

Central London

Employers' Views and Experiences of the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme



Learning+Skills Council
London Central

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE MODERN APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME

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BMRB

for London Central Learning and Skills Council

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Foreword

The London labour market contains a wealth of job opportunities and is a magnet for people from other parts of the U.K. and from overseas. Yet, within this structure, employers still have concerns about the qualities of their new recruits. At the same time, young people leaving school with minimal qualifications have great problems in finding jobs with meaningful prospects.

The Modern Apprenticeship (MA) scheme was devised to try and deal with both of these issues. The scheme aims to help employers to draw from a larger employment pool and to provide a training framework which will assist these recruits to become productive employees. From the point of view of the young person, Modern Apprenticeships aim to raise aspirations - they can provide the launch pad for the acquisition of qualifications and skills and be the vehicle for career progression.

This study was commissioned to assist the London Central Learning and Skills Council to understand better how employers had become involved with the MA scheme and to explore the nature of the business benefits which had resulted. The research has also highlighted suggestions for ways of involving more employers in the scheme in the future.

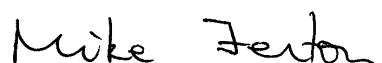
An overriding message from the report is that MAs can be a valuable tool in companies and organisations where there is a positive ethos towards investment in training and development and in those organisations which are striving to improve employee commitment and satisfaction. The case studies described in the Appendix to this report provide illuminating and heartening stories of how the M.A has worked in practice.

At the same time as this study has been ongoing, the London Central Learning and Skills Council has been developing its activities to involve employers with the MA programme. A number of employer broker projects have been set up through which intermediary organisations seek to spread the positive messages of the business benefits which have been highlighted in this report.

Another change that occurred whilst this research was taking place was the announcement in the Government's Skills Strategy, released in July 2003, that the MA scheme is to be extended to apply to a broader age group. Of immediate effect, MAs enrolled before their 25th birthday are entitled to complete the programme, regardless of their age. This opens scope a little for employers to employ an older MA – an issue raised by employers as a preventative factor to employing an MA, particularly in central London. Further, the Skills Strategy announced plans to investigate the potential of extending MAs generally so that adults can participate in the programme. This is a longer-term proposal that is currently being considered by the Department for Education and Skills, the Learning and Skills Council and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

We would like to thank all the employers and training providers who took part in this study. The insights that they have provided have been extremely valuable and will continue to inform our future activities.

Finally, we would like to thank BMRB for undertaking the fieldwork for the study and for the production of this comprehensive report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Fenton". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Mike" and the last name "Fenton" clearly distinguishable.

Mike Fenton

Head of Strategic Planning and Research
London Central Learning and Skills Council

Executive Summary

Background

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was established in March 2001 to modernise and radically reform the management of post-16 education and training provision in England. As part of this remit the LSC is charged with the task of promoting work-based learning. There are now various options, such as the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) Scheme, available to young people who decide not to continue in full-time education. The MA is a government-supported training initiative which provides a mixture of work-based training and education. It is particularly aimed at 16 to 17 year old school leavers, but is also open to other young people as long as they are completed by age 25¹.

The majority of MAs in London are taken up by young people over the age of 17 years whose employers 'convert' them on to the programme. Among the few who do choose the MA option at 16 it tends to be those with the lowest expectations for their GCSE results at 16.

The research

In order to improve the take up of the MA in central London, the London Central Learning and Skills Council (LCLSC) commissioned BMRB Social Research to carry out qualitative research with employers and training providers who are currently involved in the scheme.

Qualitative research was carried out using depth interviews amongst a purposively selected sample of employers and training providers. A total of 45 interviews were carried out; 30 with employers and 15 with training providers. The sample was selected to ensure a range of different MAs including: Installing and supporting IT, Customer Service, Business Administration, Early Years Education, Retail, Sport and Recreation, Hospitality, Engineering and Health and Beauty.

Promoting and recruiting the MA to employers

The MA had been promoted to employers through both direct marketing approaches, such as cold calling, and indirect approaches via advertisements in the media and referrals via Careers and other services. Of these, cold calling was regarded as the most effective method for promoting and recruiting employers across the sectors onto the MA scheme.

Training providers rather than employers tended to initiate the recruitment process. In this way the training provider would establish links with employers and use various techniques to promote the scheme and recruit them onto the programme.

¹ The Government's Skill Strategy, released in July 2003, announced that MAs enrolled before the age of 25 are now able to complete the programme beyond their 25th birthday.

Recruiting young people

Young people were recruited onto the scheme through two main methods. Either existing staff were converted onto the scheme by training providers and employers or young people applied for positions speculatively. In the case of the latter they had learnt about the scheme as a result of advertisements in the local paper, or after a referral from agencies such as the Connexions Service. Across all sectors, a preference was indicated for inward driven recruitment approaches, as this provided more opportunity to assess the young person's suitability for the scheme.

Generally, there appeared to be few differences between the recruitment practices operated for employees pursuing an MA and those used for other staff. In this way each applicant had to undergo a range of the following procedures, submit a CV, complete an application form, undergo at least one standard interview, take aptitude and practical tests, and have references and relevant previous experience checked. However, in some cases the level of commitment and motivation of the young person to the MA scheme was additionally assessed by the employer, or the employer relied on the training provider or career service to do this.

Motivators to participation

Employers identified one or more reasons for why their organisation had taken part in the MA scheme. These included:

- The opportunity to train employees at little or no financial outlay for themselves
- The low investment of time and resources required of employers
- The workplace nature of the training
- The content of the programme which combined educational training alongside practical and technical skills training
- A recruitment incentive for low skilled and poorly paid positions
- A way to improve staff morale and improve retention rates

Barriers to participation

Even though the sample of employers and training providers were all participating in the scheme they nevertheless identified a number of barriers or difficulties facing prospective employers. These included:

- Lack of knowledge and awareness about the scheme
- The poor image of the MA amongst employers and young people
- Employers preference for recruiting mature and experienced staff

- The amount of time and investment, which employers would have to devote to the scheme. Related to this issue was the degree of time and commitment the young person would need to fulfil the requirements of the MA scheme

The nature of the labour market was felt to be a particular issue for London employers, as there seemed to be a greater availability of university/college graduates and mature candidates who were favoured over young people who had left school at 16 with fewer qualifications.

Design and Assessment of the MA

National Training Organisations and a range of awarding bodies devise the overall design and content of each MA. In addition to this, employers had sometimes added modules to the main frameworks in order to integrate the scheme more appropriately within the workplace. The provider in conjunction with the employer and the apprentice devised the 'individual learning plans'.

Across all sectors involved in the research 'on the job' training was the most commonly used method for delivering the MA scheme and 'off the job' training was orientated to Technical Certificates and the Key Skills part of the MA.

Methods of assessment adopted by training providers varied according to the type of and level of MA. The main methods were based on observation and questioning portfolio evidence. In addition witness testimonies, written statements, oral questions, photographic and video evidence were sometimes used.

Contractual agreements set up between the employer, training provider and the apprentice outlined the main aspects of the MA scheme and the commitment required of both the employer and the young person to participate. The generic agreements outlined terms and conditions of employment and contractual aspects relating to the provider. Arrangements were also established between the employer and the apprentice in order to help support the apprentice throughout the MA scheme.

Barriers to delivering the MA Programme

Despite the largely positive accounts about the experience of delivering the MA scheme there were various difficulties encountered.

In terms of employers the most common difficulty reported was that the MA scheme did not seem to integrate well into certain activities an apprentice was doing. Also, there was concern about the investment of time required on the part of the employer to train, support and administer the scheme. Compounding this difficulty was the lack of support provided by some training providers. There were also issues difficulties associated with the employment of young people.

For training providers the difficulties seem to relate to a lack of commitment of employers and the apprentices to the scheme. It was said that employers had sometimes joined the MA scheme without realising the full implications of what was required of them to participate in the scheme. Also, levels of bureaucracy

arising from having no central awarding body was also felt to be a difficulty for training providers.

Retention Issues

Two factors were identified as having contributed to the low retention rate of young people on the MA scheme, Key Skills and lack of employer support. Irrespective of occupational area, providers found that if employers were not committed to the scheme from the beginning then young people were unlikely to complete the programme. In addition Key Skills appeared to be the main reason why young people failed their MA and subsequently dropped out of the programme. Other issues which were felt to have affected retention, included low levels of pay, and management of workloads.

Reflections on the value of the MA Scheme

The MA scheme was valued by both employers and training providers for providing:

- An effective and cost efficient mechanism for training young people
- An opportunity for employers to fulfil their social and corporate responsibility
- An opportunity for employers to display their commitment and appreciation to employees. This was felt to have a positive effect on the loyalty and productivity of staff which was in turn felt to have wider consequences for the long term success of the company
- A framework and vehicle for staff development and progression as well as a qualification which could be used to further career prospects for young people
- Wider benefits for other members of staff, as apprentices shared knowledge and skills they had learnt
- An alternative route for young people who did not want to remain in education and did not have formal qualifications
- New challenges for young people which enhanced their confidence in themselves and their capability to do their job

Suggestions for improving the design and delivery of the MA scheme

Across both samples there were a number of suggestions made for improving the design and delivery of the MA scheme. In a few cases people either did not feel there was a need for anything to be changed, or improved, or they felt they lacked sufficient knowledge about the scheme to be able to make suggestions. Not surprisingly, the suggestions for improving the scheme build on the difficulties that had been encountered delivering the scheme.

Suggestions about the design of the scheme revolved around the need for greater flexibility in terms of the content and structure of the MA, especially in relation to the Key Skills element. Also, there were requests to extend the eligibility for the MA scheme to people aged over 25 years.

As far as delivering the scheme is concerned there were three main suggestions:

- Employers should play a more active role at the recruitment stage and clearer communication between the employer and the provider should be established at an early stage
- Streamline the administration of the MA scheme so as to reduce the amount of bureaucracy
- Improvements in the methods of assessment and their delivery in terms of planning and structure in order to integrate it more into the employers workplace

Encouraging the take up of the MA

A key and recurrent solution to improving the take up amongst employers related to raising the profile of the MA by informing more employers about the existence of the scheme. In addition financial incentives to employers and young people who participate in the scheme, for example, external sponsorship were suggested as a method for stimulating take up.

A number of suggestions were made for how to promote and market the scheme:

- Advertising campaigns through a variety of media
- Government backed national advertising campaign endorsing the MA scheme with specific marketing packages for each party involved in the programme
- Promotion of the scheme via employment agencies, job centres and other agencies
- Marketing strategies within schools, including merchandise promoting the MA programme
- Advertising on food and other products that young people enjoy, use social and cultural events as a vehicle to promote the scheme
- Employers could offer work experience to younger people
- Targeting of specific occupational sectors and reputable employers who have participated in the scheme

- Improve links and co-operation between educational institutions, employers and training providers, target marketing strategies

Content of the promotions

The main suggestions about the content of the message revolved around three different themes, explaining about the design and structure of the MA and the sectors it covers, the cost and requirements for participation in the scheme, and emphasising the benefits of participating in the scheme. In addition it was recurrently said that there was a need to remove the stigma attached to work-based learning by presenting the scheme as a credible alternative to further education.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Education policy at all levels has been shaped by the need to improve the quality of education and learning, in order to enhance economic competition and greater social inclusion. It is also recognised that individuals who leave school with low levels of educational attainment are at a higher risk of experiencing social exclusion as adults and have significantly lower lifetime earnings. In order to remedy this, the Government agenda has focused on raising the standards of education and qualification levels of all young people. It has also addressed educational disadvantage and disaffection by, for example, tackling truancy and exclusion during compulsory education and providing a range of measures of financial support to widen access and improve retention rates of young people in education and training post-16. In order to fill today's employment requirements the aim has been to ensure that young people obtain sufficient qualifications and training.

The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was established in March 2001 to modernise and radically reform the management of post-16 education and training provision in England. As part of this remit the LSC is charged with the task of promoting work-based learning. There are now various options available to young people who decide not to continue in full-time education, including a number of government-supported training initiatives. In England and Wales, work-based training for young people was introduced in 1998 (replacing Youth Training) with the aim of ensuring all young people have access to post-compulsory education or training.

Included within these initiatives is the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) Scheme, which was launched nationally in 1995. These qualifications are a mixture of work-based training and education that are particularly aimed at 16 to 17 year old school leavers, but are also open to other young people as long as they are completed by age 25. They normally involve a young person combining working with vocational skills and training, gaining qualifications as well as receiving wages. In March 2001 there were 266,000 young people on work-based training schemes in England.

Recent government initiatives (such as 14-19: Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards; Success for All and the Chancellor's Pre-Budget Report) have placed increasing emphasis on the need to provide a vocational route for young people post-16. The task of the LSC is to ensure that the MA option is available for all young people and employers who want it. In London, in particular, this has proved to be a considerable challenge because of the nature of the labour market in the capital.

The majority of MAs in London are taken up by young people over the age of 17 years whose employers 'convert' them on to the programme. Among the few who do chose the MA option at 16, survey research (Foskett and Brown, 2000) suggests that it is those with the lowest expectations for their GCSE results at 16 who are likely to do so. While this suggests that they may choose this route by default rather than out of a genuine desire to combine learning with working

and earning an income, further research is required to substantiate this in more depth.

Compounding the low appeal of the MA are the systemic problems associated with the availability of MA opportunities: year 11 students are asked to make their choice of post-16 option during the autumn term of their GCSE year. However, MA opportunities are generally not confirmed until the March/April before they sit their GCSE's, by which point most young people have already decided what they want to do. The supply/demand mismatch limits the extent to which apprenticeships can be marketed in case expectations about the immediate availability of either trainees or jobs cannot be fulfilled. Furthermore, among the few that opt for an MA route at 16, it seems that a number fail to complete their training, as they leave it for better paid work with another employer.

In order to investigate how to raise the profile and improve the credibility of the MA the London Central Learning and Skills Council London (LCLSC) commissioned BMRB Social Research to carry out a qualitative study with employers and training providers. This research was carried out between January and July 2003.

This chapter provides an overview of the objectives, design and conduct of the research. It is followed by five further chapters. **Chapter 2** considers the promotion and recruitment approaches adopted by training providers and employers. **Chapter 3** explores the reasons why employers participated in the MA scheme and the decision making process involved. It also outlines participants' perceptions about the barriers to participation in the scheme. **Chapter 4** briefly describes the way employers and training providers designed and assessed their MAs. **Chapter 5** examines employers' and training providers' experiences of delivering the MA scheme. Finally, **Chapter 6** reflects upon the value and role of the MA scheme and makes some suggestions for how it might be improved. It also considers suggestions for encouraging more employers and young people to participate in the scheme.

1.2 The Modern Apprenticeship Scheme

The new generation of Modern Apprenticeships were introduced at the end of November 2001. Currently there are over 150 types of MA in over 80 different industry sectors. These provide structured training programmes that help develop skills at a junior management or technical level. In most cases the training provided on the job is delivered by an individual attached to a training provider or college or/and an employee within the company. In addition apprentices will usually have to attend a local college and training provider for key skills training, although the requirements and time commitments for this varies across different employment sectors.

Modern Apprenticeships can be taken at two different levels - Foundation Modern Apprenticeship (FMA) and Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (AMA). Both lead to National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs); level 2 for the FMA and Level 3 for the AMA, key skills qualifications (Application of Number, Communication, Working with others, Improving Learning and Performance and

Problem Solving), Technical Certificates and other qualifications or requirements relating to a particular occupation. There is no set time limit to complete the Modern Apprenticeship as this will depend on the ability of the individual apprentice, their employment commitments and the willingness of the apprentice to carry out tasks in their own time. Typically, young people take between 2 to 3 years to complete their MA, with a small proportion achieving it more quickly.

