
Report for NAS: Good Practice Evaluation of the Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots

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Good Practice Evaluation of the Diversity in Apprenticeships Pilots

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Key point summary

Apprenticeships form a central component of the Government's strategies for social mobility and up-skilling the workforce. The National Apprenticeship Service Prospectus (2009) set out an aim to increase the '*number, quality and background of people, applying for Apprenticeships*'. In autumn 2010, the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) commissioned 16 pilots across England to undertake trial activities which would aim to increase demand for, and supply of, Apprenticeships among under-represented groups. These were known as the Diversity in Apprenticeship (DiA) pilots.

The pilots became operational in winter 2010/11. The funding period varied by pilot, although most operated into spring-summer 2012. The funding was focused on seeding approaches that might be embedded in local contexts. NAS and SFA commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to undertake a good practice evaluation of the pilots; the evaluation work commenced in autumn 2011. This research was conducted in two stages in autumn 2011 and spring 2012. This report synthesises the emerging evidence about effective and sustainable practices.

Key points

- The 16 pilots were highly varied in design and approach although there were two broad forms of leadership model: provider¹-led pilots (eg colleges, training providers and Apprenticeship Training Agencies), and support organisation-led pilots. These leadership types had implications for delivery.
- Some pilots focused on the needs of one particular group while others aimed to address the needs of multiple groups who are under-represented in Apprenticeships. This had implications for the nature and extent of partnerships established and activities that were needed.
- Most pilots conducted research ahead of designing activities to meet the needs of their target groups. This research reinforced existing messages about barriers for different

¹ Throughout the report, the term *provider* is used in a broad form to include all providers involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships including colleges, private training providers, ATAs etc.

under-represented groups. However, since it was conducted in local settings, the messages were highly salient to local stakeholders.

- There was a consensus that the Apprenticeship message was not reaching black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. There was also agreement that different minority ethnic communities had differing barriers and needs, and consequently would need tailored solutions.
- Pilots agreed that young women, parents and, often, teachers and advisers held out-dated views of science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) occupations. The subject choices of girls at Key Stage 4 could limit their opportunities if aspirations for STEM careers were raised after this point. Employers tended to feel that there were few barriers on the supply side but rather there was limited demand among young women. However, pilots were not convinced that all employers had considered unconscious bias in recruitment practices and work environments.
- Pilots agreed that there was a need for gender positive images and role models in marketing campaigns to make social care careers a comfortable choice for male applicants. Pilots also found that consideration of health and social care occupations by men could be strongly influenced by local labour market conditions; there could be greater consideration of these careers where other job opportunities were limited.
- There is a huge spectrum of disability, learning disability and difficulty, and emotional and behavioural difficulties (D/LDD/EBD), and pilots agreed that this group required information, advice and guidance that would set expectations realistically. People with D/LDD/EBD could be held back by negative stereotypes of disabilities and health conditions among employers and parents. The time needed to prepare young people with D/LDD/EBD for an Apprenticeship could mean they were 19 or older when ready, and might not attract the 100 per cent training subsidy offered by Government². Employers required advice about the implications of different D/LDD/EBD and reassurance that individuals were capable of job performance.
- Young people from vulnerable groups (young carers, care leavers, young ex-offenders, and young people not in education, employment and training among others) have differing support needs and often complex or multiple barriers. Pilots felt this group required intensive and tailored support and pre-employment preparation. Common needs include confidence building, information about work culture, and support and advocacy to overcome the barriers encountered once in an Apprenticeship.
- Pilots reported that large employers with a track record of involvement in Apprenticeships were open to working with pilots around their expectations of candidates. However, they sought to recruit the best available candidates as a priority and would not relax recruitment criteria to positively discriminate for atypical or diverse candidates. Small and medium-sized employers were less likely to have formal policies relating to equality and diversity although could be persuaded of the business benefits of a diverse workforce; however they could be put off by red tape and bureaucracy.

² SFA (2012) 'Funding Rules 2012/13', available here: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_201213_-_Published_3_April_2012.pdf details the circumstances under which the 100 per cent training subsidy can be offered to post-19 learners

- Some cross-cutting themes emerged from the pilots' analyses: these included a call to action that young people should receive information about all post-16 education and training options (ie Apprenticeships as well as full-time study) ideally starting ahead of choices for Key Stage 4. Early work to challenge occupational stereotypes is also needed. There is a need for pre-Apprenticeship preparation (of varying lengths and intensities to take account of the differing needs of differing groups of young people) and for work-related learning for example, at Level 1.
- For different groups, the types of activities delivered by pilots included:
 - **Gender** – marketing campaigns and new publicity materials with gender positive images; using new media channels (the web, YouTube, DVDs); provision of taster events; use of role models and ambassadors to promote Apprenticeships and dispel misconceptions of occupations; equalities training and an assessment of organisational culture for businesses; provision of gender-congruent mentors and actions to positively influence parental views of gender-stereotyped occupations.
 - **Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME)** – outreach activities in communities; work in schools (eg those with high proportions of BAME students); regular radio shows on community radio stations, with BAME employers and apprentices sharing experiences and advertising vacancies; using established BAME community events and campaigns to promote Apprenticeships; raising awareness among BAME employers; improving understanding of BAME employers' needs and recruitment decision processes.
 - **Vulnerable young people including those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties (LDD)** – mentoring and support activities focused on provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG) to set expectations realistically, confidence-building, soft skills and employability attributes; brokerage with employers and matching employers and apprentices; advice to employers about the nature of disabilities and health conditions.
- The evidence suggested that the organisations involved in the Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots had grasped the opportunity to experiment and/or innovate to better understand and improve delivery to meet the needs of non-traditional apprentices. It was apparent that they had also generated a groundswell of local and, in some cases, national support.
- It was the combination of activities led by pilots that appeared effective and was most novel about their approach. At its best, this built a momentum within a local area and persuaded a range of stakeholders to work with the pilots and to assist the achievement of their aims. However, establishing partnerships was not always straightforward since other providers did not necessarily trust that pilots were disinterested parties in the Apprenticeship system.
- Despite lower than anticipated Apprenticeship starts, the pilots nonetheless had exceeded the planned volume of learner engagements and the impact of this will take some time to be evidenced. The pilots also achieved qualitative impacts: high levels of satisfaction were noted among employers and apprentices who had been supported.
- There were intentions to continue the work, although the means to achieve this varied by the pilot leadership type. For the provider-led pilots there was greater opportunity to 'mainstream' the most successful aspects of the pilot, in terms of learner and/or employer engagement, into more general recruitment and delivery activities for Apprenticeships and other forms of learning. Among support organisation led pilots, the

legacy was perhaps less assured because these organisations required project funding to roll out their work; their core funding (if they had any) would not support this.

- Some key issues emerged for consideration for future policy formation: It is critical to get **the right information, in the right hands, at the right time**. There is a critical time-line to stimulate demand among learners. It is necessary to start early, to challenge occupational stereotypes and developing knowledge about the different routes to careers, including Apprenticeships. Department for Education and Ofsted are best positioned to monitor this.
- The pilots demonstrated that **incentivising employers is effective for diversity**. It may be worthwhile for NAS to consider whether some of the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) can be ear-marked to support diversity outputs ie to incentivise the supply of Apprenticeships to particular groups or among certain employers.
- **Competition constrains collaboration** in the post-16 learning and training market-place: this limited the influence and impact of some pilots. Intermediaries such as Skills Funding Agency or NAS Regional Manager might provide help to establish the authenticity and credibility of similar work in the future.
- There is a need to **understand the spread of good practice** more generally among providers in the Apprenticeship system, to understand whether good practice activities targeted for other provision can be expanded and used to increase diversity in Apprenticeships; and whether there are opportunities to encourage greater emphasis on equality and diversity for example, through payment by results or other mechanisms related to mainstream funding models.
- A final point is the length of **time required to effect culture change**. It could not be expected that, for example, long traditions of occupational stereotyping by gender, or long held perceptions of Apprenticeships and training within BAME communities, could be changed within the short time-frame of the pilots. Ongoing work to spread the message about Apprenticeships and the different pathways to different careers is critical.

1 Introduction

1.1 The context for the Diversity in Apprenticeship pilots

Apprenticeships form a central component of the Government's strategies for social mobility and up-skilling the workforce. The vision is that by 2020 every employer will value Apprenticeships as the key route to equipping them with the skills they need. The drive to increase the volume of Apprenticeships is proving effective, and over 450,000 Apprenticeship frameworks were commenced in 2010-11 (SFA data release).

Factors that may further drive *demand* for Apprenticeships include the policy to raise the participation age in education or training, from 2013, which guarantees Apprenticeships to all capable young people who want them. The increase to tuition fees for higher education may also lead young people to consider alternative routes which enable them to earn while they learn and increased opportunities for progression to Level 4 Apprenticeships are likely to support this. However, the introduction of FE Loans for Level 3+ Apprenticeship frameworks for learners aged over 24 may have the opposite effect, although recent research with apprentices was inconclusive on the likely impacts on demand³. On the *supply-side*, many employers are already involved; however, to support small-to-medium sized employers (SMEs) to employ Apprentices in the current economic climate, the government has introduced a new grant (Apprenticeship Grant for Employers). Through this, eligible employers receive staged payments of up to £1,500 for each Apprentice they employ. Government hopes that this will continue the growth seen in Apprenticeships in recent years.

1.1.1 A history of under-representation

Research by DCSF and DIUS (2008)⁴ identified that black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, and people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are under-represented in Apprenticeships. There is also considerable gender segregation across

³ BIS (2012), *Attitudes to Further Education Loans*; this study involved a small sample of apprentices in scope of an FE loan

⁴ DCSF, DIUS (2008). *World-class Apprenticeships: Unlocking Talent, Building Skills for All*

particular vocational sectors within Apprenticeships. The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) Prospectus (2009) set out an aim to increase the *'number, quality and background of people, applying for Apprenticeships and in particular supporting 16-18 year-olds'*. In particular one of the priorities was to *'improve the number of learners from diverse backgrounds on the Apprenticeship programme'*.

As a means to support these ambitions, a set of pilots was envisaged to address aspects of under-representation. To support the development of these pilots, research was commissioned to examine under-representation in Apprenticeships and scope existing good practice (Marangozov et al., 2009⁵). This highlighted that a lack of tailored and specialist provision and a lack of awareness were key barriers. It also indicated that some employers lacked the understanding and ability to recruit and support atypical Apprentices. The evidence showed that 'what works' includes:

- Partnership/collaborative working between key agencies
- Securing employer commitment and addressing work place culture
- Specialised staff (role models, ambassadors and outreach)
- Mentoring and support
- Parental engagement
- Promoting Apprenticeships through role models and different media channels
- Equality training for employers, staff, careers advisers and community workers
- Targeted advertising, taster sessions and work trials.

A final point was the time needed to establish an impact against prevailing trends of under-representation which would have to be considered in commissioning and then in evaluating the impact of the Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots.

1.1.2 Aims for the pilots

NAS and SFA wished to encourage proposals for the pilots that would address under-representation arising from gender, ethnicity, disability, learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD), religion/belief and sexual orientation as well as uptake among vulnerable groups such as young people not in education, employment or training, young offenders and care leavers among others. A broad spectrum of project models was encouraged which encompassed:

- working in sectors with traditionally high gender segregation in Apprenticeships, including construction, engineering, hairdressing and child care
- demonstrating links and collaboration with employers wishing to broaden the diversity of their workforce through Apprenticeships
- expertise in meeting the needs of particular under-represented groups

⁵ Marangozov, R, Bates, P, Martin, R, Oakley, J, Sigala, M, Cox, A (2009) Research to Shape Critical Mass Pilots to Address Under-Representation in Apprenticeships

- identification of strategies that effectively promote Apprenticeships in communities that traditionally are under represented on Apprenticeships, and
- testing delivery mechanisms to prepare and support potential apprentices for entry onto Apprenticeships and provide support during and after the selection process, particularly for participants aged 16-18.

Proposals had to demonstrate *new, innovative approaches* to engage atypical and under-represented groups and offer support through recruitment processes and Apprenticeship programmes; that they would link to existing colleges and training providers that have access to programme funding to support delivery; would deliver *sustainable results* that could be incorporated into mainstream provision; and could give assurances that the programme funding would not be used to displace existing activity or funding.

It was hoped that some 3,500 new Apprenticeship starts in the funded period would result from the pilots. However NAS and SFA recognised that quantifying their progress through measuring the number of starts alone would not sufficiently reflect their achievements. Consequently, pilots have been monitored on activities delivered, and engagements with potential apprentices, employers, local agencies and support organisations.

1.2 About the evaluation

The evaluation was tasked with documenting good practice information arising from the pilots with an aim of informing future policy development in respect of diversity in Apprenticeships and potentially, other forms of training and development. An interim and a final phase were commissioned.

The **interim evaluation** consisted of a desktop review of pilot and related documentation; interviews with key personnel at each pilot, subcontractors, partners and/or employers; interviews with relevant Regional Contract Managers and a good practice workshop. The interim evaluation sought to clarify: the nature/composition of the Diversity in Apprenticeship (DiA) pilots ie the lead organisation(s), partnership arrangements, experience in working to combat under-representation and activities embedded, the number and nature of apprentices recruited and progress towards the achievement of this target; and the nature and experience of employer engagement with the pilots. As part of the interim research, 61 telephone interviews were achieved.

The **final evaluation** extended into detailed case studies with 15 of the pilots (one pilot had closed at the end of the interim evaluation). The research consisted of case study visits where interviews were conducted with pilot strategic and delivery staff, and a range of partners, subcontractors and stakeholders, local employers, young people, potential apprentices and apprentices. Where possible and relevant, the research visits were linked to activities and events led by the pilots such as careers fairs, information sessions, 'have a go' (taster) events, and employer events. The scope and nature of the research varied to reflect their different objectives and approaches. In addition, some of the Regional Contract Managers were interviewed by telephone. For the final phase of research, 148 interviews were completed and seven events were attended, where additional discussions were held. For the final phase, an analysis of Individual Learner Record (ILR) data was conducted in order to provide a quantitative underpinning to the evaluation.

1.3 Structure of this report

The **second chapter** of this report reviews diversity trends in Apprenticeships comparing data from 2009/10 (before the pilots were introduced) with 2010/11 (full year) and 2011/12 (part year) over which the pilots operated.

In **Chapter 3** we examine the actions taken by pilots in order to establish a view of emerging good and effective practice as well as identifying what makes this work.

Chapter 4 assesses the key learning arising from the funded period of the pilots and implications for future policy development.

The analysis of pilot delivery report culminates, in **Chapter 5**, with a detailed case study of each pilot. Throughout boxed examples are used to highlight emerging good practice.

A final chapter, **Chapter 6**, provides learner case studies which highlight the impacts and benefits of the pilots and Apprenticeships.

2 Trends in Apprenticeships

In this chapter, information from the Data Service's Statistical First Releases⁶ about Apprenticeship starts (which is based on output from the Individual Learner Record (ILR)) is used to explore equality and diversity trends in Apprenticeships across the 2009/10 and 2010/11 academic years. At the time of publication, full year data was not available for 2011/12. The data for the first six months (August to January) of the 2011/12 year is shown in tables but not discussed since it presents an incomplete picture.

The Diversity in Apprenticeships pilots were operational in 2010/11 and 2011/12 academic years. A final section of this chapter explores the data about apprentices recorded as being part of the pilots. The data for 2010/11 represent the full year however the 2011/12 data are based on a part-year (a snapshot based on eight months⁷). Consequently they are provisional and can at best be considered illustrative since the numbers may change once the full year data is reported. This section highlights reasons why these data may under-estimate the numbers of young people involved in the pilots.

2.1 Overview of Apprenticeship starts

In 2009/10, the data indicate that 279,700 people started Apprenticeships (at Intermediate and Advanced levels) and in 2010/11 this had risen to 457,200 Apprenticeship starts. This represents a rate of growth of 63.5 per cent.

Popular frameworks

Table 2.1 shows the breakdown by sector subject area. The most popular sector subject area is business, administration and law, which accounts for over a quarter of Apprenticeship starts in both years, followed by retail and commercial enterprise; health, public services and care; engineering and manufacturing technologies; and construction, planning and the built environment.

⁶ Published 29 March 2012 and downloaded from:
http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/statistics/statisticalfirstrelease/sfr_supplementary_tables/Apprenticeship_sfr_supplementary_tables/

⁷ These data were drawn from the ILR after the SFR release mentioned above

Between 2009/10 and 2010/11 there was a big increase in the number of Apprenticeship starts in the top three most popular sector subject areas ie business, administration and law; retail and commercial enterprise; and health, public services and care.

In contrast, the number of Apprenticeship starts in engineering and manufacturing technologies; and construction, planning and the built environment show a slight decline.

Table 2.1: Apprenticeship starts by Sector Subject Area

Sector Subject Area	2009/10 Full Year		2010/11 Full Year		2011/12 6 Months	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Business, Administration and Law	76,590	27.4	133,820	29.3	75,240	29.3
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	61,620	22.0	102,770	22.5	55,720	21.7
Health, Public Services and Care	44,150	15.8	89,970	19.7	48,450	18.9
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	37,860	13.5	48,970	10.7	31,190	12.2
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	25,210	9.0	28,090	6.1	17,220	6.7
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	14,690	5.3	21,590	4.7	10,050	3.9
Information and Communication Technology	12,570	4.5	19,520	4.3	10,300	4.0
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	5,690	2.0	7,380	1.6	4,070	1.6
Education and Training	860	0.3	4,070	0.9	3,290	1.3
Arts, Media and Publishing	440	0.2	1,030	0.2	610	0.2
Science and Mathematics	-		10	0.0	240	0.1
Unknown	-		-		110	0
Grand Total	279,700		457,200		256,500	

Note: '-' Indicates a base value of less than five; 'Languages, Literature and Culture' and 'Preparation for Life and Work' record fewer than five starts in each year reported

Source: SFR Apprenticeship Supplementary Tables, Data Service

Regional distribution

There are considerable regional differences in the number of Apprenticeship starts, with the North West having the largest number (over 78,000 in 2010/11), followed by the South East, while London, the East of England and the North East have the smallest numbers (Table 2.2).

Regions with the largest growth in Apprenticeship starts (above the 63.5 per cent growth seen nationally) are London (where numbers more than doubled), the North East and the West Midlands.

Growth was similar to the overall increase in numbers in the North West, East Midlands and East of England.

