for vetting SMEs who take on students/graduates.

Employers

5.86   There is a General Vacancies page available to employers free of charge. GO Wales has to be flexible to accommodate employer needs and make the programme as user-friendly as possible for the employer.

5.87   In the region of some 15,000 placements have been secured over a period of 21 months but still more employers are needed to come on board. Making things easy for the employer is a must. Finding good SME placements is difficult and challenging. Employers are subsidised for taking on a student/graduate – this is a big incentive. Without this 'hook', GO Wales feels that it would be an uphill struggle to engage suitable SMEs.

5.88   Electronic forms are available as part of the service but they find that most employers still like to complete paper-based forms.

5.89   GO Wales do not include employer names on vacancies as they feel they would lose a great deal of control over the programme; employers too do not want unannounced approaches.

Language

5.90   The website is bilingual and text is translated by a Cardiff-based company, Testun. Paper-based forms and marketing material are also available in both Welsh and English.

Marketing GO Wales

5.91   GO Wales adopts a number of marketing strategies including:

- Word of mouth – from employer to employer is extremely effective;
- Direct mail;
- Intermediaries – sign posters – e.g. business advisers/careers advisers;
- Networking events;
- Conferences/careers fairs/exhibitions.

Cost involved

5.92 We asked to have an indication of the costs of developing and running the GO Wales operation; unfortunately our interviewees were not in a position to divulge these to us.

Other clearing house websites

5.93 We asked whether our consultees were aware of any MA clearing house websites – neither had any knowledge of any such sites. As part of this line of questioning we asked them to look at and provide a review of the Sussex Apprenticeship Clearing house website. Their views were as follows:

- Both interviewees were enthusiastic about the website and liked its branding;

- They were pleasantly surprised to see that there were apprenticeships available in so many sectors;

- They welcomed details explaining the requirements of an apprenticeship - they admitted they know little about them; they felt that employers or individuals with little knowledge would benefit from the details and the way in which they were laid out;

- They liked the 'Applicant Search' facility and they thought that the level of detail displayed was generally sufficient to meet the immediate needs of most employers;

- They liked the 'Vacancy Search' facility, as well as the 'Are you ready' section of the website which they felt was an informative and useful process for individuals to go through before embarking on registration

5.94 Other elements of advice offered by GO Wales were:

- A MA clearing house should maximise the potential of latest technology, but this should be complemented by other elements, not least human intervention, but also using more traditional methods of paper based and telephone based communications;

- They feel that a clearing house should be WAG branded. 'It would be an excellent way of raising awareness of WAG's work with young people in Wales';

- Keep it simple – not too many logos or text on the website – these are confusing for all involved.

6. OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM FIELDWORK

6.1 In addition to meeting with the four comparator organisations, we carried out some 32 further field visits in Wales (30) and England (2) to consult with key stakeholder groups. These comprised:

- Employers;
- Individuals;
- Training organisations;
- Careers Wales Online;
- Strategic organisations – DELLS, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus;
- Other organisations – a Sector Skills Council and the West Wales Chamber of Commerce.

6.2 In this chapter we provide an overview of the findings of our interviews with the key stakeholders. We report findings by stakeholder group, generally using the format of our research instruments to provide a framework to do so.

Employers

6.3 One of the immediate issues we came across when setting up our employer visit programme was that some employers were unaware that individuals who were in training with them were actually Modern Apprentices; in one case the assistant manager, with whom we were conducting the interview, was having his training at a local college funded under the MA programme; he was unaware that he was regarded as a modern apprentice. Whilst not directly part of this project's remit, we sense that this information may be of some interest to DELLS.

Rationale for a clearing house

6.4 The development of a clearing house was generally seen as a 'good idea' by a majority of the employers we visited. A less significant number were somewhat neutral in their response, seeing a clearing house as adding but a further option to the recruitment process. This group suggested that they may use the clearing house, but as they had tried, tested and generally successful recruitment arrangements already in place, the clearing house would not necessarily be their first option. Employers in the hospitality sector were dubious as to whether they would see any major benefits from a clearing house, as their sector has experienced long term recruitment difficulties (one might argue that the introduction of a clearing house might provide some help to overcome this).

6.5 Smaller employers saw the clearing house as providing a useful facility where they could view the number of individuals who were seeking apprenticeships in their sector and in their locality. One of the large employers saw it as offering the potential to help reduce the number of applications it receives each year for apprenticeships (10:1 applications to jobs ratio). One other large employer (based in England, but with apprenticeship opportunities in Wales)

saw the clearing house as having the potential to reach out to some of the more remote communities, particularly Welsh speaking communities, from where the company would ideally like to recruit apprentices with Welsh language skills.

6.6   Whilst a majority of the employers we consulted with were supportive towards the introduction of a clearing house, this support would be conditional. The clearing house would need:

- To be seen as - and provide - a quality offering;
- To add value to the current system;
- To be managed proactively and professionally;
- To provide realistic 'react' times of a nature acceptable to businesses; their view was that the public sector does not presently provide an acceptable react time;
- To work in 'real time';
- To demonstrate a track record of delivery (possibly a pilot system might be considered initially to test out procedures and have the opportunity of developing some degree of 'track record');
- To be well populated with applicants, with regular additions to maintain employer interest.

6.7   As part of this element of the consultation we asked whether employers would be prepared to pay for a clearing house service. Some employers did not dismiss the possibility of them paying for a service, but they were clear that to be persuaded to do so the clearing house would have to demonstrate:

- That it provided a high quality, efficient and effective service;
- That it was more effective in both cost and service terms than using current methods including recruitment agencies and/or classified advertisements.

6.8   Some of the smaller employers were rather more reticent about paying for a clearing house service; but all employers expressed the view that the clearing house should be launched as a 'free' service with a 'running in' period, in order to demonstrate its capabilities before considering the adoption of any later commercial approach.

6.9   We asked employers to consider whether it would be preferable for a clearing house to be web based, paper based, telephone based (or any option or combination).

6.10   Unanimously the view was that a web based system was the only viable option, capitalising on technology's ability to carry out rapid searches, matches and communications, and to be available at any time. However they stressed the need to have human back up to provide first line support to employers and individuals when needed.

Display of employer details by the clearing house

6.11   We asked employers to what extent would they be prepared to allow their details (name of company, address, contact names etc.) to be displayed by the clearing house. We received a mixed reaction to this.

6.12   Some employers were enthusiastic about having their details displayed, where others (a small majority) were less so; a number fearing an inundation of unwanted approaches from unsuitable candidates. They were equally concerned that multiple approaches from various training organisations might be experienced (poaching) and wanted the clearing house to have systems in place to prevent this.

6.13   The pragmatic compromise that was acceptable to the majority was one that allowed elements of contact details (employer to have control over which elements) to be displayed only to *registered* users of the clearing house. Others argued for an optional arrangement through which the lead contact would be the training provider, rather than the employer direct.

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.14   We asked employers whether they had any views on which organisation they felt was best placed to manage the clearing house. In order of support, the following organisations were suggested:

- Careers Wales;
- Welsh Assembly Government – DELLS;
- 'Employer-led' (but no suggestion as to which organisation);
- Local authorities.

6.15   A number of employers commented to the effect that the clearing house should be managed by an organisation that was impartial and free of conflicting priorities and commercial imperatives. Indeed, for some, the actual identity of the managing organisation was of little interest: what was more important was that the service should demonstrate the functionality and quality described in paragraph 6.7 above.

6.16   In discussing this question employers wanted the clearing house to have the imprimatur of the Welsh Assembly Government to highlight its importance and to give users confidence that any details they give will be secure.

6.17   A final note of concern expressed by consultees was that many publicly funded initiatives receive high levels of initial resource and support for development, but thereafter insufficient investment is made to guarantee effective delivery.

Coverage

6.18   We took views on what coverage a clearing house should offer. We sought comments on whether it should offer geographical coverage on a pan-Wales, regional or local basis.

6.19   Employers were unanimous in wanting a pan-Wales clearing house, with a Welsh identity, but with the facility to narrow searches and displays to regional and local levels. They felt that the only way this could work efficiently would be by using latest technology via a website.

6.20   Additionally we asked whether a clearing house should offer an overarching service, or whether a number of sector-based clearing houses should be established.

6.21   Whilst a sector based model would have some advantages in terms of sector expertise, there were real doubts as to whether there would be sufficient 'business' on a sectoral basis to warrant the development of a number of different clearing houses. Individuals seeking an apprenticeship are just as likely to do so by occupational title as by sector title; a sector based clearing house is unlikely therefore to offer individuals the widest range of opportunities; neither would it offer employers the widest range of applicants.

Marketing and branding

6.22   We asked employers how a clearing house should be marketed to the business community. They felt that a number of approaches would be necessary. They included:

- Television and radio campaigns;
- Using opportunities when Welsh Assembly Members are undertaking employer-related events to publicise the introduction of the clearing house;
- At business embryonic level, via Business Eye advisers;
- Word of mouth (which is seen as very effective within the business community).

Encouraging non participating employers to recruit modern apprentices

6.23   We asked non participating employers whether the introduction of a clearing house might persuade them to consider recruiting a modern apprentice. The overriding criterion in this respect would be whether there is a business need for taking on an apprentice.

6.24   However, employers felt that additional interest might be created if the clearing house is visible, well maintained, and has specific, easy to read, clear messages about apprenticeships. Whilst the clearing house may create some opportunities from employers not previously involved, our sense is that these would be very much at the margins.

Security and access to information

6.25   Employers saw the need for the clearing house to have security measures in place that not only protected personal information, but also ensured that the level of interest created in any vacancy they might notify would only come from bona fide and suitably qualified applicants.

6.26   They wanted to have access to details on potential applicants at a relatively in depth level, including qualifications held, personal attributes, interests, hobbies etc; they recognised the need for them to be registered with the system (and to undergo some element of vetting) before having access to such level of detail.

Matching and sifting of potentially suitable applicants

6.27   This was an important issue to employers. They saw the clearing house as offering the potential to reduce the number of speculative and/or abortive approaches made by individuals to them when vacancies are advertised.

6.28   They saw the clearing house using the system's technology to undertake initial matching and sifting and to produce a short list of candidates for interview. *(The skill of the vacancy taker will be most important in this regard in ensuring that the employer's requirements are fully explored and comprehensive job descriptions and person specifications are developed. We would anticipate vacancy taking to be undertaken, in the main, by training organisation staff, although Careers Wales may well be approached by an employer as might clearing house staff. Our recommendation is that a standard approach to vacancy taken is developed and adopted, with appropriate training programmes for vacancy takers being put in place at an early stage).*

6.29   There will be occasions when the system produces more matches than the number of applicants the employer requires on the short list. *(Where this is the case we believe there is a role for the training organisation with whom the employer is linked to review the applications and reduce the number to the level required by the employer. Alternatively, Careers Wales advisers might be asked to use their professional expertise to review the matched candidates and play a part in short list refinement).*

Testing of applicants

6.30   A number of employers require potential apprentices to undergo a series of pre-interview tests. We were interested to explore whether any of these could be done via the clearing house.

6.31   Practical tests were only seen as possible to be undertaken in person and at the employer's premises. Employers did see some potential for non-practical testing to be carried out via a website, but there were major concerns as to who would actually carry out the test – there would be no guarantees that it was the individual him/herself. This was sufficient cause for concern for employers to discount any form of testing being undertaken by the clearing house.

Need for a Help Desk

6.32 Whilst employers saw the major benefits a web based system would bring to a clearing house function, they did not feel that it could be operated without human intervention. They saw a Help Desk as carrying out the following:

- Telephone assistance with any enquiries about how the clearing house worked;
- Advising employers about relevant training provision within their locality;
- Overseeing the recruitment of apprentices to vacancies;
- Providing advice and guidance about other organisations that might be of help to the employer in recruiting and training apprentices;
- Ensuring the effective management and functioning of the clearing house system.