1.3 Aims of the research

The key purpose of this research was to investigate how to raise the profile and improve the credibility and take up of the MA Scheme in central London. In order to achieve this objective the research had a number of more specific aims which were to:

- Identify the methods used by training providers to promote, market and recruit employers onto the Modern Apprentice Scheme
- Explore the reasons why employers choose to participate in the MA Scheme; and the factors that are influential
- Trace the process by which employers get involved in apprenticeships; identifying their sources of awareness
- Identify and compare the different methods which employers and training providers recruit apprentices; and their views about these
- Understand the nature of apprenticeships on offer and how apprentices are managed, trained and supported
- Investigate training providers' and employers' views about the design and assessment of the MA Scheme
- Explore employers' and training providers' positive and negative experiences of delivering the MA programme; and the nature of their relationships with each other, young people and, in the case of training providers, with the LCLSC
- Investigate employers' and training providers' reflections on the value of participating in the MA programme; the impact that employing apprentices has had on their business; their intentions about future involvement in the programme; and their reasons for this
- Consider their suggestions for how take-up of the MA programme might be stimulated/improved/supported; and what (if any) changes they would like to make

1.4 Research design

A qualitative approach was adopted to provide an in-depth understanding of employers' and training providers' experiences and involvement in the MA

scheme. A total of 45 depth interviews were carried out - 30 interviews with employers (27 individual and 3 paired interviews) and 15 interviews with training providers (13 individual interviews and 2 paired interviews).

As is usual in qualitative research, samples are designed to ensure full coverage of the key sub-groups within the target population in order to identify and explain variations in the nature of experiences and views between them. The aim, therefore, is to *purposively* select a sample on the basis of a range of key characteristics identified as relevant to the given population, rather than to statistically represent the wider population.

We set out to achieve a sample of 60 employers and 15 training providers spread across the seven boroughs covered by the London Central Learning and Skills Council (Camden, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark, Westminster, Wandsworth, Kensington and Chelsea). These interviews were to be distributed across nine different employment sectors (Customer Service, Retailing and Wholesaling, Professional and Business Administration, Leisure and hospitality, Information Technology, Construction, Early Years Care and Education, Health and Beauty).

In addition the sample was designed to ensure that, as far as was feasible, that the sample would be purposively selected to ensure diversity across a range of criteria for employers (including size and type of employer, number of AMAs/FMA's being offered, age of apprentices, and route by which the apprentice was recruited) and for training providers (including size and type of training provider and nature of training provided).

The sample of training providers was identified and recruited from a list provided by the LCLSC. All these training providers were initially written to by the LCLSC inviting their participation in the study and asking them to provide BMRB Social Research with details of all employers who were currently participating in the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme. Based on the lists provided by the training providers employers were subsequently contacted by telephone and invited to participate in the research. In order to determine eligibility for the research a short screening interview was carried out with the person who was responsible for the design and management of the MA scheme within each organisation. Where there was more than one person involved in designing, organising and delivering the MA scheme, paired interviews were carried out.

Out of a potential sample of 30 training providers, 12 agreed to help us with the research and provided us with a list of employers. The lists provided generated a database of 420 employers. Of these we successfully achieved a sample of 15 training providers and 30 employers. Due to a lack of sample we had to reduce the scale of the work with employers to 30. In addition we had to relax some of our sampling criteria. As can be seen from the profile of employers we were not able to recruit a full cross section of all employment sectors intended and this has limited our potential for analysis across sectors. Our sample was also skewed to smaller employers. In addition in a few cases we ended up involving employers who were located outside the boundaries of the LCLSC.

1.4.1 Conduct of interviews

All interviews were carried out between March and May 2003. They were exploratory and interactive in form so that questioning could be responsive to the experiences and circumstances of the individuals involved. They were based on a topic guide (see Appendix 1), which outlined the key themes to be addressed and the specific issues for coverage within each. Although topic guides help to ensure systematic coverage of key points across interviews, they are used flexibly, to allow issues of relevance to individual respondents to be covered in greater or lesser detail.

The research team carried out the interviews at employers' and training providers' offices, each lasting about 1 hour. An incentive of £30 was given to each participant. All interviews were tape-recorded, with permission, and transcribed in verbatim to allow detailed analysis.

1.4.2 Analysis and presentation of the findings

A set of verbatim transcripts was produced from the tape recordings of the interviews. These were then subject to a content analysis, which involved systematically sifting, summarising and sorting the verbatim material according to key issues and themes, within a thematic matrix. Further classificatory and interpretative analyses were then derived from the analytic charts and these formed the basis of the findings reported in subsequent chapters.

The findings reported are illustrated by the use of verbatim quotations, case illustrations and examples. Where necessary the details of the contributors or their subjects have been moderately changed to protect anonymity. Pseudonyms have been used for all quotations, examples and case illustrations.

Adopting a qualitative approach has made it possible to report on the range of views, experiences and suggestions reported by employers and training providers. The purposive nature of the sample design as well as the small sample size, however, means that the study cannot provide any statistical data relating to the prevalence of these views, experiences or suggestions.

1.5 Sample profile

A total of 45 people were included in the research; 30 employers and 15 training providers.

1.5.1 Profile of employers

Occupational areas	
Customer Services	6
Early Years	6
Health and Beauty	5
Hospitality	3
Business and Administration	3
Education	2
Facilities Provider	1
Leisure	2
IT	1
Security	1
TOTAL	30
Size of Employer	
Small (0-49)	16
Medium (50-149)	7
Large (150+)	7
TOTAL	30
Number FMA/AMA	
AMA	12
FMA	9
Both	9
TOTAL	30
Recruitment Methods	
Colleges	10
Internal recruitment	9
Other	11
TOTAL	30
Type of Training Provider	
Local College	3
Private Provider	11
Other	1
TOTAL	15
Occupational areas covered	
Customer Services	5
Business and Administration	4
Hospitality	3
Early Years/ Education	1
Health and Beauty	1
Local Authority	1
TOTAL	15

2 Awareness, Promotion and Recruitment

In order to understand how young people and employers were recruited onto the MA scheme this chapter will provide an overview of the promotion and recruitment methods adopted. We begin by considering how employers initially became aware of the MA programme. As the evidence suggests, there was a general lack of awareness of the MA programme at the first point of contact. This issue will be revisited later in the report as it was felt to have implications in relation to the take up of the MA scheme.

2.1 Employers' sources of awareness of the MA Programme

Initial awareness about the MA Scheme was explored with employers at the beginning of the interviews. However, the ability of respondents to identify or recall their first awareness of the scheme varied, and some were unable to answer the question. In circumstances where the MA Scheme had been operating for a period of time respondents were not always aware of how their organisation had initially heard about the scheme. Similarly, in larger organisations where more than one person had been involved in the decision to take part in the programme, interviewees were not always able to answer this question.

While a number of sources were cited as having raised awareness about the scheme these differed according to whether the employer was proactively investigating training schemes for staff, or not. It seemed that across the sectors covered by the old Youth Training Schemes there was a general awareness that these type of courses exist and this has encouraged employers to investigate current information on courses that were available.

In circumstances where employers were actively looking for a training scheme they had learnt of its existence through discussion with other employers, external advice with central awarding bodies, or from searching the Internet. For example, an employer who was updating their training programme learnt about the MA scheme on the Internet when he was searching for government funded courses. Another employer was looking at various training schemes for staff, school leavers and graduates. In the course of doing this he attended a meeting set up for local employers where he learnt about the MA scheme from other employers who were participating in it. Within the health and beauty sector, employers seemed to be more aware of the Modern Apprenticeship scheme and training schemes in general as employing 'trainees' was an established and recognised side of the industry.

Otherwise employers' awareness had arisen as a result of them receiving some information about the scheme by chance. There were a number of different ways in which this had occurred. Commonly this had happened when employers had received promotional literature, or a visit from a training provider who had explained about the scheme. These respondents maintained that, prior to receiving this information, they were totally unaware of the existence of an MA scheme or training schemes like this.

Employers also reported hearing about the MA from employees who had come across it whilst on a training scheme at a local college. Another way in which employers had learnt about the scheme was through speculative letters from young people who were interested in working in their organisation. More exceptionally an employer had first heard about the MA programme when it was advertised on the radio.

2.2 Promoting the MA to employers and young people

The promotional activities of training providers were regarded as a key way of recruiting employers onto the MA Scheme. Training providers, therefore, tended to employ an individual who was directly responsible for developing promotional and marketing strategies.

A range of different approaches was reported as having being used to promote the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme to employers and young people and these are discussed below.

Direct marketing approaches typically involved some form of 'cold calling'. This could involve a representative of a training provider either visiting an employer unannounced, or contacting them by telephone, to inform them about the MA scheme. It seemed that the practice of cold calling was commonly used when marketing to the health and beauty and retail industry. Mailshots to companies taken from business directories were another way in which training providers marketed the MA to employers, with approximately 1000 companies targeted per month.

Training providers varied in their strategy either saturating certain employers in particular locations over a period of time, or relying on leads from external marketing companies.

'It's cold calling on direction from us, we geographically site them, or lead them in a particular area, for example Brent Cross Shopping Centre, we say to them "right, saturate that this month", so they'd spend a month phoning stores and so on, and they would cold call.'

(Training Provider, Retail industry)

Others chose to target their marketing to a large number of employers within a particular industry. For example, by contacting the head office of a large nationwide employer followed by regional and local visits. This approach was adopted by training providers covering the hospitality and retail industry as these tended to be the sectors which had large numbers of regionally based employers. The investment to develop a marketing strategy specifically for this type of employer was therefore viewed as worthwhile.

In some cases employers commissioned other organisations such as Telemarketing agencies to act on their behalf. This process involved first making telephone contact with employers listed in Yellow Pages or the Internet, then sending promotional literature, followed by a meeting arranged with the training provider and employer.

Training providers also sent student curriculum vitae to particular industries which young people had expressed an interest in working in. This approach was sometimes used in the hospitality industry where there tends to be a high turnover of staff, which was presumed to make employers more receptive to such a strategy.

Otherwise training providers adopted more generic approaches to promote the scheme to both employers and young people. These included enlisting the help of Career Services to market and promote the MA through, for example, school career services, employment services the Connexions service. Methods that were specifically directed at young people included promoting via school, using youth and school councils, youth clubs and activity centres.

In addition training providers advertised the scheme in the local press, on radio stations and through websites. Sometimes the advertising was used to target specific young people, such as those from Asian communities, so as to attract more young people from specific ethnic minorities. Also, flyers were handed out outside tube stations advertising the training provider and the MA scheme. More exceptionally, consideration was being given to the idea of using road shows to present and promote the MA scheme. Also, a training provider covering the hospitality industry had advertised their services and the MA scheme at a cinema located close to where they were situated in order to help encourage the involvement of employers and young people within the area.

Marketing literature, promotional magazines and brochures tended to be produced in-house by the training provider. There were usually two sets of literature; one aimed at employers and one at the young person. The literature aimed at the employer tended to consist of a glossy magazine which covered the benefits of participating in a MA, the requirements of an employer to participating in the scheme and the advantages of having a training provider manage the scheme. The brochure aimed at young people was set out more simply, outlining different Modern Apprenticeships on offer, details of the scheme, qualifications which can be gained from taking an MA along with the frequently asked questions and answers. In addition specific leaflets were sometimes developed to target young people with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia.

2.3 Recruiting employers onto the scheme

Training providers rather than employers seemed to initiate the recruitment process. However, in circumstances where employers had a member of staff who they regarded as suitable for the MA programme, then the recruitment process may have been activated by them.

Once the training providers had identified potential recruits through their marketing and promotion strategies, they arranged meetings with the appropriate person in the company to discuss the MA scheme in more depth. Typically the person in the training provider who was responsible for developing marketing strategies played an important role in the recruitment of employers and was often the person who met with the employer. In large companies with more than one office training providers usually promoted and marketed the

scheme to the head office. They then targeted their recruitment strategies at a local level. Approaching companies in this way was found to be the most effective way to establish rapport with staff and helped to encourage the participation of the local manager.

‘We would target local restaurants within the chain and promote the MA scheme to them, outlining how they would benefit from investing in the scheme if they trained their staff up to gain a qualification in the industry, which would ultimately add value to that employer’

(Training Provider covering hospitality industry)

The purpose of these follow up meetings was to inform employers about the MA scheme and outline the requirements of participation. This follow up meeting was felt to be of considerable importance in establishing a rapport between the training provider and the employer. It was also felt to be of value for providing an understanding of the level of commitment required to employ a young person participating in the MA. During these discussions the terms and conditions were agreed and the employer was recruited onto the scheme. As part of the recruitment process training providers also carried out initial assessments of employers premises ensuring that they adhered to legal health and safety standards.

A similar approach was taken to the retention of existing employers. This seemed to follow a similar process whereby the training provider contacted and met with companies who were already participating in the scheme and have an established relationship with the training provider. The purpose of these contacts was to ensure that employers continued to participate and to encourage them to employ more young people onto the MA scheme.

A different technique which was adopted by a training provider in order to engage with employers within the Business Administration profession was to establish regular monthly ‘business meetings’ to gain feedback from the employer. They thought that this technique raised the kudos of the MA scheme in the employers eyes, placing an importance and value on the scheme similar to that of any project within the company.

2.4 Recruiting young people onto the scheme

There seemed to be two main ways in which young people had been recruited to the MA scheme. These differed according to whether new staff were recruited, or existing staff within an organisation were being converted on to the scheme.

The ‘inward driven’ recruitment route, or converting existing permanent staff was a common method of recruitment reported by both training providers and employers. In these circumstances either the employer or the training provider had approached young people of a relevant age to offer them the opportunity to participate in the MA. However, before a training provider could undertake this process they had to first seek permission to access employees via an employer. Once a link had been established the training provider would then outline the

MA to the young person and the employer, emphasising the level of commitment and motivation required to participate. After this initial induction, eligible and willing young people then had to go through a rigorous assessment procedure administered by the assessor from the training provider. This assessment of the young person aimed to ensure they were aware of what their participation in the MA would involve, as well as to identify which MA was most appropriately matched to their needs, ability and role within the company.

The recruitment of new staff to take part in the MA scheme was undertaken both by employers and training providers, each adopting a range of different practices.

Advertising for young people to join the MA scheme was a common approach used by training providers and employers. Training providers, for example, reported advertising in local papers and shops in the hospitality industry, as this was felt to be an effective method to recruit young people. Also training providers covering the hospitality industry looked through local papers and contacted restaurants and hotels who were advertising for staff and would introduce young people and the MA scheme to them this way. Using vacancy boards within career services to advertise positions that were available in specific employers were also used as a means for training providers to recruit young people across different sectors. Employers also mentioned advertising specific MA posts in newspapers, employment services and through the Connexions Service. Much more unusually an employer reported having advertised through a recruitment agency.

When advertising the MA post, some employers seemed to have invested time in considering what their requirements were for the post and strict criteria were set which had to be met. In these circumstances, applicants were required to have a minimum of 3 A-C GCSEs including English and maths. Across the sample this approach seemed to be more common amongst employers who had apprentice's participating in the Advanced Business Administration apprenticeship. In these cases the qualification requirements were regarded as being an important factor in determining whether or not a young person would be able to cope with the workload set for the AMA and as a result the requirement of GCSEs at a specified level did not seem to be a criterion imposed in the hospitality industry.

In contrast, other employers sometimes seemed to have chosen to avoid initially mentioning the MA in the advertisement for the job. The reason for this seemed to be that they viewed the MA as an optional extra rather than a pre-requisite for the job. They were therefore keen to emphasise that eligibility for the job was not dependent on a young person wanting to pursue an MA.

Referrals from a range of bodies were another common way in which young people were recruited. Training providers reported that they had referrals from the Connexions Service, Careers service and various Learning and Skills Councils. Indeed, because of the number of referrals (up to 5 a day from Connexions, for example) there was often a nominated individual within a training provider who was responsible for dealing with these services. Employers recruited young people who were presented to them by training

providers and career services as they had been vetted for suitability and screened for levels of commitment to the MA. The employer trusted the training provider and career services with these methods of assessment as it saved them a considerable amount of time.

Employers within the Business Administration and Early Years Education also offered work experience schemes as a way to attract young people from 16 years. Once the young person had completed the placement with the employer they were often recruited onto the MA in partnership with the employer. This work 'taster' provided young people with an insight into the world of work and an understanding of what a vocationally oriented learning programme would involve. This method was regarded as being very useful for the office based sector as it is very often an environment which was reported as being alien to younger people which they find difficult to settle into.