Table 2.2: Apprenticeship starts by region

Region	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12	
	Full Year		Full Year		6 Months	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
North East	18,510	6.6	34,550	7.6	18,900	7.4
North West	47,280	16.9	78,660	17.2	43,710	17.0
Yorkshire and The Humber	36,530	13.1	55,800	12.2	31,030	12.1
East Midlands	24,620	8.8	40,860	8.9	22,820	8.9
West Midlands	31,720	11.3	54,290	11.9	29,620	11.5
East of England	23,730	8.5	39,760	8.7	22,780	8.9
London	20,350	7.3	41,400	9.1	22,300	8.7
South East	39,120	14.0	58,340	12.8	33,290	13.0
South West	35,020	12.5	49,330	10.8	28,400	11.1
England Total	276,900	99.0	453,000	99.1	252,800	98.6
Other	2,790	1.0	4,220	0.9	3,670	1.4
Grand Total	279,700		457,200		256,500	

Source: SFR Apprenticeship Supplementary Tables, Data Service

Characteristics of apprentices

Reviewing the characteristics of apprentices who started training in each of the two academic years (see Table 2.3), shows that:

- the overall proportion of females starting Apprenticeships has increased: from 49.6 per cent in 2009/10 to 53.8 per cent in 2010/11
- there has been a slight decline in the proportion of apprentices with a learning difficulty or disability (LDD): from 9.4 per cent in 2009/10 to 8.0 per cent in 2010/11
- the proportion of apprentices from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups has slightly increased: from eight per cent in 2009/10 to 10 per cent in 2010/11.

To put these data in some context, the Labour Force Survey⁸ was used to examine the characteristics of employees, aged between 16 and 64 in the UK. This showed that males represent 50.8 per cent and females form 49.2 per cent of the workforce. Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers form one-tenth of workers (10.9 per cent).

Finding a comparator group of workers in the LFS for apprentices with disabilities, learning disabilities or difficulties is problematic. However to provide some context, 4.8 per cent of workers in the LFS declare a disability (using the Disability Discrimination Act definition) and 9.5 per cent of workers note that they have a work-limiting health condition.

⁸ LFS 2011, quarters 1 to 4 (annualised), UK, weighted

Table 2.3: Characteristics of Apprenticeship starts

Dimension	Category	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12	
		Full Year		Full Year		6 Months	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Gender	Female	138,640	49.6	245,990	53.8	132,570	51.7
	Male	141,030	50.4	211,220	46.2	123,940	48.3
Learners with Learning Difficulties and/ or Disabilities	Learning Difficulty/Disability	26,390	9.4	36,670	8.0	20,240	7.9
	No Learning Difficulty/ Disability	250,640	89.6	416,910	91.2	233,310	91.0
	Not Known	2,650	0.9	3,640	0.8	2,940	1.1
Ethnicity	Total Asian/ Asian British	9,390	3.4	19,270	4.2	9,800	3.8
	Total Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	6,390	2.3	14,610	3.2	7,640	3.0
	Total Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Group	5,020	1.8	8,290	1.8	4,730	1.8
	Total White	254,780	91.1	407,050	89.0	230,540	89.9
	Total Other Ethnic Group	1,430	0.5	3,440	0.8	1,520	0.6
	Not Known/ Not Provided	2,660	1.0	4,550	1.0	2,280	0.9
Grand Total		279,700		457,200		256,500	

Source: SFR Apprenticeship Supplementary Tables, Data Service

2.2 Apprenticeship starts resulting from the pilots

NAS provided the evaluation with information from the Data Service about the number of starts recorded on the ILR data set in 2010/11 and 2011/12 which were attributed to the Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots. For any apprentice who started training as a consequence of involvement in the pilots, the provider of their training could register them using a flag within the National Learning aims monitor variable (A46). It is important to note that these data represent a full year for 2010/11 but only a snapshot of eight months for 2011/12. These latter data must be viewed as provisional since they are incomplete.

The data suggest that 389 starts were registered to DiA pilots in 2010/11 (full year) and 382 starts were registered to the DiA pilots in 2011/12 (part year, representing eight months).

Information about the characteristics of these DiA apprentices was supplied by NAS, drawn from the ILR. This indicated that the pilots had attracted a considerably higher proportion of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) learners than is seen in Apprenticeships generally. The 2010/11 full year data indicate that 33.7 per cent of DiA apprentices were from BAME groups. Part-year figures for 2011/12 show a proportion of 45.5 per cent. Similarly, the data suggest that the pilots had supported a greater proportion of young people with disabilities, learning disabilities or difficulties (D/LDD) into Apprenticeships than is typical. The full year data for 2010/11 show 11.6 per cent of DiA apprentices had a D/LDD, while the part-year data for 2011/12 suggest that 14.1 per cent declare a D/LDD.

The overall numbers of apprentices starting frameworks through the pilots is somewhat beneath the anticipated outputs which were set at around 2,500 starts across the two years within SFA's delivery contracts. The evaluation research revealed a number of reasons why the ILR data might under-estimate the output from the pilots:

- Not all pilot lead organisations had access to the ILR since not all were providers. These pilots had to rely on the providers with whom they placed apprentices to supply the Unique Learner Number from the ILR and to flag the learner as a DiA start. Providers could be reluctant to do either: it was reported by pilots that they feared their training subsidy would be top-sliced; and/or they were concerned about disclosure of this information given data protection policy.
- In provider-led pilots, the DiA flag might not be used since the administrators responsible for data entry might be located in a different department from pilot delivery staff, and might not be aware of, or might forget to use, the flag when entering learner registration data.

The pilots monitored their starts and other targets (such as for engagements) through local, bespoke management information systems. The information they shared with the evaluation team indicated a mixed picture, with some pilots such as Acer, Newcastle UXL and Versa Professional Services reporting that they had exceeded their targets for the number of starts; and others reporting that engagements had been exceeded but that starts were running behind profile. Some pilots had not concluded work; consequently, the number of starts they spoke of during the final stage evaluation fieldwork represented an incomplete picture of their achievements.

More generally, there are a couple of points about why Apprenticeship starts may be lower than anticipated in the contracts:

- The impact of information, advice and guidance (IAG) is acknowledged to be hard to measure. The engagements that pilots proposed frequently surrounded the provision of IAG. This might lead to more informed decisions but not necessarily to the take-up of Apprenticeships since learners might choose other (non-Apprenticeship) routes to their chosen careers; or change their thinking about their future career directions.
- Many pilots were undertaking work in schools to develop demand for Apprenticeships. These activities would not demonstrate impact for some time, for example, where the group involved were in years 9 or 10 and some way off making decisions for post-16 training and education.

3 Addressing under-representation

This chapter explores the delivery of the pilots, first considering design principles for their work, pilot leadership and partnership arrangements, then their approaches to raising awareness and recruitment, support and delivery. It concludes with an assessment of their impact and the potential legacies from their work.

3.1 About the Diversity in Apprenticeships pilots

Sixteen organisations were commissioned to deliver Diversity in Apprenticeships (DiA) pilots from January 2011. Pilots operated for different periods, with some finishing by autumn 2011, and others working until spring or summer 2012. A small number had a contract that extended beyond summer 2012, although no funding was attached to the additional period of operation.

There were, in effect, two types of pilot: those that were provider⁹-led ie by organisations that deliver training and education – colleges, Apprenticeship Training Associations (ATA), Group Training Associations (GTA) and private training providers – and those led by support organisations (ie that do not have contracts to deliver training). These two types of leadership had implications for the acceptance of the pilots' delivery models among some local stakeholders and also their spheres of influence. For example, where a provider-led pilot aimed to deliver information, advice and guidance (IAG) and support to young people in schools or enrolled with other local providers, it might be viewed as a competitor despite the good intentions of its offer. However, while support organisations might be viewed as disinterested parties, opportunities to mainstream their work in local provision might be more limited since they themselves did not have 'mainstream' delivery contracts. They had to rely on partners to embed good practice or to seek other sources of funding to continue their work.

- **15 Billion**, based in London, focused upon black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), female and vulnerable groups' under-representation. It is a third sector youth support organisation which specialises in working with disadvantaged groups. Its model encompassed the delivery of IAG and peer support delivered by apprentices it employed, along with pre-Apprenticeship employability training. As a support

⁹ Throughout the report, the term *provider* is used in a broad form to include all providers involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships including colleges, private training providers, ATAs etc.

organisation, it worked with local colleges and training providers to broker the frameworks that young people and employers wanted.

- **ACER** (Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region) focused on under-representation among BAME, gender, disability and vulnerable groups. It acted as a prime contractor for colleges selected from its wider network, each of which undertook an action research to define, assess and develop solutions to meet the needs of different under-represented groups.
- **Bury College**, based in the North West, focused on two key groups during the funded year of operation: BAME and those with disabilities, learning disabilities and/or difficulties (D/LDD). It also undertook some work related to under-representation in gender-stereotyped occupations. It worked across a range of sectors seeking to influence the supply of Apprenticeship places through employer engagement, and to develop demand among non-traditional entrants and to prepare them for employment.
- **City of Bristol College** prioritised the under-representation of BAME young people and those with LDD in its pilot. It led the pilot on behalf of the Western Training Provider Network. It engaged a Diversity Consultant to lead training on Equality and Diversity issues; an outreach worker was commissioned to lead engagement with the BAME community; and 'have a go' events were organised to raise awareness and interest in Apprenticeships. It developed an Equality and Diversity toolkit for providers.
- **CHENELL** (College of Haringey, Enfield, North East London and Lewisham) focused on recruiting individuals from BAME backgrounds, those with LDD and non-traditional gender entrants to occupations, working in London and the South-East. The college delivers a high volume of Apprenticeships and is a designated Apprenticeship Training Agency. It focused efforts on working through partnerships with local businesses, local Jobcentre Plus offices and other training providers.
- **Essex County Council** aimed to increase the number of girls and women undertaking Apprenticeships in engineering and related sectors. The council acted as prime contractor for four colleges which led on delivery. It worked with a marketing consultant and ex-Connexions careers advisers to promote engineering to female learners. The pilot used a variety of methods to raise awareness of engineering-related study and careers among girls, teachers and parents and also sought to target employers.
- **New College Stamford** based in the East Midlands, focused on supporting young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties (LDD) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) to enter Apprenticeships. Its pilot operated for around six months. It worked within an established partnership network to gain referrals, and to provide pre-employment training and mentoring to young people.
- **Newcastle UXL Ltd** is a partnership of 11 training providers. It focused primarily on BAME under-representation although had gender under-representation as a secondary aim. It employed outreach mentors to assist it to reach into different local BAME communities and to understand their needs in order to develop solutions. It targeted different mentors to focus on the differing needs of employers, learners, young women and parents.
- **Rathbone** operated in Leicester, Bradford and Oldham, and sought to increase the representation of BAME and some disadvantaged groups (in particular, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)) in Apprenticeships. It aimed to work on the demand and the supply sides, and delivered activities to raise awareness of Apprenticeships, delivered IAG to young people and tracked their transitions.

- **Remploy** was a national level pilot which focused on addressing the under-representation of individuals with disabilities, learning disabilities and/or difficulties or long-term health conditions in Apprenticeships. It provided pre-employment training and support to individuals and targeted unemployed clients in its Work Choice and Work Programme provision. The final evaluation research took place in the North West.
- **South Western Apprenticeship Company (SWAC; formerly Triangle Fusion)** focused on the under-representation of vulnerable young people (including young care leavers or ex-offenders) and those with learning disabilities and/or difficulties for the pilot. Its delivery model, built on previously successful work, involved the offer of mentoring and support to young people, along with employer brokerage to ease their pathway into work and support to employer and learner once recruited.
- The **UKRC** was a national level pilot, prioritising action to increase female representation in the energy sector. It had a secondary focus on access to this sector among BAME groups. It partnered with energy sector employers and engaged representative bodies, such as sector skills councils, to undertake work on the 'supply' side to ensure organisations were welcoming of women. It also supported activities on the demand side intended to increase applications from women.
- **Versa Professional Services** operated the South East (Reading and Oxford) and London (Lambeth) to address the under-representation of young people from BAME groups, vulnerable groups, and by gender in stereotyped occupations. Its model sought to work holistically within local contexts and to marshal local partnerships in order to support local stakeholders to work more effectively to remove barriers to participation. Its delivery model was based on a pathfinder project it led to address under-representation by race in Yorkshire and Humberside for the then local LSC.
- **Via Partnership** (formerly CX Ltd), is based in Lancashire and is owned by Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. It aimed to address the needs of young people from BAME communities and those with disabilities and/or learning disabilities and/or difficulties; and encourage non-traditional entrants by gender. Its model involved the delivery of support and IAG to young people and employers.
- **West Nottinghamshire College** is situated in the East Midlands. *Vision Apprenticeships* which took the lead for the pilot combines aspects of an ATA and GTA and acts as a recruitment agency for, or employer of, apprentices. Its pilot focused on increasing female representation in engineering Apprenticeships. Delivery involved awareness raising and the provision of IAG to young people and employers about work roles and workplace cultures. In this respect it has sought to influence both the demand for, and supply of, engineering Apprenticeships among young women.
- **Zodiac Training Ltd** is based in the North East and focused on increasing male representation in social care. Its model involved providing pre-employment training and work trials to unemployed males, funding their Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, and brokering with employers for suitable placements. It prioritised the engagement of men aged over 19 since employers' policies can preclude the employment of younger age groups.

These descriptions demonstrate that the pilots had highly varied aims, compositions and scales, with some focused closely on one type of under-representation in Apprenticeships while others worked across the spectrum. Consequently, the evaluation has aimed to identify common messages and lessons to assist others to understand what is effective and why, and to promote the adoption of good practice across the Apprenticeship system.

'The aim of our network is to promote Apprenticeships... but what this pilot allowed us to do was really focus, identify where it was we needed to go and how we would get there – this helped to accelerate our progress.' [Pilot Lead]

3.2 Designing and refining pilot approaches

The funding enabled pilots to: trial local innovation projects and to take key learning from these to embed into mainstream activities and other projects; or to extend existing approaches to new populations. In most pilots, the work comprised (often ongoing) research alongside the delivery of activities. In one instance, a pilot had received funding from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) to analyse local diversity trends. It had then been possible to build this assessment into their bid to lead the DiA pilot.

While the research led by the DiA pilots did not necessarily reveal new messages about the needs of under-represented groups, it was conducted in localised settings. Consequently, the research findings were relevant and persuasive when engaging with local stakeholders and provided the underlying context for the pilots' work.

3.2.1 Barriers experienced by different under-represented groups

The pilots identified some barriers for different groups' access to Apprenticeships:

- There was a consensus that the Apprenticeship message was not reaching black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. There was also agreement that different minority ethnic communities had differing barriers and needs and consequently, solutions should be tailored. Broadly, barriers included a lack of promotion of Apprenticeships in schools, a culture in some minority ethnic communities for progression in education rather than training, a dichotomy whereby individuals were either encouraged to aspire to professions (and undertake qualification routes that would enable access) or to aim for the family business (where qualifications did not hold particular value), a lack of awareness among parents, employers and the community more generally of the Apprenticeship route (and the potential to progress to higher education qualifications through work-based learning).
- Pilots agreed that young women, parents and, often, teachers and advisers held out-dated views of science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) occupations. The subject choices of girls at Key Stage 4 could limit their opportunities if their ambitions for STEM careers were raised after this point. Some pilots consulted with employers about their views of recruiting females. Employers tended to feel that there were few barriers on the supply side but rather there was limited demand among young women for STEM careers. However, pilots were not convinced that all employers had considered unconscious bias in recruitment practices and work environments.
- Pilots agreed that there was a need for gender positive images and role models in marketing campaigns to make social care careers a comfortable choice for male applicants. Pilots also found that consideration of health and social care occupations by men could be strongly influenced by local labour market conditions; there could be greater consideration of these careers where other job opportunities were limited.
- There is a huge spectrum of disability, learning disability and difficulty, and emotional and behavioural difficulties (D/LDD/EBD), and pilots agreed that individuals in this group required information, advice and guidance that would set expectations realistically. There was also a need for supported pathways into Apprenticeships and,

potentially, tailored support as part of their training. Individuals could be held back by negative stereotypes of disabilities and health conditions among employers and parents. The time needed for this group to prepare for an Apprenticeship could mean they were 19 or older when ready, and would not attract the 100 per cent training subsidy offered by Government. Employers required advice about the implications of different D/LDD/EBD and reassurance that individuals were capable of job performance.

- Young people from vulnerable groups (young carers, care leavers, young ex-offenders, and young people not in education, employment and training among others) have differing support needs and often complex or multiple barriers. Pilots felt this group required intensive and tailored support and pre-employment preparation. Common needs include confidence building, information about work culture, and support and advocacy to overcome the barriers encountered once in an Apprenticeship.
- Pilots reported that large employers with a track record of involvement in Apprenticeships had policies relating to equality and diversity and were open to working with pilots around their expectations of candidates. However, these employers sought to recruit the best available candidates as a priority and would not wish to relax recruitment criteria to positively discriminate for atypical or diverse candidates. Small and medium-sized employers were less likely to have formal policies relating to equality and diversity although could be persuaded of the business benefits of a diverse workforce. These employers, however, could be put off by red tape and additional paperwork introduced by some pilots into the sign-up process for an Apprentice.

Some cross-cutting themes emerged from the pilots' analysis of the needs of their target groups. Among these was a call to action that young people should receive information about all post-16 education and training options (ie Apprenticeships as well as full-time study), ideally starting ahead of choices for Key Stage 4. Early work to challenge occupational stereotypes is also needed. There is a need for pre-Apprenticeship preparation (of varying lengths and intensities to take account of the differing needs of differing groups of young people) and for work-related learning for example, at Level 1.

3.2.2 Designing pilot approaches

Some pilots used a model developed as part of previous work to inform their DiA approach. For example, Via Partnership had delivered its pre-Apprenticeship and ongoing support model for young people with LDD previously and expanded this to a wide range of vulnerable groups for the pilot. Similarly, 15 Billion has an extensive track record of working with disadvantaged young people and was able to embed Apprenticeship IAG into this approach as a novel feature of work for the pilot. In other instances, local innovation was the priority. In these cases, it was necessary to scope current activity and stakeholders in the local settings to understand where and how innovative approaches might be focused.

Versa Professional Services developed a set of guiding principles following an earlier project and tested its traction in new settings for the DiA pilots (see Figure 1). This provides a useful design tool and highlights areas where research, scoping and activity could be focused to identify the needs of different target groups as well as to identify potential areas of innovation.