Employer-related cross border issues

6.33 In certain parts of Wales there is a travel-to-work pattern that sees individuals:

a. Living outside Wales, but travelling to work in Wales;
b. Living in Wales, travelling to train at the employer's training centre in England, but working for the employer in Wales.

6.34 In *example a.* the employer would be disadvantaged if potential applicants were denied access to registration because of their place of residence. They argue that the clearing house should facilitate the registration of non-Wales residents who are interested in their (and other) opportunities in Wales.

6.35 In *example b.* a major employer with operations across the whole of Wales provides training only at its England based training centre. The employer is approved and contracted as a training provider by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in whose area it is based. The employer recruits individuals from localities in Wales, where, apart from their off-the-job training programme, they work. This employer would wish to advertise its vacancies via the clearing house – but as the requirement would be to have a DELLS recognised and contracted training organisation dealing with the training of the individuals, the opportunity to place vacancies is likely to be denied.

6.36 In these cases DELLS might wish to consider the following:

- *Example a.* – allow the registration of any non-Wales resident who is interested in finding an apprenticeship in Wales, but with robust systems for formally checking the authenticity of the registrant with Connexions in England (and their counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland if appropriate).

- *Example b.* – make a special case to approve the organisation based in England as a recognised training organisation (but not under contract) with formal arrangements with the local LSC to have access to quality assessments undertaken by the LSC and the Adult Learning Inspectorate as an assurance that training is of a satisfactory standard. This course of action would allow the employer to notify its local (Wales) vacancies for display by the clearing house.

Individuals

6.37   We met with some 25 individuals in four focus group sessions. Three focus groups comprised a mix of Foundation and Modern Apprentices; the fourth group was of individuals who had not yet entered a MA programme, but were, for a variety of reasons, undertaking a Skillbuild course.

Rationale for a clearing house

6.38   The response from individuals was an unqualified enthusiasm for the prospect of having a clearing house system through which MAs could be accessed.

6.39   The individuals saw job seeking as a very serious and important business; they saw the clearing house helping to give MAs an added status and profile in line with the seriousness with which they regarded the job seeking process.

How a clearing house website might operate

6.40   As part of the consultation with individuals we organised internet access during the focus group sessions; we asked the participants to view and provide a short appraisal (via verbal feedback during the session) of their impressions of 4 websites:

- Sussex Apprenticeship Clearing House;
- Careers Wales Online;
- London East Partnership 16+ Course Finder;
- LANTRA'S 'ajobin'.

6.41   Of the four websites visited there was an overwhelming preference for the Sussex Apprenticeship clearing house. Focus group participants found it to be easy to navigate; they also felt that it projected a professional and appropriate 'look' and was not heavily dependent on text. Participants particularly liked the facility to view available apprenticeships; interestingly, whilst they were attracted to local vacancies, a number of them were also keen to know what was available on a wider geographical basis.

6.42   Other websites did not receive the same level of 'approval'. Comments included 'too much text', 'boring', 'difficult to find my way around', 'out of date' and some phrases used on one website were 'too young' for them: 'Old men trying to talk teenager chat-speak' was one verbatim comment!

6.43   All but one of the twenty five interviewees had access to the internet at home.

Display of employer details by the clearing house

6.44   Participants expressed the view that they would wish to see as much detail about the employer as possible before they would take any decision to apply for a post (in line with the seriousness they attach to job seeking). They would want to undertake Google searches to determine any facts about the employer; any negative impressions gained from this would probably dissuade them from applying for the post.

6.45   As a minimum, individuals would wish to see information on the following:

- Job location;
- Salary;
- Job description;
- Number of places available;
- Any requirement to spend time away from home;
- What the full training package involves;
- What the MA would lead to (permanent job, promotion, progression etc);
- Career prospects (across the sector);
- Case studies of people who have progressed through MAs.

6.46   They accepted the possibility of employers having uncontrolled approaches to them from job seekers if details were open to public display, and in this context they would be happy to register with the clearing house if this provided access to a higher level of detail about the employer.

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.47   We had to use a degree of prompting to elicit comments from all groups on this. There was little considered debate and little by way of firm views expressed as to who should manage the clearing house.

6.48   The most common point was that it should be managed by an organisation in which they could have trust. With prompting, the following organisations were seen as potential organisers of the clearing house:

- Careers Wales (a majority);
- Welsh Assembly Government (some);
- Local authorities (a few).

Coverage

6.49   The majority of interviewees wanted to have information at very local level (recognising that apprenticeship remuneration was unlikely to support away-from-home living costs); nonetheless most were also interested in the 'big picture' for Wales as a whole, mainly for comparison of opportunities and salary purposes.

6.50   They saw the clearing house as dealing with all vacancies and sectors; they felt that this allowed them to see the widest range of opportunities to which they might consider applying.

Marketing and branding

6.51   In terms of marketing the focus groups provided a range of possible options via which their attention might be drawn:

- Careers Wales offices;
- Career Wales Online;
- Jobcentre Plus;
- Schools;
- 'Places you can trust' such as the WAG website or WAG literature;
- Training organisations;
- Television (one remarked that she had seen a Monster.com advertisement that prompted her to look up the website);
- Local radio;
- Internet banner advertisements on young people's websites;
- Local press;
- Poster campaigns; and
- Promotion at Year 9 and Year 11 interventions.

6.52   Branding and 'look' of any website was important to the individuals. Of the websites shown all but one individual thought that the Sussex Website 'look' was the best of those viewed. It was seen as colourful and attractive to all ages within the focus groups (which ranged from 16 – 26 years old).

6.53   One possibly important point raised by some within this group was their lack of enthusiasm for the term 'clearing house'. A number of interviewees had been to university and had used the UCAS system; the term 'clearing' within the UCAS system was seen to be analogous with 'second best' and 'second rate'.

The guarantee group

6.54   Those in the Skillbuild group might be termed as having fallen under this description at some stage. They were very enthusiastic about the possible introduction of a clearing house, feeling that it might help them to focus their attention and to see some purpose in striving to achieve perhaps more or better qualifications in order to gain entry into an apprenticeship.

Security and access to information

6.55   The groups had a number of concerns with regard to the security of the website. There was a general nervousness about posting personal details; individuals would need an assurance that their details would not be passed on to anyone without their permission (including employers and training organisations).

6.56   Having a named person, within the clearing house, to whom they could be assured that their details were being forwarded, and with whom they could have telephone contact, if necessary, was very important to them.

6.57   They needed to be assured that any employer registering with the clearing house had been appropriately vetted and approved.

Matching and sifting of potentially suitable applicants

6.58   The interviewees were keen to understand how the clearing house would ensure that individuals are not sifted out too quickly, especially if using an electronic process to carry out a first match. They were especially anxious that there was some human oversight of this and that employers had the opportunity of seeing them not just in the light of immediate factors such as qualifications held, but to have access to some information through which an individual was able to 'sell' him/herself.

Details about training organisations

6.59   Interviewees were equally interested in having detailed information about any training provider with whom they might be linked. They would like to see information on:

- 'How good are they?' – a star rating system such as Amazon or eBay would help;
- What are their results like (success rates)?
- Where they are based?
- How many trainees they have on their books?
- The contents of the training course (breakdown of frameworks); and
- Any special entry requirements.

Testing online

6.60   Individuals did not particularly welcome the concept of undertaking online tests. They were quick to point out that there were no guarantees about who was actually taking the test. Whilst individually they might be scrupulous in this regard, they could not be assured that everyone else was being so – this had the potential to place them in a disadvantageous position, possibly losing out on a job interview.

6.61   Additionally they wanted the opportunity to 'sell' themselves to an employer, to be able to display the value that they might bring to an organisation – and online testing would not facilitate this in any way.

Need for a Help Desk

6.62   Interviewees saw a Help Desk as a very important and fundamental component of the clearing house. The Help Desk would:

- Need to be totally independent and impartial;
- Provide a human interface;

- Provide a feedback system where applications had not been successful;
- Provide a referral service to other professionals for additional support;
- Provide information on other opportunities that might be of interest.

6.63 We asked interviewees about how a clearing house might communicate with them? They were very clear that having a named individual within the clearing house with whom they could communicate was important. Other key points included:

- They were happy to receive telephone calls;
- They were less enthusiastic about receiving text messages (possibility of messages being lost in the amount of 'spam' they receive by text);
- E-mails and personal messaging were acceptable; and
- A preference for receiving communications by post, as an indication that the communication was of importance and had a degree of seriousness attached to it.

Cross border issues

6.64 Within the group there were some individuals who lived outside Wales but who had secured jobs with companies in Wales. They were anxious to press the case for people living outside Wales having access to registration with the clearing house. We have also commented on this and offered a possible solution in paragraph 6.36.

6.65 A further cross border scenario, not touched on in earlier paragraphs, is that of those individuals who live closer to work in England than they do to work in Wales, and where their natural travel-to-work pattern is into England. There was a view expressed that the clearing house should carry MA opportunities appertaining to these particular areas, enabling individuals to have information about vacancies in their natural travel-to-work zones rather than information just on vacancies in Wales.

6.66 One pragmatic solution might be to allow employers in prescribed areas outside Wales to notify vacancies to the clearing house, with contact details being shown and interested applicants asked to apply direct. However, there are many issues that remain outstanding with this approach, not least employer bona fides, employer commitment to training frameworks, health and safety aspects and the track record of the training organisation linked to the employer. Our view is that this is a difficult policy area for which there is no easy resolution; in the short term, it may be advisable for the clearing house not to include such vacancies.

Training organisations

6.67 We met with 6 training organisations during our consultation programme. One of the findings, as a by-product of our consultation, was surprising. A significant majority of MAs with some of the training organisations we met had already been employed by the company for some time prior to commencing a MA framework. In one case a figure of 89% (of some 700 MAs); in another 90% (of 600) were already employed at the time of commencement on MAs.

6.68   One might argue that this large percentage of already employed apprentices is unlikely to form part of the direct customer base for a clearing house, particularly for its prime function of registration, matching and referral to employers. There may be some use made of the clearing house's information banks about MAs and frameworks, but our sense is that this would be at the margins.

6.69   Clearly before a clearing house operation is put in place, there will need to be some analysis of its potential customer volumes. We recommend that DELLS undertakes an analysis of the number of MAs who are already employed at the point of starting a MA and the number who approach the system on a more speculative basis (the likely main customer of the clearing house) as a starting point from which to forecast business volumes.

Rationale for a clearing house

6.70   The concept of a clearing house was broadly welcomed. For those with high volumes of already employed apprentices the clearing house was of less immediate importance, but they saw advantages for their non-employed cadre, as well as, where appropriate, their Skillbuild clients who might be able to make progress into a MA opportunity.

6.71   One training organisation with sectoral recruitment difficulties felt that the clearing house might not create much impact in that sector (care), but it might provide the opportunity for extending the scope for advertising apprenticeship vacancies. Additionally the clearing house could provide some accessible and readable information for employers, some of whom are reluctant to offer MAs as they believe that frameworks are too restrictive and unsuitable for their business.

6.72   Some training organisations felt that the clearing house could ease elements of their administrative workload. It could, for example, automatically provide MA statistics to DELLS, freeing up time for organisations to undertake more productive work with employers and individuals.

6.73   Training organisations would see themselves as playing an important role in the clearing house system, particularly in undertaking their role of working with employers – carrying out suitability vetting, health and safety assessments, checking commitment to the full MA frameworks and marketing the clearing house.