'I think they're very young when they come to us, they've got a lot of learning to do. The thing about the MAs is they're often very enthusiastic and really, really keen which is great, but they've still got quite a lot to learn'

(Local Government employer)

In addition young people were also reported as having initiated the recruitment process themselves by contacting a training provider and an employer. In the case of training providers these young people were interviewed to establish what type of course/job they were looking for. Once this had been discussed the training provider directed the young person to an employer for an interview.

The way in which young people were assessed varied across different training providers. For example, young people were sometimes asked to write essays and take a test to assess their basic skills competence in certain areas like numeracy and verbal ability. This stringent selection procedure was reported as having resulted from the targets set by the Learning and Skills Council leading them to rigorously screen students before enrolling them onto the MA. In exceptional cases young people were enrolled onto a NVQ level 1 for six months to monitor how they fared with the work before they progressed on to an MA.

Like training providers, employers reported a range of different methods to recruit young people. In general, across all sectors, the evidence suggests that there was no difference between the recruitment practices operated for employees pursuing an MA and those used for other staff. In this way each applicant had to undergo a range of the following procedures, submit a CV, complete an application form, undergo at least one standard interview and sometimes two, take aptitude and practical tests, and have references and relevant previous experience checked. However, in some cases the level of commitment and motivation of the young person to the MA scheme was additionally assessed by the employer, or the employer relied on the training provider or career service to do this.

That said, the evidence suggests that some employers were in the process of developing recruitment practices specifically for MA students. These targeted practices included the development of application forms, which are more relevant for apprentices and include various scenarios relating to a work environment. Methods for testing the level of commitment a young person had to the MA were important as retention was found to be a common problem with this age group.

When employing a young person, employers across all sectors reported certain criteria that they wanted a young person to meet. Despite the variations reported, common themes across sectors included the requirement of personal attributes such as professionalism, intellect, enthusiasm, presentation and team working skills. Aptitude in a number of areas like numeracy and literacy were also identified as important. Personal presentation and honesty were among the most important in the customer service based industries

Employers also reported requiring young people to undertake additional tasks as part of their recruitment process. For example in the Health and Beauty industry a company asked their best candidates to bring a toy, or an object they would like to tell a story about. Also, they were required to complete their application form on an employer's premises so they were unable to obtain any help from friends or relatives. After this process they were sometimes subsequently asked to do an unpaid trial day.

Employers in our sample also reported that they were trying to target their recruitment drives to those who lived/or would be living locally as it was felt that this would be more convenient and cheaper for the employee. The high cost of transport within London seemed to be the key factor underpinning this consideration, in addition to the fact that apprentices do not earn a high salary.

2.5 Views about the efficacy of recruitment and marketing strategies

Training providers had implemented formal monitoring systems in order to assess the different approaches taken to market and recruit for the MA scheme. These methods were adopted to establish which methods were most successful and cost beneficial to the provider, so they could be used on a regular basis.

Training providers assessed the efficacy of a particular marketing and recruitment approach according to three different types of considerations. Not surprisingly the overall cost of a particular approach was a key consideration and was judged according to the number of recruits it had generated. In addition the investment of staff time and other resources that were required to undertake a particular approach were taken into consideration. A final factor was concerned with the nature and type of recruits (whether young people or employers) that had been generated from a particular approach.

It was not, however, possible for training providers to be able to assess the efficacy of all approaches they adopted. For example, there were inevitable difficulties resulting from monitoring the success rate of handing out flyers, where it was not so easy to track the number of leads that this approach generated. In addition there was an awareness that other more indirect

methods which could not be measured (and did not involve any cost to them) such as word of mouth, were also considered a valuable form of promoting the MA.

2.5.1 Recruiting employers

In terms of recruiting employers, cold calling was regarded by training providers as one of the most effective methods in recruiting employers across the sectors onto the MA programme. Within the retail and hospitality industry especially, this process was regarded as the most successful and effective way to recruit employers on to the scheme. That said, there were concerns expressed about the cost of carrying this out and the investment of time and staff resources required.

Training providers believed the 'personal touch' was an important aspect of their promotional and subsequent recruitment approach. This was felt to be easier to integrate into small employers where it was easier to be on first name terms with staff. Also it was reported to be easier to optimise the use of a 'branding' technique where the training provider tried to encourage strong links with the employer through, for example, the use of t-shirts, promotional literature and badges. This way the employer and young person were reminded of the identity of the training provider. Within the retail industry this was reported as a particularly successful approach as young people and employers appeared to be susceptible to this technique and engaged with the training provider.

Cold calling was regarded as the most productive form of marketing the MA scheme to these industries as it gave the training provider an opportunity to actually sit down with the young people who expressed an interest in the scheme as opposed to just leaving promotional literature. Access to these types of employers were easier to gain compared to office based employers as there tended to be a more relaxed atmosphere within the salons and retail shops which made it easier for the training provider to directly approach young people.

2.5.2 Recruiting young people

Across the sectors covered in the research, training providers implied that their marketing approaches were working well as there did not seem to be any difficulties attracting young people, particularly at the Foundation level, to the MA scheme. Indeed there were exceptional cases where training providers reported having waiting lists for young people to enrol on an MA scheme. There were, however, difficulties reported attracting young people from specific backgrounds, such as Asian young people.

Whilst there was no shortage in terms of attracting young people there were concerns about whether they were attracting young people with appropriate skills and attitude to undertake an MA. This was a concern also echoed by employers who had found it difficult to recruit young people of a certain calibre, particularly high verbal and numerical skills and a mature approach to work.

‘.....Its very hard to motivate people....to find somebody who is willing to go on a scheme like the MA means that they do want to learn, they do want to move faster in terms of learning things and it won’t be easy for them to tear themselves away’

(Employer, Health and Beauty sector)

In terms of the recruitment of young people, across the sectors, converting existing staff was a preferred recruitment approach because there was more opportunity to assess whether the young person would suit the MA scheme. In addition it was felt that because the young person was already working within the company and familiar with what this involved this might additionally help to reduce the high turnover and retention issues that occurred in certain industries, such as the hospitality sector. Therefore, employers interviewed from this sector preferred this approach as it helped to overcome commitment and retention issues.

‘ If they have been working in the industry for a while they already know how tough it can be and are aware of the long shifts, so to get them involved in a scheme means that they are furthering their career in that industry by gaining qualifications’

(Employer Hospitality)

Another popular method for training providers was working with Connexions and Careers services as they tended to trust the selection processes which these organisations used to assess the eligibility of a young person for the MA scheme. Employers also emphasised their preference for taking referrals from Connexions and Careers services (as well as training providers).

In contrast, recruiting apprentices through schools and careers fairs was not felt to be a particularly cost effective method, as this approach required training providers to invest a considerable amount of time and resources, which might only result in the recruitment of two or three young people at a time. However, views about the efficacy of the approach varied across sectors, and this approach was suggested as being effective within the engineering and service maintenance industry. The employers interviewed covering this type of profession found that prospective young recruits seemed aware of what a job in their sector would entail. They also seemed to have been interested in working within the particular sector for sometime. As a result they had often been proactive in finding out information from careers services in schools. Therefore opting for the MA scheme was their choice from the start as they perhaps knew that an office based NVQ would not suit them.

‘....they might have an older brother in the industry and know about what it means to be doing physical work and working with your hands, getting dirty etc so they are the ones who decide they want to do some sort of scheme so when given the choice of the MA they are enthusiastic as it fits in with what they want....’

(Service Maintenance Employer)

Rather more exceptionally, a training provider felt that using a recruitment consultant was not an effective method of recruitment, as it had not resulted in any young people being successfully recruited. The candidates that had been generated from this approach were graduates and perceived to be overly qualified for an MA. However, it seems that this approach may have failed because the consultant was not sufficiently informed about the MA scheme and therefore targeted young people who were too highly qualified.

One of the main issues within the hospitality industry appeared to be attracting the 'right' sort of person. Training providers covering this sector found that one of the main barriers to attracting young people into this profession was convincing the parents that hospitality was a worthwhile career path.

3 Motivators and barriers to participation

This next chapter considers the factors that have motivated employers to participate in the MA scheme and the process involved in arriving at this decision. It also reflects on employers' views about the barriers to participation. As our sample was drawn from employers who are currently participating in the scheme their views were based on their perceptions rather than their experience of the issues involved. However, their views are reinforced by those of training providers who, through their marketing and recruitment strategies, have been in contact with other companies who decided against participating and therefore had an understanding of the barriers.

3.1 Reasons why employers participate in the MA

In general respondents were able to identify one or more tangible reasons for why their organisation had taken part in the MA scheme. However, in cases where companies had been participating in the scheme for a period of time not all respondents were aware of the reasons why their organisation first got involved. The reasons as to why employers became involved in the MA did not seem to vary across sectors.

This section will outline the reasons that respondents identified as having resulted in their organisation's participation in the scheme:

- A key attraction and reason for participating in the scheme was that it offered an **opportunity for employees to be trained at little or no financial outlay to the employer**. Organisations varied as to whether they offered some kind of training within the workplace prior to participating in the MA scheme. In circumstances where no training was provided the MA was regarded as an ideal way of offering training to employees.
- Organisations who were committed to training staff were pleased to be able to develop their training programmes through the introduction of the MA. In these circumstances the MA scheme was used to compliment or replace an existing programme. In this way employers were motivated to take part because the MA was considered to provide the **opportunity for a young person to receive additional educational training alongside more standardised practical and technical skills training without increasing a training budget**.
- In addition to the financial benefits employers were **also motivated by the work-based nature of the learning** as this meant that employees did not need to leave the workplace to be trained. In this way they assumed that the training provided would not need to interrupt the day to day running of the company. This motive for becoming involved in the MA programme was shared across the sectors included in the study.

- Another related incentive was that there would be minimal involvement in staff time managing the scheme, as it was understood that the scheme would be **externally managed by the training provider**.
- The offer of training was additionally believed to be **a useful incentive when recruiting young people to low skilled and poorly paid positions**. As employers found it difficult to attract applicants to these lower paid positions, the MA provided an additional and effective incentive for targeting and recruiting young people of school leaving age. Within the hospitality, health and beauty industries, this was found to be a very effective recruitment incentive.
- Training staff to be more skilled and qualified was also perceived by employers as **a positive way to influence staff morale and retention**. It was said by employers who had provided training in the past that staff who receive training are more likely to feel that they are a part of a company and this can contribute to their loyalty and commitment.

“Training can act as a motivational tool because the more you know about something the more willing to work with it and defend it, encouraging more involvement helps staff understand the part they play in the team”

(Retail employer)

3.2 Decision Making Process

The decision to participate in the scheme was made by individuals with different roles within organisations. Depending on the type of employer, a range of different types of managers were reported as being involved, including: training managers, head office, senior or general managers, heads of departments, the managing director and principal or vice principal of the company. Across all sectors it was typical for the final decision to be made by the individual responsible for training.

The process in which decisions were made seemed to have been relatively straight forward. Indeed, there were very few concerns expressed about the initial decision to become involved in the MA scheme. Employers across the sectors found the decision to participate easy, as there was a common belief shared amongst management that it was a positive way forward for training staff and investing in their futures.

Where concerns were raised however they related to the commitment of the young person and the wider impacts arising from participation in the scheme. A common concern amongst employers across the sample was whether the young recruit would be able to keep up with the programme, manage their workload and attend college for their off the job training. Additional concerns related to whether the young person would complete the qualification in the time allocated.

Another related concern was how employers would manage when the apprentice was being trained and assessed. This seemed to be a particular issue reported in the retail and hair and beauty sector as the loss of an employee for a day on the shop floor could affect the level of customer service available.

Other concerns related to the impact that the apprentice and the introduction of the MA scheme would have on the organisation as a whole. Of issue here was the amount of time managers and other staff would have to devote to administering and supporting the scheme. There were also anxieties that introducing the MA and training as a concept and the message that this would convey to staff. Therefore whoever decided to embark on the MA would have to be a good role model in order to convince staff of the benefits. This related to the wider issue that everyone within the company would have to be supportive of and enthusiastic about the MA scheme.

A final issue related to the longer term consequences of young people completing their MA. The nature of this concern was that the training might raise unrealistic expectations about new roles and promotion, which could not be accommodated within an organisation.

3.3 Barriers to participation

We now turn to employers perceptions about the main barriers to participating in the MA scheme. This evidence was further reinforced by training providers' experiences of recruiting employers to the scheme.

- **Lack of knowledge and awareness about the scheme was identified as a key reason why employers were not participating.** Despite the range of ways in which the scheme is being promoted there was felt to be a lack of awareness about its existence. Even where there was felt to be knowledge about the existence of the MA scheme, it was said there was a lack of understanding of what it actually involved and how it would benefit and reward young people and employers. Indeed employers across all sectors reflected on how difficult it had been to find out about the MA scheme after they had initially heard about it. This is an issue that will be revisited later in the report.
- Related to the lack of understanding **was the poor image that the MA seemed to have amongst employers.** This was perceived as being a major reason why employers do not participate in the scheme. Both employers and training providers indicated that MA's have a reputation for having a very low profile when compared to other qualifications such as A levels and GNVQs. This poor image was felt to have contributed to a perception that young people who opt for this route may be pursuing it as a last resort and lack commitment, intelligence and qualifications. As such, these young people were not viewed as attractive prospective employees and both training providers and employers felt this was a serious deterrent to participation in the scheme.

- **The poor image of the MA was also felt to have deterred young people from opting for this route** and this was identified as another related barrier to employers' participation in the scheme. It was said that the drive and emphasis by the government and schools for young people to continue into further and higher education had affected the willingness of young people to opt for an MA route. It was therefore suggested that in certain industries it was difficult to encourage young people to take an MA in a particular trade. Employers within the construction industry believed the emphasis placed on academic learning and further education did not encourage young people to participate in technical or practical skills training.

'Its very difficult to get kids interested in a trade'

(Employer installing security equipment)

- **Employers' preference for recruiting experienced and more mature staff** was another reason identified for their disinclination to participate in the scheme. Underpinning this view was a perception that employers view young people who have just left school as lacking motivation as well as needing more supervision and help adjusting to the working environment.
- Another key barrier to participation was concerned with **the amount of time and commitment that employers assumed they would have to invest in order to participate in the scheme.**
- Related to this **was the degree of time and commitment that young people would need to fulfil the requirements of the MA scheme.** Training providers held the opinion that employers were deterred by the amount of time required for apprentices to take their key skills and technical certificates
- Another barrier identified related to concerns about, the training providers managing the scheme and the potential for them to impose systems or rules which would have to be adhered to in order for employers to participate in the MA.

In view of the low take up of the MA scheme in London we also considered additional barriers that are an issue for employers within the capital.

- The transient and competitive nature of London's labour market seemed to be the key barrier to employers participation. It was said by employers that the market was flooded with university/college graduates, or mature candidates with more work experience who were preferred to school leavers of an apprentice age. Also London's labour market was believed to attract well-qualified recruits from the UK and abroad which in turn provided employers with a wider choice of well-qualified applicants who needed very little training. As a result they were perceived as more efficient and productive employees.

- Employers also seemed to be put off recruiting young people of school age in central London because of access and travel difficulties they encounter. Employers stated that retention of people on the programme, was affected by the amount of money being spent on travel. They were therefore perceived as a less attractive employee.

4 The design and assessment of the MA

This chapter describes the way in which employers and training providers designed and assessed their MA programmes. It also covers the contractual arrangements between the apprentice, training provider and the employer. The relationships between providers, employers and apprentices are also covered as is the relationship which providers had with the Learning and Skills Councils.

4.1 Design and content of the MA

The design and content of each Modern Apprenticeship were devised by the former National Training Organisations and a range of awarding bodies. There are set frameworks, which have to be adhered to in order to gain the relevant qualification. Individual employers and training providers do not determine the standards or specific requirements of these frameworks, although they do have the opportunity to add additional units from other apprenticeship programmes to fit in with the framework of the job and the MA being studied by the apprentice.