Figure 1: Roadmap to participation and achievement

Source: © Versa Professional Services

Versa Professional Services: Roadmap to participation and achievement

Versa Professional Services (VPS) set out to work in three areas, Oxford, Reading and Lambeth, to address under-representation among black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. Reading and Lambeth were visited for the evaluation. Lambeth has a highly diverse community and the BAME groups are present, not hidden. This is not the case in Reading where communities are dispersed and 'harder to reach'. The road map has helped to guide project workers in diagnosing the barriers, identifying key partners and channels to work through, and to design new approach. The pilot's implementation was distinctive in each area, reflecting differing needs of different communities and local contexts.

3.3 Partnerships and collaborative working

Establishing partnerships has been a crucial aspect of the work and has supported pilots in their implementation. However, formal partnerships, defined by contracts or service level agreements, were less common than informal collaborations. Some partnerships were established prior to the pilots, in other cases, new collaborations were fostered. The effectiveness of partnerships and the need for formal agreements depended on each pilot's approach and factors in the local context.

'The partnerships have been the key thing – if we'd done it in isolation... gone out and done it on our own, we wouldn't have got anywhere.' [Pilot Lead]

3.3.1 A formal partnership to share responsibility

Formal partnerships were established by: the ACER pilot, which devolved funding to projects proposed by its network members; and Essex County Council which worked with

four colleges to deliver its pilot. In both instances, the pilot lead acted as a prime contractor with overall responsibility for monitoring funding and progress.

ACER: Action research to address under-representation

ACER is an established provider network which bids for and delivers projects as well as provides a good practice forum for its members. It asked network members to propose 'action research' projects for the pilot, which it commissioned, attached targets to and devolved budget for delivery. Local interested parties were invited to join an Advisory Group to steer and learn from the action research projects. Each project had autonomy to test a theory to address the under-representation of a particular group. Each also had autonomy to work through informal partnerships in their locality. ACER provided two central members of staff – a pilot manager and an action research consultant to assist its partners in delivery and to monitor and manage progress.

Reflecting on progress, other pilots and some contract managers, felt that more formal partnership arrangements might have helped. 'Setting in stone' expectations for joint-working would have defined roles and underpinned a shared sense of purpose. However, where the collaboration was new and work experimental, structuring effective service level agreements may have been challenging.

Local circumstances could also affect the extent of cooperation, particularly where the DiA organisation might be viewed as a competitor by other stakeholders. In establishing formal partnerships, consideration may be needed over whether to devolve funding or a 'benefit in kind' to incentivise the support of partners. More importantly, being able to set out expectations is critical to success.

Commissioned specialist support

Some pilots commissioned expert partners to work on their behalf. This commissioned specialist support frequently focused on outreach activities although there were examples where commissioned support also focused on building capacity (see City of Bristol College below and ACER earlier).

When commissioning support, organisations should be clear about and set out the role to be performed and the outcomes that are expected – whether these relate to information, knowledge, stakeholder engagements, additional capacity, Apprenticeship engagements or starts. The commissioning organisation should also determine how it will sustain and build on the outcomes achieved by consultants to ensure there is a legacy from this type of work.

City of Bristol College: Equality and Diversity, and Outreach Consultants

City of Bristol College managed the pilot on behalf of the Western Training Provider Network. It decided it would be critical to ensure its provider members fully understood, complied with and ideally exceeded their duties in respect of equality and diversity legislation. Consequently it commissioned an *Equality and Diversity Consultant* to lead training on the 2010 Equality and Diversity duty. The consultant also delivered up to one-day of support to each provider to develop their equalities practices and policies. The consultant also worked closely with the Pilot Steering

Group to support the local innovation projects and the development of an equality and diversity toolkit for providers. An experienced, local *Outreach Consultant* was also commissioned to lead a local needs analysis of barriers to the recruitment of young people from BAME backgrounds to Apprenticeships, and to start promoting Apprenticeships to key stakeholders to build momentum for the pilot.

3.3.2 Informal collaborations can also be effective

More frequently, pilots worked through informal collaborations with key partners. These might be configured on the basis of the target group(s), sectors, and localities of the pilots. Key partners typically included:

- local authorities (city, borough or town councils) which have insight into the local labour market, the local populations and communities, and local public community events
- Jobcentre Plus which has good insight into the local labour market, local populations and local support agencies. Apprenticeships can help its clients into employment, and Jobcentre Plus can also offer support to employers – it is keen to engage and support new local employers
- Next Step¹⁰ adult careers advice service, Connexions and youth advice services which can act as sources of referral and support
- voluntary and community sector organisations, with interests in the target group(s) for the pilots, or with capacity to provide support in some respect; and
- business networks which brokered access to local employers, especially black, Asian and minority ethnic business communities.

‘We’ve been working with Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, and Connexions and have done lots of work on the ground with small organisations in the community, to reach out and talk to key influencers.’ [Pilot Lead]

Finding a shared aim between the pilot and potential partner organisations, and working through the partnerships of an established collaborator, could be an effective means to engage new partners. The model adopted by Versa Professional Services, which aimed to scope and coordinate local stakeholders to make the most of existing resources was viewed as effective:

‘The USP has been the Connector role – this is needed... [it] has provided a connector for individuals and agencies – they’ve [the pilot worker] been the person on the street promoting the partnerships that are needed to push things forward.’ [Local Stakeholder]

Newcastle UXL had considerable success in establishing a relationship with Asian Business Connection (ABC) which has since become a formal partner. ABC has been critical in enabling this pilot to reach out to target employers and to understand their needs and perspectives. Without this trusted broker, the pilot lead felt that many fewer Asian businesses would have engaged with the pilot. However, other pilots reported difficulties

¹⁰ Now part of the National Careers Service

engaging with business networks since not all were convinced by the ‘social responsibility’ call to action. Some networks would not support the pilots without funding, which was not forthcoming since pilots were not assured of outcomes and had not been configured to deliver this. This highlights a need for clarity that the right partners have been engaged.

What was frequently needed was resilience on the part of pilot staff to continue scoping and negotiating with potential partners, to understand better what (if anything) might motivate them to be involved and how they might help. Finding the lever that would deliver benefits on both sides was critical.

‘You have to keep seeking and finding new opportunities to get into communities. It’s not about shouting louder, it’s about finding new ... it is finding the right ways and the right channels to communicate the benefits of Apprenticeships. You need to link into the culture, deal with concerns and think about the drivers to involvement and the perceptions you’re dealing with.’ [Pilot Lead]

3.3.3 Employers as delivery partners

Recruiting employers as formal partners in pilot delivery was less common than other types of partner although had been achieved. The engagement was most extensive in the pilot led by the UKRC. This was focused on removing barriers to female entry into science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) occupations and more specifically, young women entering the energy sector.

The UKRC: Working in partnership with energy sector employers

The UKRC established formal delivery agreements with a small number of large, national and well known energy sector employers. These employer-partners committed to attending regular pilot steering groups meetings, to allow UKRC to lead an analysis of the organisation using its ‘cultural assessment tool’ and to provide feedback about how culture and the environment could be made more attractive to female staff. The pilot also offered employers training for example, on gender equality duties and unconscious bias. Employers were motivated by a desire to achieve greater workforce diversity. Employers reported that significant benefits had emanated from the chance to attend meetings with competitor organisations, to understand differing approaches, consider good practice and to identify new ways forward. In this respect, UKRC had fostered a ‘safe space’ for increased employer collaboration.

More frequently, pilots sought to build relationships with key local employers and this was common among those addressing under-representation of females in male-stereotyped occupations. West Nottinghamshire College and Essex County Council had sought to forge key relationships with employers with whom they could work as sector ambassadors. In both cases, employers were supportive of the pilots’ aims and were able to provide resources in the form of company tours, work experience and female role models to meet with potential apprentices.

Zodiac Training Ltd also developed key relationships with some employers in the social care sector to understand how diversity might benefit their businesses, and to design a delivery model that was sensitive to their policies and recruitment needs. This involved Zodiac in providing pre-employment training, paying for CRB-checks, while the employers provided three month probationary employment placements in order that individuals and employers could assess suitability for the work role.

Involving employers in delivery activities can be beneficial: there are opportunities to help develop their policies and practices but employers can also set out the actual experience of sectors and occupations, and provide access to the work place, which can overcome any misconceptions held by non-traditional candidates.

3.4 Awareness raising, engagement and recruitment

The majority of the pilots were focused on the start of the learner and employer journey into Apprenticeships and as a result, a great deal of activity emphasised raising awareness, creating a demand for, and to a lesser degree supply of, Apprenticeships.

The pilots' work was highly varied, although many examples are replicable. It would be anticipated that as a result of the trials implemented by pilots, not all of which were successful, other providers could avoid some of the pitfalls and benefit from the lessons that have resulted.

Broad spectrum marketing activities

At a general level, the research activities conducted early on by pilots revealed that there is some distance to travel in terms of young people, employers, parents and local stakeholders knowing about, and fully understanding, Apprenticeships. The value of national campaigns, such as National Apprenticeship Week and World Skills, was recognised, but pilots felt more was needed, specifically regular-to-constant communications activity to assert the Apprenticeship brand and keep it in the news locally and nationally.

This was particularly the case for getting the Apprenticeship message to black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.

'What is hard is that the Apprenticeship brand is not there at ground level – there is a huge gap between the perception of government and the reaction of BAME communities. I've been really surprised by the lack of awareness, so few people have heard of Apprenticeships and if they have, they don't understand what they are.' [Outreach worker]

Consequently, finding the right channel to communicate through was crucial. This had to be different from the channels used for national communications activities. City of Bristol College and Newcastle UXL used local Asian radio stations to promote Apprenticeships.

City of Bristol College: Ujima radio show

The radio show commissioned by City of Bristol College was a weekly two-hour slot involving BAME apprentices and employers, and a round-up of vacancies available from provider members. The commissioned outreach worker had identified a need to focus marketing on target communities and identified Ujima as a means to achieve this. The format of the show went beyond advertising to discussions with role model employers and apprentices about the benefits and how others might get involved. The radio show is called 'Be Who You Want to Be' see: <http://www.ujimradio.com/on-air/shows/be-who-you-want-to-be-with-junior-saunders/>

Other pilots working in areas with significant BAME populations had considered local BAME radio and television stations but multiple stations existed and it was felt to be

challenging to target limited resources effectively. Bristol College and Newcastle UXL had overcome this; key partners had recommended which local channels would be effective in meeting their goals. The stations they worked with shared aims to benefit the BAME communities.

'With [Asian radio station] you feel that the money you invest filters down to benefit the local SMEs – the station invests money in the community which makes it different from commercial stations.' [Pilot Lead]

Other forms of communications activity led by pilots included web-based campaigns, use of social media (such as facebook and twitter) and the production of DVDs. This included a campaign developed by the Essex County Council pilot to target young women with information about STEM careers with a dedicated website, leaflets and posters which have been displayed prominently in its partner providers. Another example was Bury College which updated the images and case examples it used in marketing materials (web/digital and print-based) to include more race and gender positive images and role models. Pilots most successfully used social media as relatively static, web-based advertising rather than drawing on interactive features. Where they had experimented with interactive features this had not particularly attracted young people to their offer.

An innovative approach implemented by ACER took the form of a learner-developed DVD. The pilot lead asked a group of apprentices about the best way to recruit young people to Apprenticeships. This revealed that young people thought their voice should be prioritised in communications rather than that of adults, *'it's not you should be talking to us it should be us talking to apprentices'*. This led to a learner-centred and learner-led DVD development and individual films have been uploaded to YouTube. The DVDs have been in high demand among local stakeholders such as schools and advice agencies.

'Students were the only ones talking – we had students doing the graphics, the filming, the editing, the music – every aspect was led by students. It was a phenomenal success.' [Pilot Lead]

Use of new communication channels and refreshed marketing materials are valuable and good practice supports the use of imagery and commentary that suggests Apprenticeships and workplaces are suitable for non-traditional candidates. However, a note of caution has to be sounded that any campaign or new channel will have a 'sell by date'. New and refreshed approaches will be required to ensure messages and channels remain relevant to target groups.

Information work in schools

Providing information about Apprenticeships to young people in schools was seen as critical by the majority of pilots. Earlier work to raise awareness of Apprenticeships among under-represented groups and to promote non-traditional career choices would, in theory, lead to more informed choices for post-16 learning and training options. However, the impact of work in schools might not be demonstrated in the funded period of the pilots. For example, where pilots provided information and advice ahead of Key Stage 4 choices, it would take between two and three years for any influence of this to be demonstrated.

Pilots reported that not all schools would allow access to their students. The extent to which the pilot lead organisation was seen as a competitor in the local post-16 learning and training market place influenced access to students. West Nottinghamshire College was able to overcome this by using its Vision Apprentice brand, which was seen as an advice organisation rather than a training provider by staff in schools. More frequently, pilots approached a number of schools and worked with those willing to be involved.

In addition to delivering information to students, pilots also reported the importance of influencing school staff and careers advisers. These adults might also have out-of-date and inaccurate perceptions of Apprenticeships and careers. It was crucial to attempt to change these when leading work in schools.

Rathbone: Working within a school to widen student choices

The aim of the Rathbone pilot, to increase BAME representation in Apprenticeships, was shared by the head teacher of Challenge College. This head teacher was keen to ensure students were well advised about the range of options post-16 because this would support them to continue to participate rather than failing in full-time education post-16. The provision of independent information, advice and guidance on training and Apprenticeship options post-16 was also viewed as critical.

'The student body here is 99 per cent BAME. Parents support education, and while have not themselves been to university, very much aspire for their children to go. They tend to believe that their own children, and by dint of this, all students at this school, will enter a professional career but not everyone is capable of this, and they need other options. If there are 150 in the year group, 100 will continue into our sixth form. Of those, about 40 will go to University. That shows the leakage in the pipeline and why we are keen to find ways to increase awareness of Apprenticeships.'

Outreach in communities and with employers

Frequently, the pilots focused on building relationships to raise awareness of Apprenticeships. This was particularly important to engage with black, Asian and minority ethnic communities and employers and with employers for work on occupations stereotyped by gender.

To build relationships with individuals, parents and employers in hard-to-reach BAME communities, pilots reported that for outreach to be effective, it was beneficial to work with or through someone from a BAME background, and ideally a trusted intermediary. Community leaders are a diverse group but an example of how this could work was the relationship established by Newcastle UXL with the Imam of a local mosque.

Newcastle UXL: Working through a trusted elder

The mosque is a highly influential centre and a hub of community education within Muslim communities. It was identified by the appointed diversity worker as a critical means through which to reach out to the local Muslim community. The Imam welcomed the contact since it was a means to ensure his community became better informed about work and training opportunities. He also provided guidance to the pilot about how to develop their marketing documentation to comply with strict principles of the Muslim faith which would be necessary if materials were to be made available in the mosque, ie that it is not acceptable to include images of sentient living beings. As a consequence, the pilot has developed marketing materials which are suitable for a wide range of settings as well as gained access to a community through a key

community centre (the mosque) with which it would not have engaged without the support of this trusted intermediary.

To maximise the value of work conducted by trusted intermediaries (and commissioned staff), permanent staff within the pilots shadowed their work, or had an agreed point at which to take over the lead contact role. This meant that contact established with individuals and parents could be maintained in the future by the pilot organisations.

Pilots reported that it is best to conduct outreach with employers face-to-face and for advisers to travel to where employers are located. Business development teams or equivalent staff in providers, could lead on this work. However, challenges were encountered in the lack of data which identified BAME-led businesses. Bury College had overcome this by sending its business development advisers out to areas with known BAME populations and businesses to conduct outreach to employers 'on their doorstep'.

3.4.1 Engaging with potential apprentices and employers

The solutions tested by several pilots extended upon the provision of information and advice, to 'engagement' work with young people and employers. The nature of this engagement varied although tended to entail the provision of extensive information advice and guidance (IAG) and frequently tracking of young people into Apprenticeships. Providing pre-Apprenticeship support was seen as particularly valuable for vulnerable young people and those with disabilities, learning disabilities or difficulties, or emotional and behavioural difficulties.

IAG and pre-employment support

The majority of pilots offered some element of IAG within their delivery model, usually one-to-one or small group sessions to talk about careers and Apprenticeship opportunities. This could be intensive engagements where pilots were leading 20-30 minute one-to-one advice sessions and subsequently gaining permission to track young people and provide further support as needed.

It was common for pilots to take IAG out to where young people were, such as community events, although mixed success was experienced with this. Greater success was had in attaching IAG opportunities to some events than others and it appeared that some events could be better used for awareness-raising rather than IAG delivery. This included large-scale, social/entertainment events rather than those with a careers or work focus.

Versa Professional Services: Apprenticeship IAG in Jobcentre Plus

In Lambeth, Versa Professional Services organised Apprenticeship advice sessions to align with Jobcentre Plus events since in this area, minority ethnic groups are not hard to reach, although they do need information about what an Apprenticeship entails. Jobcentre Plus understood the benefits of claimants progressing to Apprenticeships in terms of increasing their employability and helping Jobcentre advisers achieve outcomes among their case load. The Apprenticeship events were held monthly in the borough offices and were led by different training providers who set out information about Apprenticeship opportunities in different sectors, entry criteria and recruitment requirements including basic skills assessments. Some of the providers acted as

recruitment agencies for employers, and anyone interested in progressing the Apprenticeship further could apply to join the providers' register of available apprentices which would be prioritised for any vacancies. Jobcentre Plus reported that as a result of the event, in addition to new vacancies and employer contacts, it had gained new provider contacts which further benefitted its network.

Other pilots learned about timing IAG events to maximise the attendance of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, for example, CHENELL offered pre-employment, group IAG sessions to potential apprentices. It found its morning sessions were poorly attended and were ineffective as a result. It changed its model to offer afternoon and early evening sessions to vulnerable young people – at least at the outset of their journey towards employment.

Remploy was targeting disabled people and people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties for Apprenticeships. It delivers contracts for the Department for Work and Pensions which bring it into contact with individuals who were eligible for its pilots. Consequently, it revised its delivery model to build on the work already being carried out by its advisers. It provided information and crib-sheets to advisers in order that they include Apprenticeship advice within their IAG and pre-employment training sessions. This was not dissimilar to the approach of youth support organisation, 15 Billion, which among other actions increased the focus on Apprenticeships within its IAG provision and pre-employment support.

Pilots, and other youth and adult advice and support services, noted that they assisted young people to use the Apprenticeship Vacancy (AV) system. It was reported that most young people require an induction into the system, information about what to include in their profile and how to upload this, and coaching about to apply for vacancies including the use of formal language, the same as would be used in hard copy applications. However, there were not any consistent messages that particular adaptations were required to AV to meet the needs of any groups targeted by the pilots, beyond the need for initial support among most groups. The feedback received reinforced CfE's findings from its detailed evaluation of the system¹¹.