6.74   Some training organisations expressed the view that DELLS targets and funding regimes constrain them, forcing them to be selective in terms of which employers they work with and which individuals they recruit. There was concern voiced that a clearing house might attract more volumes of employer vacancies and individual registrations, some of which might not be suitable for further development. There was an anxiety expressed that DELLS would coerce training organisations to accept any employer or individual as a means of rapidly populating the clearing house database. There were also funding implications in this context.

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.75 There were a number of suggestions put forward by training organisations. A common theme was that of wanting an impartial, independent organisation that is not target driven. A number felt that whichever organisation is selected, it must have a reputation of working effectively with employers in Wales. Suggestions included:

- Welsh Assembly Government;
- Careers Wales;
- Sector Skills Councils (but none specifically named);
- UCAS.

Coverage

6.76 All training organisations expressed the view that the clearing house should operate on an all-Wales basis, but with the capacity to deliver local and regional breakdowns of information.

Marketing and branding

6.77 There is a need for the clearing house to be marketed intensely in the early stages, with a particular focus on employers, without whose vacancies the clearing house will face some credibility issues.

6.78 Training organisations felt that they had a significant role to play in delivering a message to employers and were prepared to act on the clearing house's behalf (via contract) to market the new service.

6.79 In addition to a delivery of a marketing campaign by training organisations, the following were mentioned as possible marketing conduits:

- Sector Skills Councils;
- National and local newspapers;
- Television and local radio;
- WAG initiatives.

6.80 Target groups for marketing campaigns would include:

- Young people;
- Adults;
- 'Influencers' such as parents and teachers;
- Employer groups.

6.81   The branding of the clearing house was important. Training organisations see the clearing house as a 'fresh' initiative and as such the branding of the service should be equally 'fresh'. Having its own house-style would be important in achieving this. Training organisations expressed the view that in order to appeal to the majority of young people, the clearing house website should avoid any excessive use of text in its pages.

6.82   The Sussex clearing house website was shown to a number of training organisations and there was a favourable response to its design and functions.

The guarantee group

6.83   There was a unanimous opinion expressed when we asked how a clearing house might help the guarantee group. Training organisations put forward the argument that most in this group are generally unfocused with many personal challenges to resolve before entry into training. This group was said to be largely unattractive to employers.

6.84   It was felt that a clearing house website might prove too daunting, being seen by this group as somewhat clinical and impersonal; it is unlikely to provide the inspirational ingredient needed to generate action by the group.

6.85   At the margins, and with a small number, it might stimulate some degree of interest, resulting in those individuals making some further enquiries about apprenticeships.

Encouraging employers to recruit modern apprentices

6.86   The overwhelming response was that if jobs are not there, the clearing house is unlikely to have any immediate effect. However, there may well be some employers who are unaware of the availability of MA funding; having a web based facility will provide an extended opportunity for such employers to gain an insight into the availability of funding and support should they have any jobs that might be filled by a Modern Apprentice.

6.87   Equally, where employers already have employees who might benefit from being trained under a MA framework, the website will also provide the facility for employers to have further information.

6.88   The clearing house website will then provide a potentially powerful marketing tool to access employers who fall into the above categories.

Display of employer details by the clearing house

6.89   We discussed with consultees whether the display of employer details on the clearing house website might encourage other training organisations to make approaches to employers already 'signed up' with another training organisation – colloquially referred to as 'poaching'.

6.90   There was some difference of opinion expressed by employers in our sample. Some felt that poaching could be a problem; another large training organisation stated that in their part of Wales there was an informal inter-provider agreement in place, which had emerged over a number of years; this has resulted in the incidences of poaching fading. There seemed to be quite a difference in experience between various parts of Wales.

6.91   Our recommendation is that a 'Code of Practice' is drafted as part of the clearing house development, with every training organisation being asked to sign up to its principles. DELLS might also consider whether the Code of Practice be underpinned by their contract with training organisations.

6.92   In addition we believe that the clearing house will be in a position to monitor any activity in this context and bring to the attention of DELLS any practices that appear to be in breach of the Code of Practice.

Security and access to information

6.93   Training organisations felt that these were very important issues and needed to be addressed at an early stage in the clearing house's development. It is essential that any employer is vetted before having full access to the system. It is also vital that access to any level of personal or company detail is only permitted via registration and password access.

Testing online

6.94   Training organisations are required to carry out initial assessment tests before any trainee is placed in a training opportunity. There was an acknowledgement that a web based clearing house could facilitate online completion of some tests, but with serious concerns about who has actually completed the test, the likelihood would be that it would have to be retaken at the organisation's premises. This would be wasteful duplication and serve little useful purpose.

Need for a Help Desk

6.95   Training organisations viewed positively the inclusion of a Help Desk in the clearing house model, making the comment that a website is but a tool; advice and guidance alongside the website would be essential. Training organisations saw a number of elements of advice and guidance being part of the clearing house model:

- Advice and guidance about how the clearing house operates, and the provision of help with any difficulties in using it – clearing house staff;
- Advice and guidance about and signposting to other agencies who might be able to help the individual or employer further – clearing house staff;
- Advice and guidance to individuals about career choices – referral by the clearing house to careers advisers in Careers Wales or Jobcentre Plus;
- Advice and guidance to employers about training frameworks – referral by the clearing house to training organisations or Sector Skills Councils.

6.96   The Help Desk would play a very important role in helping individuals who had been unsuccessful at any stage in using the clearing house by referring them to appropriate organisations to provide further assistance – Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and training organisations.

Careers Wales Online

6.97   We had a very useful meeting with Careers Wales Association, which has responsibility for Careers Wales Online, initially to gain an understanding of the work in which they were currently involved and to be briefed on the next stages of their Careers Wales.com development.

6.98   We also attended a presentation given by CWA to the Careers Wales Online Advisory Group.

6.99   The Careers Wales.com website currently includes:

- e-Progress file;
- CV Wizard;
- Interview games;
- Learning Choices database;
- Career ideas database;
- Jobs in Wales database; and
- Links to other relevant information-providing websites.

6.100 Phase 2, for implementation by March 2007, will include site improvement and links to the e-Prospectus, which is being developed by each 14-19 Learning Partnership.

6.101 The next phase of development (Phase 3) will include many sophisticated applications (CWA have just completed a tendering exercise to select the software developer to take Phase 3 forward). These will include:

- A Content Management System (to manage taxonomy, i.e. how various parts of the system provide information and how they interface with each other more efficiently);
- An impact analysis package (are CW making a contribution to individuals' progress?);
- A special needs facility - text-to-speech capability;
- e-Guidance provision - online messaging between individual and adviser;
- Online chat, both public and private;
- A webcam facility;
- Guidance to help individuals use the site optimally;
- A motivational package for the NEETS group;
- An employer database;
- A work experience management tool;
- A comprehensive e-mail facility.

6.102 CWOL has some 175,000 registered users; included in that figure is 75% of the 14-18 age cohort.

6.103 In the development of a clearing house model Careers Wales Association felt that the following points should be considered:

- CWA's preferred option was that it should be an all-encompassing facility to cover all options for everyone between the ages of 14-25; CWA is aware that DELLS, at this stage, has only a *MA* clearing house in mind;
- A clear definition would be needed of what is meant by a clearing house;
- Data flows and protocols should be robust (particularly employer IDs: should CRB checks be part of the registration process?);
- Sustainability and future-proofing should be built into the model;
- There was a need to decide whether the clearing house should be little more than an advertising medium or provide a much fuller service;
- Should employers' details be shown (issues around potential for 'poaching')?
- How much flexibility should be given to employers to use the system (eg, in terms of advertising – should there be the option of 'free text' or via standard template to give details of opportunities)?
- How much flexibility should individuals be given to provide details about themselves (e.g. a written CV (template or bespoke), a visual CV (photograph), or creation of their own personal website)?
- 'Duty of care towards young people' issues should be considered;
- The system should have in place access to advice via contact with *people* – clients will always want human interaction;
- Links should be available, but the individual user should be given the option of whether to have links whilst they are using the clearing house (i.e. don't overwhelm anyone with too many links) - perhaps a web link directory could be an option?
- Cross border registration needs to be considered, to enable individuals living in England, but within the recruitment catchment area of the clearing house, to apply for vacancies;
- Before launching the clearing house all technical and functional issues need to be explored, a project management plan put in place and a prototyping process undertaken before graphical elements are attached.

Careers Wales Online Advisory Group

6.104 The Careers Wales Online Advisory Group invited us to sit in on a presentation of some of the work being undertaken in Phase 3 of the 14-19 Learning Pathways Project.

6.105 The presentation covered many aspects of interest to the clearing house model development. Clearly there are significant areas of overlap between the impressive developments undertaken by CWOL and the requirements for a clearing house, articulated by key stakeholders during our consultations.

6.106 The advisory group argued strongly that Careers Wales should be the organisation to manage the clearing house.

Strategic Organisations

DELLS

6.107 We met with two focus groups of DELLS staff, one in North Wales and one in South Wales. In addition two further meetings were held with 2 managers of the organisation.

Rationale for a clearing house

6.108 Staff are involved with the MA programme in a number of ways:

- Policy development;
- Contract management;
- Quality assurance; and
- Marketing.

6.109 The concept of a clearing house was viewed positively; it was seen as having the potential to increase the range of opportunities for young people and adults. There was also the potential for it to help with promoting the parity of esteem between options, and provide a positive platform for raising awareness (and kudos) of vocational qualifications

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.110 Careers Wales was seen as the obvious organisation to be in the lead, but DELLS are keen for new initiatives to be run on a partnership basis. The possibility of the training provider network being involved with its running was mooted.

Coverage

6.111 An all-Wales model with filter facilities to narrow down searches by location and sector was seen as the most suitable model.

Marketing and branding

6.112 Promotion to employers was seen as the main priority as more opportunities are definitely needed. Consultees felt that Business Eye could play an important role – it is a free service for employers and a key medium through which to market a clearing house.

6.113 In the context of individuals, Careers Wales, schools and training providers were seen as important conduits; it was stressed that parents should also be a focus for marketing the clearing house.

The guarantee group

6.114 There is a tendency to place 'difficult' young people onto Skillbuild – this being a much easier option. To place them onto a (Foundation) MA is a considerably more difficult task. The general consensus was that the clearing house will have only minimal effect with this group.

Display of employer details by the clearing house

6.115 The group was keen that employer details should be identified wherever possible – as it will help to make it 'more real' for applicants. The group did recognise the possibility that a number of employers might not want their details revealed, mainly for fear of being inundated by applications.

Display of individuals' details by the clearing house

6.116 Caution would be needed about the amount of detail the clearing house should display about any individuals registered. This caution also needs to be extended to include any details given about individuals in general communications between the clearing house and employers and training providers. It will be important that registrants have some control over the level of detail the clearing house can divulge.

Poaching

6.117 The group was very concerned about poaching of employers by predatory training organisations. If employers are freely identified on the web, with contact details visible, there is a danger that they will be approached by other providers trying to 'steal' their business. Several people mentioned this. They would want to see a code of practice, with penalties for those which abuse the system in this way.

Need for a Help Desk

6.118 The group felt that a Help Desk would be an important feature of a web based clearing house; clients will want a person with whom to speak. It is important that the Help Desk provides assistance to anyone who 'fails' in any part of the system.

Careers Wales

6.119 We held discussions with three groups of staff from Careers Wales:

- A Chief Executives' group, drawn from the whole of Wales;
- A group of practitioners, from North East Wales; and
- A group of managers and team leaders, from South Wales.