As described in the introduction there are two types of Modern Apprenticeship – Foundation and Advanced. These cover a wide range of sectors including Accounts, Administration, Customer Service, International Trade and Services, Information Technology, Retail, Sales, Recruitment, Road Haulage and Distribution and Management. The core qualification being studied for on a Foundation MA is a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 2 and for the Advanced MA it is an NVQ, Level 3.

Across the sample, Modern Apprenticeships were being taken in the following areas: Installing and supporting IT, Customer Service, Business Administration, Early Years Education, Retail, Sport and Recreation, Hospitality, Engineering and Health and Beauty. Within the sample, there were nine employers where apprentices were studying the Foundation MA, 12 employers where apprentices were taking the Advanced MA and nine employers where they had employed apprentices who were taking the Foundation MA and the Advanced MA. The larger employers within the sample tended to be supporting apprentices who were doing an AMA. In these cases it seemed that this was because they were more likely to be able to accommodate the apprentice's training requirements for this level of NVQ.

Each Modern Apprenticeship within the sample had a number of set modules to complete in line with the national frameworks. However, there were a number of employers who added units to the apprentices' individual learning plans so that the MA fitted in with the job. For example, an apprentice who was Assistant Concierge at a large hotel was doing a Foundation MA in customer service and there were certain skills required for this post, which were not covered in the Customer Service MA. The training provider in liaison with the employer and apprentice decided to import specific units from the Business Administration MA so it would be more in line with the skills set required for the role as a Concierge.

Within the sample, the training providers took the lead in tailoring the programmes known as individual learning plans for each apprentice. These plans were devised through discussion with the employer and the apprentice as to what was involved within each role and final details were established after a lengthy mapping process. This process involved highlighting areas where the apprentice might need more help so that units, which were more relevant to the job, could be added. The final decision about the precise content of the MA was worked out between the training provider, employer and the apprentice, so each party was aware of which units were included within the programme.

The way in which training is delivered, in terms of the degree of 'off the job' and 'on the job' training depended on the type and level of NVQ and the specific sector. These issues are covered in more detail in the following section.

4.2 Nature of training provided

Training Providers offered both 'on' and 'off the job' training. On the job training involved the employer, apprentice and the training provider working to action plans which had been set up after initial consultation between the training provider and the young person. The action plans involved setting deadlines for work to be delivered. The purpose was to inform the apprentice about what was required of them and to inform the employer about what the apprentice should be doing.

For example, respondents within the hospitality industry reported that the assessor from the training provider set the apprentice tasks which involved mastering a particular skill before next assessment. Therefore when the training provider came to assess the apprentice in that skill, (baking a cake for example) the apprentice should have practised this in order to deliver completion of this unit on the day of assessment. In contrast there did not seem to be much flexibility in Business Administration and IT sectors. There were set tasks which had to be completed on a particular day and there was less opportunity to mould these tasks to the job they were doing. In these professions the MA was more regimented and standardised by the training provider so that goals were achievable.

On the job training was intended to be managed overall by the employer, although the training provider would assess and highlight weaknesses with the training programme if they felt the apprentice had not met the requirements of the action plan.

Across the sectors covered in the sample, on the job training was the most commonly used method for delivering the MA. In addition the hospitality, construction and health and beauty industries required apprentices to train one day a week at the training provider. These MAs were designed in this way because there were certain aspects of the training which had to be taught intensively. In addition, the employer did not always have the facilities to provide adequate training within these areas. For example, within the health and beauty industry there were training colleges specifically covering an element of the NVQ, such as hair cutting and apprentices had to attend this provider once a week.

Across the sample 'off the job' training was orientated to Technical Certificates and the Key Skills part of the MA. However, it was found that in some cases where the employer was reluctant to allow the apprentice time off for this training, the provider arranged for the training to be delivered on site. For example, within the retail and customer service based industry training providers offered this service as employers were more willing for training to be delivered on the shop floor.

'The training provider would come in and train the apprentice then and there as it would be too difficult to allow them time off from the shop, because when it is busy we need everyone on the shop floor.....one man down has consequences on how we can serve customers that day'

(Employer, Retail industry for technical products)

'Off the job' training within the construction industry sometimes involved an apprentice having to attend more than one training college to study different aspects of their NVQ, as there were facilities provided at these colleges enabling the apprentice to perform certain tasks required for different units of the MA.

Part of the off the job training offered involved the Key Skills element of the MA, covering areas like numeracy, literacy and IT. There were particular areas of the Key Skills identified by employers and training providers where the apprentice needed more help. In order to provide extra support to the apprentice, the training provider offered support staff (in addition to the assessors who delivered in house training) covering the problem areas.

There were a number of training providers additionally offering 'off the job' training which was not related to the job or the NVQ. They held monthly surgeries or workshops covering a range of topics like health and safety, counselling, financial support and advice. Employers were found to offer a number of in house training courses covering corporate issues and training in computer systems used within the company.

4.3 Nature of the contractual arrangements

A number of different contractual agreements were set up between the employer, training provider and the apprentice and these will be outlined within this section.

4.3.1 Contracts between the employer and the training provider

The initial contract between the training provider and the employer set out health and safety requirements which employers had to comply with in order to participate in the scheme. This legally binding contract ensured that the employer premises were secure and safe for an apprentice to work in. This agreement was required before any other contracts could be drawn up and signed.

There were also more specific training agreements between training providers and employers which set out the employers' commitment to allowing the apprentice time off for study, evidence collecting and to attend training courses on Key Skills and Technical Certificates. The main reason for this contract was to ensure the employer was aware of what was expected of them.

The contract between training providers and employers additionally outlined further agreements for the training of Key Skills. Along with this contract, details were provided to the employer outlining how the apprentice should be paid.

Across the sample it was typical for the contracts to be communicated through written correspondence. Amendments were made to contracts if additional staff were recruited on to the MA scheme after the initial contract was agreed.

4.3.2 Contract between the training provider and the apprentice

The contract which the training provider had with the apprentice covered all aspects of the MA programme including the development of action training plans, and the design and content of the units involved in their Modern Apprenticeship. During the process of establishing a contract, identification of areas where extra support was needed in relation to Key Skills were highlighted and this also formed part of the contract. This specifically outlined the level of support which would be provided to the apprentice and the frequency of visits. These individual learning plans served as the contract between the training provider and the apprentice.

4.3.3 Contracts between the LSC, the training provider and employer

The Learning and Skills Councils have contracts with each training provider which follow a set format outlining the agreement between the training provider and the employer to ensure funding related to each apprentice participating in the MA scheme.

4.3.4 Contract between the employer and the apprentice

The contract between the employer and the apprentice seemed to vary in its design and coverage across the sample of employers. Typically the apprentice tended to have a generic contract which all staff had with an employer outlining their terms and conditions and entitlements. In addition they tended to have a contract with the training provider outlining their training plan.

Methods of payment to the apprentice were specified in their contract. These varied between being paid hourly and receiving an annual salary. The annual salary rate was said to be on a par with that being paid to other employees at the same level. Hourly wages ranged from £3.75 in the health and beauty industry to £8.50 in the customer service sector. Annual salaries ranged from £8,000 to £15,000.

4.4 Methods of Assessment

A wide range of methods of assessment were used by training providers to assess the Modern Apprentices. These varied according to the coverage and level of the MA. FMAs, for example, were regarded as being more basic in their content, and the emphasis was placed on the apprentice documenting and capturing evidence for the work-based portfolios. In contrast, AMAs focused on a managerial role and therefore the onus was on the apprentice to demonstrate their supervisory and management skills. This was collected using different methods of assessment, for example, within the hospitality sector an apprentice was filmed managing a group of chambermaids to assess managerial techniques learnt through the MA scheme.

Across the sectors in the sample, the main methods of assessment were based on observation and questioning portfolio evidence. Assessors set up training action plans with the apprentice and then assessed the apprentice through observation of these plans. Assessments were pre-booked and pre-planned once the apprentice's routine in the workplace had been established. Assessors assumed a variety of roles; they acted as a mentor, tutor, agony aunt and confidant, ensuring that the relationship between themselves and the apprentice remained professional at all times.

The assessor meetings were customised for each apprentice, and the role of the assessor was similar to that of a teaching role, although this varied across the sectors. Within the hospitality, retail and customer service industries assessors tended to visit once a month. Within the construction and facilities industry the assessor visited every 4-6 months. In addition assessors used a variety of assessment methods such as witness testimony, questioning and professional discussion, observations, witness statements, written questions, oral questions, and more diverse methods like photographic evidence. Video cameras were used within the hospitality industry where apprentices were filmed at events or whilst preparing a meal.

Over time the apprentice built up a portfolio of evidence which met regulated standards and completed specific units. The evidence and witness statements collected related to each unit, which the employer initially signed off when the task had been completed to a satisfactory standard. These were then checked by the assessor from the training provider. Finally the apprentice's portfolio was assessed by an internal verifier within the training provider.

One of the most effective methods used in assessing the apprentice and gaining evidence for the portfolio was reported to be where the apprentice was unaware that they were being observed and assessed by the line manager. It was said that this approach reduced the pressure on the apprentice to perform well and often better results were achieved under these more relaxed circumstances.

Training providers tried to match each apprentice with an assessor who was experienced within that occupation. It was found to make it easier for the assessor and the apprentice if they had prior knowledge of the industry and its workings. The time spent with the apprentice was thus purely focussed around the apprentice. A number of training providers placed the onus on the apprentice to arrange assessment meetings when they felt they had completed collecting evidence for a unit of the MA.

Another method used by training providers to support apprentices, was the use of support workers in addition to the assessor. These support workers offered tuition to apprentices in areas where they needed help, such as Key Skills. In these cases the support workers visited apprentices in between assessor visits and offered an extra layer of help to those apprentices who were at 'risk' of leaving the programme. The support worker's role was seen as a confidant. In circumstances where a good stable relationship was established. It was felt that this helped combat the retention issues.

There were a few employers within the sample with work-based internal assessors who were qualified NVQ assessors. However, this was quite rare as employers were found to prefer to rely on the training provider to act as an internal verifier. Training providers tended to encourage the apprentices doing an AMA to train as internal assessors in order to establish a link within the employer that the apprentice could refer to on a daily basis.

There were exams for Key Skills and Technical Certificates. Exams consisted of written and theory assignments which were pre set by the awarding bodies. With Key Skills apprentices had to sit five tests under exam conditions. The format of the tests varied depending on the level, some were written multiple choice and at Level 3, information technology was computer assessed.

4.5 Support and line management

Support and line management of the apprentice was reported as being a very important aspect of the MA as it contributed to the smooth running of the programme. There seemed to be a number of different types of arrangements, some of which overlapped with the support given to the apprentice during assessment. These will be discussed in this section.

One type involved the line manager of the apprentice taking on a supportive role and coaching the apprentice with witness based testimonies. They were also responsible for signing off the apprentice's portfolio evidence and any units completed. He/she would liaise with the apprentice and offer support in any area required and meet with the training provider on a regular basis. There were systems established within employers where the line manager and the apprentice could approach the overall training manager for some extra support and any advice required.

It seemed that in circumstances where there was an established good relationship between the training provider and the employer, the line managers and supervisors often took a back seat role, as they trusted the assessor to act as support for the apprentice.

Another type revolved around situations where the apprentice moved between different departments. In these circumstances apprentices would have separate line managers across the organisation who acted as a mentor within each department. The employer would try and match this person with the age of the apprentice as employers believed that this would encourage people to approach line managers with personal problems and have more confidence in speaking out.

Another role which the line manager of the apprentice took was to go through areas of Key Skills with them ensuring they were aware of what they were doing and felt confident in the required areas. The time devoted to the apprentice varied between a five minute chat to five hours a day.

Employers from the customer service based industries developed robust frameworks for the management of apprentices and how they should be supervised. The training manager set up a meeting with the work place supervisor at the beginning of the placement and then half way through to make sure they were reaching targets. They interviewed the apprentice to get feedback as to whether or not they thought the line manager had been supportive and had given them enough time to work on their portfolios.

4.6 Relationships between training provider, employer and apprentice

One of the most effective ways of establishing good working relationships between all three parties involved in the MA programme was for the training provider to place emphasis on the importance of communication between them. The level and regularity of communication had to be maintained to ensure that everyone was aware and informed of any issue arising so that it could be resolved at an early stage rather than running the risk of the apprentice or the employer dropping out of the programme.

4.6.1 Relationships between the employer and the training provider

In general the relationships between the employer and training provider seemed to be working well. Communication was established at an early stage during recruitment and there were set formats followed by training providers to maintain and secure these relationships.

This level of communication between the employer and training provider was regarded as one of the most important aspects in influencing the apprentices involvement in the MA and the maintenance of employers commitment. Therefore, training providers invested in maintaining a high standard of communication by adopting a variety of different methods. The training providers ensured that within each sector they provided a level of communication that did not interfere with the day to day running of the employer. The providers wanted the running of the MA scheme to fit in with the set up of each employer. Each sector had different requirements but consistency of communication was voiced as the most important.

‘The methodology of the MA fits into our ethos..... the provider forces us to confront what we do and how we do it and it becomes part of the way we do business’

(Employer within the Business sector)

One method used by training providers was to supply employers with regular reports on the apprentice’s progress as well as feedback about the apprentice, how the apprentice felt they were getting on with the employer. Other techniques ranged from 3 monthly newsletters, employer of the month, monthly review meetings with the managing director of the company and communication on first name terms with staff. During the review meeting, providers gave advice and support on the delivery of the MA and employers were provided with a forum to discuss any issues. In order to ensure some continuity, one person within the training provider was assigned to each employer and apprentice and would liaise with each throughout the duration of the MA.

Training providers were aware that the first few months of the MA could be the hardest for both employer and the apprentice. Therefore they aimed to meet with both parties at this early stage to discuss how apprentices were progressing with their individual learning plans and the work they were required to complete. These weekly review meetings served to combat initial concerns. They were also reported as having ensured the employer and the apprentice remained on the programme. Reviews were initiated by the training provider every 2 to 3 months. If the training provider was unable to arrange a convenient time for the three way meeting, they would hold a telephone interview instead.

However, there were some issues relating to the reliability and timing of the assessments. In some cases there appeared to be a lack of communication between the employer and the assessor as to when they were going to visit the apprentice. There were times cited by employers when the assessor would not turn up. This was reported as resulting in the apprentice seeming de-motivated particularly for their assessment.

4.6.2 Relationships between training provider and the apprentice

Relationships established between the training provider and the apprentice were also regarded in the same light as the employer relationship, so a similar amount of emphasis was placed on this and different methods were used to maintain them.

The training provider aimed to secure this relationship through establishment of trust and understanding at an early stage in order to encourage the young person to approach them should any problems occur whilst they were taking their MA. One method of maintaining a good working relationship between the training provider and the apprentice was identified as gaining the young persons perspective. Training providers often asked the apprentice to fill in a questionnaire seeking their views about the support provided by the assessor and if any improvements could be made. This was regarded as being very important as it was felt that the better the relationship between the apprentice and the assessor the more likely they were not to drop out of the programme.

Other methods used included offering awards for the 'apprentice of the month', sending birthday cards, a branding process ensuring they knew which training provider they were attached to.

'Making them know who they are attached to is important and making them feel they are part of a family is a good thing, which means that if they ever have any problems that they feel comfortable in coming forward and saying what is bothering them'

(Training Provider covering retail, customer service sector)

4.6.3 Views about the relationship with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

There were a wide range of opinions regarding the support training providers received from Learning and Skills Councils. This evidence was based on interviews with the 15 training providers.

Relationships worked well when there was a good rapport established at the early stage of recruitment. This had been maintained through regular contact and constant communication. These relationships were viewed as strong because the contract manager in the LSC was regarded as being approachable and flexible in their management of the contract.

Continuity between the LSC and the providers was viewed as a key element to maintaining a good relationship. Providers found in circumstances where the contract managers within the LSCs changed too often then it became difficult to establish a continuous relationship. Training providers felt that regular visits at the local level were a good way in maintaining the relationship. However it was felt that problems arose nationally due to the size and scale of the Council and the large number of providers they were responsible for.