An innovative model for IAG and support was introduced by 15 Billion which is an experienced youth support organisation. This pilot employed apprentices, trained them in IAG, and these apprentices offered peer mentoring to young people in their target groups.

15 Billion: Apprentices as peer mentors

Once a young person had been accepted by the 15 Billion pilot, they were provided with support from one of the 10 apprentices that 15 Billion had hired. Each of 15 Billion's apprentices had a case-load of young people who they mentored. This provided experience for their own training while also allowing them to share their growing knowledge of Apprenticeships and work. Using a peer mentor was seen as a key success of the pilot since potential apprentices benefited from someone of their

¹¹ Diamond A, Jones A, Casey P, CfE (2010) Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Vacancies System, Learning and Skills Council and National Apprenticeship Service

own age to talk to and involved in doing something to which they aspired. The mentors worked with the young people to improve their employability including improving their CV, assisting them to register on the Apprenticeship Vacancy system and put them forward for suitable positions. The mentors could also provide support about interview preparation and employers' expectations of time-keeping and motivation.

Practical IAG sessions and events

The delivery of practical sessions can provide a novel means through which to communicate more varied career options to young people and can overcome the barriers that some encounter with more formal careers talks and sessions. Some of the DiA pilots wanted to extend local practice and to encourage local innovation. An example of this, was the 'Have a Go' event delivered by City of Bristol College. Its work to target schools in disadvantaged areas for this event should be highlighted.

City of Bristol College: 'Have a Go' engagement events

In Spring 2011 Bristol College trialled a 'Have a Go' event. This took place at a prestigious venue in the city centre, was open to the general public and each of 20 providers offered an information stand and some providers offered a taster session. The model was refined for Spring 2012. The event was held in National Apprenticeship Week in order to benefit from national publicity and to provide a local focus for publicity. In addition to the evening public event, the college targeted schools to attend throughout the morning and early afternoon. More providers were challenged to offer tasters, and the taster sessions were refined to be more attractive to young people. To support the event, the college pooled funding from the pilot with European Social Fund monies. It seconded a School Engagement Worker to target schools in disadvantaged areas and with high proportions of BAME students for attendance and to overcome any barriers to attendance, such as cost or travel. As part of the event 2,420 'Have a Go' activities were delivered, 407 young people from Years 9, 10, 11 & 12 from 22 schools attended in addition to 383 members of the public.

In a slightly different approach to the delivery of practical IAG sessions, West Nottinghamshire College recruited a group of young women to a 'Build a Bridge' activity. This led to local press coverage and young women have permitted the pilot to track their transitions after the age of 16 to assess the impact of involvement. This college has also involved female role models from industry in sessions targeted at young women. In addition, employers it has engaged have offered work place tours and work experience opportunities to enable young women to better understand the nature of work in engineering and related sectors.

Gaining support among schools for these practical events was relatively straightforward although it was necessary to work through those which were interested in partnership to some extent (see earlier) and to offer incentives and support, for example funding for transport in the Bristol College case noted above.

Engaging with employers

As noted earlier, outreach among employers was judged to be most effective when conducted in person on business premises. However, pilots had made other attempts to engage with businesses and understand their perceptions of Apprenticeships, drivers to recruitment and any challenges associated with recruitment of atypical entrants.

One example of this was West Nottinghamshire College which commissioned a survey of local engineering (and related) sector employers, to understand their views of increasing the diversity of their workforce and any barriers to the achievement of this. The survey suggested that employers did not believe that they erected barriers to the recruitment of young women and instead the problem surrounded low demand among young women. As part of the survey, employers were asked if they were willing to meet with the college to talk in more depth about the pilot and what might be involved. This led to the college increasing its employer links, gaining new vacancies which it could encourage young women to apply for, and understanding more about employers' perspectives.

'It helps to build a rapport because you come to understand how employers recruit and if they offer an annual recruitment cycle, you can start to plan that into activities.' [Pilot Delivery staff]

Bury College and Rathbone collaborated with NAS on employer engagement events. The process of working in cooperation – within a network of providers – provides some insight into the challenges of employer engagement but also demonstrates how they can be engaged with the diversity agenda.

Rathbone and Bury College: BAME employer engagement events

Rathbone and Bury College pilots were undertaking work in similar geographic areas. They collaborated for two events, with the regional NAS employer engagement manager, and other local partners and providers, targeted at BAME employers. These comprised presentations about Apprenticeships, information about uptake among BAME individuals, and included testimonials from employers and apprentices. As part of the events, some apprentices provided catering to demonstrate the skills they were gaining through their training. The marketing materials for the events highlighted that information would be given about the new Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, and a financial incentive offered by the local authority, as an inducement for employers to attend and did not specifically note that the intention was to target BAME employers. Instead, to achieve this, partners were first asked to share their employer contacts who would then be contacted by mail-shot. Given the sensitivities of this – and implications for providers' ongoing business with employers – contact details were not shared but each provider agreed to send the mail-shot to relevant employers. The events were successful – employers were surprised to learn of the low uptake of Apprenticeships among BAME groups and were keen to support action to address this.

Working to engage small and medium BAME employers required sensitivity. More than one pilot found these businesses were anxious of 'red tape' and the paperwork created by one pilot to record new vacancies resulting from the DiA work was 'off-putting' to them. Minimising bureaucracy was important to bringing these employers on board.

However there were opportunities to build the engagement over time and to promote improved employment practices where these did not meet national requirements.

Newcastle UXL demonstrated how this could work. Establishing an initial rapport and maintaining support and contact meant pilot staff could become trusted brokers to these employers.

Newcastle UXL: The Employer Compact

Newcastle UXL developed an 'Employer Compact' to give to employers who take on a BAME apprentice. It was developed following a workshop attended by providers and stakeholders including the TUC and Equality and Human Rights Commission which identified challenges and solutions for engaging with employers. The booklet provides information about legislation on equalities and employment, and highlights practical examples and case studies of the implications for business and how employers can respond to the requirements. The employers engaged by the pilot were also invited to a half-day training session where they were given scenarios related to legislation and discussions were held about ways to respond to them. This proved appealing to employers and had been successful in equipping them with information about legislative requirements in order that they can improve their business practices.

The approach to employer engagement for pilots with aims to address under-representation in gender-stereotyped occupations, and those seeking to support people with disabilities, learning disabilities and difficulties, and/or emotional and behavioural difficulties was more variable. In some instances pilots, such as New College Stamford, had sought to establish a rapport and trust with employers, to understand their ethos and environment and their ability to provide additional support to young people with complex or multiple barriers. Similar to other pilots working with vulnerable groups, this pilot was able to offer in-work support and mentoring, and provide advocacy between apprentice and employer if the employment situation was at risk.

'A lot of the young people have come from workless homes and they are the only people who get up in the morning and go out to work and it is hard for them, this motivation, and they need the service provided by the pilot in order to do this'. [Pilot Lead]

South Western Apprenticeship Company (SWAC) reported that it found that employers were more likely to refer an apprentice to their support and mentoring than other providers. As part of its pilot, it made available a support worker as an additional adult within Apprenticeship delivery who could act as a mentor and coach to vulnerable young people, and an advocate on their behalf with employers and training providers. Once employers found out that additional support could be available which could help develop the employment attributes of individuals there was some enthusiasm for the model.

However, it was reported that providers had not fully understood that SWAC had no interest beyond providing support to the apprentices and would not, for instance, seek to change their training registration or top slice funding. This acted to a barrier to referrals by providers.

Remploy used a different approach for its disabled clients including those with learning disabilities or difficulties (D/LDD). As part of its engagement with potential apprentices it provides pre-employment training and coaching support for specific vacancies. Employers, and the providers working with them, have been impressed by the motivation and attitude shown by Remploy candidates and this has decreased any concern about additional support needs. Remploy will provide information to employers and apprentices

about statutory funding streams that can support work adaptations should these be needed. However, its main selling point has become its well prepared, high quality candidates.

Employer incentives

There were several examples where pilots used incentives to encourage employers to offer Apprenticeships and this opened up opportunities for non-traditional candidates. Typically, financial incentives came from other sources than the DiA funding. For example, Bury College noted that through a European Social Fund project it had been able to fund a 'golden hello' recruitment subsidy and that this could be used to support Apprenticeship starts for the DiA pilot. Via Partnership Ltd was able to access a similar subsidy.

As part of the employer events, Bury College and Rathbone highlighted the new Apprenticeship Grant for Employers, and the financial incentives that the local authorities could make available to employers to support the aims of the pilot. The Essex County Council pilot was able to offer a subsidy to the value of 50 per cent of an apprentice's wage throughout the first year of their training.

Zodiac incentivised employers through using the funding to overcome barriers to employment, by paying for the CRB check which individuals need to enter the health and social care sector, and through other means (see below).

Zodiac Training Ltd

Zodiac offers pre-employment training, and funds CRB checks, to support men into social care roles. It has worked closely with Jobcentre Plus and Next Step which refer unemployed men to Zodiac for IAG, and if interested to start on the pre-employment training programme. Through its work to explore any supply-side barriers to the employment of men, Zodiac found there is a demand for social care supplied by men to meet the needs of men with disabilities and/or support needs. Working with employers, it now acts as an agent to sift potential recruits and to lead their initial training in order that they are work ready. These 'in kind' incentives have reduced risk, recruitment and induction costs for employers and supported the recruitment of men into this gender stereotyped sector.

Using financial incentives can alleviate employers' concerns about the affordability of an Apprentice, and NAS itself is currently rolling out the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers which targets financial incentives at small to medium sized businesses. The pilots have capitalised on existing funding streams and aimed to increase opportunities for non-traditional Apprenticeships through use of recruitment subsidies and incentives in kind.

3.5 Support activities

Activities to support and prepare the way took precedence over awareness-raising for disadvantaged young people such as those with disabilities, learning disabilities and difficulties, emotional and behaviour difficulties, and those from vulnerable groups (such as care leavers, ex-offenders, young people NEET). Early work by the pilots revealed that there was not an information gap for this heterogeneous group, although there were other types of barrier to their progression into Apprenticeships. Continuing support into the training experience was more important for these groups.

As noted above, some of the pilots targeting these groups aimed to match individuals to employers for Apprenticeships for example, New College Stamford. This meant that pilot staff could assure employers of an individual's capabilities and also provide in-work support to apprentices. Other pilots targeted the employers of Apprentices to offer additional support to apprentices who needed it, for instance the South Western Apprenticeship Company (SWAC) pilot.

Bury College was prioritising learner support for its activities targeted at young people with disabilities, or learning disabilities or difficulties. It had seconded a member of the Learner Support team to support pilot staff to improve their support to these learners and to design a programme of activities that would expose them to work-based learning and different employment options. The Learner Support team member also benefitted through gaining a better understanding of Apprenticeships.

Young people who had been inactive for some time, disadvantaged individuals with multiple or complex barriers, and those with disabilities or learning disabilities or difficulties that required higher levels of support, benefited from pre-Apprenticeship support and development programmes. These programmes could provide a holistic package of personal and employability development and could vary in intensity depending on the support needs of individuals.

Via Partnership Ltd: End to end support

Via Partnership Ltd works with a range of clients including young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) and young people facing multiple or complex barriers to training. The first stage of their model involved delivery of IAG and training to improve employability and soft skills. As part of this, young people complete a 'passport to employment' which works to improve their CV, interview skills, and offers them development about expectations of behaviour at work, insight into body language, options for work experience and accredited training. Following this, Via seeks to create a match between potential apprentices and employers and supports the apprentices through the application and interview process. Once the young people have commenced training, Via continues its support through regular review meetings with them and liaison with employers to ensure their expectations of attendance and behaviour are met. Via acts as an addition to the Apprenticeship triumvirate of employer, young person and provider, and offers the additional support needed by vulnerable young people to maintain their employment and training.

3.5.1 Supporting other forms of learning and training

There was some evidence that the pilots supported individuals to make transitions into non-Apprenticeship training or learning. For example, West Nottingham College referred potential female engineering apprentices to relevant FE provision while a suitable placement was sourced. Similarly, Rathbone could refer vulnerable young people to the Access to Apprenticeship provision should they require a relatively short programme of support and training to be Apprenticeship-ready. In another example, Zodiac Training Ltd was able to provide NVQ training to highly qualified men who wanted to work in the social care sector, through the Adult Skills Budget. In this latter instance, individuals were not entitled to government subsidised Apprenticeship training.

Pilots highlighted that not all young people are capable of an Apprenticeship since relatively high standards of qualification are required for entrance. Furthermore, Apprenticeships may not provide a suitable route for those with more severe disabilities, learning disabilities or difficulties and emotional and behavioural difficulties. In these instances, setting young people's expectations realistically and finding different options for them, such as for work-related learning, was a good outcome.

While these other forms of learning and training did not count towards the targets set out in the pilots' contracts, they demonstrate valid outcomes. Individuals were referred to provision that could provide a stepping stone to their eventual career or Apprenticeship aim if they were capable, or had the chance to experience work-related learning at a level that was more appropriate to their abilities.

3.6 Targets and monitoring

The measures of success for the DiA pilots included trialling activities to develop supply of, and to increase demand for, Apprenticeships among under-represented groups. Contract managers monitored activities through regular reports and meetings with the pilots. Numeric measures included the numbers of learner and employer engagements achieved and the number of Apprenticeship starts achieved.

Pilots agreed the numeric targets as part of the commissioning process. These varied depending on the nature of work that was proposed and the group(s) to be targeted. All pilots had targets for Apprenticeship starts, most had targets for learner engagement (the nature of engagement varied), fewer had targets for employer engagements. The targets provided a focus for measuring the effect of differing activities within each pilot's work.

The differing definitions of engagement apparent across the pilot have been highlighted earlier. However, despite the differences, all pilots had either met or exceeded their targets in this regard. For those pilots where the engagement comprised IAG sessions and the pilot's delivery model was that of an 'honest broker', then unless it had been possible to personally contact all potential apprentices, it was not possible to track the outcome of engagements. Similarly the effect of a young person engaging in an Apprenticeship or careers event might be unknown since it was not possible to track the outcomes of large numbers of young people. Moreover, attributing the effects of IAG in any case is acknowledged to be challenging¹².

The targets for starts, over time, had come to be seen as over ambitious since the assumed conversion rate from an engagement to a start was frequently over-estimated. This was particularly apparent for pilots focused on supporting young women into STEM Apprenticeships, where there is a lengthy tradition of gender segregation and where awareness-raising and engagement needed to start in Year 9 and 10 to ensure the right choices are made in Key Stage 4. Consequently, any effect of pilots' activities would be unlikely to be demonstrated, at least in terms of a numeric impact, in the funded period.

Similarly, pilots had over-estimated the conversion rate that could be achieved with some vulnerable groups. Young people who spend time not in education, employment or training (NEET), and/or who are from families with inter-generational unemployment, can

¹² For example, see Pollard E, Tyers C, Tuohy S, Cowling M (2007). *Assessing the Net Added Value of Advice and Guidance*. Research Report RR825A, Department for Education and Skills

quickly become entrenched in inactivity and require significant, intensive input to be ready for an Apprenticeship.

'With hindsight, the targets were unrealistic... these are young people from workless families, really broken backgrounds, sometimes with disabilities... In a nutshell, they are the hardest to reach and hardest to help.' [Pilot Delivery staff]

Despite the challenges of attribution, and of tracking all young people who had contact with pilot activities such as careers and Apprenticeships events, the pilots had all used data to monitor their effect. This involved collecting information from individuals attending events (to assess which forms of marketing were effective), tracking young people (who had given permission) through to registration on an Apprenticeship, and assessing the effect of widely targeted events on interest in Apprenticeships for different under-represented groups.

The pilots also frequently monitored the qualitative experiences of learners. The extent of this depended on whether the delivery model focused solely on the early part of the learner's journey, or whether the pilot was configured to supply ongoing support.

Setting targets and establishing processes to monitor these effectively, can prompt organisations to review what is proving effective in encouraging more diverse candidates into Apprenticeships and what, about their approach and offer, needs action or revision.

CHENELL: Monitoring the Apprenticeship end to end

CHENELL has monitored qualitative experience from initial engagement with potential apprentices, during their Apprenticeship and following completion. For example, it conducts six-week and end of placement reviews with apprentices and employers. It also tracks whether apprentices who complete their training are taken on by their employer or have progressed into another job. The retention and progression rates of DiA apprentices will continue to be monitored beyond the funded period of operation to help the college plan and improve its delivery and support for target groups.

SWAC: Measuring distance travelled

Following the evaluation of a previous project, which used a similar delivery model to that of the pilot, SWAC improved its monitoring approach. It worked with a range of vulnerable groups for the pilot. Initially, the mentor would establish a rapport with potential apprentices and the 'paperwork' would only be introduced at a follow-up meeting if the young person agreed to be involved. At the follow-up meeting the mentor and young person would complete a diagnostic to identify support needs, and a development plan, to set goals and targets. The diagnostic tool asks the young person to rate themselves on various skills and abilities, such as verbal and written communication, accepting instructions, timekeeping, getting motivated and taking responsibility. At the end of their training, the mentor re-visits the diagnostic with them so that they can both see how far the young person has travelled in terms of their personal and skills development.

3.7 Impacts and legacy

The evidence suggested that the organisations involved in the Diversity in Apprenticeship Pilots had grasped the opportunity to experiment and/or innovate to better understand and improve delivery to meet the needs of non-traditional apprentices. It was apparent that they had also generated a groundswell of local and, in some cases, national support.

Despite the lower than anticipated Apprenticeship starts¹³, the pilots had nonetheless exceeded the planned volume of learner engagements and the impact of this might take some time to be evidenced. Pilots had also achieved qualitative impacts: a range of stakeholders including potential apprentices, employers, statutory and voluntary organisations reported the value of their work. High levels of satisfaction were noted among employers and apprentices who had been supported which perhaps demonstrates a critical impact since they are likely to spread the word about the value and benefits offered by Apprenticeships.

There were intentions to continue the work, although the means to achieve this varied by the pilot leadership type. For the provider-led pilots there was greater opportunity to 'mainstream' the most successful aspects of the pilot, in terms of learner and/or employer engagement, into more general recruitment and delivery activities for Apprenticeships and other forms of learning. What might encourage the uptake of successful areas of work with employers was the need for constant effort to ensure a sufficient flow of Apprenticeships vacancies to meet mainstream contracts.