Rationale for a clearing house

6.120 Careers Wales would see a clearing house model helping to increase the parity of esteem between the various work-based and academic routes. It was stressed that it would be important that MA opportunities are integrated with other post-16 opportunities; any clearing house model should incorporate all such opportunities. Emphasis was placed on the significance of the 14-19 continuum in Wales.

6.121 One of the current difficulties in the market was the lack of *employment* opportunities; there was no shortage of interested *applicants*. Consultees were not convinced that a clearing house would make any real difference in this respect. On a linked point they emphasised that only a small proportion of MA vacancies are ever openly advertised. Most are filled through existing employees being converted to MA after employers have been made aware of funding availability via training organisations.

6.122 There were a number of consultees in this group who were unenthusiastic about a clearing house if it was to be developed as a standalone model outside of the Careers Wales Online system.

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.123 Consultees from Careers Wales saw only their own organisation having the credibility and capacity to manage the clearing house in Wales. It should be managed as part of the national vacancy database, not as a clearing house per se. They argued that if a separate system were established, it would generate its own 'industry' with additional costs (central team, maintenance contract etc).

6.124 Should Careers Wales manage the clearing house, there would be the possibility of populating its database with records from the CWOL's various databases, including the e-Progress file database, the Learning Choices database, and the Work Based Learning database.

Coverage

6.125 The groups expressed the view that the clearing house should have pan-Wales coverage and that it should cover all opportunities.

Marketing and branding

6.126 The groups stressed the low number of opportunities on offer in many sectors. It would be an important task of the clearing house to stimulate employer interest and commitment to notifying opportunities.

6.127 The groups suggested that a website alone would not in its own right generate enough employer interest and commitment; it would need to be backed up by personal contact. They saw training organisations playing an important role in this context.

6.128 The groups felt that the clearing house should sit within the housing of CWOL and adopt the house style and colours.

The guarantee group

6.129 Careers Wales felt that the clearing house would not be able to offer much help to this group; generally individuals in this group had other challenges that needed to be addressed before contemplating entry into higher level training offered by MAs.

Individuals registering with the clearing house

6.130 Careers Wales holds records for the vast majority of 16-19 year olds in Wales; CWOL has some 175,000 database entries on individuals – including 75% of the current 14-18 cohort. Should they be asked to manage the clearing house they would see this database providing the source to confirm the authenticity of new registrants. There would need to be a fallback position to enable adults and those living outside Wales (but who are interested in opportunities in Wales) to register with the system.

6.131 Careers Wales was anxious about the level of information the clearing house would both *display* and *reveal* about individuals registered with it. They expressed unease about the unfettered approach in Germany (as seen in one of the clearing house websites we examined during our desk research – see paragraph 4.11).

Common application form

6.132 The groups suggested that any development of an application form should be set in the context of all post-16 opportunities. However, they felt that in practice it would probably only be realistic for it to have a common front end – with any later sections being more customised.

Testing online

6.133 Reservations were expressed about online testing (not everyone has internet access; difficult to confirm it is the candidate who is actually sitting the test etc).

6.134 Mention was made of the approach used by some professional bodies which use online testing. In brief, candidates have to use a webcam so that examiners can confirm that it is the right person who is undertaking the test. However, it was felt that this would be somewhat impractical given the volume of potential applicants in Wales and the requirement for anyone undertaking a test to have their own webcam facility.

Need for a Help Desk

6.135 There was strong support voiced by the groups for the clearing house system to offer personal assistance to anyone using it. There was a debate around whether this should be offered by a separate unit or by using the established Careers Wales network of careers advisers throughout Wales.

In conclusion

6.136 The groups argued the case for Careers Wales to manage the apprenticeship clearing house in Wales. They see CWOL having the capacity for and capability of providing the technical solution; they also see the network of careers advisers across Wales providing the support infrastructure.

6.137 Our opinion is that, whilst stakeholders expressed the view that the clearing house should be a discretely managed operation, the development of it should be undertaken in full co-operation with Careers Wales Online, capitalising on the work already undertaken by them. Where the contractual responsibility for the development and ultimate management of the clearing house will lie, is, of course, a matter for DELLS. We recognise that DELLS procurement policy might require it to be put out to competitive tender.

6.138 However, should they be invited to develop and manage the clearing house, our view is that Careers Wales would bring a unique blend of attributes to it; these would include:

- Having an established reputation and presence throughout Wales;
- Having an understanding of the labour market and communities in Wales;
- Having established links with schools, employers and training organisations;
- Having substantial contact with individuals from the age of 14;
- Being centrally involved in the 14-19 agenda;
- Having a comprehensive database of individuals, employers and training organisations underpinning the Careers Wales.com website;
- Undertaking many developments on Careers Wales.com that would be of significant benefit to a clearing house system;
- Being recommended as the preferred organisation to manage the clearing house by the majority of key stakeholders involved in this consultation.

6.139 We believe that there is general support for Careers Wales to undertake the management of the clearing house. If there are reservations, they relate only to procurement policies (see above) and design (see next paragraph).

6.140 A clear message was put forward by many of the stakeholders in our consultations (in particular individuals) that their strong preference was for a simple, free-standing system, with its own branding and house style. The Sussex model was overwhelmingly favoured over any other similarly focused websites reviewed during our discussions with stakeholders.

6.141 We believe that it is technically possible for the clearing house to be housed as an element of CWOL, but with the appearance to users of it being a standalone, bespoke system for dealing with apprenticeships. We believe this to be a pragmatic proposition.

Jobcentre Plus

6.142 In view of the large number of adults participating in the MA programme we were asked to include Jobcentre Plus in our visit sequence.

6.143 We were advised that adults who present themselves to Jobcentre Plus seeking a MA are generally channelled to Careers Wales for more in-depth advice and guidance about apprenticeship opportunities. The majority of adults on MAs are those who have already secured a job and for whom the employer subsequently accesses funding/support from a training provider under contract to DELLS. Others progress from work based learning to MAs without any further involvement of Jobcentre Plus.

Rationale for a clearing house:

6.144 Jobcentre Plus would welcome anything that enables easier access to training provision and information for both clients and advisers. A clearing house system that provides Jobcentre Plus with better statistics about activity within training provision (outputs especially) would be particularly useful.

6.145 The main pitfalls to avoid would be ensuring that a system does not disadvantage any customer group. Whilst acknowledging that an IT solution is likely to be the most efficient, there would need to be safeguards built in that provided support for disadvantaged groups who were unable to use, or lacked access to technology. Examples quoted included those who lacked IT literacy, those with basic skills needs, those with language difficulties and those who physically had no access to IT (particularly clients based in rural areas).

6.146 Jobcentre Plus would hope that a clearing house could help simplify and enhance the current information, advice and guidance process by providing those most capable of self help with immediate access to information and opportunities, thus freeing up resource to provide assistance to those most in need.

Who should manage the clearing house?

6.147 Jobcentre Plus expressed the view that whoever operates the clearing house must have credibility in the market place with key stakeholders, including employers, individuals and training providers. The feeling was that Careers Wales has a natural claim to operating the system, but there would need to be adequate funding and resources provided centrally.

Coverage

6.148 Jobcentre Plus felt that there might be an argument to have each Sector Skills Council operating their own clearing house – they should have access to and credibility with their employers. However there are confusions about crossover between occupational areas and which SSC handles certain routes that would certainly not help an individual to determine from which clearing house to seek information. On balance, a pan-sector clearing house was seen to

provide the best overall solution. In geographical terms a pan-Wales facility should not be a problem if a there were filters to allow individuals using the clearing house to access information about specific localities.

Marketing and branding

6.149 There would need to be a multi-pronged approach to marketing the clearing house - to target individuals, employers, training providers, schools, parents, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus. The marketing would have to be significant in order to ensure that the clearing house gets a high profile start. However, Jobcentre Plus is concerned that MAs are seen as 'second class' provision behind university options and addressing this in concert with a marketing drive should be considered as a high priority.

Engaging non-learners:

6.150 The Government's 'push' on higher education means that there is, arguably, a 'lower ability' group left to take up apprenticeships; some young people leaving school may feel that they have 'had enough' of learning, preferring to take a job rather than pursue a more lengthy continued formal learning programme required of them in an apprenticeship. In addition, the perception of MAs (whether imagined or real) as not being of a similar standard to previous traditional apprenticeships, means that there are many more fundamental issues needing to be addressed. It is unlikely that a MA clearing house will have any major impact on those who choose not to engage with the programme.

Engaging employers:

6.151 Employers are likely to be interested in a clearing house if it can be shown to offer them tangible benefits. Those who tend to be inundated with applications for what are seen to be the 'better' apprenticeships are likely to welcome its development. Those offering low quality opportunities are likely to be highly critical of a clearing house if it does not deliver applicants to them.

It is essential to gain the 'buy-in' of those organisations that interface with employers, particularly Sector Skills Councils, training organisations, colleges, Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and business development agencies.

Other Organisations

LANTRA (the Sector Skills Council for the environmental and land based industries)

6.152 LANTRA has a significant role in the recruitment process for MAs in their sector. Enquiries from potential applicants come from a variety of sources (web, Careers Service etc); LANTRA would then refer them to the relevant training providers (i.e. as opposed to employers direct). LANTRA does not follow up either applicants or training providers to check on progress and outcomes, so the process is quite informal and 'hands off'.

6.153 Currently they have 3 linked websites (the latter two are still being developed):

- A formal one in their role as a Sector Skills Council http://www.lantra.co.uk/index.asp);

- A recruitment website aimed at young people (discussed in paragraph 4.6) http://www.ajobin.com/; and

- A parallel site targeted at older people who are aiming to enter the sector http://www.afuturein.com/ – the latter two are still being developed.

6.154 Many of the views expressed by other stakeholders were also similarly articulated by LANTRA. However there was one important point raised by them:

- LANTRA is quite concerned about the proposal to develop a clearing house for MAs in Wales. They cannot see a great deal of value added over existing services and websites. If the net effect was to duplicate their efforts, their view is that it would cause confusion in the market place and represent a poor return on investment of public money.

6.155 There may be a case for DELLS to provide information to all Sector Skills Councils to raise awareness about the proposals to develop a MA clearing house in Wales, so that any duplication of effort might be avoided.

West Wales Chamber of Commerce

6.156 We contacted the board of West Wales Chamber of Commerce to seek a meeting with them. As well as having visited a number of individual employers we felt that an overview from a more strategic employer angle might help the process of the consultation further. We met with the Chamber's retail sector representative.

6.157 In the process of our consultation the following pertinent comments about the development of a clearing house in Wales were made:

- The name of the website should be short and snappy;

- The website must be efficient – employers would be dissuaded from using the system if they experienced any inefficiency in it;

- If the clearing house is efficient and effective it could be an excellent means for a small company to find suitable candidates without having to advertise. If employers were to see value in the service they might pay to use it, but it would have to be a more effective method of recruiting than their current means;

- They were uncertain about whether employer details should be placed on the website. Perhaps there could be a choice so that those who are happy to take enquiries are able to post their details; others could post a 'contact only via the clearing house' notice on the vacancy;

- In terms of who should manage the website the Chamber did not feel that it should be employer led. It does need to be an impartial, non commercial organisation with no vested interest in targets. Possibly Business Eye might be a suitable contender;

- The website needs to have a pan-Wales feel with an option to access details of local opportunities. In view of the many problems young people are having finding work in rural areas in Wales, it might be a natural step for individuals in Ceredigion or North Wales to seriously look at opportunities in Swansea or Cardiff areas – and the clearing house could provide this level of information;

- On a marketing point it should be marketed through Careers Wales and schools. There is also a sizeable marketing opportunity with 'start up' companies when accessing business support through Business Eye or mainstream providers. The best marketing possible would be through employers who have actually used the system advocating its value to other employers;

- In terms of security and access the Chamber favours a registration process for employers and applicants. After registration it will be important for employers to gain information about the background and experience of candidates for interview. If provided with this information employers could confidently select candidates for interview;

- It is essential that employers are in control of the interview process and any final decision about taking on a MA must be left to the employer;

- Where a candidate is unsuccessful or their skills do not match a particular vacancy, the Chamber suggests that they are referred on to further training or other career options - the clearing house should play a pivotal role in this respect;

- The clearing house must meet business needs or the private sector will not engage with it.