Training providers found the wide variety of training workshops conferences, seminars and network training offered by Learning and Skills Councils productive and informative. In particular, the provider forums which the LSC ran were found to be very useful, as delegates from different training providers gave their views regarding the delivery of the MA scheme, and a range of issues were raised and their concerns were often said to have been resolved. The downside of these forums was that, if they were missed, information was not filtered down to providers which was essential in maintaining the chain of communication.

One of the main roles of the LSC was seen as being to provide guidance and support. However views varied about the quality of this support provided. There was a view amongst some training providers that the LSC was too distant and remote and as a result lacked an awareness and understanding of the perspectives of training providers. This led to decisions being made by the LSC to implement changes to the MA scheme which did not seem to have responded to the views and experiences of training providers. It was suggested that a referral system of employers to providers, similar to the old technical systems, was a way to improve the relationship as this would ensure the LSC

had closer contact with the employer and provider which would aid the process if there were any problems.

The way in which funding was organised meant that in a few cases training providers had contracts with more than one local LSC. This was felt to have created additional bureaucracy. Also, where providers had contractual agreements with more than one LSC, some indicated that this had resulted in them receiving different and sometimes inconsistent messages. This had conveyed the impression that local LSC's did not all appear to be implementing the same policy and following the same ethos. As a consequence it was emphasised that it would be *'Good if they all sang from the same hymn sheet'* (Training Provider covering the hospitality industry).

It was also proposed that the criteria that LSC's use for training providers performance review should be based on benchmarks which are appropriate and fair. In order to achieve fair grades and targets the suggestion was made that training companies should be compared with other providers in their area rather than with those across the country, as national statistics were felt to mask local circumstances and difficulties. Also, some providers felt that the LSC was inclined to focus on highlighting the problems without helping to provide constructive advice about how to deal with issues or implement changes.

Another issue raised was that the LSC had encouraged smaller providers to work with larger ones in order to pool resources and make cost savings in terms of marketing and recruiting. However, providers felt that such an approach lacked appreciation of the expertise that smaller providers had in specific sectors. It was therefore said that to join forces was counterproductive as this would mean that some sectors would not benefit from specialised training.

Another suggestion for improving the relationship was that the LSC could do more in relation to quality issues and monitor new systems that providers had implemented with the view to introducing them on a national level.

5 Delivering the MA Programme

This chapter discusses various issues connected with the delivery of the MA scheme. We begin by considering some of the positive experiences that resulted from delivering the scheme. In order to provide learning for prospective employers and training providers some of the difficulties encountered whilst delivering the MA are subsequently addressed. We then consider retention of apprentices on the scheme and the reasons why young people leave before qualifying for their MA. The final section considers ways in which the training providers have evaluated the delivery of the MA programmes.

5.1 Positive impacts and experiences

The delivery of the MA scheme seemed to have been a largely positive experience for employers and training providers alike. The range of ways in which the scheme had been of value is addressed in the next chapter but we briefly outline some of the positive experiences that resulted from delivering the scheme.

- The sense of satisfaction resulting from successfully delivering the scheme was identified by both employers and training providers. Observing the personal and educational progression and development of a young person throughout the scheme was viewed as one of the most positive and rewarding experiences of delivering the programme
- For training providers there was the additional bonus of seeing the employer embrace the concept of the MA scheme and learn to manage and run it successfully
- The nature of the vocational and work-based learning was additionally found to be a very valuable and useful experience for training young people
- Another positive experience resulting from the training was that it encouraged young people to think beyond their job as they applied their learning to other aspects of the organisation

‘....when you start to get people thinking of their development out of the box, because you’re relating it back to the organisation, they see the organisation out of the box as well’

(Employer, Retail industry)

- The experience of working through an MA framework pursuing goals and targets was also perceived to have helped to motivate young people. Furthermore the experience of having to demonstrate skills, capabilities and achievements was felt to have enhanced the confidence and morale of the apprentices. It was said that the apprentice gained a real sense of achievement as they completed units, which had contributed to their positive attitude towards work and commitment to the company

- Employers were also positive about the work-based nature of the learning, as it had ensured that apprentices did not have to take time off from their work to attend a college course for training
- Additionally there had also been wider benefits experienced by other members of the organisation as the apprentice had shared their learning across the company
- Employers who had previously organised and delivered training schemes were positive about the substantial amount of time that had been saved delivering the MA scheme. In contrast with the past they did not have to spend time researching appropriate training schemes and wading through the paperwork to apply
- Finally the MA was praised for the way it had helped to develop closer links between employers and training providers

5.2 Difficulties and barriers to delivering the scheme

During the course of delivering the MA programme employers and training providers had encountered various difficulties, which are now addressed in order to provide learning for prospective training providers and employers.

5.2.1 Difficulties and barriers for employers

One of the most common difficulties employers reported was that the MA scheme did not seem to integrate well into certain activities apprentices were doing. The disparity between the training received off the job and the application of this training to the job seemed to underpin this difficulty. For example, there were cases where the apprentice was being trained in computer packages, which were not being used by the employer. Therefore a lot of time was perceived as being wasted in off the job training. This lack of application of some aspects of the MA to the actual job related mostly to Key Skills, which were perceived to lack relevance within the workplace. As a result of this it was sometimes difficult to engage the young person in certain areas covered by Key Skills.

There were also difficulties experienced balancing employees work and MA commitments. This was discussed in two ways: firstly, there were problems balancing the timetable for off the job training alongside work commitments, as these sometimes clashed. Secondly, there were issues about how focused employees were when they were at work because of the number of tasks they had to complete in relation to the MA. This could result in apprentices falling behind with their work commitments.

Another difficulty that had occurred related to the high investment of time required on the part of the employer to train, support and administer the scheme. As a result employers had experienced difficulties trying to persuade line managers to invest the time delivering the MA. In certain circumstances employers found that training providers had put the onus on them to teach the

apprentice certain aspects of the scheme which they felt had been neglected during college training.

Compounding this difficulty was the lack of support provided by some training providers. In these cases training providers visits were reported as being irregular and long periods of time lapsed between visits. Sometimes this meant that when they did come to assess the apprentice, a large percentage of time was spent resolving personal problems and other issues, which left too little time to do the assessment. When assessors arrived without warning this could also be very disruptive to the workplace, as the length of time spent with the apprentice placed additional pressure on other staff to cover for the apprentice if the visit had not been pre planned.

Communication between assessors and the apprentice was sometimes an issue when the apprentice was experiencing a problem with a particular part of the MA but felt unable to raise this with the assessor.

The negative aspects of delivering the MA also related to the difficulties associated with the employment of young people. Issues raised by these employers related to the greater investment of time required to provide the supervision and mentoring that young people needed. Apprentices were also found to have problems with issues of responsibility, time keeping, adapting to work environment. Employers also reported that people sometimes seemed to experience difficulty setting boundaries between their personal and professional lives.

In addition, apprentices were not always found to have a positive attitude towards the MA. As a result, they did not seem to appreciate the benefits of participating in the programme. It was said that apprentices sometimes seemed to have an inappropriately high opinion of themselves as they equated the MA scheme with a university degree and saw themselves on a par with graduates.

In circumstances where employers lacked an awareness of the requirements for participation in the MA scheme, it seemed that employers had not had the programme fully explained to them, nor the way in which the course would be assessed and supported. Employers also reported that the assessment of the apprentice was too intrusive. Related to this point, they additionally said that they felt they were being judged and assessed which employers found difficult.

A final issue for some employers was the difficulty in guaranteeing a permanent job opportunity at the end of the apprenticeship. Where employers were unable to find a permanent position for the apprentice at the end of the course they had employed them on a temporary contract which often resulted in young people leaving the company before completion of the course.

5.2.2 Difficulties and barriers for training Providers

Training providers main difficulties in delivering the scheme arose when they did not have the full engagement and co-operation of the employer. Employers who fell into this category had joined the MA scheme without realising the full implications of what was required and sometimes tried to prevent the apprentice

taking time off to attend college, or did not provide an adequate level of support. There did not appear to be any differences across the sectors in terms of the difficulties which arose. Employers who were new to the concept of having an externally managed training scheme seemed to have taken longer to settle down with the workings of the scheme compared to those who already had some form of training scheme established.

In addition, the levels of bureaucracy required to administer the MA programme had posed problems for employers and training providers. But in circumstances where employers had not fulfilled their commitments then this could result in additional difficulties for the training providers. It also sometimes resulted in communication difficulties between the training provider and the employer, which had further exacerbated the problems delivering the scheme.

Another problem delivering the scheme resulted from there being no central awarding body for the MA. This caused logistical difficulties and time pressures when assessing an apprentice for the various elements of the Key Skills exams, as it increased the amount of paperwork that needed to be completed within a set time frame.

‘You can have one apprentice with 4 or 5 awarding bodies attached to their apprenticeship....getting all the paperwork completed on time can sometimes be a logistical nightmare’

(Training provider covering retail, admin and IT)

Training providers found that across the sectors, it was sometimes difficult to attract young people who would remain committed to the scheme. It seemed that often young people were recruited onto the MA who appeared appropriate at the time of recruitment, but subsequently lacked commitment to the scheme, resulting in them leaving early. These issues are addressed in the next section.

5.3 Retention issues

The way in which statistics are compiled to assess retention rates was raised as an issue by training providers. Of concern was the way apprentices are recorded as early leavers with no outcome when they complete the full NVQ but only parts of the units towards the Key Skills. This, it was argued, leads to low rates of completion for the majority of the training providers even though the apprentice has credits towards a qualification.

There are two main reasons which were thought to contribute to the low retention rate of the MA, Key Skills and lack of employer support. Irrespective of sector, training providers found that if employers were not committed to the scheme from the beginning then young people were unlikely to complete the programme.

Key Skills are assessed under exam conditions which seemed to have caused difficulties for many young people, particularly those who had failed their school exams. The failure of the Key Skills part of the MA is what often leads the young

person to drop out of the scheme even if they had been given a number of opportunities to re-sit them.

Employer support to the apprentice was paramount in encouraging the young person to carry on with the course. If the employer had little time to invest in the young person or to offer the level of support and advice which was needed, then the young person could become despondent, and possibly leave the scheme and their job.

It seemed that the workloads that an apprentice had to cope with in conjunction with their MA could also be too much for some young people and result in them falling behind with their assessments and units, ultimately resulting in them failing their MA. This problem seemed to be an issue within the professions where apprentices were undertaking the Business Administration apprenticeship. This was thought to be because of the sheer volume of work which is created in this type of industry therefore resulting in a conflict between the work at hand and the work which had to be completed for the units on the NVQ. Those employers within the retail industry found that the MA integrated more easily into the work environment than employers in office based professions, who found that they had to make separate time available for apprentices to complete particular units.

'We are interested in performance and what people are capable of and what we do. Two very different things often.....sometimes we need to backtrack on ourselves just to make sure that he is doing the work and that the work is relevant to the MA and the NVQ stuff is relevant to the workplace. And we check ourselves and don't load too much on him'

(Employer, Business recruiter)

As mentioned before, apprentices tended to come from complex backgrounds and had other stresses to cope with in conjunction with holding down a job and training programme. Therefore, it is not uncommon that the first thing which the young person would give up is the MA. Training providers found that social situations and circumstances often changed throughout the duration of the MA for example, some girls dropped out due to pregnancy.

Across the sectors, the low level of pay was also thought to have contributed to retention, and this seemed to be a particular issue in London where the cost of living is higher. In these circumstances training providers found that apprentices tended to move from job to job for the sake of securing extra money. If the employer who they moved to was not willing to support them participating in the scheme (assuming it was a similar sector) then this could also result in them dropping out of the MA scheme.

A final factor contributing to retention was not to do with young people dropping out but associated with training providers 'excluding' young people from the scheme. This, for example, had occurred as a result of the attitude of a young person and their low level of commitment to the programme.

5.4 Evaluating the delivery of the MA programme

There were a wide range of evaluation methods and procedures which training providers had developed in order to assess the MA programme and to contribute to the long-term success of the programme.

Training providers were interested in receiving feedback from both the apprentice and the employer. They used a number of different methods to gain this information, including:

- Training providers asking young people to keep written accounts of their experience, either in a regular weekly diary or on a more ad hoc basis
- Supervisor assessments held between the provider and supervisor of the apprentice
- Group and individual reviews with apprentices to gain feedback about the MA scheme
- Surveys and questionnaires with employers and apprentices assessing their views on the relationship between them and the provider and the various aspects of the MA scheme

These methods generated information which training providers used in order to improve relations with employer and the apprentice and to improve the way they delivered the scheme. Regular management and assessor meetings were common-place within providers, during which apprentices progress were discussed, monitored and changes to their individual learning plans were made where necessary.

‘We meet every Friday, all the assessors, to discuss each apprentice and we go through every single one and flag up problems or issues which may have arisen and we solve them by making changes to their learning plans and talking to them before we do this’

(Training Provider)

Training providers implement set formats to ensure best practice within their own organisations. External internal verifiers are employed within training providers to verify standards within the company. The internal verifier looks at a number of different areas of the MA scheme, particularly focussing on retention issues, set achievements and targets, and overall attendance of the apprentices. Some training providers employ an attendance officer who produces statistics and chases the apprentices who have poor attendance records. One method used to ensure standards did not slip and to evaluate how the employer was integrating the MA into the workplace was for the Centre manager of the provider to have regular contact with the employer.

Regular communication between training providers was believed to be an excellent way to evaluate the MA programme. Also, sharing experiences had helped to provide solutions to issues which arise. Attending workshops, network

meetings, training days and seminars covering subjects like best practice, retention and achievement workshops are an effective way to exchange information and tips between delegates from different training providers who attend these forums. Literature, such as, the Adult Learning Spectrum Reports and reports from the Learning and Skills Council had helped training providers to keep informed about policy developments in advance so that they could develop strategies to implement them.

‘One of the most useful things at these workshops isn’t actually the workshop itself but it is being able to talk to all the delegates from all the different training providers to exchange ideas and talk about problems and how they have resolved them, getting tips off each other.....helps you improve things in your own company’

(Training Provider, Hospitality sector)

Training providers also reported studying retention statistics and contacting apprentices who have dropped out so as to investigate their reasons for leaving. They also tracked what they were currently doing and explored whether they wanted to return to the industry. If they managed to contact an apprentice shortly after leaving then this had sometimes resulted in them successfully persuading the young person to return to the scheme.

External awarding bodies regularly assess training providers performance twice a year. This enabled training providers to maintain standards and evaluate their methods and levels of assessment. These reviews were believed to be productive as they had helped to ensure the training providers’ were constantly ‘self evaluating’.

6 Reflections and Improvements

This final chapter will report on employers' and training providers' reflections on the MA scheme and their suggestions for how the design and delivery could be changed and improved. As a key purpose of this study was to explore how the take up of the MA scheme could be improved suggestions about this are also outlined. Central to this discussion was the need for further promotion of the MA scheme and this is considered in the final section.

6.1 Reflections on the value of the MA scheme

The MA scheme was valued by both employers and training providers alike. This next section will address the aspects of the scheme that were singled out for mention during this discussion. As section 3.1 showed there were different factors which motivated employers to take part in the training scheme and these overlap with the way the scheme was appraised.

Employers varied in the degree to which they believed in the value of training and this affected the way in which they responded. Among organisations that placed a high degree of value on training it was said that the MA scheme had enabled them to fulfil what they saw as their social and corporate responsibility.

'We were going to go in for Investors in People....we do in both of our businesses...they are fairly mammoth undertakings, but certainly the MA fits into that and the perspective, that we support people in formal learning and NVQs as a matter of course.'

(Employer in the Business Services sector)

For others the MA scheme was seen in more practical terms; relating to the nature of the training, its relevance, applicability, impact and cost.

The way in which the MA scheme had provided an effective and cost efficient mechanism for training young people was universally valued. In particular, there was appreciation of the way the training had been orientated towards skills which were relevant to the job being undertaken. Furthermore as a method of training it was also praised by employers for being relatively inexpensive to deliver, as the onus was on the training provider to take responsibility for this.