'We'll carry on using the lessons we've learned and the marketing, we'll carry on doing our events... I think it [the pilot] has set us up with good practice to follow. I don't think we'll change what we've started doing for the pilot, now the funded period is over.' [Pilot Lead]

Among support organisation led pilots, the legacy was perhaps less assured because these organisations required project funding to roll out their work; their core funding (if they had any) would not support this. However, some of these organisations, for example 15 Billion, had already secured new funding and were applying their learning and delivery approaches to new projects. However, in some cases, the legacy was found among the stakeholders from whom these pilots had fostered support. The pilots introduced new thinking about Apprenticeships and diversity which their partners could mainstream in their work.

'It looks seamless with what we do... I still want to carry on encouraging the atypical apprentices to come in and I'm still going to be encouraging the employers to take them on – I think that message is embedded.' [Local stakeholder]

More generally, many pilots demonstrated clever use of additional and mainstream funding sources to support their work. A legacy of their efforts may potentially be the application of these funding sources to continue work to increase Diversity in Apprenticeships.

¹³ The accounts given by pilot leads suggest a varied picture with a small number of pilots exceeding targets, but more struggling to achieve the target number of starts.

Some elements of the pilots' work had built capacity that meant that a focus on equality and diversity would be sustained. For example, the provider toolkit developed by the City of Bristol College pilot will continue to be used and updated by providers in the Western Training Provider Network. Similarly, the Employer Compact developed by Newcastle UXL will continue in use among its network of providers. The various marketing campaigns introduced by pilots will also continue to be highlighted. In addition to these material outcomes, staff have developed skills and better understanding which means diversity approaches could be built into their work.

Other elements might be more difficult to continue unless other sources of funding are found. These include the engagement events which targeted potential apprentices and employers. In some cases, it was hoped that providers who had been involved might co-fund these events in future based on the benefits they had derived from the events which the pilots had seed funded.

Finally, pilots identified two broad actions which will be critical to supporting more non-traditional entrants to Apprenticeships:

- Ensuring that Apprenticeships are regularly highlighted in a range of communications – and that communications include images of and testimonials from non-traditional apprentices. The National Apprenticeship Week campaign ensures that Apprenticeships have a focus and gain attention early in the year and there is significant coverage through local and national communications channels. There is simply a need for more of this, to ensure a spread of news across the year.
- Ensuring that young people and parents receive full information about their post-16 options, and careers advice which challenges stereotypes, early in their school years. Ideally careers advice should start ahead of Key Stage 4 choices since these can start to narrow options post-16.

4 Policy messages

The issues around involving under-represented groups in Apprenticeships, and non-traditional entrants to gender stereotyped occupations are well known and have not been challenged by the pilots. The pilots' work has reinforced:

- The need for segmented work in minority ethnic communities to understand barriers to the uptake of Apprenticeships among young people from different minority ethnic communities; and barriers to the supply of Apprenticeship positions among employers. 'One size fits all' approaches do not work.
- The importance of early work to try to overcome gender stereotypes of occupations, along with the provision of role models and ambassadors. Employers say they want to recruit the best talent available, hence emphasis should be placed on developing demand and preparing atypical candidates, but it remains worth checking employers' practices for unconscious bias.
- Providing supported pathways to Apprenticeships for young people with disabilities, learning disabilities and/or difficulties, and emotional and behavioural difficulties is effective. Coaching and mentoring potential Apprentices also works. Incentivising the supply of Apprenticeships, and reducing barriers on the employer-side is beneficial.
- Vulnerable young people, such as care leavers, young people NEET, and ex-offenders, benefit from intensive support to develop their employability and understanding of work cultures and employer expectations. In-work support and advocacy can help individuals to sustain their employment.

It is also apparent from the work of the pilots, and previous attempts to address equality and diversity in different education and training settings, that actions that seek to effect a change of culture require time, along with consistent and concerted effort. For example, gender segregation in occupations has a long history and evidence shows that children's choices are influenced by gender from a very young age; this has lasting consequences. It should not be expected that this could be turned around for Apprenticeships within a 12-18 month project period. Similarly, it would be unreasonable to expect that cultural traditions, eg for progression in education in some minority ethnic communities, could be effectively challenged in the relatively short period of the pilots' funding; any changes will only begin to be demonstrated over time.

A key message for policy as a result of this is the need for continued effort to create and develop the conditions and pathways that lead to: a more diverse group considering Apprenticeships; and to non-traditional career – and Apprenticeship – choices among

young men and women. However, beyond this, the pilots indicate some areas where policy might focus.

Developing demand

- It is crucial to get **the right information, in the right hands, at the right time**. There is a critical time-line to stimulate demand among learners. It is necessary to start early, to challenge occupational stereotypes and develop knowledge about the different routes to careers, including Apprenticeships.
- To be effective key influencers, parents, teachers and advisers must be persuaded. Involving key influencers in IAG focused work helps.
- For atypical gender entrants, and some BAME communities, social and cultural pressures build up at critical points and may divert choices away from non-stereotypical careers and training routes. Timely provision of impartial IAG eg ahead of Key Stage 4 choices, ahead of post-16 choices, and ahead of post-18 choices is needed.
- Statutory guidance for head teachers, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities highlights that Apprenticeships should be included in IAG, and anticipates that some young people will be guided to vocational rather than academic routes¹⁴. Encouraging and ensuring that schools meet these requirements is crucial. Department of Education and Ofsted are best placed to monitor this.

Developing supply

- The pilots demonstrated that **incentivising employers is effective for diversity** as well as for increasing Apprenticeship supply more generally, which NAS acknowledges since it has introduced an Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE).
- Improving providers' knowledge of the flexibility (in specified circumstances) in the age-related training subsidies may help some groups, including young people with disabilities, or LDD¹⁵, and some vulnerable groups since they require a lengthier period of preparation to become Apprenticeship- ready, than others, which providers understood would tip them over the 100 per cent subsidy that is available to 16-18 year olds.
- It may be worth considering whether some of the AGE can be ear-marked to support diversity outputs ie to incentivise the supply of Apprenticeships to particular groups (eg those with D/LDD) or among certain employers. Alternatively, pilots demonstrated that other sources of financial incentive, such as local authority funding and European Social Funds could be used to incentivise employers for diversity pilot outcomes.

¹⁴ The Education Act 2011: Duty to secure independent and impartial careers guidance for young people in schools

¹⁵ SFA (2012) 'Funding Rules 2012/13', available here: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/SFA/Funding_Rules_201213_-_Published_3_April_2012.pdf details the circumstances under which the 100 per cent training subsidy can be offered to post-19 learners

- Incentives to employers do not have to be in the form of money. A number of pilots performed tasks (such as advertising vacancies, sifting applications and short-listing, provision of training which overlapped employers' inductions) which reduced employers' costs and acted as an incentive to recruit atypical candidates. Becoming an employers' provider of choice can act as an incentive to providers.

Developing the market-place

- **Competition constrains collaboration** in the post-16 learning and training market-place: this limited the influence and impact of some pilots. Competitors did not trust that pilots would act as an honest provider of IAG, as an honest, disinterested broker of Apprenticeships or simply a supplier of additional support. Intermediaries such as the Skills Funding Agency or NAS Regional Managers might provide help to establish the authenticity and credibility of similar work in the future.
- Support organisations, and those new to working in particular geographic areas, may also benefit from support from these intermediaries in order to facilitate their contact with key local providers, and again to establish their authenticity and the credibility of their work.
- There is a need to understand the spread of good practice more generally among providers in the Apprenticeship system, and to explore whether there are opportunities to encourage greater emphasis on equality and diversity, for example, through payment by results or other mechanisms related to mainstream funding models.

5 Pilot case studies

5.1 15 Billion

Extended youth support package to include Apprenticeships

15 Billion's pilot aimed to address the under-representation in Apprenticeships of BAME individuals, by gender in stereotyped occupations, among vulnerable groups such as young offenders and among young people with learning difficulties.

As part of 15 Billion's former role as a Connexions partnership it worked with young people post-16 with the aim of progressing them into education, training or employment. Their work has always involved providing support packages for diverse young people to help retain them in learning or work, or to help them move closer to employment. However 15 Billion was not experienced in how the Apprenticeship system works hence it established partnerships to provide this expertise.

These partnerships included Step Direct and Epping Forest College. Step Direct provided leadership on the practical work to ensure that the conditions of Apprenticeship frameworks were met. It also engaged with employers. Epping Forest College was the main partner for the Apprenticeship delivery.

15 Billion also partnered with WOTS consultancy to deliver 15 'Get App'ed' shows in local schools. The aim of these was to raise awareness of Apprenticeships among young people and present them as a viable career progression route. They successfully fulfilled these targets and 15 Billion are currently returning to the schools to evaluate the impact they had. In addition to this 15 Billion led five sector skills events which aimed to promote the ethos of the Diversity in Apprenticeship pilot among employers. These were also felt to have been a success.

Apprentices as peer mentors

An innovative approach instigated by 15 Billion was to employ ten apprentices to lead on recruiting young people to Apprenticeships and to act as peer mentors. Each of 15 Billion's apprentices managed a caseload of young people. The apprentices were trained to use the Apprenticeship Vacancy (AV) system in order to support the young people with their applications. They worked with their 'mentees' to improve their CVs, register them on the AV system and put them forward for suitable training positions. It was reported that the use of peer mentors was a considerable success since potential Apprentices had a peer to talk with who was also a role model for Apprenticeships.

‘Dare 2 Achieve’ gets great results

Potential apprentices were provided with a support package, Dare 2 Achieve, which WoTs Consultants delivered. This trained and supported the young people in order that they had the skills to apply for Apprenticeship opportunities. The package helped young people to develop confidence, identify career interests and future aspirations and gave them an understanding of the work environment and employer expectations, for example around time-keeping, telephoning the employer about absence due to illness and providing notice of any time off required. The Dare 2 Achieve support package has proved to be very successful and is becoming a product which 15 Billion can use to support partner organisations with bids for their own work.

The support package has enabled 15 Billion to secure a European Social Fund (ESF) project. This requires a programme which provides a pathway for under-represented groups into Apprenticeships (very similar to DiA); however the scope is broader than London and 15 Billion have been given tighter targets to achieve. Again, it has looked to establish good partnerships to deliver on the targets and hopes that the ESF project may also act as a progression route for those potential apprentices that have more recently completed the DiA funded Dare 2 Achieve package.

The Dare 2 Achieve package also offered support to employers when they took on an apprentice from 15 Billion. This has worked well and has allowed 15 Billion to engage with employers to establish their needs and then tailor the support package based on the young person they feel may be suited for each employer’s vacancy. As part of the employer engagement, the pilot lead visited employers face-to-face to raise their awareness of the Diversity in Apprenticeship aims and values prior to sending a young person’s CV to them. The 15 Billion logo was highlighted on the CV and application form so that employers were aware that the young person was part of the pilot and would be given the support and training required to undertake the role successfully even though they did not have the required grades. This method was adopted at a later stage during the pilot but proved to be successful in increasing the numbers of their potential Apprenticeships taken on. As an example, one of their employers introduced a new programme of Apprenticeships and young people from 15 Billion secured 12 out of the 15 places that were available. This employer was impressed by the values of the pilot and recognised the additionality of the support package provided by 15 Billion to the young people.

5.2 Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region

Sharing responsibility and funding in a provider network

The Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER) is a provider network and it acted as the contract holder for the DiA pilot. It requested proposals from its network members for projects to address different aspects of under-representation in Apprenticeships, and selected nine to which it devolved funding and targets. The projects include addressing issues of gender stereotyping of occupations, encouraging women into IT, working with the Bangladeshi community in the hospitality sector, and supporting disabled learners to take up work-related learning, and identifying the barriers to Apprenticeships among care leavers.

An advantage of devolving funding through the network was that it shared the responsibility across the nine organisations; hence the pilot was not dependent on the success or failure of any individual project. Although the approach allowed some flexibility,

projects nonetheless were made aware in the preliminary stages that they were being awarded funding on the grounds of their ability to meet their targets, and if they failed to do this, then they would receive reduced funding pro-rata of their achievement.

Addressing under-representation through action research

This pilot was distinguished by taking an 'action research' approach. Each of the nine projects proposed a theory about the barriers for different groups and then tested whether these were true through research, and devised and tested potential solutions through a practice element. The project manager at ACER required monthly reviews of progress which focused on ensuring that learning was articulated and captured. The action research review posed questions that explored what each project team had learned, what needed to change, how many people they had interacted with and what activities had been delivered. This approach encouraged projects to reflect on what they had learned and what changes were needed for better success in the future and to make detailed notes of these outcomes and learning points. Along with the review, ACER required monthly updates to the action plan for each project. Hence a continuous process of action and review was built in.

The ACER project manager provided ongoing support for each project through regular email and telephone contact as well as facilitating their support for each other by bringing the projects together on a number of occasions to discuss progress. In addition, an Action Research consultant was brought in to provide training and support to each project.

The pilot was supported by an advisory group established by ACER. This consisted of Jobcentre Plus and the local Connexions service, as well as organisations that had been unsuccessful in their bids to ACER to be part of the pilot but which wanted to gain learning from the work. The Advisory Group met three times during the course of the pilot; at the beginning and middle stages to provide guidance on overcoming issues, and at the end to assist with the dissemination of results and to discuss ways in which the pilot could continue without funding. Their role was to 'oil the wheels and lubricate practice.'

Research, plan and take action

The prevalent message about successful and effective practice was the need to plan ahead and to understand the target population from the outset. Projects such as those led by Cambridge College and Huntingdon College conducted extensive research to identify their target population and understand the best way to attract them before starting to deliver project activities.

Employer engagement was felt to be critical for most projects. Engaging with employers in their workplace was crucial in ensuring that they bought into the ethos of the pilot. Early engagement with employers also helped the project teams to identify any additional resources that were needed to achieve successful outcomes. For example, during the research and planning stage, Huntingdon College identified that they would need to employ learning providers from within the Bangladeshi community in order to engage with employers and apprentices. These learning providers better understood the community and were more likely to be trusted by employers, hence the college entrusted them to carry out the engagement work. By adopting this approach, Huntingdon College gained access to employers and young people which they might not otherwise have done. The college will use this approach in future plans to engage the Thai community.

Embed diversity across provision

Another factor that was critical to the success and the sustainability of this pilot was to ensure that the entire college bought into the ethos of the pilot rather than seeing it as an isolated project. Cambridge College continually promoted the messages arising from its work to the senior college managers as well as tutors and other staff throughout the organisation. This 'top down-bottom up' approach allowed the ethos to become embedded within the college and it was reported that considering diversity implications and messages is now an 'everyday' part of the college's work.

Overall, ACER felt the pilot had been a great success from the way that it was set up and run and the outcomes that it achieved. ACER continues to raise awareness of Apprenticeships to under-represented groups through a DVD it produced with the help of the nine projects. All aspects of the DVD were created by apprentices (speaking parts, graphics, editing and music) and it was reported that this learner-led style had promoted the concept of Apprenticeships to young people more than a campaign developed by adult professionals would have. The DVD has proved to be a great success and ACER have been asked to produce a follow-up DVD which includes the views of employers as well.

The videos are also available on YouTube, and can be accessed from the following link. <http://www.acer.ac.uk/diaresources.html>

5.3 Bury College

Get the marketing right

Bury College had aims of addressing the under-representation of individuals from BAME backgrounds in Apprenticeships, and increasing the representation of individuals with disabilities and learning disabilities or difficulties (D/LDD). As the year progressed it also considered occupational stereotyping by gender, and the under-representation of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The pilot led events which included IAG sessions in schools and employer events. It also tried to raise the profile of Apprenticeships among the target groups using the college website which has been redeveloped to include gender and race positive images. The pilot has published testimonials and case studies from learners and employers to encourage others to consider Apprenticeships. The marketing is angled for the diversity project although has wide range appeal.

Different under-represented groups have different needs

The two priority groups were found to have quite different needs. BAME communities lack information about Apprenticeships and to target under-representation among this group effectively requires wide spectrum communication activities to raise awareness and dispel myths about what is involved in Apprenticeships. Messages need to reach out, not just to young people, but to parents and employers as well.

For young people with D/LDD a greater emphasis is needed on providing support and an entry route into Apprenticeships. The college has supported a group of learners with D/LDD and has provided them with information about Apprenticeships and work experience opportunities as part of a programme of development that is designed to help prepare them for Apprenticeships. It was reported that brokerage with employers is also

required, since they may be apprehensive of employing people with disabilities because they are unsure about what this might entail, for example adaptations that may be required or additional support that should be offered. In addition, work on parental engagement is needed since they may be concerned about the suitability of employment and training for their child.

The work-based learning unit led the project and worked with Jobcentre Plus, local authorities and organisations in the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The college has struggled to find community partners in the VCS with a shared interest in ensuring BAME access to Apprenticeships. However, for D/LDD strong partnership working was established with a society for blind and partially sighted people where a progression route was established to support young people.

A softly, softly approach with employers

A lot of this pilot's work has focused on outreach to minority ethnic employers and negotiations were found to require a sensitive approach. However, as a result of their experiences the business development advisers now feel confident and more able to encourage employers to consider the benefits of workforce diversity alongside brokering new Apprenticeship vacancies. The college has been using monies from ESF funding with regeneration aims to offer a 'golden hello' to new employers and this has been effective, since small businesses may find it difficult to fund an apprentice without some support. While this will phase out now that the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) has been implemented, the college will continue to promote Apprenticeships to BAME employers using the AGE as an incentive to get involved.

With Rathbone, another of the DiA pilot organisations, the regional NAS Employer Engagement Manager, and other local stakeholders, Bury College co-funded two employer events. For these, providers worked together to target BAME employers to attend to hear about Apprenticeships, how young people from BAME backgrounds were under-represented, and to meet with other employers and apprentices who had got involved. Providers were also available to offer more information to employers about how to get involved.

Events outside the college

Bury College also held a public event at the Fusilier Museum for which they partnered with Jobcentre Plus. The event was held at the museum as this would be a less intimidating environment than the college for people not involved in learning. The event was a great success, 'a really busy day', that attracted lots of people and staff are currently involved in organising a similar event for 2012. With both of their target groups the college has identified a need to also work with parents to ensure that they too understand the opportunities and benefits associated with Apprenticeships and the public events have provided an important means through which to reach out to parents.

Sharing the learning

Within the college, the project has led to an increasing focus on, and promotion of, diversity issues within the study body. The pilot manager sits on the Equality and Diversity committee and has used this as a forum to feedback lessons learned and to test new ideas with students. Gaining students views of proposed activities can ensure they are sufficiently attractive to young people. Another example of good practice has been the effort to spread the new knowledge and practice more widely. Staff have been seconded

to the project to undertake particular aspects of work (business development) or to support different groups of students (the Learning Support Officer has been seconded to offer dedicated support to the group of potential Apprentices with learning difficulties). This has great potential to build capacity and to sustain the diversity focus.