7.   COSTS

7.1   We were asked at the meeting[16] of the project's sub group to give an indication (based on information gleaned from visits to exemplars) of the potential costs of developing an apprenticeship clearing house for Wales.

7.2   We have to say that neither of the two organisations currently offering MA clearing houses was able to give us details of precise costs. However their best estimates were as follows.

West of England:

Development and running costs during a four year period are estimated at £3 million, with annual running costs (4.5 fte Contact Centre staff) approximately £100,000 per annum.

It should be noted that the West of England apprenticeship clearing house is but an element of their much more comprehensive model incorporating the management of work experience, employer database, comprehensive 14+ database and area prospectus. The development costs included project management, significant investments in developing the software to run the system, providing all schools at secondary level with the software packages, training a cohort of teachers to use the system, website construction and marketing.

Sussex Apprenticeship Clearing House:

Initial development costs are estimated at £150,000 - including project management, software development, website construction and marketing. This figure would have been approximately £30,000 higher had their apprenticeship information website not already been in existence.

Continuing costs of running the clearing house (2.5 fte clearing house advisers) is approximately £90,000 which includes staffing, domain costs, ongoing development work and general overheads. The recent employment of a freelance consultant to generate employer leads will add further to these costs – we were not given any estimate of this cost, but our sense would be that £30,000 might be a realistic estimate.

Cost of developing a clearing house in Wales

7.3   There are so many variables on which decisions will need to be made in Wales including, for example:

- Who manages the clearing house?
- Will the resources of CWOL be utilised?
- What level of throughput is anticipated?
- How will marketing be undertaken?

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[16] Held at WAG office at Bedwas on 10th January 2007

- What level of staffing will the clearing house require?
- Will there be separate clearing house premises (e.g. one based in North Wales and one based in South Wales)?
- Will a project manager be appointed?
- At what level of detail will the website be developed (i.e. how many of the enhancements suggested in our model will be implemented initially)?

7.4   We were not asked to develop a definitive costing model; however, we have provided information above which gives an indication through the estimates supplied informally by two other organisations of the costs they have incurred in developing their clearing houses; we have accepted these estimates in good faith.

7.5   Clearly there is a significant difference between the estimate supplied by the West of England LSC and that provided by the Sussex Council of Training Providers. That difference can be accounted for in terms of the scope of the two models. Our recommendations for a clearing house model for Wales are more closely aligned to the Sussex model and we suggest that costings may be more in parallel with that model than the one operating in the West of England.

7.6   However, there will be additional factors in Wales which will need to be considered and which are likely to make costs higher; a principal one being the need to develop the website bilingually in English and Welsh.

7.7   Given that there are a number of variables and imponderables, articulated above, that need resolution before a costing can be firmly developed, we make the *suggestion only*, that the cost of developing a clearing house for Wales might lie in the range £300,000 - £500,000. We reiterate that this is very much a 'best guesstimate' and recommend that DELLS takes further professional advice on the likely costs of this development once decisions have been made and agreements reached on the ultimate 'shape' of a Wales model. Additionally any 'Invitation to Tender' should ask bidders to develop *firm* costing proposals for the project in their submissions.

8.   CONCLUSIONS

8.1   To arrive at our conclusions we have consulted with some thirty different organisations and four focus groups of apprentices and other trainees. In total ninety five individuals contributed their views to this project. Many views on the possibility of a MA clearing house for Wales were consistent. In some instances views were a little more divergent; we believe that our conclusions reflect the opinions of the *majority* of consultees and our model is based on those views.

Rationale for a clearing house

8.2   There was general enthusiasm for the development of a clearing house; the majority of consultees felt that a bespoke clearing house dealing with apprenticeships initially was the best way forward. However, there were counterviews expressed arguing the case for a much more inclusive model that incorporated all 16+ opportunities.

8.3   Larger employers were somewhat more enthusiastic than smaller employers, seeing the clearing house offering the prospect for the better management of the substantial over-subscription of applications to available apprenticeship places.

8.4   Individuals were extremely enthusiastic; they take job seeking very seriously and saw the clearing house providing a very useful resource for them.

8.5   Training organisations were generally receptive to the proposal, but some concern was expressed about whether levels of interest would outstrip available funding.

8.6   Our brief was to develop a 'think piece' relating exclusively to a MA clearing house: we have done this. However, we recognise that extending the model to incorporate a much wider market makes eminently good sense. We have developed our draft model as an exclusive MA one, but we believe that it is sufficiently flexible to incorporate other strands of work based learning, job vacancies and Further Education.

Who should manage the clearing house?

8.7   The general opinion was that the clearing house should be managed by an impartial, non-commercial organisation that was not constrained by competing targets.

8.8   There was very firm advice, based on experience, from the currently operating clearing houses that the operation of the clearing house should be carried out by a discrete staffing cadre. This advice was seen as sensible by the majority of the consultees.

8.9   We asked consultees which organisation, in their view, should undertake the management of the clearing house in Wales. There was a majority in favour of this work being undertaken by Careers Wales.

8.10   Our view is that the eventual contractor should be placed under a formal, performance-based contract to DELLS. However, we believe that there is also an opportunity for other bodies to contribute to the funding, particularly Careers Wales and the National Training Federation – albeit at nominal levels. This approach would give these organisations a real stakeholding in the operation and provide them with opportunity to monitor performance and contribute to the future direction of the clearing house; the Sussex model is a working example of such an approach. A further funding avenue might be via employers, not in terms of payments to use the services of the clearing house, but in terms of an investment in its development and as a sign of their commitment to its operation in Wales. This may be a slightly longer-term aspiration.

Coverage

8.11   We were interested to take views on whether a clearing house should be developed on a pan-Wales basis, or on a more localised level. We asked similar questions about whether it should be developed to cover all industry sectors, or should there be a number of sector-specific models developed.

8.12   There was an overwhelming majority in favour of a pan-Wales, pan-sector model but with filtering systems that allowed users to retrieve information on local and occupational levels.

Marketing and branding

8.13   There will be a need to undertake early and extensive marketing of the model, especially to obtain employers' commitment to notifying their vacancies to the clearing house. We believe that it is imperative that the clearing house starts business with its vacancy database well populated; this should, in turn, encourage individuals to commence registering and using the system.

8.14   We believe there will need to be a concerted effort by all partners (DELLS, training organisations, Careers Wales and Jobcentre Plus) to stimulate employer interest and to generate sufficient MA vacancies to get the clearing house off to a good start. Stronger links might also be established with the Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (DEIN) initiatives such as the Local Supplier Development Project, which holds networking events throughout Wales aimed at employers from a range of sectors. Events such as these could provide an excellent platform to market the MA clearing house to SMEs.

8.15   Many consultees felt that the clearing house should have its own distinctive brand and house colours. Respondents asked that the website should be 'sharp', colourful and easy to use; it should avoid the use of extensive text as its basis. There was substantial approval of the Sussex model both in terms of ease of use and design.

Encouraging non participating employers to recruit modern apprentices

8.16   The prime consideration of most employers in determining whether to recruit an apprentice is the business needs of their companies. If a vacancy does not exist the clearing house will have no immediate relevance to that company. This was confirmed during our consultations with employers.

8.17   Where a vacancy does exist, but that company has not previously recruited via the MA programme, the clearing house could have some relevance and impact.

8.18   If the clearing house is effectively marketed, it could have a longer term influencing effect on employers, with the possibility of them approaching the clearing house in the future.

Displaying employer details

8.19   There was a more mixed reaction to the question as to the level of detail the clearing house should reveal about employers. Smaller employers were concerned that if their details were publicly available they might be inundated by (unsuitable) applicants. Some larger employers would want to be 'associated' with the clearing house and have their details quite openly published.

8.20   Individuals wanted as much detail as possible about the employer as they would want to do research on the company before making any decision to apply for a vacancy.

8.21   In our model general details of vacancies will appear on public-facing website pages, but no specific details about the employer. Details would include a job title, the sector in which the employer operates, the level of the apprenticeship (FMA, Mod App, MSD), the location of the vacancy, the remuneration level, and the preferred start date notified by the employer.

8.22   Further information about the actual employer would be restricted to registered users of the site, and then only at the level the employer would wish the information to be displayed. Alternatively an employer might wish the training organisation with which they are linked to handle initial contacts on their behalf.

8.23   In the context of employer details being made available, the subject of approaches being made to employers by more predatory training organisations was discussed. In some area of Wales an informal agreement has been reached within the network of training organisations; in other parts of Wales this is not the case and 'poaching' is more prevalent. We recommend that a 'Code of Practice' is developed and all training organisations asked to sign up to its principles; the requirement to adhere to the Code of Practice should be built into the DELLS contract with training organisations.

Displaying individuals' details

8.24   Individuals were extremely concerned about having any personal detail displayed publicly on a website. There was also some reticence about general levels of detail about them being displayed.

8.25   Employers, on the other hand, wanted to see as much detail about individuals' education, qualifications, experience, interests and availability.

8.26   Again, in our model, we have taken a pragmatic approach to this issue. Publicly available information about individuals will be restricted to a reference number, their occupational choice, the level at which they wish to commence their apprenticeship (FMA, Mod App, MSD), the number of GCSEs grades A-C attained, the areas to which they could travel to work and the date of their availability to take up an opportunity.

8.27   Beyond that basic level of detail only registered users will be able to access information about the individual. The online application form the individual will complete will seek permission to disclose information to registered users at every section of the application form. This process will enable the individual to have significant control over the level of detail to be made available.

Displaying training organisations' details

8.28   Employers and, in particular, individuals are very interested in being able to access information about training organisations. Knowing what they had to offer in terms of sector coverage and other general services was important. Our model provides for training organisations to display descriptions (using a template to ensure a consistency of lay out and coverage); these descriptions will be moderated by clearing house staff (in consultation with DELLS if appropriate).

8.29   However, most important to individuals we consulted was 'how good' are the training organisations? Individuals were not interested in reading lengthy reports on training organisations, but were more interested in seeing a rating system e.g. stars or scores as in Amazon or eBay feedback systems. Equally they would like to see short reviews completed by their contemporaries who had trained with that organisation. Our model has such feedback facilities built in to its design, although we recognise that these may take some time to develop satisfactorily.

8.30   Of particular interest in the context of star ratings might be the experience of the Learning and Skills Council in developing their Employers' Guide to Training where they grappled with the same issues. Employers wanted to be able to include some 'honest' feedback on training providers, but LSC expressed some concerns about balance. There is a pilot in the South West of England in operation, and a training provider feedback online form can be viewed at: http://www.lsc.gov.uk/Regions/SouthWest/egtp/feedback-training/. However in a search of the website (not exhaustive) we were unable to find any scores yet entered, perhaps suggesting that the pilot has yet to proceed fully to maturity in this respect.

Security and access to information

8.31   The security of any information held by the clearing house was seen to be very important, particularly details about employers and the personal details of individuals. We believe our model reflects the needs of these groups, insofar as requiring anyone who wishes to access any greater level of detail about the employer and individual to register with the clearing house. Access thereafter will be via login and password processes.