Another positive feature of the MA scheme was the impact it was reported to have on the commitment and productivity of the apprentice. Employers observed that participation in the MA had a beneficial effect on the attitude and morale of the young person, their willingness and motivation to learn new skills and to adapt and develop within the organisational environment. The MA scheme was therefore valued for providing an opportunity for employers to use training as a means of displaying their commitment and appreciation of employees.

Underpinning this view was the idea that investing in training and development not only results in a better qualified workforce but also in employees feeling they are valued members of staff. This in turn was perceived to contribute to levels

of motivation and knowledge which was reported as having affected levels of productivity. This was believed to have wider consequences for the long-term success of the company as a whole.

The way in which the MA scheme can provide a framework and vehicle for staff development and progression was raised as another important feature of the scheme by employers and training providers. In both cases they emphasised the way in which they had watched apprentices mature and develop during their time on the programme. This benefit was particularly voiced by employers in the retail and hospitality sector where the MA appeared to integrate more seamlessly into the day to day activities of the job undertaken. In these circumstances it was said that the MA had made it easier for them to monitor progress and performance of the young person and as a result manage their promotion and development more easily.

The way in which training is provided was highlighted as another valuable aspect of the scheme. In contrast with other schemes the work-based nature of the learning was appreciated for having released the employer from making provision for an apprentice to be absent from work whilst attending their training sessions. This appeared to be a key benefit for employers within the retail industry as such a large percentage of the apprentice's time is spent on the shop floor, and the MA meant that the young person would not have to neglect their duties whilst participating in the scheme.

There were also felt to be wider implications of participation in the programme on the young person and other members of staff. Due to the design of many modern apprenticeships a young person will move from one department to another in order fulfil the requirements of the MA programme. This aspect of the MA was valued for broadening the skill and experience base of the apprentice as they are exposed to new opportunities and tasks within different departments.

It was also felt to have had wider benefits on other members of staff within the company as the apprentice had transferred their learning to others. This opportunity to share learning with others appeared to be a particular feature of the Business and Administration apprenticeship where an apprentice had to move between a number of different departments within one office. The transfer of skills to other employees was, however, not felt to be the exclusive to this profession. It was said that, regardless of the way in which a company was physically set up, training was always beneficial as communication and sharing of new skills would always feature.

'When there is a new face in the company learning new skills especially on the computer then other people are always willing to learn new things and ask the apprentice how to do things they have no idea about and they learn from each other in an informal way..'

(Employer, Education sector)

In addition to sharing learning across departments this feature of the scheme had also helped to engage other employees in training programmes as they could clearly see the benefits of younger members of staff participating.

Through participation in the MA programme employers also welcomed the opportunity to keep abreast of current educational developments. This had occurred through their close contact with the training provider, attending seminars and workshops on the latest educational training programmes. This had provided employers with an awareness of new initiatives, which they wanted to investigate.

The way in which the MA scheme was of value to young people was also emphasised. Employers identified that it provided a structure for promotion as well as a qualification which could be used to further career prospects for young people.

'It is an achievement for the apprentice and they should feel rightly proud of themselves. And that is something which is wonderful, because it then opens the door to them achieving an awful lot more because they can then feel more comfortable and more confident about getting further in education and their career'

(Employer, Hospitality Sector)

Furthermore unlike other training courses and academic learning the MA scheme was additionally appreciated for providing practical experience of skills that young people are learning. This opportunity for practical application of skills being learnt was felt to be very useful for young people.

The MA scheme was also valued for providing an alternative route for young people who were either less keen to remain in education, or who had not achieved the qualifications required to do this. Having the opportunity to earn money alongside training was therefore perceived to have opened new horizons for young people who typically had few qualifications. In this way, the MA scheme offered young people a route into employment without having to have a high standard of formal qualifications. It also enabled young people to find a way of pursuing a career path within a sector they were interested in without obtaining the requisite qualifications.

'Kids just want to earn money really, that was one of my motivations for not going to university in the end....this job and the MA gave me a chance to earn, gives the opportunity for young people to attain but while they still feel they are progressing in life and being able to claim their independence and take that adult status.'

(Apprentice working in a specialist business to business recruitment agency)

Otherwise the sense of achievement which some apprentices may feel on completion of the MA scheme was felt to be rewarding in itself. During this time the young person was constantly being challenged with new tasks and skills to

be carried out and by taking on responsibility and learning new skills they enhanced their confidence in themselves and their capability to do their job.

6.2 Suggestions for improving the design and delivery of the MA

Not surprisingly, the suggestions for improving the scheme build on the difficulties that had been encountered delivering the scheme. However, as the overall design of the MA is managed by external awarding bodies and set to national frameworks and standards not all of their recommendations are appropriate or feasible. They, nevertheless, provide useful learning for any further development of the scheme.

The following suggestions were made for improving the design and overall structure of the MA programme.

- A number of these suggestions related to the need for greater clarity about the structure and time-scale of the MA frameworks. Despite the appeal of having a flexible training programme, specific guidance was requested about the amount of time that apprentices should spend on each module so that the framework could be completed within the funding period. In combination with this, training providers also suggested that the LSC should develop a monitoring system to ensure employers, training providers and apprentices are working to required levels and set standards. This would also help to ensure a consistency of approach across training providers, apprenticeships and different sectors
- In contrast with the above, suggestions were also made for greater flexibility around the structure and content of the MA
- Another suggestion made by training providers related to the need to reduce the gap, or introduce an intermediary level between the FMA and AMA. This, it was argued, would ensure that the learning and development of managerial/supervisory skills could be distributed over three levels, providing the apprentice with wider experience
- In order to remove the problems associated with Key Skills it was suggested that there should be greater flexibility surrounding the inclusion of this element within the scheme. Indeed one suggestion involved completely removing the Key Skills component in circumstances where this aspect of the scheme was not felt to be relevant to the job in hand
- A final suggestion about the design of the scheme related to the need to extend the eligibility for the MA scheme to people aged over 25 years. Training providers found that members of staff who were both interested in the MA scheme and would benefit from it, were prevented from participating because they were too old

There were a number of issues relating to the delivery of the MA scheme:

- Employers across the sectors were keen to be more involved in the delivery of the MA. It was therefore suggested that they should play a more active role at the recruitment stage when individual learning plans were being established
- In order to ensure a stronger link between the MA scheme and the job being undertaken there was also felt to be a need for clearer communication between the employer and the training providers at the recruitment stage. It was said that training providers should outline details of each module and the requirements for the completion of the units, so the employer can ensure that the work which the apprentice is undertaking connects to the training received
- A number of suggestions related to the methods of assessment. Employers requested more planning, structure and warning about the assessment process and when the assessors would be visiting. A timetable outlining set dates for assessment and specific deadlines to work to was one idea for how to help improve this. By establishing a timetable, all three parties would be aware; when and where assessments were due to take place so each could prepare in advance. It was also thought that this would improve the reliability and punctuality of assessors' visits
- In order to reduce the amount of work required to prepare for monthly assessments, it was suggested that the apprentice should be assessed on a more regular basis
- Where employers were reluctant to allow time off for apprentices to take their Key Skills and Technical Certificate tests it was suggested that training providers should deliver the tests on the employer's premises. This, it was argued, would also alleviate the anxieties of young people by reducing the formality of the exam environment
- The need to streamline the administration of the MA scheme and, more particularly, to reduce the amount of bureaucracy involved was recurrently suggested by employers and training providers. One idea made for reducing bureaucracy was to introduce an electronic portfolio, which, it was argued, would result in a substantial reduction in paperwork for all three parties. For example, it was emphasised that this would make it easier for apprentices who could email completed units to assessors. It was also suggested that this would reduce the need for assessors to visit to sign off completed modules

6.3 Encouraging the take up of the MA

One of the objectives of this research was to investigate suggestions for improving the take up of the MA scheme. Both employers and training providers had ideas about how the demand could be stimulated amongst employers.

A key and recurrent solution to improving the take up amongst employers related to raising the profile of the MA scheme. As there is felt to be a considerable lack of awareness about the scheme a common suggestion made was to inform more employers about the existence of the scheme. In addition to this it was also said that employers need to be told more about the design and delivery of the scheme. Specific suggestions for how this could be achieved are addressed in the next section.

As part of the drive to stimulate demand across employers it was emphasised that there is also a need to raise the profile of the MA scheme amongst young people. This was viewed as an essential step to encouraging young people to participate, as employers and training providers believed that what was lacking was an awareness of the MA as a credible alternative to further education.

Related to the need to raise the profile of the MA scheme was the need to improve the image and reduce the stigma attached to work-based learning. As has been seen one of the barriers to recruitment of young people and employers is the poor image that the MA scheme appears to have. This was also felt to have been further exacerbated by government policy, which encourages young people to remain rather than leave education at 16 years.

'The profile of the MA has to be raised as it is often associated with kids who are not intelligent enough to go to university so have basically gone for the MA as the last option but this is not the case, the young people who are involved in the apprenticeships and sectors we cover are all very intelligent and capable...'

(Training Provider covering a number of different sectors)

The need to improve the links and co-operation between educational institutions, employers and training providers was also felt to be critical to the success of any marketing strategies, as these need to be targeted and directed at the relevant individuals.

The idea of offering financial incentives to those who participate in the MA scheme was suggested as another way to encourage demand. This, it was argued, would encourage a wider range of employers from different sectors to join the scheme. In addition it was felt that it would enable smaller employers to join the scheme as it would help them to overcome some of the costs of delivering a training programme. There were different suggestions for how this financial assistance could be provided. For example, external sponsorship to help meet the costs of training was put forward as one way of giving employers financial assistance. Another suggestion involved offering a tax subsidy or a contribution to the salary of the apprentice on the successful completion of their course.

The offer of financial incentives to young people who take an MA was also suggested. In this context external sponsorship was discussed and the benefits for the apprentice outlined as well as the employer. It was pointed out that a young person might be attracted to being sponsored throughout the MA by a

reputable employer as they would see this as leading to potential employment opportunities in the future.

A final suggestion made for widening participation in the scheme was to extend the programme to those over the age of 25. As previously noted employers found the age range of 16-24 year olds as too young and restrictive. Driving this view was a perception that 16-18 year olds have more attitude problems about discipline and as a result tend to lack commitment to remaining within one company long enough to complete their MA. It was proposed that those employees who are older tend to display higher levels of commitment and responsibility and would be more likely to stay with an employer and complete the scheme.

6.4 Encouraging more young people to participate

The content of the message conveyed to young people about the MA programme is very important. It is essential to highlight and make young people aware of the advantages of participating in the MA scheme. Not only can they earn money straight out of school but can also gain a qualification putting them in good stead when thinking and planning future career opportunities. This concept of trying to make young people think towards the future can be difficult, therefore a way to do so would be to use role models of young people who chose the MA as a route from school and have gained a qualification enabling them to find employment in the sector they were interested in. These young people could come and talk to school assemblies and career services and promote the MA acting as a forum for discussion, answering questions relating to choosing the MA as an option of post-16 education.

An important issue connected to this, is to ensure the young person who finds the MA attractive is fully aware of the value of the MA and the fact there are elements of the MA which involve intensive study and tests. Otherwise, this would have wider consequences if they chose the MA and viewed it as an easy option and were not aware of the educational elements involved.

6.5 Promoting the MA scheme to employers

Employers and training providers had a wide range of ideas for how to promote the MA scheme. Their suggestions related to the ways of delivering the message, the content of the message and who should be responsible for marketing and promoting the scheme. These suggestions were informed by awareness and views about recent campaigns promoting the scheme.

There seemed to be a general lack of awareness of recent campaigns promoting the MA scheme. Among those who had heard something about the scheme on a recent radio campaign, there seemed to be some confusion about what the MA was and stood for. In a few cases it was felt that abbreviating the Modern Apprenticeship to an MA might arouse confusion as it could be associated with the Master of Arts. Others, however, were clear about the message being conveyed on the radio but were concerned that the adverts did not do more to sell the scheme to people.

6.5.1 Suggestions for promotion and marketing

There were a number of promotional and marketing techniques suggested by employers and training providers to encourage more employers and young people to participate in the MA programme and these are outlined below:

- Advertising campaigns through a variety of media including radio, television, national and local newspapers, trade magazines and journals, advertisements, billboards, and the Internet
- A government backed national advertising campaign endorsing the MA scheme. The campaign should take a simplistic approach with easy to understand publicity and with information accessible to all parties involved in the campaign. This should include separate promotional brochures applicable to the young person, employer and training provider. Through this type of promotion it is thought that each party will then be aware of what it involves to be part of the MA programme and will be less reluctant to participate in a scheme funded by the government
- A marketing campaign within schools, including merchandise promoting the MA programme. It was argued that this should be targeted at younger children before they make decisions about what to do at the end of compulsory education
- Advertise the programme within the local community via libraries, shops, billboards
- Introduce the MA scheme in television programmes e.g. through characters in soap operas
- Advertise on food and other products that young people enjoy such as on Play Station games or cereal packets
- Use social and cultural events as a vehicle to promote the scheme and other educational messages
- Promote the scheme via employment agencies, job centres, and the Connexions service
- Employers could promote the scheme through offering work experience or 'job tasters' to school children of 14 to 15 years old This could serve as an important informative experience where the young person is given the opportunity to work for two weeks or more within a company getting a 'feel' of what it would be like to work full time. Therefore when presented with the option of the MA programme, this experience could serve to encourage young people that a work-based learning programme could be a credible path to choose
- External sponsorships could be used to raise the profile of the MA amongst different industries but also to present an excellent marketing opportunity for those companies who decide to sponsor the apprentice

- Use reputable employers who have participated in the MA programme and have been successful as role models to inform and encourage other companies to participate
- Using Employer Forums to promote the MA scheme to potential employers
- Targeting specific sectors where the NVQ is valued and required

6.5.2 The content of promotions

In terms of the content of the message that needs to be delivered suggestions revolved around three different themes – explaining about the design and structure of the MA and the sectors it covers, the cost and requirements for participation in the scheme, and the benefits of participating in the scheme. The remainder of this section highlights the benefits that employers and training providers felt needed to be promoted when marketing the scheme.

A number of suggestions were concerned with conveying the benefits of participating in the MA programme. Specific examples given were that marketing campaigns should explain that the MA scheme is a cheap and effective way to train staff with the added incentive that the training course will be externally managed by a training provider. The concept of having to administer training courses for members of staff often acts as a deterrent to employers, therefore the fact that a large percentage of the bureaucracy and overall administration is dealt with externally needs to be included in the promotion. Another selling point was felt to be that the nature of the learning is work-based.

A further suggestion about the benefits to be conveyed related to the longer-term impacts on the company arising from training and investing in staff. Of issue here was the need to communicate the way training may impact on employee morale, satisfaction and commitment to a company and as a consequence of this on the productivity levels and long term success of an organisation. In addition it was said that there was a need to highlight to the employer that training can act as a motivational tool for staff which will ultimately have longer-term effects on staff retention.

Promoting the MA as a local employment opportunity which will benefit the local community was another idea for how the scheme could be sold to employers. It was suggested that the message should involve promoting the scheme as a way in which local employers could fulfil their social and moral responsibilities to the community, by helping to engage young people who have decided not to carry on with further education. It was suggested that this message could be reinforced by a government campaign conveying the benefits of investing in young people from the local community as a way to protect the long term quality and future of that area.

6.5.3 Who should be responsible for marketing and promotion

There were a wide range of views regarding who should be responsible for the marketing and promotion of the MA programme. It was suggested that if overall

responsibility was with the Learning and Skills Council this should be in conjunction with the government and take the form of a national advertising campaign.

Training providers recurrently said that the marketing and promotion of the MA programme should be a joint partnership between a central body representing training providers and the government. Having a central representative of the training providers would combat the problem of having a variety of different messages being conveyed to employers from the diverse range of training providers covering each sector. Through this link formed between training providers and the government, the government would be able to gain an insight into the difficulties faced by training providers in selecting and recruiting appropriate employers and young people for the MA programme.