5.4 City of Bristol College

Assessing impact through monitoring trends in take up

City of Bristol College led the pilot undertaken by the Western Training Provider Network (WTPN). The network comprises 25 training providers and FE colleges that deliver work-based learning and Apprenticeships. Network members are interested in sharing good practice and were attracted to and engaged with the pilot, to provide support and to underpin wider work such as raising the profile of Apprenticeships and exploring new markets. Rather than attempting to work with all members of the network, a small steering group was formed to manage and deliver the pilot. A project manager at Bristol College was given operational responsibility, and the Chairperson of the WTPN had strategic oversight. The pilot delivered a range of activities aimed at raising awareness and encouraging take-up of Apprenticeships. Initially the pilot prioritised the under-representation of BAME young people, an issue of concern in the Bristol area, and also targeted those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). However, the pilot has since reached out further to include, for instance, young offenders and other disadvantaged groups by working with schools in disadvantaged communities.

To fully assess the impact of its activities, the college is monitoring 'diversity' trends in Apprenticeship take-up over the next two years (to take account of the impact on young attendees who are still at school), and is also monitoring re-engagement with learning among young people NEET, given that this acts as a stepping stone towards an Apprenticeship.

Commissioning expertise to build capacity and raise awareness

To help deliver its aims, the college engaged a Diversity Consultant with extensive experience of the Learning and Skills sector to lead training on Equality and Diversity (E&D) issues throughout the network. The Consultant led a training session on the implications of the new (2010) E&D legislation, and each provider received an individualised consultancy to assist with policy and strategy development and adoption of best practice to ensure their provision was as open as possible and supportive of the needs of different groups.

Based on the work with providers, the Diversity Consultant developed an E&D toolkit to help providers to better promote Apprenticeships to more diverse groups, provide better support for diverse and non-traditional apprentices, to promote improved practice in dealing with employers and more generally to disseminate best practice throughout the network. The toolkit included business impact case studies which providers could use to engage employers.

An outreach worker was commissioned to lead the work to assess the issues around engaging with the BAME community and to identify the actions that would be needed to encourage take-up of Apprenticeships. The support worker targeted his work in deprived wards, engaging with individuals, youth advice providers and youth workers, as well as schools and government agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

Due to his community links and understanding of how to reach out to the local BAME communities, this outreach worker suggested the pilot contact Ujima Radio – a local Asian community station – and commission a weekly show to promote Apprenticeships, known as ‘Be Who You Want to Be’. This was instrumental in publicising Apprenticeships to target employers and learners. During the show Apprenticeship vacancies were advertised and employers and learners discussed the Apprenticeships they were engaged in, their experiences and the benefits of the training.

The pilot also involved the development of wider partnerships with a range of organisations including Trade Associations and with the city council. The city council was viewed as a critical partner for the pilot’s work on employer engagement since it leads the way in recruiting apprentices from diverse backgrounds and could act as a role model/ambassador. Informal links were also established with some local schools.

Come along and ‘Have a Go’

The college identified that action was needed to raise and increase awareness of and interest in Apprenticeships among young people, employing organisations of all sizes, and particularly BAME-led organisations. It found that Apprenticeships required promotion through schools, in IAG sessions, through stakeholders and a range of channels to ensure diverse communities would hear about the opportunities presented.

The pilot delivered innovative ‘Have a Go’ events in April 2011 and February 2012 in a prestigious, high profile venue in the city centre. These centred on interactive IAG sessions rather than standard careers fairs and involved lively taster events, which were seen as an enjoyable way to raise awareness of Apprenticeships. Staff were also available at information stands to offer one-to-one advice and information. The first event was open to the public and held in the evening. For the second, the pilot saw an opportunity to widen its influence through opening up a day-time session targeted at schools. To ensure schools would attend, it seconded a school engagement officer from a network member to lead on liaison and overcome any barriers to attendance. Schools from deprived wards and those with a high proportion of BAME students were targeted for attendance. The events achieved high levels of take-up among the local schools that were targeted. A total of 790 people attended (407 young people in years 9 through to 12 and 383 members of the public), involved 22 schools, and 2,420 ‘Have a Go’ activities were taken up.

Tailor the Apprenticeship message for different communities

Reflecting on the range of activities that had been delivered, the pilot identified the work with the community-led radio station as particularly successful in reaching out to employers and to parents. The provider toolkit, which draws together the learning arising from the consultancy activity, will promote the further uptake of good practice among local providers. The ‘Have a Go’ events were seen as an ‘incredible success’ and the pilot was looking for ways to fund a similar event in the future. Each of the Ujima radio programmes has been developed as an audio file to be used on providers’ websites, and, together with the Provider Toolkit are key legacies from the pilot. However, the key learning point has been that messages about Apprenticeships need to be tailored to different communities to be most effective.

5.5 College of Haringey, Enfield, North East London and Lewisham

Providing pre-Apprenticeship advice and support

The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London and Lewisham (CHENELL), is a designated Apprenticeship Training Agency and a large and experienced Apprenticeship provider. It has established contacts and is located in an ideal area from which to reach out to diverse groups of young people. Their pilot focused on partnerships with local businesses, Jobcentre Plus and other training providers, and has worked with a wide range of young people in the 16-18 and the 19+ age groups to target under-representation and provide additional support. The key groups it was seeking to influence were those from BAME backgrounds, with learning difficulties and from a non-traditional gender for occupations.

The college aimed to use its considerable experience in running Apprenticeship programmes to provide additional support to under-represented groups to boost their confidence and self-esteem and ultimately to secure an Apprenticeship. The initial part of the offer was delivery of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) which was followed by support to help individuals to select suitable opportunities and make applications. It has aimed to track young people once they gain an Apprenticeship and monitor their experience to ensure the experience was meeting the expectations of the young person and the employer.

The college has been in contact with a wide variety of local organisations to engage them as partners in the pilot, including Jobcentre Plus, local councils, schools, Connexions, training providers, charities and community groups. Their strategy involved preliminary face-to-face meetings with agencies to explain the goals of the pilot and explore options for partnership working, followed by weekly emails with a list of all their current vacancies. Where possible, the team also arranged to deliver the IAG sessions on the premises of these agencies. Jobcentres and schools were the most effective partners for this.

It takes effort to develop demand and supply

The college has undertaken significant activity to raise awareness of the pilot among potential apprentices and employers. To attract young people, staff placed posters and leaflets in libraries and schools, produced newsletters, hosted stands at school and college Open Days, used social media channels, advertised vacancies via Jobcentre Plus and Connexions, and invited all online applicants to the college to the IAG sessions.

To attract employers, they mailed out initial briefing material and followed this up with telephone calls and face-to-face meetings to provide further information and encourage participation. The employer engagement activities were most fruitful when staff could speak to employers directly about the pilots' aim; in these cases, employers were often willing to get involved. The college considered their work to engage employers to be a particular strength of the pilot. Participating employers included some existing employer contacts but the majority (approximately 80 per cent) were new to Apprenticeships. The college found that larger employers and those in the public sector were the most likely to 'buy in' to the ethos of the pilot. To engage smaller organisations, staff focused on the suitability of the apprentices for their business rather than the diversity aims of the pilot.

A positive outcome of the college's focus on employer engagement has been to encourage employers to increase Apprenticeship wages in order to cover travel costs

which can act as a barrier to take-up. This led to greater commitment and attendance from apprentices. At the start of the pilot, almost all employers were paying the standard rate of £95 per week, but many increased this to between £120-150 per week. Another positive outcome has been the number of organisations returning to the college to offer additional Apprenticeships.

Learn from experience, refine the offer

A key element of the pilot activity has been the provision IAG sessions, and the college has put significant effort into improving attendance rates over the course of the pilots since initially between a third to a half of young people would not turn up to the session they were booked onto. The college reviewed the timing of the sessions, moving them to the afternoon when young people were more likely to be available; it also implemented a system of phone calls and texts to remind young people of their session.

The sessions begin with initial informal small-group inductions, to create a less intimidating experience. These are followed by one-to-one discussions with an experienced staff member focused on getting to know the candidate and finding an Apprenticeship which would provide a good match for their skills and aspirations, and to which they could easily and affordably travel. In addition, the college distributes a resource pack to potential apprentices that contains interview tips and sample interview questions. The college also hosted learner 'confidence coaching' workshops, facilitated by an external trainer, to work on building young people's self-confidence and self-esteem. These were positively received, and the college is considering further activity of this kind. It also provides ongoing in-work support to apprentices through regular contact (apprentices attend once a week) and pilot staff regularly telephone apprentices to check on progress.

Overall, the pilot has encouraged the college to review and improve their Apprenticeship offer, which will help all learners and employers, not just those targeted by the pilot; and the diversity message is now deeply embedded in the college's Apprenticeship work and this will continue in future.

5.6 Essex County Council

Girls Allowed!

Essex County Council led a pilot in partnership with four local colleges. The focus of the pilot was to increase the number of girls and women going into engineering Apprenticeships. The partnership between the four local colleges was reported as a relatively unusual but effective arrangement and one which is likely to form a model for future cooperation between the colleges for other work. The colleges had worked with Essex County Council in the past, promoting the Apprenticeships in general. There was therefore a strong existing trust and rapport between all parties which assured that they would collaborate to increase demand among young women for engineering careers.

The pilot has been rolled out under a campaign brand 'Girls Allowed' and a programme of communications work has been put in place to establish the brand. A marketing consultant was commissioned to assist in this process. The materials developed have

been well-received, and the use of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook is believed to have been effective. Marketing materials (including a Girls Allowed website¹⁶) have been designed to appeal to women and girls, and include case studies and role models to inspire take-up.

The pilot has used a variety of awareness-raising and recruitment strategies, aiming to promote engineering as an option to girls, their parents and their teachers. The marketing materials are on prominent display throughout the four colleges involved. The pilot has received coverage in local newspapers.

The council also led a large-scale mail-out to around 17,000 families in the county. It worked with ex-Connexions advisers to develop a brochure for parents identifying career opportunities in the engineering sector and providing information about Apprenticeships.

School engagement has involved presentations at assemblies, small group sessions with young people, and work with parents and teachers. For example, colleges held parents' evenings, and invited teachers to industry tours such as to the local ports to increase their understanding of the various career options in engineering.

There is also a science, technology, engineering and manufacturing (STEM) programme locally which aims to encourage girls into the subjects that enable progression into the engineering sector. Links have been established between this and the pilot, and led to the detailed involvement of three schools to date.

Following the talks to assemblies by pilot representatives to highlight the programme the young people (both boys and girls) were invited to apply for activities and Saturday clubs at the colleges involved. The pilot has focused its activities on pupils in Years 9 and 10.

All female IAG sessions work but all female training groups don't

The colleges also worked with the ex-Connexions team to hold an event, open only to girls, entitled 'Women in Technology'. As part of this girls could try out different aspects of engineering and construction in a single-sex environment. This proved attractive and effective: the single-sex sessions meant that young women felt able to experiment with technology without feeling under pressure from boys, who might be more experienced with certain technologies.

However, the original plan that young women recruited during the pilot would train as an all-female cohort, in order to provide a supportive environment and 'critical mass', was not particularly effective. It became apparent that neither female apprentices nor their employers liked this concept. The women wanted to be integrated into the industry and wanted to be trained as part of a mixed group.

Incentivising employers

The recruitment element picked out as particularly significant was the offer of a wage subsidy to employers, which was made available from local authority monies. The subsidy, which is equivalent to half an apprentice's wage, lasts for 52 weeks and was normally used to support Level 2 qualifications, although in some cases was also used to

¹⁶ See: <http://www.girls-allowed.co.uk/>

support Level 3 qualifications. To be eligible, employers had to demonstrate that they had not employed an apprentice for at least two years. The subsidy was advertised through flyers mailed out to business and through telemarketing.

Challenging gender stereotypes of engineering takes time

The pilot's work is perceived to be a 'slow-burn' and benefits from its work may take time to show since the focus has been on increasing awareness of engineering career options several years prior to the eligible age for an Apprenticeship. The reason for this focus on earlier years has been to ensure that young women select the qualifications at Key Stage 4 that will meet the requirements for engineering courses. Despite this concern over the demonstration of impact, the council reported that there has already been an increase in the number of girls enrolling for engineering locally.

What has been critical to success, given the current challenging economic climate, has been focusing on industries which demonstrate a strong demand for apprentices, and which are sustainable for the future. In addition, partnership working has been crucial. The Federation of Small Business has helped with promotion to small and medium sized employers; other partners such as the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME) and the ex-Connexions team have also been supportive in assisting the pilot to deliver its aims. Finally, working with providers with a reputation for high quality delivery has been vital.

5.7 New College Stamford

Pre-Apprenticeship support for young people with complex or multiple barriers

New College Stamford focused on the Nottingham area and aimed to provide support to prepare young people for an Apprenticeship. Its pilot operated between spring and autumn 2011 and targeted vulnerable young people, often with complex or multiple barriers to employment. Once a young person was 'Apprenticeship-ready' the aim was to match them with a provider, who would assist them into an Apprenticeship vacancy. Early on, the pilot realised it had over-estimated the rate of conversion to Apprenticeships among the young people it engaged with. The extent of their barriers meant that they required significant and extensive input before they were ready for an Apprenticeship.

As part of the pre-employment training, the pilot offered young people structured sessions to help them develop their CV, led skills analysis which underpinned the provision of information, advice and guidance (IAG), and developed an action plan for the support that would be put in place to build up their strengths to enhance their employability.

The approach with employers worked differently in that the pilot aimed to find employers who were sympathetic to the support needs of the young people and who would be willing to provide additional support and would allow pilot staff to visit the workplace to provide mentoring support. In the current economic climate it was challenging to find employers with time to support a young person in this way; however, a few were receptive. Each young person placed with an employer was assigned a named adviser who would provide regular mentoring (in and out of work) and act as an advocate with the employer, should this be needed.

The pilot demonstrated that there was a need for this depth of support for the target group of young people who required in-depth IAG and inputs about the culture of work and employer expectations of commitment and time-keeping. The pilot also demonstrated the

value of working in partnership with advice organisations such as Next Step since Apprenticeships can be built into their advice with diverse clients.

Despite the challenges of finding suitable placements and preparing young people with complex or multiple barriers, the pilot reported that the experience of engaging with hardest to reach groups had been valuable and helped the college to establish many community links, on which it can build in the future, that it would not have done without the pilot.

5.8 Newcastle UXL

Increasing diversity in the provider workforce

Newcastle UXL (N-UXL) is a partnership of 11 training providers based in Newcastle upon Tyne. The partnership works to promote Apprenticeships throughout the local area. Preliminary research, funded by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service, indicated that low numbers of BAME young people were taking up Apprenticeships. Consequently, its bid for the pilot focused on detailed work with the local BAME communities with an aim to address the barriers they faced to Apprenticeships. In addition, a subsidiary aim of this pilot was to address gender segregation in Apprenticeships.

A preliminary assessment of the workforce in N-UXL member providers identified that most did not employ trainers or assessors from a BAME background. This was identified to be a critical barrier when seeking to reach out to raise awareness of Apprenticeships within the BAME communities. As a result, UXL recruited mentors from a range of backgrounds and faiths. This proved to be a success and allowed it to gain access to areas such as the mosques to promote Apprenticeships, which non-Muslims would not have been able to do.

Employing the right members of staff for the mentor roles was highlighted as one of the most important factors for success. The qualities N-UXL looked for were sales ability and marketing skills, a personable communications style and the ability to talk to SMEs and large employers. It was important that learner mentors had experience of youth work and an ability to engage with young people to make them feel at ease.

Working through partners

UXL led the pilot and were supported by a number of other organisations including providers in its network, the local authority and the TUC. It has also established partnership working with Asian Business Connexions (ABC) which has now become an official partner to the network. ABC is a membership organisation of over 100 employers, predominantly BAME-led SMEs; ABC was tasked to spread the Apprenticeship message and became the employer mentor for the project. In addition, the pilot worked with the charity, Jet, which committed to place young people on a range of courses that would raise their skill levels in preparation for an Apprenticeship.

N-UXL worked with schools to lead sessions on diversity and Apprenticeships. These proved to be successful at educating young people as well as teachers on the benefits of Apprenticeships and many of the schools have invited N-UXL back to run the same session with pupils from other age groups.

ABC has set up regular curry events which are attended by N-UXL and used to promote Apprenticeships to employers, parents and young people. Through the ABC mentor, the pilot has also gained a radio slot each month on Spice FM. This is a popular radio station

within the Asian community and has helped the pilot to reach out to parents and young people.

Reassuring parents

The N-UXL mentors led face-to-face engagement with parents to promote Apprenticeships and to reassure them about allowing their children, particularly females from the Muslim faith, to enter into the workplace. On many occasions the mentors accompanied parents on a visit to potential employers before they allowed their child to work there. While this was time consuming it was a successful technique when attempting to alter the views of parents.

Keeping young people on track

A learner mentor was allocated to work with young people who were at risk of dropping out of their Apprenticeship; who also acted as an advocate with their employers. The learner mentor facilitated discussions between the learner and their employer in order that any issues could be highlighted and solutions found. This tactic was successful since it allowed the employer and the learner to discuss their views in an open forum and work together to resolve any misunderstandings that may have arisen. N-UXL was able to take the learning from this process to build capacity among its other mentors and in its member providers in order that they could tackle any similar problems in a timely manner.

Intermediate steps to an Apprenticeship

With the assistance of ABC, the lead member of which acted as the employer mentor, N-UXL reported it had engaged with enough employers to generate 100 BAME Apprenticeships. However, many of the young people it engaged with did not have the requisite educational level or skills necessary for employment. These young people were placed onto other courses rather than an Apprenticeship, such as those offered by Jet as part of the pre-Apprenticeship package, or education provision eg Foundation Learning.

As part of working with these groups, N-UXL also engaged with young people with learning disabilities or difficulties who similarly could benefit from an intermediate step to an Apprenticeship. It is also exploring ways to work with Deaf Link and Momentum (an organisation for people with brain damage) to provide work-related learning as a potential stepping stone to work-based training.

The 'Employer Compact' for business improvement

To engage employers, UXL promoted Apprenticeships to them as a package to improve the whole culture of their working practice. Many BAME employers were unaware of employment legislation. N-UXL presented Apprenticeships as an opportunity for employers to develop their policies and procedures.