8.32   In terms of more general material, for example the job description of any vacancy, details about training organisations, and links to other general pieces of information, our recommendation is that access to these be unrestricted.

Online testing of applicants

8.33   We examined the prospect of the clearing house providing online testing facilities, where required by the employer and/or training organisation. The majority of consultees felt that such a system was impractical as there are difficult issues to address around invigilation and guaranteeing the authenticity of the test taker. Our model does not therefore incorporate this as process.

The Guarantee group

8.34   We were asked to consult on and assess to what extent a MA clearing house might help this group.

8.35   The overwhelming body of opinion was that the characteristics of this group (e.g. personal problems, vocationally unfocused, often not job ready and low levels of motivation) militate against them being attractive to employers.

8.36   At the margin, an eye-catching, easy to use, interesting website might provide some degree of inspiration and motivation to this group to seek further advice and guidance about how to develop to the point of making an application for an apprenticeship opportunity.

Sifting and matching of applications

8.37   We are led to believe that using technology to undertake this function at a basic level is relatively straightforward. There would be a need for key factors for matching to be determined. We refer to these as 'knock-out' factors. For example, if an employer requires candidates with a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grades A-C then all those individuals lacking the minimum requirements will be sifted out by the system – providing the clearing house application form has been so designed and the applicant has completed it accordingly. Similar criteria apply to location, occupation, level of apprenticeship offered/sought, and preferred start date. On each sift against each knock-out factor the list will reduce until a final shortlist is produced. This is broadly the system employed in both Sussex and the West of England.

8.38   The difficulty with any mechanical sifting system is where knock-out factors are poorly articulated. Descriptions such as 'self starters', 'highly motivated' and 'articulate' are unlikely to be satisfactorily sifted by mechanical means.

8.39   Our model is designed to pick up clearly defined knock-out factors, providing that employers and individuals use the same describing conventions. The model also provides for clearing house staff to identify where a shortlist is in fact not short enough and to liaise with training organisations and possibly Careers Wales for help in further refinement.

8.40   In addition the model provides for both employers to view registrant details and individuals to view employer vacancy details allowing either party to match each against the other.

The need for a Help Desk

8.41   There was unanimity in the view that a clearing house could not operate exclusively through the use of new technology. Whilst a web based clearing house was the most effective and efficient 'front end', it was imperative that it be supported by a team of staff to ensure not only the mechanics of the clearing house operated smoothly but that users had a person to contact where further advice was needed.

8.42   We see the advice given by the clearing house to be that relating to how the clearing house operates and how users can take optimal advantage of it. We see the clearing house staff referring users to other professionals (e.g. Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and training organisations) for any advice and guidance about careers and training.

The role of Careers Wales

8.43   Our comments in this section relate *only* to the role of Careers Wales as an all-age, impartial information, advice and guidance service - and the part they might play in a clearing house model.

8.44   We see Careers Wales playing an important part in marketing the clearing house to individuals, especially young people – possibly from year 9 onwards. There will be a similar role to undertake with employers through their regular contact with them.

8.45   Importantly we see the need to have excellent lines of communication between the clearing house and Careers Wales (the Sussex clearing house model is such an example of good practice in working partnerships).

8.46   In large numbers of cases Careers Advisers will, when recommending an individual consider a MA, encourage the person to complete an online application form for the clearing house at the time. The careers adviser will be able to provide confirmation of authenticity and verification of details given at the point of application, enabling the registrant to make full use of the system immediately. In cases where an individual completes the application form independently, the named careers adviser will be contacted by the clearing house to confirm authenticity and verify the details given.

8.47   Occasionally, where employers have asked for the shortlist of candidates for his/her vacancy, provided by the clearing house, to be further refined, we could envisage careers advisers having some input to this process; however, in the main we anticipate that the linked training organisation would provide such a service.

8.48   Where individuals, once registered with the clearing house, have experienced some 'failure' within the system, the nominated careers adviser will be contacted by the clearing house to be made aware of the circumstances and to determine what further action should be taken with the individual. (We also see Learning Coaches being similarly kept abreast of such circumstances). The clearing house staff will play a vital role in ensuring these contacts are made.

8.49   At employer level, in addition to general awareness raising activities, DELLS may wish to consider entering a performance-based contractual agreement with Careers Wales to work with employers to generate additional MA opportunities for handling by the clearing house.

8.50   Nominated careers advisers will have access to tracking and statistical reports about their individual clients within the system – this was seen as a significant item of added value by Connexions advisers in Sussex.

The clearing house – recruitment and selection or referral model?

8.51   In attempting to meet the needs of all consultees and drawing on experience from our exemplar visits we have found it difficult to develop a model that is what we would describe as a fully working 'recruitment and selection' system. However consultees wanted something more than a simple 'referral' model.

8.52   In regard to a 'recruitment and selection' model, no employer we interviewed was prepared to hand over the total responsibility for recruitment and selection to a third party. The employer would always want to make the final decision on who he/she wished to employ. By the same token employers would not wish the clearing house to provide little more than a classified advertisement service with unmediated access to details about the company and the vacancy, with the prospect of being inundated by jobseekers – both suitable and unsuitable.

8.53   Employers saw the clearing house undertaking a comprehensive recruitment service and providing a degree of selection to shortlist level.

8.54   Where our clearing house model falls short of a fully working recruitment and selection system is in its unsuitability (on advice from consultees) to provide online testing of candidates or to deliver any proxy interview and final selection procedures.

8.55   We believe that the model we have drafted goes well beyond a simple 'referral' system. It provides:

- An online application procedure;
- A registration procedure for employers and individuals, underpinned by measures to ensure security and confidentiality of information;
- An authenticity check on registrants;
- A verification process for confirming registrant details;
- A process for employers to notify an interest in placing a vacancy;
- An authenticity check on employers;
- An automated sifting and matching procedure, using key knock-out factors, to provide shortlists of candidates;
- An automated sifting and matching procedure to match vacancies against registrants and to notify them of a successful match;
- A registration and verification procedure for training organisations;
- A referral system that provides support to anyone 'failing' within the system;
- A wide-ranging series of links to organisations and pieces of information relevant to MAs;
- A tracking and statistical model (at micro and macro levels of detail) to provide information to key organisations involved in the system.

8.56   We believe that our model is based on the findings from sound research with key stakeholder groups in Wales and the advice given to us by exemplar organisations in England and Wales; it provides a position from which recommendations can be made by the Project Steering Group on how it might be taken forward by DELLS.

Possible business levels

8.57   We have described the business levels generated by the Sussex MA clearing house in paragraph 5.37. We thought it might be interesting to express two elements of these business levels (number of registrants and number of vacancies generated) as percentages of the 16-19 year old population and the number of businesses in Sussex.

Table 10 : Registrations expressed as a percentage of the 16-19 year old population of Sussex

16-19 year old population[17]	60,454
Registrants for MAs[18] (Nov 05 to Nov 06)	3,000
Percentage registering for MAs	4.96%

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[17]   Source – Connexions Sussex
[18] Source - SCTP

Table 11 : Vacancies generated expressed as a percentage of the number of businesses in Sussex

Number of businesses in Sussex[19]	63,475
Number of vacancies generated[20] (Nov 05 to Nov 06)	308
Percentage of MA vacancies generated	0.48%

8.58   It might be argued that any attempt to speculate on potential business levels in *Wales* by extrapolations based on performance in *Sussex* might be somewhat unreliable at best; however, we thought it nonetheless worth applying the percentage achievements of the Sussex clearing house to the young person and business populations in Wales. The figures can, at best, be described as illustrative. Clearly DELLS and the successful contractor will need to examine more closely the likely levels of business to be generated once development gets underway in Wales.

**Table 12 : Possible number of registrations for MAs in Wales –
12 month period**

Percentage registering for MAs in Sussex	4.96%
16-19 year old population in Wales[21]	163,000
Possible number of registrations in Wales (12 month period)	8,055

Table 13 : Possible number of MA vacancies in Wales – 12 month period

Percentage of MA vacancies generated in Sussex	0.48%
Number of businesses in Wales[22]	171,065
Possible number of MA vacancies in Wales (12 month period)	821

8.59   As we suggest in paragraph 8.58 these figures are highly speculative; they should be treated with caution. However, as no such projections are currently available we believe that these extrapolations give at least a 'feel' for the business levels a first year of operation in Wales might generate.

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[19] Source – Sussex Enterprise
[20] Source - SCTP
[21] Population projections in Wales for 2007 by the Government Actuary's Department
[22] Welsh Assembly Government - StatsWales

Our recommended model

8.60   Our model – at a high level – is as follows. A more detailed description, a diagrammatic representation, and sections relating to access and security, and tracking and statistics can be found in Volume 2 of this report, provided under separate cover.

Main parameters of the draft model

- The clearing house should be outsourced under contract to DELLS, with performance targets agreed between the two parties; it should be operated by a dedicated staffing resource;

- It should be web based, utilising latest technology and supported by dedicated staffing;

- It should be bi-lingual in delivery;

- It should have its own branding and house colours;

- It should have access to, possibly integrated with, existing resources, notably Career Wales Online;

- It will need the backing and co-operation of the education and training infrastructure;

- It will need early and significant employer support and involvement (particularly high profile organisations);

- It should be brought to the attention of young people at an early stage in their education;

- It should be effectively marketed to adults;

- It should have immediacy;

- It should be effective;

- It should operate in 'real time';

- It should have multiple funding sources.

Next level of detail – the website

8.61   General principles:

- Largely of an 'open access' nature;

- Have restricted access at minimal levels;

- Attractive to and have relevance to employers, young people and adults;

- Avoid excessive use of lengthy descriptions and information pages;

- Have filtering processes to produce results appropriate to the user's requirements;

8.62   Initially the website might include the following:

- Home Page;

- General information about apprenticeships;

- Access to more detailed information about occupations in which apprenticeships might be available;

- Details of training organisations approved to organise and offer apprenticeship training;

- Testimonials from individuals and employers;

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - and answers;

- Links to other useful sites relevant to the world of work;

- Search facilities – free text, search for a training organisation, for a vacancy, for a potential apprentice;

- My Personal Page – Individuals (access via registration and password);

- My Personal Page – Employers (access via registration and password);

- My Personal Page – training organisations (access via registration and password);

- Contact details and general information for the clearing house;

- Apprenticeship Vacancies – short description;

- Apprenticeship Vacancies – detailed description;

- Find a training organisation – Individuals;

- Training organisations – detailed description;

- Individuals seeking apprenticeships – anonymised, short description;

- Find a training organisation – Employers;

- Vacancy notification – Employers;

- Registration process – Individuals.

Underpinning processes

8.63   Electronic matching based on a match between an individual's location and details of:

- Occupational choice;

- Travel to work capacity;

- Level of apprenticeship sought;

- Qualifications held;

- Availability to start date.

8.64   Employers' vacancy details recording:

- Occupation offered;

- Location;

- Level of apprenticeship offered;

- Qualifications required;

- Required start date.

8.65   A Code of Practice (the requirement to adhere to this being underlined by the DELLS contract) signed by training organisations which would, inter alia, signify their commitment to:

- Work with the clearing house;

- Notify new apprenticeship vacancies to the clearing house;

- Agree not to attempt to 'poach' employers already committed to another organisation;

- Agree to work to specific timescales for interviewing individuals and meeting with employers;

- Provide management information to the clearing house for tracking purposes.

8.66   The Code of Practice would also set out the roles of the following within the clearing house system:

- Careers Wales;

- Jobcentre Plus;

- Learning Coaches;

- Clearing house staff.

8.67   A protocol of timescales agreed between the clearing house and training organisations by when certain actions would be undertaken:

- To contact an individual once registered;

- To interview an individual;

- To place an individual, or refer back to the clearing house;

- To meet with an employer requiring an apprentice.