There was also concern about the need for links to be established between training providers and schools. Training providers across the sectors stated that not being able to gain access into schools in order to promote their service and the MA scheme was one of the most frustrating barriers to them promoting the programme. They felt that this was an important aspect of the promotion of the programme at the stage in which young people are deciding what to do after leaving school.

8. APPENDIX A – Case Studies

Case Study One – Employer was proactive about introducing the MA scheme

Ann works as a training manager in a large hotel chain. Having worked in the field of personnel and training for over ten years she learnt about the MA in her previous employment. Ann had also taken an NVQ some years before.

‘ I did an NVQ when I was younger and really benefited from it, so [I] decided to try and introduce the benefits of that sort of learning to my work place’

Ann decided to introduce the MA scheme to the hotel as there had been no previous means of training employees. She opted for the MA scheme as she had seen how brilliantly it had worked in her previous employment. Also, she wanted a scheme that would enable staff to progress within the workplace

‘it [the MA] means that young people can progress further once they have got a qualification, plus its good for their confidence to be involved in a training programme’

The fact that the scheme would be managed externally also appealed to her because it would be less of an imposition on the company. She believed this would help them through the introductory phase and would reduce the amount of bureaucracy involved. Also she felt that the training provider would be able to help integrate the Customer Service Modern Apprenticeship into the workplace.

The in-house training provided by the employer covered the units that had to be completed and the training provider came into the hotel and offered training for particular parts of the programme which the employer was unable to address. The training provider came to the premises to teach the apprentice once a month. He covered different aspects of the key skills part of the MA as this was more specific training, which they did not have the facilities to teach.

Once the MA scheme had been introduced an Assistant Concierge at the hotel named John was enrolled onto the scheme. John was 22 years old and had been working at the hotel for a year. He had not done particularly well at school and so he decided to leave at 16. Since this time he had been working for a number of different hospitality employers. John was attracted to the MA scheme because it provided him with an opportunity to progress further within the hotel once he had gained his qualification.

Ann viewed the introduction of the MA scheme as an ideal opportunity for John to develop his skills further, build up experience and gain a qualification in an area which he was interested and committed to. She also thought it might additionally be of use in the future.

‘.....I felt like John had reached a point where he had no sense of achievement of anything and he was so good, we didn’t want to lose him, so the MA scheme was ideal for him as he did really enjoy working in the hotel’

The selection of an appropriate candidate for the scheme was a very important consideration, as it was recognised that they could be used as a role model to extol the benefits of training. This, Ann argued, would help to overcome any resistance she encountered from those who did not believe that employees needed a training programme. Indeed she felt that her biggest challenge facing her was convincing other managers about the value of introducing the MA scheme. John was therefore selected to demonstrate an excellent example of how a person participates in the scheme and how training can benefit an employee.

'I came up against a lot of resistance because it is something new, I was introducing a totally new concept that they hadn't even heard of, so I needed the backing from everyone who was going to be involved otherwise it was not going to work'

In order to encourage John to participate in the MA he had to be reassured that the work he would be completing would not be like schoolwork. He also had to adapt to having to complete his assessments on time throughout the scheme. John's basic skills needs were additionally addressed through the scheme by providing some practical support in areas like literacy and maths. Through support from his line manager he had also been coached through certain parts of the MA scheme which he had found difficult. This really helped John and as he mastered new skills and activities his motivation towards the job and learning, as well as his confidence increased.

'John needed extra help with some basic skills really and through the scheme he received help for them which gave him more confidence in himself really'

Ann rated the service provided by the training provider as excellent. They were praised both for the flexible way in which they had trained John as well as the way they had nurtured him throughout the course. They had responded to any problems and issues that arose finding a way to resolve them and offer any help he needed. The monthly assessor visits from the training provider to verify John's work were also viewed as constructive and rewarding.

As a result John flourished on the scheme and successfully completed his Foundation Modern Apprenticeship after a year. Ann also observed John mature and develop, taking on more responsibilities as he progressed through the MA scheme. She also valued the way he had taken personal responsibility for his training, development and rewards for achieving. He is currently in the process of considering progressing onto the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship.

After John had completed his MA, Ann went through a process of identifying other members of staff to target the MA scheme at. However it was difficult to find potential candidates who would benefit from gaining qualifications. She thought front of house receptionists would be ideal candidates for training but in most cases they had already completed 3 to 4 year college diplomas. It was therefore decided that it would be more appropriate to introduce the MA scheme for maids and waiting staff within the hotel.

Ann had spoken to a number of people she thought would be interested in the scheme and they had expressed a lot of enthusiasm towards the course. They were attracted to the idea of earning money whilst training on the job, and working towards a qualification. Some of the younger members of staff thought the scheme would encourage them to remain working for the hotel as it would provide them with a career path to pursue.

Ann concluded that John's experience had helped to demonstrate the importance and value of the MA scheme. In the long term she believed that it would improve retention of younger staff and as a result save money spent on recruitment. The hotel therefore decided to implement the MA scheme into the recruitment process and employ individuals offering them the option of doing a Modern Apprenticeship in conjunction with working. They felt that it was of paramount importance to integrate a rigorously managed training scheme as it addressed issues of training staff to a level regarded as an acceptable standard to offer to customers.

The success of the MA scheme was felt to be due, in part, to the commitment shown by other members of staff to be co-operative towards John's learning and the training provider's enthusiasm, backing and support also contributed to the smooth running. Ann felt another important contribution to the success of the MA scheme was that John was self motivated. The need to be self-motivated was perceived as being integral to a vocational oriented scheme.

Case Study 2 – Employer outside of the sectors which traditionally provide training

This large Private Client Stockbrokers is not the sort of company who would typically participate in the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. They deal with a wide range of financial services from market making, corporate finance, settlements, compliance, dealing, institutional sales to broking.

They got involved in the MA scheme after having difficulty retaining younger employees. The Training Manager, Tim, thought that the scheme would help to boost the morale of younger staff and provide them with a set of goals to work towards. It was hoped that this would make the job seem less routine and mundane.

‘.....I felt like these young people were coming in and working hard, but that they needed something to aim for and I wanted them to feel a sense of purpose, a qualification as a goal.....the MA programme was an excellent solution’

As employees are working in a busy fast moving office environment it was essential that any training scheme they provided should be delivered on the job. The MA scheme was therefore seen as ideally suited to the way the company is set up and run. This was also felt to be another reason why the company opted for the scheme. Tim emphasised the difference between learning on the job and learning in school as they ***‘learn in two completely different ways’***. Working on the job means that employees learn about how things work within the company which is ultimately more relevant and useful. Learning at college, he argued, is fine ***‘if you can learn to type but if you don’t understand what you are typing then you are not going to be effective’***.

Currently there are three people in their Compliance and Administration department taking a Business and Administration MA. Of these one of the employees has just completed a FMA and is about to move on to an AMA. The other two apprentices are taking FMAs.

Tim set out to find out about the Modern Apprenticeship scheme after initially hearing it advertised on the radio. Once he had investigated it further, he set up a meeting between a local training provider, himself and the Managing Director of the company.

During the initial set up phase Tim met with the training provider on a regular basis and they established a close rapport. Tim feels that this consistency of communication between himself and the provider helped establish a ***‘solid working relationship’***. Also, this was helped further in the implementation and delivery phase as the representative from the training provider took on the role as assessor for the apprentices.

In order to attract further staff onto the scheme the training provider gave a presentation about the MA at the workplace. During this he also presented the apprentice who had completed his FMA with a certificate. This presentation

seemed to generate interest from other employees and helped recruit the two apprentices currently doing an FMA.

‘....after the presentation from the training provider, there was a lot of interest in the course and the general feeling amongst members of staff was that it was definitely a worthwhile programme to do, as it resulted in them gaining a qualification which would only go towards helping them in their future career...which they all seemed to realise’

Together the training provider and Tim developed the MA programme tailoring it to the needs of the business by adding in some additional modules that would be appropriate to the work the apprentices would be doing.

Once a month the assessor visits to check witness testimonies and look at each apprentice's portfolio evidence. So far they have not experienced any difficulties delivering the scheme. The apprentices seem committed to the training because they appreciate that it is improving their skills base and making them more experienced and marketable for the future. By investing in training their staff through the MA they had helped to combat the problem of low morale and retention problems. Previously low morale was felt to have been caused by younger staff watching others progress whilst they were not moving forward or being promoted. It was therefore felt that a training scheme would provide them with something to aim towards. It was also felt to convey the message that the company values them.

‘.....if the company is involved in this type of training, this means we are looking after the people and they will want to stay and ultimately they will look after us, by putting back into the company what was given to them’

The MA was reported as **‘empowering members of staff and increasing their morale and confidence’**. Participation in the MA scheme had also given apprentices more confidence about their abilities. More specifically the presentation skills module had helped apprentices with their presentations to clients. Tim believed that running the training programme alongside their work gave employees a reason to perform well as they had a **‘goal to achieve’**.

Despite the current apprentices being recruited internally, Tim now wants to publicly advertise the MA opportunity and offer it to all potential recruits. In doing this, he feels that they will reach a wider range of young people as it may get picked up by parents of 16-25 year olds who will remember the previous ‘apprenticeships’. In view of the low awareness about NVQs, Tim also emphasised the need to advertise it as a Modern Apprenticeship rather than an NVQ.

‘By using the term apprenticeship it is saying you are actually learning on the job and gaining a skill. Works better in people's minds, that you are physically doing the work but learning and gaining skills in a proper fashion not unlike a school situation’

Tim believed that the enthusiasm, commitment and support he received from the Managing Director made a difference to the way in which the MA scheme has been integrated into the firm.

When Tim carried out the 6 monthly appraisals with apprentices, they all gave him excellent feedback. They valued the scheme and the training as it had made them feel more committed to the firm precisely because they believed that their employers were committed to them.

Case Study 3 – Company which is very committed to the MA scheme and uses it as part of its recruitment drive

Company C was established 40 years ago as a Planned Maintenance Engineering Company specialising in central heating and electrical installation. It now has 13 branches across the country and currently has over 400 employees. In the central London area they annually recruit 30 apprentices.

This company has been involved in providing schemes for young people for the last 10-15 years. They have currently been involved in the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme for the last 3 years. The main impetus behind their involvement in the MA scheme was to train staff as there was a shortage of skilled employees within their sector. It was also seen as an ideal way to develop and mould staff, ensuring that the skills they learn will be relevant and applicable to the needs of their industry. Also one of the other advantages of having apprentices working within their company is that they can pass on what they know and what they learn to other members of staff.

In designing and delivering the MA scheme they have established a close partnership and excellent rapport with the training provider. Their aim has been to ensure that the MA's being taken can be integrated into the workplace. The training college provides practical and technical training and the employer ensures there is the opportunity to apply this learning within the work environment. Periodically they go to college to monitor how well apprentices are coping with their MA as well as to check on the way the scheme is being integrated into the job an apprentice is doing.

The employer has now integrated the MA scheme into their annual recruitment drive and it has become part of the company's ethos. Each year they take on about 30 apprentices on the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship which usually takes about 3 to 4 years to complete. When apprentices finish their qualification, the HR department look for opportunities for junior engineers. On average 2 or 3 apprentices are employed on a permanent basis after completing their MA.

The company takes a unique approach to recruitment of apprentices. In order to identify where it is feasible to place an apprentice they take an overall look at the structure of the company and see where there are opportunities for an apprentice to learn the skills required for their MA. They also establish where the duty officers are and who will be able to provide long term support and act as a mentor throughout the apprenticeship. This process is viewed as being an essential part of their role and commitment to the MA scheme.

They mostly recruit apprentices who have been recommended by local colleges. They have people on these courses who are looking out to place committed people with an employer so they can learn the practical side of things from them and build up the evidence for the NVQ. They tend to take on apprentices aged between 18-25 years olds, as they have found them to be more committed to the MA and as a result more likely to complete the qualification compared to those aged between 16 and 18.

'[We] have to make sure the apprentice is committed to the industry and is aware of what it involves in working in the service industry they must be focussed and committed'

As soon as apprentices complete their qualification their salary increases and they join the company pay scale. Their level of pay is assessed in terms of their knowledge and productivity as they will not have had the chance to gain the experience that other qualified electricians have.

The mentoring system involves pairing an apprentice with the appropriate contract manager who will ensure the work which an apprentice is doing on the job will closely mirror what they are learning at college. As part of the mentoring process they use a 'watch assistant system' which involves the apprentice having their college work checked on the computer by their mentor. Once the apprentice has completed their qualification, their mentor and line manager will take a step back and let them take the reins.

All of the apprentices who have been on the scheme have successfully qualified for their MA. This success was attributed to the following factors:

- They have an excellent process in place with mentors and the training manager which is inter linked with the training provider. There is a pool of information and knowledge on each apprentice which they use on a regular basis. They use this to solve problems, for example, if someone is not performing well and gelling, due perhaps to a 'personality clash' between them and their mentor, then the company will move them to another mentor.
- The systems which they have in place provides the apprentices with numerous opportunities to request help with aspects of their work that they do not understand at college or in the company.
- The company also offers extra tuition to help apprentices. They invest the time and extra funding and resources if the apprentice is hard working.
- The apprentice has a **comment sheet** they fill out every week. This is described as a 'happy sheet'. It basically asks each apprentice what they have done each week and if there are any problems or if they want to raise anything. This provides the opportunity for the apprentice to comment on how they are feeling and what they have been up to. It also provides a vehicle for change if an apprentice is not happy about something. It also acts as their 'passport as a safety measure' so that they know whether or not they are okay.

'It is a good thing so the apprentice is not left to stew in something they are not happy with if they feel like they are not learning anything they will leave but if picked up quickly then this can be resolved'

For the employer having the structure of the MA to follow provides them with a foundation to use to develop and train staff. The close partnership with the college enables them to monitor that the scheme is being integrated into the workplace and that they are addressing all the apprentices needs. They believe

it is an excellent programme for employers to participate in and to work in partnership with the training provider is one of the main values of taking part.

‘..... a lot of employers haven’t got the time to put the structure into place and they require and need guidance and to have experts tell you what to do is perfect.’

Case Study 4 - Employer with a good working relationship with the training provider

Being strong believers in training staff this Housing Department within a local council was drawn to the MA scheme as a way of developing their own training scheme for school leavers and graduates.

‘.....if we train the staff then they will feel invested in and by having trained staff this would mean long term benefit for the company’

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme was felt to be the right training scheme for them because:

- They wanted an established training scheme which would not be expensive to deliver. They were attracted to the MA because it was a free scheme. Also it could be externally managed so they could minimise their involvement
- The MA was a government initiative and being a government department this was in line with their ethos. It was also a recognised training programme with a good reputation
- The MA scheme was sufficiently flexible to enable apprentices to gain experience and knowledge within various departments. They achieved this by adapting the programme so it addressed their specific job needs and requirements
- Their staff would benefit from the scheme by gaining qualifications which would facilitate their progression within the organisation. This was felt to provide long term benefits for employees and the employer

The training manager carried out a lot of research and investigated a number of different training providers. They were advised by other councils participating in the MA scheme that the best way to implement the MA scheme was to have the backing and support of a reputable training provider. They decided the best option was to be linked to a provider who was local. They researched a number of providers within the area and decided to go with the training provider who was the **‘most proactive in coming forward’**. This provider followed up their enquiries and appeared the most willing and flexible to discuss any initial concerns or queries they had with the MA scheme.

Their main priority was they wanted a rigorously managed training scheme as their choice had to be authorised by senior management. This involved the training manager presenting a written report about the scheme. The council wanted to ensure that all parties were fully aware of the requirements of participation in the Modern Apprenticeship scheme and were committed to devoting time to working with apprentices. They did this by holding a general meeting with all employees within the department informing them of the decision to participate in the MA.

‘.....we wanted to take a holistic approach to the scheme and wanted everyone on the scheme to be aware of what it involved and the commitment it would need from everybody as it did require a lot of paperwork and enthusiasm’

Currently they have 5 apprentices aged between 16 and 19 years taking a FMA; 2 from the first year when they ran the scheme and 3 new apprentices were recruited this year. They advertised for the apprentices through the local press, and local careers fairs. They wanted to attract local young people as they felt it was important to employ people who live within the area, as many of the housing issues relate to the area and it makes the job easier to relate to and understand the issues if employees have local knowledge. In addition to advertising they also regularly liaised with the Connexions Service over the recruitment of apprentices, as this seemed to be a key source for recruits who are currently working with them.