To support this, it developed an 'Employer Compact' following a workshop with providers, staff, employers and organisations such as TUC and the Equality and Human Rights Commission. The booklet provides employers with practical examples and case studies of issues they may face and how they can be handled and is issued to each business that employs an apprentice. The Compact highlights different aspects of employment legislation and how to work within these. When mentors visit organisations they encouraged employers to look at the document and take note of the possible consequences that may occur if legislation is not followed. In addition, every business that

takes on an Apprentice is invited to attend a half day training session where they are given examples of certain scenarios and suggested ways to handle them. The Compact and training elements have received very positive feedback and represent a key sustainable output from the pilot.

5.9 Rathbone

The Apprenticeship message has not reached BAME communities

The Rathbone pilot operated in three areas in Leicester, Bradford and Oldham, and sought to increase the representation of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) young people and some disadvantaged groups (in particular, young people not in education, employment or training) in Apprenticeships. At an early stage, pilot staff undertook a data assessment of uptake of Apprenticeships among BAME groups in each local area. The staff also contacted local providers and led youth outreach to understand their perspectives on why under-representation existed.

The research revealed that BAME individuals were often not receiving information about Apprenticeships and if they knew about them, their perceptions of Apprenticeships were out of date or factually incorrect. Parental aspirations within some BAME communities were reported as a barrier to the uptake of Apprenticeships. For example in Asian and Chinese communities, parents aspire for their children to complete academic studies, including higher education in order to access the professions. Parents may not understand that Apprenticeships also provide a means to achieve equivalent qualifications and progress to higher education level studies.

An honest broker to deliver IAG and support

Rathbone's model of delivery had a dual focus, aiming to work on both the demand and supply sides and it delivered activities to raise awareness of Apprenticeships within the BAME community through schools, community and employer events. Despite operating as a training provider and Apprenticeship provider, within this pilot Rathbone aimed to act as a support organisation and an 'honest broker'; with a focus on the delivery of IAG and support to young people and employers and assistance to find the best provider for their needs.

Following the delivery of IAG to young people, the pilot team aimed to track young people's transitions eg into Apprenticeship or other forms of learning. Young people received significant support pre-Apprenticeship with training in soft skills, preparation of CVs, and induction to the Apprenticeship Vacancy system.

Rathbone staff attended a wide range of events including large and small scale, public community events, school assemblies, exam result sessions, advice days and college open sessions, in order to raise awareness of Apprenticeships. The pilot team also developed a campaign on local community radio and television which aimed to raise awareness among parents, employers and young people.

A drawback of this varied approach to outreach is that it may not be possible to know the effect of some activities, for example, it is impossible to know whether a leaflet or a brief discussion at an event has inspired a young person to approach their local college or Connexions or the NAS website to find out about Apprenticeship opportunities. Where it has been able to track individuals, the pilot has found a range of outcomes including

Apprenticeships, but also other learning outcomes such as young people enrolled on Foundation Learning and into Access to Apprenticeship programmes.

Trust among local partners

Partnership working was a key challenge for various reasons: establishing new knowledge about local networks, the difficulties of setting up new 'true' partnerships, suspicion and fear from other organisations over poaching of contacts. Pilot workers also found that not all actors within the system welcomed the offer to promote Apprenticeships as this may conflict with objectives for young people to progress into sixth form.

Nevertheless, some of the partnerships worked well. In each area, Rathbone established Steering Groups formed from members of NAS, local providers, schools and employer bodies. Joint employer events were held with other pilot providers, enabling the partners to target key audiences for their offer. Local Authorities have been particularly important, helping gain access to local community events, and helpful for their knowledge of the local labour market. Other key partners were schools, school advisers (in order that the IAG can be delivered), and providers to whom the potential apprentices could be referred.

Rathbone found that considerable effort was required to leverage local support and it required personal contact to assess how the different partners could best link their objectives.

Staff at Rathbone intend to continue to offer Apprenticeship information and advice about intermediate steps, in order to help young people in their career choices. The key learning point for this pilot was the need for regular broad-spectrum awareness-raising to have impact on the target communities.

5.10 Remploy

Embedding Apprenticeships in welfare to work provision

Remploy is a national level pilot which has focused on addressing the under-representation of individuals with disabilities, learning disabilities and/or difficulties or long-term health conditions in Apprenticeships. The pilot operated through regional managers in the North West, North East and Yorkshire and Humberside, East Midlands, West Midlands, and London. The case study was based on fieldwork in the North West.

Remploy is well-known as a support organisation and employer of people with disabilities. It has been involved in Welfare to Work provision for years, previously as part of the Flexible New Deal and contracts with Jobcentre Plus/DWP for specialist support programmes for people with disabilities. It currently provides the Work Choice contract for Jobcentre Plus and is a sub-contractor for the Work Programme. For Remploy, working with 16-18 year olds and on Apprenticeships has been a new experience. Many of its clients are aged over 18, and Apprenticeships had not previously formed a part of its support offer.

Stereotypes of disability are the problem

A key barrier for its clients is the stereotypes of disability and health problems held by employers and the public. When clients note their disability on an application, they can find they are not shortlisted despite their capability for a role. It was reported that employers assume that individuals will require significant levels of support which may be

far from the case. While some adjustments may be required, these can be minor and not impact on work performance. The pilot was configured such that delivery staff would work with individuals before and during the Apprenticeship. Staff could also provide support to employers.

Key partner networks

There has been a focus on establishing effective relationships with a small number of providers, rather than working with a larger number at a more superficial level. The Jobcentre Plus Disability Employment Advisers who refer individuals to the Work Choice programme have been key partners, and a key referral source. More important has been finding the right provider partners for the age groups the pilot has worked with, and with Apprenticeship frameworks their clients have wanted. The pilot discovered that training provider contracts can be age-restricted.

Working in partnership with this small network of providers has been new for Remploy and has produced results. The providers have come to understand the quality of Remploy's candidates and have been willing to share vacancies for Remploy to fill. The quality of candidates is reported to be a result of the pre-employment training that Remploy offers to ensure candidates are motivated and employable and have the requisite literacy and numeracy skills.

As part of the pre-employment training, Remploy leads a basic skills assessment using the tests that Apprenticeship providers use. Providers were willing to share the assessment tool because it meant the candidates referred to them would be of suitable standard. Since it leads the assessment, Remploy can also give feedback to candidates about any need they may have for other forms of learning prior to starting an Apprenticeship.

Staff reported that it is critical to build in 'Better Off in Work' calculations into the advice provided for people with disabilities. This identifies the financial support that they can access once in work which can help overcome anxieties of losing statutory benefits when moving into work.

Remploy has engaged with employers at a number of levels. They have sought to raise awareness of Apprenticeships among their existing employer network and among those that have links with their branches. They have also worked through providers to access new employers. The providers maintain the link and benefit from future business, but in return this brings vacancies to the attention of the Remploy client group. Remploy can provide support to employers and advise on funding streams if work adaptations are required.

Apprenticeships will continue to be built into early IAG discussions with Remploy's clients since branch advisers have information, capabilities and skills to take the work forward without support from the coordinator.

5.11 South West Apprenticeship Company (SWAC)

A small financial incentive

This pilot was originally run by Triangle Fusion, a support organisation which was part of a training group based in the South West of England and in Wales supporting apprentices and other young people. In the summer of 2011 the pilot was integrated into another part of the group, the South West Apprenticeship Company (SWAC). SWAC is an

Apprenticeship Training Agency; a model of delivery in which the agency employs the apprentice, taking any the risk away from the employer. The ATA then charges a fee to the employer for supplying them with an apprentice and in addition takes a referral fee from the provider. For SWAC, the pilot funding acted as pump-priming and allowed people with difficulties and atypical apprentices to be placed without employers paying the standard administration fee.

This pilot built on a previous project that Triangle Fusion had delivered which used mentors to support apprentices with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD). That project had developed an approach and model that was proven to work, but had had to close when funding ended.

Mentoring support for young people who want it

The SWAC team identified there could be a gap in the support provided by colleges and providers to apprentices, since resource is not available to deal with personal issues. The pilot believed that mentoring would be beneficial to a range of people not just those with LDD. For the Diversity pilot the team at SWAC re-launched and expanded on their previous project; their premise was that all apprentices could potentially benefit from mentoring support.

The pilot was open to anyone who needed additional support but was focused on a range of under-represented groups such as: BAME individuals, females or males in non traditional roles, sexual orientation and transgender, deprived social background, social welfare, single parents, gifted, religion.

Different routes to gain referrals

The SWAC delivery model covered work to support young people into Apprenticeships as well as support to existing Apprentices. For this latter group, SWAC at the outset was heavily reliant on partnership working and referrals from colleges and providers. This proved to be difficult, despite buy-in at a managerial level in colleges and providers. The barriers included providers being protective or possessive of their learners; not realising that their apprentices might need extra support; in addition some providers were fearful that they would lose out on funding.

Consequently, the team changed the emphasis of their work to focus on supporting young people before they had found or started an Apprenticeship. Since the pilot was part of SWAC this enabled apprentices employed by the Apprenticeship Training Agency to be supported by the pilots' mentors. This pilot also used employer recruiters to cold call employers. They found it easier to 'sell' the mentoring support to employers when they were looking for new apprentices. The offer of free mentoring support under the banner of the pilot was attractive.

Mentors are additional to the key Apprenticeship relationships

The mentor acted as an additional person to support the apprentice – separate from the employer and the training organisation and assessor. Through the mentors, the pilot could also offer support the employer and provider too, since the mentor could help all parties to see the other's point of view.

The role of the mentor is to help the young person overcome their barriers. Since SWAC supported a wide range of young people, from pre-apprentices through to apprentices their barriers too could be wide ranging including: confidence, self esteem, writing a CV,

interview technique, housing issues, travel to work. The young person was put in control and could choose how much support they would like and how frequently they would wish to meet with their mentor. It was reported that a monthly meeting was most usual although some young people preferred to meet every six to eight weeks.

A relationship with boundaries

The relationship between the mentor and mentee is all important. Mentors aim to establish a rapport at the first meeting and to outline the nature of the mentoring support available. At this point, both parties have an opportunity to get to know each other. At the second meeting a diagnostic assessment is conducted which helps to pick up on support needs. A development plan is also created and goals and targets set. The mentor re-visits the development plan at the end of the agreed mentoring period so that both mentor and mentee can see how far the young person has progressed.

SWAC provided training for the mentors as part of their previous project, which was aimed at helping to distinguish between the different roles of mentoring, befriending, advising and coaching.

The mentoring will continue for most of the young people beyond the funded period of the pilot since most apprentices have started through the ATA. It will be possible for SWAC to provide resource to mentor these young people for the lifetime of their Apprenticeship. There is a firm belief that mentoring should be embedded into the mainstream offer in colleges and training providers and that all organisations that support apprentices should provide mentors.

By providing mentoring support this pilot has removed barriers to the entry onto Apprenticeships, raised employer awareness of apprentices' needs, and helped with the retention of young people in training. Through providing pre-employment support SWAC believes they have helped young people to get an Apprenticeship who might otherwise have missed out.

5.12 The UKRC

Getting employers involved

UKRC aimed to work with employers to encourage greater female representation in STEM subjects and, more specifically, the energy sector. Its work with employers aimed to address barriers to recruitment, including unconscious bias, and to promote the adoption of proactive and equal practices. It had a secondary focus on increasing the representation of minority ethnic apprentices in the energy sector. To encourage young women to consider STEM subjects the pilot identified a need amongst parents, teachers and careers advisers in schools for better information about STEM occupations and Apprenticeships. Furthermore, the images of the sector in marketing materials needed to be more appealing and draw on female role models. Given the fact that parents are a significant influence on the career decisions of young people from minority ethnic groups they also identified a need to improve their understanding of Apprenticeships.

The pilot was led by UKRC which engaged employer-partners to work with it to encourage women into STEM subjects. The UKRC secured some 'big names' in the industry and this was a key strength in terms of giving the pilot profile, and reaching out to other employers. The pilot benefited from the involvement of key sector bodies, such as National Skills Academies and Sector Skills Councils which sat on its advisory group. The driver for their

engagement was that the pilot's aims fitted with some of their own in terms of identifying good practice among employers and addressing future workforce issues.

The employer-partners found the experience of involvement in the pilot useful: it raised their awareness of unconscious bias in recruitment processes, assisted them to improve their career open days and promotional activities to appeal to a broader set of potential recruits, and enabled them to benchmark their own practice against that of other companies in the sector (see below). The main drivers for employers' involvement were to do with workforce planning issues, such as the need to insure against future skills gaps; access to the equality and diversity expertise and networks which UKRC offered was also a draw.

The UKRC utilised the advisory group and its contacts to raise awareness of the pilot and to get further employers engaged. It then established regular meetings to share good practice, common challenges and identify areas of improvement in terms of recruiting the target groups.

As part of its pilot, the UKRC delivered: training for employer-partners in unconscious bias, gender equality duty and advice on open days, career fairs, recruitment/ application processes; a 360 degree assessment of equality and culture in employer-partner organisations using the Cultural Analysis Tool (CAT). This is the pilot's unique selling point and they will continue to offer the CAT beyond the funded period of the pilot to interested employers. Employer-partner workshops have provided a 'safe environment' within which employers can talk freely about their own practices, benchmark these against others' practices and share good practice with competitors.

It also developed an online module to prepare mentors for their role in mentoring apprentices. In addition, UKRC has produced a manual for mentees and is developing an online 'interview module' for potential apprentices, which will be interactive and feature video clips of employers and apprentices talking about the process of applying and the experience of being an apprentice.

Shared learning and improvements to recruitment practices

As a result of its work, pilot staff and the employer-partners have identified a range of impacts and lessons. One of the most positive outcomes of the pilot was the opportunity for employers to share amongst themselves each others' practices around recruiting and attracting apprentices and learn from each other's experiences.

As a result of the training and development offered by the pilots, employers tweaked and amended their recruitment practices to overcome unconscious bias and be more attractive to females. This demonstrates that despite employer views that recruitment processes are open and fair, there is value to examining these in more depth to ensure there are not hurdles to female recruitment.

Having successfully engaged some of the largest and most high profile companies in the sector gave the pilot profile and influence to engage other employers. It also meant it was seen as an employer-led initiative, with credibility and leadership coming from the 'top'.

Employer-partners reported the benefits of having access to equality and diversity networks, expertise and contacts which they otherwise would not have had, or had the time to build up. Employer-partners saw UKRC as a helpful channel to get their message to under-represented groups, to advise them on how to best market their open days and promotional material, and to assess their recruitment practices and equality policies.

5.13 Versa Professional Services

An holistic approach to making local systems work for Apprenticeships

Versa Professional Services operated in the South East (Reading and Oxford) and London (Lambeth) to address the under-representation of young people from BAME groups, vulnerable groups, and by gender in Apprenticeships. The research case study covered Reading and Lambeth. Versa's model aimed to work holistically within local contexts and to marshal local partnerships in order to make local systems work together to remove barriers to participation. Its delivery model was based on a pathfinder project it undertook to address under-representation by race in Yorkshire and Humberside for the then local LSC.

The Versa pilot focused on increasing black, Asian and minority ethnic group awareness of and involvement in Apprenticeships. It addressed this through an emphasis on working through local systems and networks. It was a multi-stranded approach which involved work across the community engaging with young people, employers, and local agencies to create support coalitions to create a critical mass to take action around the agenda. Creating partnerships has been a critical feature of Versa's work and they have sought the collaboration of a range of stakeholders in each context.

The areas were selected on the basis of existing contacts and partnerships. These were stronger in some cases and the area selection had different implications. For example, Versa was in touch with the City Council in Reading; local BAME communities are dispersed and can be considered hard-to-reach – a similar situation was found in Oxford. However, in Lambeth there is a hugely a highly diverse community and minority ethnic groups are not hard-to-reach.

A roadmap to success

The pilot's operation was underpinned by the roadmap created as part of the Yorkshire and Humberside project (see main body of report, Figure 1). The pilot was an opportunity to test the road map for its traction. The local area differences noted above meant that the pilot operated differently in each to meet the needs of the different communities and to reflect the differing make-up and contexts. In Lambeth, Jobcentre Plus proved to be a powerful partner and there have been benefits to this on both sides. The composition of the partnerships in Reading was very different and varied in different parts of the town and its surrounding areas. The roadmap makes allowance for these differences since it encourages the selection of the *right* partners, and the *right* employers for the area and the target groups.

Versa's model surrounded acting as an 'honest broker'. Project workers engaged with young people and employers to get them interested in Apprenticeships and to offer young people support, mentoring and help with the application processes. They have helped employers to find the best provider for their needs. Each project officer had a case load of people who they worked with to prepare them for an Apprenticeship. The nature of the work with individuals varied depending upon their needs. With some it would be light touch while others required a greater depth and frequency of support. The support could surround the use of the Apprenticeship vacancy system, setting out opportunities and keeping them on track, as well as coaching for interviews and more general confidence building.

A lack of knowledge about Apprenticeships

The pilot team reported that the Apprenticeship message passes by BAME individuals without hitting home. The pilot team were unconvinced that ethnicity in itself constituted a barrier but rather that the issue is a lack of knowledge among these young people. A lack of awareness among key agents could also act as a barrier. This included inconsistent knowledge and understanding between different Jobcentre Plus offices and a lack of information among schools staff and youth advice services.

Another barrier identified, particularly in London, was the Apprenticeship National Minimum Wage pay rate since it can be insufficient to support travel costs. This can be particularly problematic for vulnerable young people such as care leavers, who live independently and have to find money for rent, bills and travel from the Apprenticeship Minimum Wage.

The right staff

The Project Officers brought different skills and understanding to the pilot although they all shared a commitment to increasing diversity, a proactive approach to networking and leveraging local opportunities, and an ability to work across different social structures and with different groups. It was apparent that it took constant and focused effort to keep the project on track and to keep sending regular and consistent messages out about Apprenticeships. In addition to this, it was also valuable to engage role models and ambassadors from the community to promote Apprenticeships.

5.14 Via Partnership (formerly CX Ltd)

Intensive support helps many types of young people

The Via Partnership operates in the North West and aims to improve skills and reduce unemployment. It works with public, private and third sector organisations to deliver a range of products and services, and careers information, advice and guidance for young people and adults, and business support for workforce development, redundancy transition and business growth. The main focus of its pilot was on young black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people aged 16-18 and also those with disabilities or learning disabilities and/or difficulties (LDD). They also aimed to encourage non-traditional entrants by gender and to support young people with emotional or behavioural conditions (EBC; eg autistic spectrum, attention deficit disorders), young offenders, care leavers, and young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

A 'Passport to Employment'

The model of delivery was intensive support and information, advice and guidance (IAG) to young people and specialised employer brokerage. Intensive support was provided throughout the process, from career advice services to placements into Apprenticeships and during the lifetime of the Apprenticeship. Support to young people was provided at several stages with the first steps involving a programme to improve their employability and communication skills. This was known as the 'Passport to Employment', a development tool created around pre-employability skills such as CV writing, interview skills, behaviour at work, body language, and also work experience which results in NQA certificates.