8.68   A referral system will be needed whereby any 'rejection' of an individual, within any part of the process, is referred back, via the clearing house team, to the individual's careers adviser (Careers Wales or Jobcentre Plus) and/or Learning Coach.

8.69   Where early terminations are encountered the clearing house will make contact with the individual (possibly via the linked training organisation) to discuss what further help might be offered.

Policy points that may need to be considered

Location(s) of the clearing house

One 'central' unit	Pros	Cons
	Economies of scale;	Not locally delivered;
	Costs;	Low knowledge base of local infrastructures;
	Internal communication;	
	'Leaner' management structure;	Low knowledge base of the local key players;
	Lower staffing levels;	North versus South issue
	Provision of cover;	
	Uniformity of delivery.	

Two (or more) regional units	Local knowledge and delivery;	Diseconomies of scale (duplication);
	Better understanding of local infrastructure;	Costs;
		Communication challenges (policy rather than local);
	Better knowledge of local key players;	
	More of a 'community base'	Extra management layers;
		Higher staffing levels;
		Potential for disparate delivery and setting of precedents

Cross border issues

8.70 Companies located in Wales but who recruit significant numbers of apprenticeships from outside Wales (e.g. Airbus UK, Broughton) are likely to want individuals living outside Wales to have access to registration via the clearing house.

8.71 Companies located outside of Wales but who traditionally recruit apprentices from Wales (e.g. border areas where the natural travel to work pattern is from Wales to England) might seek to place vacancies with the clearing house.

8.72 Individuals located outside of Wales, having seen the website may well complete the on-line registration form. A clear line will be needed in terms of whether this registration be accepted, in the same way as one completed by an individual who is located in Wales. There will also be issues in terms of confirming the bona fide nature of registrations: it may be prudent to strike agreements with Connexions in England and, possibly, counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

8.73 Training organisations who have locations outside Wales (eg, Scottish Power) who seek to recruit Welsh based apprentices for local opportunities argue the case for their details to appear on the clearing house website, even where the training centre is based in England and under contract to an English LSC.

8.74 Once policy agreement has been reached on the above, a set of specific instructions to set out the position of the clearing house (and access to its use) should appear prominently within the website.

9.   A SUGGESTED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

9.1   The report we have produced 'Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Think Piece' is, by its nature, a 'think piece' i.e. it offers a range of ideas and possibilities, some more immediately realistic and practical than others. In terms of taking forward the project, one extreme possibility might be that no further action is taken on any recommendations and the project is abandoned. There are many potential permutations and scenarios built into the report and model; developing any form of definitive implementation plan to take this project forward, with no decisions having yet been taken, makes this a highly speculative piece of work; any important decision made which departs from the plan might have the effect of rendering the remaining plan somewhat redundant. It will be for the successful contractor to write a more detailed development and implementation plan

9.2   For the purpose of writing this plan we have made three fundamental assumptions:

- That DELLS will go ahead with developing a MA clearing house for Wales;
- That decisions have not yet been taken on whether the contract for the delivery of the clearing house will be put out to competitive tender; and
- That the model will be developed on our base model suggestions (ie, any 'enhancements' suggested in Volume 2.2 of our report will not be immediately implemented).

9.3   We have built no actual timescales into this planning model. We have developed it as a broad illustration of the actions needed to develop the clearing house; we have indicated who we believe are the key organisations to contribute to the development of each stage.

9.4   In terms of timescales to develop such a model, our best advice has been provided from our visit to the Sussex Council of Training Providers. Their model was developed between August 2005 and November 2005 (when it went 'live'). We believe that there will be a need for somewhat more time for a similar development in Wales, the reasons including, not least, issues concerning the Welsh language, the geographical scale of Wales (cf, Sussex), the need for thorough negotiations with key organisations across four regions in Wales and the implementation of a full scale marketing effort.

9.5   However, we believe it will be important that the development progresses in line with the prime recruitment and engagement period for MAs. We believe this to be during the summer months, with engagement commencing in September/October each year (DELLS may wish to review our assumptions on this).

9.6   It will be for the eventual contractor to agree with DELLS how long a development period will be required. We suggest that if the full launch of the clearing house system in Wales fails to coincide with key recruitment and engagement dates, then that full launch is delayed until this can be achieved. If this is the case then DELLS may wish to consider a launch of a pilot in a selected geographical area to provide a thorough field testing of the system prior to full launch.

MA Clearing House – A suggested implementation plan

A	Action	By Who ✓Also may be involved ●							Others to involve/ Comments
		DELLS	Contractor	CW	CWOL	JC+	Training Organisations	Employers	
1	Make decision whether to proceed	✓							
2	Determine procurement policy	✓							
3	Develop Invitation to Tender	✓							
4	Distribute ITT to potential contractor(s)	✓							
5	Develop marketing strategy (strategic level)	✓							
6	Produce strategic marketing plan	✓							
7	Commence strategic marketing	✓							
8	Select contractor	✓							
9	Consider role of training organisations	✓					●		Vacancy notification requirements. Marketing
10	Consider appointment of a project manager	✓							
11	If appropriate, recruit project manager	✓							
12	Commence development process	✓	✓						
13	Decide 'siting' and branding issues	✓	●						Whether CH should appear as a freestanding website

B	Action	By Who ✓Also may be involved ●							Others to involve/ Comments
		DELLS	**Contractor**	**CW**	**CWOL**	**JC+**	**Training Organisations**	**Employers**	
14	Consider and develop nature and range of targets for CH	✓	●						
15	Undertake initial market analysis	●	✓	●	●	●	●		
16	Make early contact with CWOL		✓		●				
17	Analyse potential links with CWOL		✓		●				
18	Negotiate agreement with CWOL	●	✓		●				
19	Produce definitive development plan including review dates	●	✓						
20	Produce model outline indicating links and dependencies	●	✓		●				
21	Determine and agree first year targets	✓	✓						
22	Determine overall modus operandi of CH	●	✓	●	●	●	●		
23	Determine location(s) for CH	●	✓						
24	Develop technical requirement for website		✓		●				Possible visit to SCTP Sussex
25	Develop technical Invitation to Tender		✓						
26	Distribute ITT to potential contractors		✓						

C	Action	By Who ✓Also may be involved ●							Others to involve/ Comments
		DELLS	Contractor	CW	CWOL	JC+	Training Organisations	Employers	
27	Select technical contractor(s)	●	✓		●				
28	Commence technical development		✓						And successful contractor
29	Develop draft job descriptions and person specifications for CH staff	●	✓						
30	Determine recruitment policy		✓						
31	Interview and select staff for CH		✓						
32	Develop CH marketing plan	●	✓						
33	Initial awareness raising activities with key stakeholders	✓	✓	●	●	●	●		
34	Develop training organisation Code of Practice	●	✓				●		In consultation with National Training Federation (NTF)
35	Develop service level agreement with Careers Wales		✓	●					In the context of procedures for applications and referrals back from CH
36	Determine whether full launch or pilot for CH	✓	✓	●		●	●		Consultation with selected area if pilot
37	Develop training packages /advisory notes	●	✓	●		●	●		Vacancy taking; training organisation's descriptions; using the system

38	Deliver training packages/advisory procedures		✓	●		●	●		
39	Develop security and access to information strategy for CH		✓						
40	Develop tracking and stats package	●	✓	●		●	●		

D	Action	By Who ✓Also may be involved ●							Others to involve/ Comments
		DELLS	Contractor	CW	CWOL	JC+	Training Organisations	Employers	
41	Deliver training on use of tracking and statistical data	●	✓	●		●	●		
42	Develop employer contact and vacancy targets	●	✓	●		●	●		
43	Launch CH	✓	✓	●	●	●	●	●	Level depends on whether pilot or full roll-out
44	Commence employer marketing campaign	✓	✓	●		●	●	●	
45	Undertake employer contact programme		✓	●		●	●	●	DEIN
46	Develop targets for individual registrations	●	✓	●		●	●		
47	Commence individuals marketing campaign	✓	✓	●		●	●		
48	Commence schools and colleges marketing campaign		✓	✓					Schools and colleges
49	Commence A&G inputs on CH at student level			✓					Schools and colleges
50	Commence taking registrations		✓	✓		✓			
51	Commence taking vacancies		✓				✓		
52	Take early marketing opportunities	✓	✓						First vacancy; first registration; first placement
53	Ongoing review schedule	✓	✓	●	●	●	●		

Appendix I

Research instrument example

PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS

1. **Contact details of interviewee(s)**

    (a) name(s)
    (b) job title(s)
    (c) contact tel no(s)
    (d) e-mail address(es)
    (e) postal address
    (f) brief description of role(s) within organisation, if not apparent from (b) above

2. **Employer organisation**

    (a) full title
    (b) brief description of the employer's business

3. **Range of Mod Apps and/or Foundation MAs**

    (a) list the MA frameworks used by employer (will often be 1 only, but could cover several different types of occupation within same organisation)
    (b) (for each framework) how many Mod Apps and/or Foundation MAs taken on per year? [if recruitment is less regular, note the pattern over last 3 years]
    (c) which training provider is used (not necessarily external, could be provided by the host employer)

4. **Experience of recruiting Mod Apps and/or Foundation MAs**

    (a) is main recruitment process undertaken by employer in-house, or delegated?
    (b) if delegated, to whom (e.g. employer association, training provider, sector skills body) – *list all, if more than 1 MA framework involved*
    (c) for each framework, is the number of suitable applicants 'about right' , or are there not enough, or are you inundated? Enquire about the suitability/calibre of applicants, are they the type of person the employer is seeking.
    (d) any comments on IAG services (importance to process, availability, quality, feedback from users etc)

Please describe briefly (and comment on the effectiveness, where relevant, of) the main stages of the application process (whether done in-house or delegated):

(e)   marketing, advertising (including use of the web and promotion through Careers Wales and others)

(f)   sending out further details and application forms (confirm paper based – probe if web based)

(g)   screening for suitability and short listing

(h)   assessments/tests

(i)   interviews

(j)   verification of qualifications

(k)   making final selection and offering places

(l)   providing feedback to the individual after selection process

(m)   general view on the effectiveness of the current system (note headline strengths and weaknesses only)

(n)   what could be done to help to get the right quality/kind of people?

5. Views on clearing house model

Note: we may need to describe briefly what we mean about a clearing house model (eg. similar to the process for applying for a place at university). In later interviews we should be able to describe our emerging model for comment.

(a)   in general terms, do you think your company would prefer a clearing house model?

(b)   why? and/or why not? (i.e. attractions and drawbacks)

(c)   would it be preferable for it to be web based, paper based, telephone based or a combination?

(d)   why? (for preferred option) and/or why not (for other option)

(e)   'ownership' – which organisation should be in the lead role? why?

(f)   are there any other credible contenders for managing the clearing house?

(g)   funding – how would the costs be met? would employers be willing to contribute to the costs of such a model

(h)   geographical coverage (local area, regional, pan Wales)?

(i)   sectoral split – should there be one overarching clearing house for all frameworks or should there be a series of parallel clearing houses for individual (or small groups of) sectors?

Can you think of any specific process points we should bear in mind when drawing up a potential model. For example, as regards:

(j)   marketing and advertising

(k)   web access and security

(l)   screening for suitability

(m)   assessments

(n)   interviews

(o)   verification of qualifications

(p)   making final decisions

(q)   notification of outcomes

(r)   would you welcome the model being extended to other routes (e.g. jobs and full-time courses)? *[interesting to get a quick 'feel' for this, but do not explore in depth we are focusing on MAs]*

(s)   are you aware of any other relevant comparators that we should review

6.   Consultant

(a)   Name and date of discussion/visit.