The second stage focused on the matching and brokerage between potential apprentices and employers. Via Partnership supported the apprentices during the interview stage, giving advice and financial and practical support. The pilot team then continued to provide on-going support to apprentices and employers during the Apprenticeship to help with retention. Pilot staff also liaised with the training providers to ensure that the training was going well.

The recession bites

The main barriers that Via Partnership identified were the lack of engagement from training providers and the economic recession. The organisation made use of existing networks and links but there were no formalised arrangements such as funding or service level agreements for providers to help contribute towards Via Partnership's targets. Additionally, because of the economic downturn many providers had to reduce the size of their workforce through redundancies, while, at the same time, there was a remarkable increase in the number of young unemployed and young people in Apprenticeships who needed their services. The focus of the pilot project itself caused difficulty in reaching the targets. Via Partnership found that young people with disabilities needed a longer period of support to get them ready for Apprenticeships that this could tip them over the age of 18, putting them outside the scope of this pilot (at least in terms of its agreed targets).

Direct contact to engage employers

A combination of marketing activities was implemented at the beginning of the project. They organised radio shows in the local area, set up a dedicated website to market the diversity project and handed out leaflets to young people and employers. However, pilot staff found that the best strategy was to engage with employers face-to-face, explain the project to them, and involve them in the actions of the organisation to make sure they are really committed to provide the support that apprentices need.

The Via Partnership mainly used their existing network of employers and worked mainly with the public sector. The employer engagement team had a strong focus on building relations with employers to find placements for work experience as well as Apprenticeships. They looked for employers who were advertising job opportunities and attempted to interest them in possible Apprenticeships. They found a common misperception amongst employers that people with disabilities would not be as productive as other staff and employers did not want to invest the time and resources in possible support they believed might be needed. They faced some difficulties in engaging with private sector employers, but had a subsidy that they could offer to voluntary and community sector employers, which helped with engagement in that sector.

The intensive support received before and during the Apprenticeships was appreciated by young people and the pilot delivery staff strongly believed that this intensive support and care provided to the apprentices was the key strength of this pilot. This allowed staff to monitor closely the development of the apprentices and intervene if any problems arose. Intensive one-to-one work allowed the staff to focus on the young person and dedicate full attention to his/her issues. It also allowed young people to boost their confidence, motivation and develop a trusting relationship over a period of time.

5.15 West Nottinghamshire College

A close focus on gender barriers to engineering

Vision Apprentice is an ATA/GTA arm of West Nottinghamshire College. It acts as a recruitment agency for employers (GTA), helps them to access training for their existing workforce (known as the 'invest' strand), and can employ and place apprentices with companies which are unable to commit to employing an apprentice permanently (ATA). It can offer additional services to employers with these ranging from advertising their vacancies, conducting a first sift of applicants and helping with the interview process.

The key aim of this pilot was to increase the number of young women in Apprenticeships in engineering occupations. Vision Apprentice and West Nottinghamshire College have a history of leading equalities projects and consequently have an eye to other areas of occupational stereotyping and under-representation among other groups. However for the DiA pilot, the college wanted to take a close focus on women in engineering to find out very specifically where the barriers were and to innovate to find ways to overcome those barriers.

Employers say they don't erect barriers

Through some initial research with employers, the pilot found that employers believed that they did not erect any barriers to the recruitment of young women, it was simply that young women did not apply for their vacancies. This led to an increased focus on addressing the demand-side with young women although pilot staff retained some concern that unconscious bias might nonetheless exist within employers' recruitment processes, and that premises or facilities might be off-putting to young women. Tackling these issues was therefore built into their brokerage with employers.

Different skills needed to work with learners and employers

The college recognised that different skill sets were required for learner and employer engagement work and that there was a need to ensure the pilot benefited from both to take the work forward. It appointed staff from existing teams to lead on both aspects which led to capacity building as well as pilot outcomes.

The pilot has worked with local schools and local employers to develop activities. It has been possible to deliver learner engagement activities as part of Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) classes. Vision Apprentice has also run learner engagement events at the college and in local community settings. It was reported that their employers are keen to attract local talent and to raise their profile within the community. For these reasons, employers have been willing to support IAG sessions with learners and explain about engineering occupations and careers.

Out of date perceptions of engineering

A key barrier among young women was found to be unrealistic and out-of-date perceptions of engineering careers. In many organisations there is a great reliance on machinery for lifting and manufacture, hence ideas that women cannot perform engineering roles are incorrect. The use of clean technologies means that in many cases old stereotypes of engineering as a dirty job are also out of date. Having employers on board has meant the pilot can expose young women to the realities of the occupation.

Breaking occupational stereotypes and broadening views of engineering careers has been important with parents and advisers and key influencers too, who also may not realise the breadth of careers available and how women may outperform men in intricate engineering operations and spatial awareness. Parents may also not be fully aware of the full range of qualifications that can be available: in the space of a four year Apprenticeship, it can be possible to complete Level 3, Higher National qualifications, Foundation and Bachelors Degree qualifications.

The college has learned a lot about how to engage young people and the necessity of having someone who can specialise in that role. Asking someone in the established team to lead on this work has helped to build capacity. The college is also joining up funding streams to continue work to promote engineering to females and is planning a revamp of its websites with a bespoke area for parents. It is hoping that some of the young women in Apprenticeships will become ambassadors, since word-of-mouth and role models are important to success. A key point of learning is the time it takes to address long standing occupational stereotypes. It needs earlier work in schools but it is impossible to measure the impact within the time scale of the pilot.

5.16 Zodiac Training Ltd

There is a market for male care workers

Zodiac Training Ltd is a training organisation operating across the North East. In the last five years it expanded into the health and social care (H&SC) sector with the appointment of a programme manager for the sector and, under the auspices of the DiA pilot, the appointment of a male co-ordinator to focus on supporting males into care. Their work is supported by an employer engagement manager and a curriculum lead.

There were two aspects to the pilot: developing demand among males for social care roles and working on supply with employers. To develop employment opportunities and Apprenticeship vacancies, the employer engagement manager identifies potential employers, markets Zodiac's provision to them, and explains the diversity project. The benefits of the diversity initiative are highlighted, specifically the value of making male workers available: men who require care may prefer this care to be delivered by male workers. Employing male care workers can help care employers meet the needs of different clients. The employer engagement manager works with the learner engagement lead to identify suitable candidates for vacancies.

Constrained labour markets can lead men to consider alternative careers

To generate demand, the pilot worked with Jobcentre Plus and Next Step to gain referrals of potential Apprentices. The engagement process involved a meeting to provide information and advice about social care occupations, assess candidates' suitability for employment in the sector and the nature/aspects of work they are interested in, delivery of pre-employment training and matching potential apprentices to vacancies. The pre-employment training aims to prepare men for work in the care sector, seeking to instil key sector-related 'employability' skills.

It was reported that the reduction of the public sector in the North East was driving men to consider non-traditional career choices. While care work had perhaps not been a first choice of occupation men wanted to work rather than be unemployed. Zodiac estimated that of the adult males they had taken on as apprentices or trainees, between 40-60 per cent had been made redundant and were unemployed before being recruited for the pilot.

The economic circumstances have encouraged males to think about different occupations and Zodiac is proud to have supported them into employment.

Indirect incentives to the employment of men

With employers, Zodiac emphasised the uniqueness of its delivery model: the applicant males had been vetted and would not be put forward for employment unless suitable for the work. Zodiac delivered pre-employment training which covered aspects of employers' induction training. This would usually encompass first aid, manual handling, employability skills, and a work experience placement. The training could take place in workplaces, at Zodiac's premises or, the Job Centre Plus offices or in community facilities. This meant the pilot had a good reach into differing communities and individuals could trial the training in a local setting before committing to employment. Zodiac also pays for the CRB checks of the candidates it engages with, hence employers can be assured that candidates are suitable when put forward for vacancies.

Once candidates were selected by employers, the next stage was typically a three-month induction. Zodiac found that most employers preferred a probationary period prior to registering recruits for an Apprenticeship in order to assess their commitment and suitability for the work. Once this period was completed and the candidate was registered for the Apprenticeship, Zodiac monitored their experience to ensure the training was well matched to the work being undertaken.

Apprentices usually started at Level 2 and completed functional skills. Although the Level 2 Apprenticeship involves taking literacy and numeracy Key Skills at Level 1, some candidates have also gone on to undertake Level 2 key skills, which means that if they go onto the higher level, Advanced Apprenticeship they already have their key skill units at the requisite level. Zodiac estimated that around half of their candidates would go on to complete the Advanced Apprenticeship or NVQ Level 3. In cases where men have been ineligible for Apprenticeships due to their prior higher education qualifications Zodiac has used the Adult Skills budget to enrol them for the Care Diploma. Their completion rate was 84 per cent at the time of the research.

Zodiac produced a DIA leaflet for employers, which detailed their delivery model and information about other services they could offer. The relationship with the employers is a crucial element of the model and it is important to understand the nature of their work to ensure the best candidates are put forward. Another key partner has been Job centre Plus which refers candidates to Zodiac and also advertises vacancies available.

The key strength of the model was outreach to promote social care careers to men with the training and the job matching process to find them employment. Over and above a standard offer, employers benefit from candidates who are CRB cleared and who have received initial training relevant to the sector. These combined, were reported to offer employers a substantial saving on recruitment and induction costs. The pilot has improved the company's equality statistics significantly – previously around 12 per cent of their Apprentices or trainees were male and towards the end of the pilot, this had increased to 27-28 per cent males.

6 Apprentice stories

This chapter contains the stories of some of the young people recruited onto Apprenticeships by the DiA pilots and interviewed as part of the evaluation. These have been anonymised to protect the identities of young people.

After **Gulnaz** left school she was unemployed for almost a year. She talks of her time before gaining the Apprenticeship as a dark moment of her life *'I didn't know what to do, I was off the rail, always in-and-out of Connexions and couldn't get a job because of lack of confidence'*. Then she decided to try an Apprenticeship and contacted the Via Partnership. She is now doing a Business Administration Apprenticeship at the Darwen Health Centre.

Gulnaz is now enjoying every minute of her Apprenticeship. When she started she was quickly given the opportunity to work at the front desk and now works on her own but with support from other colleagues or manager when needed. She deals with over 90 patients a day, either by phone or in person, and loves the direct contact with people that the job provides. Solving patients' problems can be challenging but is rewarding.

'I love this work, I like to deal with customers, you never know what you will get, and you never get bored - there is always something new.'

She now finds that she enjoys the course work at college, because she can see the practical uses and apply what she studies. She also feels the Apprenticeship has had a wider impact on her life: Gulnaz says that she now feels more confident and is more aware of her potential and the possibilities that life can offer. The Apprenticeship has improved her employability and given her lots of chances to find out about other jobs that require her skills. She says her Apprenticeship has been *'a life-changing experience'*.

Atish is undertaking an Apprenticeship in business administration in the Contracts Department at Bunzl Healthcare. He decided after a few weeks at university that it was not for him, and since then has had several jobs, ending up unemployed for a while. It was during this period of unemployment that a friend told him about the Apprenticeships website. He had heard about Apprenticeships at school, but he was

under the impression they were only for 16-year-olds. He looked at the website and realised that they were still open to him:

'[Looking at the website], I realised that, oh you can do it – I think it goes up to 25. I never knew that, but I thought, it's quite good, for people who are unemployed at 19...it's a good opportunity for them.'

The main attractions of the Apprenticeship have been the chance to combine working and learning and the opportunities he believes it will afford him in future. He initially felt it would be 'good to try something new', but is now more focused on his future prospects:

'There's always the potential to move up the ladder and that's my main aim.'

Atish feels he has had plenty of support from both his employer and the College. His colleagues have 'made him feel at home' and been happy to answer any questions.

Overall, he says the Apprenticeship has exceeded his initial expectations, and feels the combination of experience and qualifications he has gained will be a strong platform for future jobseeking:

'To be honest, I've loved every minute. Being at college, meeting new people, being in a different working environment, there's really no downsides... I'd recommend it to anyone.'

Atish is the first apprentice the company has employed. He is the only male in the Contracts team, and younger than most of the other staff, but he has fitted in well and made friends. The Contracts Manager feels the company has benefited from taking him on:

'I would encourage any of my colleagues in other departments. It's a good scheme to be in.'

Harriet was at college completing her A-levels before she started an electrical apprentice at National Grid. After seeing an advert on TV about Apprenticeships she looked into what was involved. Her school had not encouraged Apprenticeships and her dad thought it meant she'd be 'digging up a road somewhere'.

Despite this initial lack of support Harriet persevered and is now loving the Apprenticeship. The pay is good and so are the company benefits. She describes her mentors as 'brilliant' and they are always there to give her advice and support and explain things to her.

She recognises that you need to be assertive, confident and not too bothered about being in a male-dominated environment, but would recommend an Apprenticeship wholeheartedly.

Dameko studied a business administration diploma at college but was then unsure about his future options. He had applied for several jobs but not gained employment. Then he spoke to a friend who was involved in an Apprenticeship and he was keen to get into one too. He heard about an Apprenticeship in business administration through

Versa. He has now been an apprentice for around six months with his employer Nestacare and has found that he really enjoys this more applied style of learning:

'It's more practical – I'm more practically involved with the business and I find it very nice, I enjoy it, it's hands on and you're doing stuff and learning stuff at the same time.'

When he started he had been nervous and worried about his ability to communicate with people, but as a result of doing the job his confidence has really grown. His work manager has helped him a lot with the theory and the practical. She is very supportive: *'I can go to her with anything, at any time.'*

The best bit of the Apprenticeship has been *'learning first hand, while doing the job. It's the best way to learn... 'cos when you're actually doing something, you're learning first hand and it stays in your mind.'*

He thinks that Apprenticeships are not well enough advertised. Most of the advice he'd heard before had focused on going to university but Apprenticeships are a good route and should be better advertised. His message to other young people would be *'although schools and colleges will tell you that university is the only way, there are also other options like Apprenticeships that give you a way to do the theory and practical at the same time. Consider that. If you're unsure about which direction to go in, give Apprenticeships a try.'*

Vivaca left school after taking her GCSEs and began working as a receptionist, but remained interested in gaining further qualifications. She found out about Apprenticeships online and noticed that CHENEL was a local provider. Staff gave her more information about Apprenticeships and she felt that the combination of work and study offered by an Apprenticeship would be ideal. She is now studying for an Apprenticeship in business administration at Churchfields Primary School.

Vivaca has really enjoyed her Apprenticeship so far. She feels the best aspect has been the opportunity to combine work and study in a way which benefits both her and her employer. She has become more confident in taking on new things, and is pleased that her work reinforces her studies: *'The things you cover you have to do'*.

After completing her Apprenticeship Vivaca intends to continue her studies at university. She believes that having work experience as well as a qualification will look good on her application, and also gives her the option of continuing in full-time work should she decide against university nearer the time.

She feels that the Apprenticeship programme could be expanded, as it is potentially attractive not only to school leavers but also to those looking for a career change or seeking work when they are older:

'They should try and get more organisations to be involved because it is a scheme that a lot of people want to get into.'

Sarah had taken the Engineering Diploma at Key Stage 4 and had decided that this was the career for her. She really enjoyed the design and manufacturing elements. She applied for relevant Apprenticeships in the summer following school. She was

keen on engineering because it offers good career prospects. She also wanted to learn on-the-job and felt that she had had enough of full-time study.

'I'm a creative person and I wanted something that would allow me to channel that but that would also challenge me.'

Currently she is working on mechanical applications while she takes the first part of her Level 3 qualification. In future she would like to get involved in more machine, design and CAD based-work. Her Apprenticeship contract will last four years during which she will complete the Level 3, followed by Higher National qualifications and hopes after that to do a top-up course to allow her to get a degree (BSc).

She used the Apprenticeship Vacancy Service and found lots of vacancies were available. She looked through the job descriptions and applied for those that most appealed to her. It was here that she found Vision Apprenticeships and linked through to their website. Vision Apprenticeships helped her to find her employer, Glenair.

She was the top applicant in a competitive field of 150 individuals and was delighted when she was selected. She received a personal letter from the company's MD to commend her on her success. Her parents are really proud of her and think she is building towards a good career. Her mum has warned her that it may not always be easy because it is male dominated but if she believes in herself she will get on. Sarah thinks there is a need for parents to be made more aware of careers in this sector.

'I will prove it to myself and I think that companies do think it is good to have women on side.'

Her employer is very supportive and she has been assigned a manager and a female mentor from another part of the business. The training is going well and she enjoys college because of the opportunities it provides to gain insight into other areas of engineering. She believes her Apprenticeship will help her gain permanent employment in future.

'A lot of companies are looking for experience and with an Apprenticeship you have that and qualifications and training which can go up to University level so you have the whole package.'

She would like to see more women working in the sector and would encourage other young women to consider an engineering career. With technological changes there is no reason why women cannot get on as well as men in the sector.

Following school, **Talharqa** went to college to improve her maths and English qualifications. While she was at college, she had access to a careers adviser who helped her to explore her options and while Apprenticeships were covered, Talharqa did not fully understand the range of occupations covered by them. She wanted to pursue business administration but did not enjoy full-time learning *'it felt too much like school, I prefer a grown-up environment'*. She found the pace of learning slow and wanted increased opportunities to work independently. She left college, and was NEET for a considerable period with few ideas about what to do.

'I didn't really know much about Apprenticeships before I did one. I knew that you did work and you study at the same time... I'd rather be doing work at the same time so I can understand what I'm learning so when I heard about the Apprenticeship with Nestacare I was really keen.'

She reported that her employer has been highly supportive of her personal and cultural needs.

'He is really, really good. I can wear my religious clothing and I get a place to pray. I feel so comfortable here, it's a really good friendly environment and no-one feels intimidated by anyone, we all help each other with work it's really nice'.

When we spoke to Talharqa, she was pregnant and soon to go on maternity leave. She hoped to return to her employer once she had had her baby. She was very satisfied with the training she had received as part of her Apprenticeship – both on and off the job.

'The best bit has been working in this environment and I did enjoy the course work. I liked reading about things and then going and doing them myself... I think apprenticeships are really good – it's a much faster way to learn'