Appendix II

Desk research

The following websites were examined during our desk research work. The websites listed are only those which offered some element of interest to the project – ie, directly related to apprenticeship matters. There were many more websites investigated which, on examination, were of no direct relevance to the project – these have not been recorded.

'Apprenticeships' newsletter funded by LSC	http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/45C58EC0-8A0C-4ABD-8729-358ADD3F0FE8/0/AppNewsletter_14AW181105FINAL.pdf
Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce Newsletter	http://eastbournechamber.co.uk/News/?page=February
'Apprenticeships in Sussex' – the Sussex Apprenticeship Clearing House	http://apprenticeships-in-sussex.com
'Apprenticeships on line' the clearing house for West of England and Hampshire & IOW LLSCs	https://www.apprenticeshipsonline.org
Union Jobs Clearing House – International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 97 Quebec Canada	http://www.unionjobs.com/trade/iupat/iupatdc97.html
Canadian Apprenticeship Forum website promoting apprenticeships in Canada	http://www.apprenticetrades.ca/EN/displayContent/default.asp?userAction=LOADARTICLE&txtArticleID=1036
Apprenticeship and Occupations website of the Department of Education, Government of Nunavut province	http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/Apprenticeship/index.htm
Apprenticeship and Occupations website of the Department of Education, Government of Northwest territories	http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/Apprenticeship/index.htm
Advanced Education Branch, Department of Education, Government of the Yukon Territory	http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanced/apprenticeship/index.html

The Canadian Industry Training Authority website	http://www.itabc.ca/
Government-sponsored, industry training website for Alberta	http://www.tradesecrets.org/
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission	http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/index.php
Manitoba Advanced Education & Training website	http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/apprent/
Ontario's Ministry of Education website's apprenticeship section	http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/apprenticeship/appren.html
Emploi-Quebec website	http://emploiquebec.net/anglais/individus/qualification/index.htm
New Brunswick's Department of Post-Secondary Education and Training	http://www.aoc-acp.gnb.ca/
Prince Edward Island Government website apprenticeship section	http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ/index.php3?number=74951&lang=E
Nova Scotia's Department of Education Apprentice Training and Skill Development website	http://www.apprenticeship.ednet.ns.ca/
Newfoundland & Labrador's Department of Education website apprenticeship section	http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/app/
Apprenticesearch.com website	http://www.apprenticesearch.com/default.asp
London East Connexions 16+ Clearing House	http://www.connexions-londoneast.co.uk/clearinghouse/home.php
Public sector ICT & e-Government news and jobs newsletter	http://www.publictechnology.net/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=1004
Battersea Power Station Newsletter about site redevelopment (2004)	http://www.thepowerstation.co.uk/press/press_releases/detail.cfm?contentid=227
Battersea Power Station Clearing House	http://www.thepowerstation.co.uk/opportunities/

Construction Skills website (Sector Skills Council for Construction)	http://www.constructionskills.net/
Construction Industry Council website	http://www.cic.org.uk/home/index.shtml
SummitSkills website (Sector Skills Council for Building Services Engineering)	http://www.summitskills.org.uk/1
Cogent SSC website (Sector Skills Council for Petrochemical industries)	http://www.cogent-ssc.com/
SEMTA website (Sector Skills Council for Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies)	http://www.semta.org.uk/semta.nsf/?Open
German portal also available in English	http://www.deutschland.de
Site endorsed by the Bundesagentur fur Arbeit	http://www.meinestadt.de/deutschland/lehstellen
An initiative of the Industrie und Handelskammern of Nord-Westfalen	http://www.ihk-ausbildung.de
Commercial site run by Message Messe and Marketing gmbh	http://www.azubi-tage.de
Website run by Zeitplan Verlag	http://www.azubi-online.com
Commercial site run in conjunction with Monster.com	http://www.jobpilot.de
Scottish Enterprise site with details of apprenticeships	http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/modern-apprenticeships http://www.mascot.uk.com/
Australian construction industry site	www.beconstructive.com.au
Austrian apprenticeship website	www.lehrling.at
Sector – Environment and Land based	www.ajobin.com/aprenticeships.aspx

Daimler Chrysler UK and German sites	www.daimlerchrysler.co.uk/careers/app_scheme/welcome.asp - UK site www.daimlerchrysler.com/de – Germany
Ford Motor Company UK website	http://www.ford.co.uk/apprenticeships
Rolls-Royce UK website	http://www.rolls-royce.com/careers/uk/apprentices/ama/recruitment/jsp
BMW UK and German website	http://www.bmw.co.uk/bmwuk/about/dealer_network_careers/apprentice - UK site http://www.bmwgroup.com - German site
Engineering Connections website	http://www.apprentices.co.uk
From Initial Education to Working Life: Making Transitions Work	http://lysander.sourceoecd.org/vl=19287220/cl=21/nw=1/rpsv/~6682/v2000n7/s1/p1
Clearing house for Postgraduate Courses in Clinical Psychology	http://www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp/index.htm
CATCH –Nursing and Midwifery education in Scotland	http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/child_health/currentwork/courses.htm
National Graduate Development Programme (Local Government)	http://www.ngdp.gtios.com/walkthrough.asp
Caregiver Jobs Clearinghouse	http://www.carecareers.net/
GIS Jobs Clearinghouse	http://www.gjc.org/
Government Skills – SSC for Central Government	http://www.government-skills.gov.uk/standards/qualifications/apprenticeships.asp
Careers Scotland	http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/home/home.asp
Hospitality Training Foundation	http://www.people1st.co.uk/webfiles/Pdfs/travel_framework.pdf

People 1st for Skills – SSC	http://www.people1st.co.uk/default.asp?sID=1
Skills for Care and Development – SSC	http://www.skillsforcareanddevelopment.org.uk/view.aspx?id=9
Skills for Health – SSC	http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/index.php
Skillsmart Retail – SSC	http://www.skillsmartretail.com/index.php

Appendix III

Participants in fieldwork discussions

The following organisations and individuals have made extremely helpful contributions to the consultation process:

EMPLOYERS

Airbus UK
Gary Griffiths - Manager, Apprenticeship Programme for the UK
Anna Powell - Apprentice Recruiter for Broughton and Filton sites
Steve Edwards - Education Liaison Manager

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Jeff Childs - Manager, Business Resource Centre

Gwent Building Supplies
Claire Jones - Office Manager

Maldwyn Leisure Centre
Gareth Jones – Acting Manager

Canolfan Tryweryn White Water Centre
Bleddyn Lloyd – Office Manager

Portmeirion Ltd
Gareth Evans – Personnel Manager
Elen Roberts – Human Resources Officer

Scottish Power
George Hedley – Apprentice Co-ordinator
Mark Lafferty – Craft Training Co-ordinator

Absolute Cutters
Mark Jones – Owner

Christopher Hall Estate Agents
Christopher Hall - Owner

Ruthin Farmers' Auction Co. Ltd
Glyn Owens – Auctioneer

TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

University of Wales Bangor – School of Lifelong Learning
Russell Dennis – Senior Co-ordinator
Lowrian Williams – Careers and Employer Liaison

Cambrian Training
Arwyn Watkins – Managing Director

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Jeff Childs - Manager, Business Resource Centre

Swansea College of Further Education
Siân O'Neill – Assistant Principal

Yale College
Wynne Roberts – Director of Work Based Learning

South Wales Assessment and Training Services
Rachael Searle – Chief Executive

FOCUS GROUPS

North Wales Training
Callum Cook
Sammy Samuels
Naomi Roberts
Charlotte March
Phil Williams
Chris Jones
Michael Willott

Airbus UK
Rob Owens
Debbie Elder
Andy McGuffie
Shaun Thomas
Dave Jellicoe
Lee Wheeler

Yale College
Hannah Evans
Lowri Lewis
Sarah Whitley
Vicky Mobbs
Bruce Ruscoe
Dominique Reynolds
Alexandra Roberts

Pathways Training – Neath-Port Talbot College
Alex John Davies
Adam Curtin
Jody Bevan
Phil Laurence
Richard Sartas

Careers Wales Association
Steve Hole – Business Support Manager
Lesley Rees – Executive Director

Careers Wales Online Advisory Group
Mark Freeman – Chairperson – CW Cardiff & Vale
Steve Harford – CW Gwent
Mark Owen – CW Mid Glamorgan &Powys
Rhian Taylor – Careers Wales Association
Fiona Hibbert – CW North East
Janet Morgan – CW West
Paul Messer – Careers Wales Online
Steve Hole - Careers Wales Online

STRATEGIC GROUPS

DELLS South Wales
Clare Jones – Learning Provision Manager
Wayne Scoberg - Learning Provision Manager
Alison Bryant – Senior Learning Policy Manager
Kim Clark – Skills Development Officer
Barbara Morris – Head of Sector Skills Policy
Bernie George – Senior Learning Network Development Manager
Tanya Wigfall – Senior Learning Provision Manager
Mark Bradley – Marketing Manager
Trish Hopkins – Learning Policy Manager
Siân Powell – Marketing Manager (Individual Participation)

DELLS North Wales
Adam Evans – Learning Provision Manager
Erica Dawson – Project Manager

Jobcentre Plus
Bon Westcott – External Relations Manager, Jobcentre Plus Regional Office

Careers Wales Chief Executives' Group
Lesley Rees – Executive Director, CWA
Mark Freeman – Chief Executive, CW Cardiff and Vale
Trina Neilson – Chief Executive, CW Gwent
Ray Collier - Chief Executive, CW West
Joyce M'Caw - Chief Executive, CW North East
John Llewellyn – Chief Executive, CW North West

Careers Wales North East
Louise Jones – Employment & Training Adviser (Wrexham)
Maxine Shone - Employment & Training Adviser (Mold)
Helen Applewhite – Youth Gateway Adviser (Mold)
Delyth Davies – Team Leader (Wrexham)
Val Wainwright – Careers Adviser (Wrexham)
Doreen Magaw – Team Leader (Deeside)
Fiona Hibbert – Business Manager (Wrexham)
Jane Joyce - Employment & Training Adviser (Deeside)

Careers Wales South
Shirley Rogers - Senior Manager Youth Guidance, CW Cardiff & Vale
Cathy Murphy - Business Development Manager, CW Mid Glamorgan & Powys
Graham Evans - Team Leader (Inclusion, Transition and Adults), CW West
Suzanne Owen - Team Leader (Business Improvement), CW West
Ruth Thomas – Training and Employment Adviser, CW West

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

West Wales Chamber of Commerce
Jill Burgess – Proprietor Burgess World Travel Ltd

LANTRA
Joanne Bryan - UK Apprenticeships Co-ordinator

EXEMPLARS

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)
Janet Pearce – Head of External Relations and Business Development Unit
Peter Evans – External Relations Executive for Wales

West of England Learning and Skills Council
Steve Jones – Partnership Director (Gloucester)

Sussex Council of Training Providers
Paul Mitchell – Consultant to the clearing house
Jackie Taylor – Clearing house adviser
Sandra Leicos – Clearing house adviser

GO Wales
Alysha Morgan – Placement Manager
Crystal Evans – Placement officer

Appendix IV

The Modern Apprenticeship Clearing House Project Steering Group Membership:

WAG DELLS
Jacqui Bastock
Stephanie Norris
Julie Owens
Siân Powell
Lorraine Rees
Olivia Schofield

Careers Wales
Graham Bowd

Careers Wales Association
Steve Hole

Careers Wales Online
Paul Messer

National Training Federation (NTF)
Terry Jones

Coleg Sir Gâr
Bridget Moseley

Jobcentre Plus
Bon Westcott