‘.....we trust Connexions with the referrals they make as they have already spoken to the young person in depth about what they want to do and what the MA scheme would entail from them, they have already expressed a certain degree of commitment which we feel is important’

The MA involves the apprentices going to college during the first year to do the Customer Service NVQ. In the second year they complete the FMA and where this has already been achieved they embark on the AMA . During this second year they will still be required to go to college in order to do a National Diploma in Housing. They decided to implement the diploma as part of the MA scheme in order to ensure the apprentices would be informed on housing issues as this would hopefully lead them to being employed within the organisation in the long term.

‘.....want to invest in younger members in staff so we can use them in the long term in the organisation and hopefully once they qualify they will become Housing Assistants and Customer Services Assistants, this process of sorting the requirements out with the training provider was easy’

The development of this part of the programme was jointly agreed with the training provider. The provider proved to be very open to these suggestions and was co-operative in implementing a structure of the MA that fitted in with the organisation's requirements.

In addition to the college aspect of the MA, apprentices do placements around the Housing Department where they spend four months in a number of different sections. This provides them with a good overview of housing policy and issues. In the plans for next year they are considering attaching the new recruits to a placement, which will lead to a guaranteed job at the end. This was regarded as the main cost benefit of participating in the MA scheme as it would save a substantial amount of annual revenue in having to recruit new members of staff as they would already be employed.

In order to address concerns of senior managers about the calibre of apprentices recruited in terms of their standard of numerical and verbal ability, they set recruitment criteria of A to C in maths and English. However it was difficult to find young people of that standard so they decided to develop their own internal test which apprentices would have to take if they had not achieved the appropriate qualifications.

The council was receiving excellent feedback from the training provider and had been held up as a model for how to supervise and manage apprentices. They particularly rated the way the council had set up and monitored a development plan with each apprentice which mapped their future in the organisation.

Case Study 5 - Employer who sees training as a social and corporate responsibility

Andrew works for a specialist business-to-business recruiter. He is 19 years old and is currently doing an AMA in Business and Administration.

The employer who Andrew works for is a specialist company in a very specific field. They provide social workers, managers and senior managers to local authorities, private and voluntary sectors. They are a small company with 4 employees and 30 people who they employ within the social welfare sector on a freelance basis.

The manager of the company has been involved within this field for over 15 years and was aware of the existence of the Modern Apprenticeship scheme for sometime. The scheme was recently highlighted to him through connections he has with Jobcentre Plus and Business Link.

The company views themselves as an ethical company with a corporate and social responsibility to employ people on training schemes. In relation to this, the company's choice was based on their desire to apply for the **'Investor in People'** certificate. The MA fitted in with their goal, which was to support people in formal learning.

'...the methodology of the MA fitted in with the ethos.....it gets to become part of the way we do business'

'... we're a transparent company, so that means that its giving people a different perspective when they work from the inside....its important to grow your own and to be involved in the training which people undergo'

The company has quite a unique approach to matching the skills required of a MA. They looked at their overall business plan and evaluated where they were as a company as well as their forecast for the future. They identified that the company needed to develop the business and administration and IT side of their work, especially with the human resource components of dealing with clients and customers face to face. They evaluated the skills a person would acquire on an apprenticeship and then matched these with Andrew's skills and aspirations. They then enrolled Andrew on the AMA as it appeared to address the needs of the company, but also the ambitions, which he had too.

'...it would be growing somebody at the same time as the company was growing so there's a bit of synergy there'

As the company was committed to the concept of skilling and learning on the job the MA scheme appeared to fit with their ethos. Also, the managing director had always been committed to the values and principles of life long learning.

'...its about fitness for life... most people do school qualifications and come out to work. By extending skills, developing them to make then work means greater feelings of competence and achievement in day to day work which goes together with more employability...'

Andrew had been working in the company for five months on a temporary contract and so they converted him onto the MA scheme. Andrew was very enthusiastic about the idea of doing a Modern Apprenticeship. It really appealed to him because he had,

'been in education doing A levels 3 years before...the whole idea of being a trainee working in the workplace and getting a qualification at the end of it was a way to better yourself and earn money at the same time'

The company worked with a training provider who also worked with Andrew in order to tailor the MA to suit his needs as well as the requirements of the company. They added six modules to the programme which were more relevant to his role. One of those modules was Finance as this was especially applicable to the business, as the director wanted him to learn these skills, so he could master the payroll side of the business.

In relation to the business and cost benefits they considered the more knowledge and skills Andrew acquired through the modules he was studying on the MA, meant the more he was of value to the company. As he progressed through the course they felt he would become more of an asset to them. It would therefore be imperative to retain him and pay him more money. Andrew was viewed as an investment for the company as a whole. They intended to use Andrew's expertise in certain areas and implement this into the long-term business plan. They saw that in the future Andrew would be capable and competent in order to train up future members of staff in the areas which he learnt during his MA.

'as he develops, [we may] need more support and sales staff...different aspects of the company might become clearly differentiated and what was one job, becomes two, becomes three and Andrew can have the responsibility of training new members of staff in payroll for example'

This ethical approach to employing an apprentice was viewed as having long-term benefits for this expanding company. The internal selection of an already existing member of staff was a factor contributing to the success of the MA. Andrew was already aware of what the job would involve as he had been employed in the recruitment sector previously and he had already been working for the company for five months so he understood the way they worked. Both parties were felt to benefit from the scheme and would eventually reap the rewards once Andrew had qualified.

Case Study 6 – Progression from an FMA to an AMA within the same organisation

David has been working at a secondary school as an IT technician for over 3 years. The school is a large comprehensive with over 1300 students. He started at the school on a work placement, but was subsequently employed on a full time basis because he got on so well with the other members of staff. After working for the school for six months he was approached by the local training provider (who had placed him at the school originally) who recruited him onto the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. Currently he is half way through an AMA having previously completed a FMA.

David works with Gavin who is the IT Network Manager for the school. They knew straight away that this would be an excellent opportunity for the school and for David as well. Being a local authority school they were short of extra money to pay for training courses. Therefore, the fact that the MA was a free training course was an added incentive, along with the benefits for David as it would help him advance in his knowledge and skills in the field of IT. Once gaining qualifications, this would provide him with more opportunities in the future.

Gavin said David was so enthusiastic and willing to learn it was almost **'impossible'** to think why they would not want to employ him as the IT technician.

'he was so willing and keen to learn. More patience than I have known.....therefore [I] took a decision that they needed another pair of hands and because he was so good at what he did, he had a willingness....thought it was best to employ him'

David started on a FMA in IT working towards a level 2 NVQ. Gavin found that he coped very well with this course and the way in which it was set up. The training provider came into assess David on a regular monthly basis. The assessor would spend about an hour with him marking his portfolio and checking his witness testimonies. As modules were completed the assessor and Gavin signed them off. During this process the provider spent time with Gavin asking for feedback about the way David was progressing on the scheme and whether he required any extra help and support. Gavin's overall involvement in the assessment of David's work was minimal. This had been another motivation for taking on the MA as Gavin knew he would have very little time to offer with supervision as his job was very demanding.

'The Modern Apprenticeship scheme was a brilliant way for David to learn as it meant he could get on with the work himself and working through modules meant he knew which ones he had to complete for assessment, so he was very independent and knew what to do, which was great for me'

The training, which David received for the apprenticeship was mostly provided 'on the job'. Gavin found that whilst they were working on something, David would alert him to tasks which were part of the apprenticeship and ask him to sign it off when he had completed it.

The Key Skills part of the course was especially good for David as there were certain skills, he needed help with especially written English. This part of the MA scheme addressed this and David received extra support from the training provider during the FMA in order to ensure he would pass the Key Skills part of the course. Gavin wanted David to progress onto the Advanced level as he seemed to be doing so well on the FMA. When Gavin suggested this to David he was very enthusiastic.

'....he had enjoyed the first year so much, when suggesting the idea of doing the next level David jumped at the chance as this meant, he would be able to learn more and gain further qualification which was good for his future'

One of the main advantages for the school taking part in the MA was that it was saving money on training courses. Because the IT world is such a fast moving industry where once one type of software has been mastered, a new type is brought out which has to be conquered, training costs can amount to a substantial sum of money. As the school already spends a lot of money sending Gavin on courses the saving from David's MA was identified as a real benefit of the scheme.

The level of work and the type of training which David received on the scheme was ideal for his stage in life and fitted in with the work which he was required to do at school. Gavin found the set up of the MA ideal, as the training on the job meant he was not left to manage alone whilst David was being trained. Also Gavin was very enthusiastic about the way the MA combines working with gaining recognised qualifications.

' I think it is a nice idea....people when they leave a school environment and go off to do a qualification they can actually gain real experience, it is not just a paper based process you go through, you are not just walking around with a qualification which means nothing because you have no practical experience to back it up. So I think it is actually very positive, that it is practically led. And it is nice to see that people who maybe aren't academically outstanding can do something practical and achieve something'

Having seen the benefits of the scheme through David's positive experience the school is very keen to expand its MA programme and take on more recruits.

The IT skills required for the job are much more practically orientated and require only a limited emphasis on theory. Therefore, being able to gain practical experience of resolving problems gave David an insight into what it would be like to work in a busy demanding IT job. He has progressed so far in this job he is now offering teachers within the school training lessons in using the computer. This was his idea to implement these courses and he was the one who suggested the course to other members of staff who were willing to take him up on his offer.

' After completing the FMA, David decided that he needed to progress further with his supervisory role which is part of the AMA and decided to

offer mini training sessions to other members of staff in the practical side of using the computer. This has been very popular and a lot of teachers are spending time learning how to use certain programmes during their lunch hour!'

Case Study 7 – MA addressed retention issues

This large hotel chose the Modern Apprenticeship scheme to help with the retention of staff. Currently they employ approximately 270 people aged between 17 to 70 who are spread across two sites. Young people aged 16-25 make up 30% of the staff. At the moment they have two apprentices doing a Customer Service based Modern Apprenticeship, one who is completing their FMA and the other is about to start the AMA.

Jean is the Group Training, Health and Safety Manager and has worked for the hotel for 5 years. She said the reason why they took part in the MA scheme was so they could offer longer courses with qualifications attached to them, which they hoped would improve their retention of staff. Previously they had offered intensive two or three day courses where staff received certificates to help with this problem, but they still had a high turnover of employees.

‘The fact that people were given the opportunity to gain better qualifications compared to just receiving certificates and with NVQs because it is completed over two or three years as opposed to a few days this would help the retention of them’

They employ people within the hotel on the basis that they want to join the company. Once employed they suggest the option of taking a Modern Apprenticeship to them.

For them the MA was a good way to increase and maintain standards as it provided a structure where people have to work to goals in order to develop their skills. In order to combat their previous retention problems it was essential that they made sure there were positions within the company for people to move into once they had qualified. Before enrolling members of staff onto the MA scheme they would check that there was a vacancy at the appropriate level for them to move to. In this way employees were able to develop and progress in the company through the scheme.

‘ we made sure if people were doing Level 3 which is specifically supervisory based then they were in a role where it would allow them to be assessed in that way and they were supervising in some way’

Over the last 3 years they have had 30 staff enrolled on the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. Out of the 30 members of staff, 8 stayed with them permanently after completing their qualification which was felt to be a big improvement from past levels of retention. Within the hospitality industry it is estimated that staff leave every 2 to 3 months.

This improvement in retention levels was felt to have wider benefits for the company as it had improved customer service and the hotel's ongoing reputation that staff are experienced and qualified. The two current apprentices are very knowledgeable about the hotel and take an active interest in its policies, procedures and systems. They are also encouraged to put forward

their own ideas, so that they feel more involved and committed to the general ethos of the company.

The training provider they work with was willing to adapt and change the MA scheme if there were certain factors which did not fit in with the hotel.

‘....they were quite happy to amend things, so we would actually look at the standards that they were asking for and then kind of like rewrite it in a way that still kept the standard but was more focused to us’

They have also been excellent at accommodating a member of staff who is dyslexic and have agreed to allowing the apprentice to submit oral rather than written testimonies, using a dictaphone which the assessor will then listen to. The need for flexibility is important to them as an international company, as they have staff from across the EU with resulting language difficulties.

All the heads of departments within the hotel were aware of the MA scheme and they have looked at extending the scheme to other areas, specifically to do with housekeeping as this work is customer service based. The next area they are going to concentrate on is working behind the bar.

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme has taught members of staff to think laterally. Jean encourages them to think out of the box and look at other areas, which the skills they are gaining, can be applied to.

‘..when you start to get people thinking about their development out of the box, because you’re relating it back to the organisation, they see the organisation out of the box as well, ...it really bolsters their confidence as well’

Jean attributes the retention of the members of staff partly to the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. The fact that they have trained for two years and have completed a programme, makes them realise how far they have come and want to stay, as opposed to leaving after three or four months if there was no training scheme on offer.

The two benefits to the company have been **retention** and **customer satisfaction** and Jean believes that those members of staff who have participated in the Modern Apprenticeship scheme may view the success of the company differently to people who have not gone through the programme as they have contributed to that success.

Case Study 8 – An example of an apprentice approaching an employer

This employer is within the Health and Beauty Industry and specialises in hair extensions for Afro and European hair.

The salon opened in the last year and currently employs 3 people full time, of which one, Camilla, is currently doing a AMA in Hairdressing. Camilla approached the employer herself as she was interested in learning about hair extensions but also wanted to earn money at the same time. Despite having experience of hairdressing from working in a number of different salons her main interest was hair extensions.

The owner of the salon subsequently received some literature from the local college detailing courses offering work-based learning. The attraction of the MA was that it integrated well with the hairdressing sector and had the added bonus of providing training for free. The employer got in contact with the local college and after a few meetings Camilla was set up on the course after the premises had been assessed.

'it was so easy, all we had to do was tell the college what training we were going to give Camilla and they went through the training courses they could offer, we decided on the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship and within a few weeks she was on the MA'

They had to adapt the MA course for the apprentice to include specific training on hair extensions, as it is not part of the general NVQ in Hairdressing. They trained Camilla in house in the different techniques specific to this industry, for example, hair extension techniques, braiding, removal and hair structure.

As there are not many salons within London which specialise in hair extensions it is emphasised that it is very difficult to recruit someone who is experienced. The decision, therefore, to take someone on who is familiar with basic hairdressing skills and then train them up to learn specific techniques seemed to be the easiest option. When Camilla turned up at the salon and said that she wanted to learn and earn at the same time the MA seemed to be the ideal solution. They were also enthusiastic about employing Camilla because she ***'showed the drive and willingness to learn and would not be put off'***. The willingness and enthusiasm which Camilla showed in her desire to learn new skills is what the employer felt was the key difference between her and other young people.

In addition to these reasons another advantage was that they would save a lot of time and money by employing Camilla, as the training provider covered the basics of hairdressing at the college. This meant that the time that Camilla spent at the salon could be used to teach her about hair extensions. The scheme was also perceived as ideal for such a small and new employer because the training was provided for free and this was main factor driving the employer to consider recruiting more young apprentices.

'In the long term it will save us a lot of money in terms of recruitment costs and training, as the MA is a way round these hurdles, especially when you are just starting up a business'

In order to help them recruit young people who are interested in participating in an MA, they have approached the local college and have requested referrals from them. Their main concern is that they find someone who is just as willing and enthusiastic to learn as Camilla. They recognise that training someone up who then leaves after the course, to move on to a bigger salon would be very detrimental to their business, as they would have spent so much time in training and supporting them.

'need to make sure that if we employ an apprentice they are committed to us as an employer and is willing to learn the new techniques, because if we are investing in them then I would want them to stick with us, to lose them to a bigger salon would not be cost efficient or good for our morale'

The Modern Apprenticeship scheme offered this salon the opportunity to train someone like Camilla in the field of hair extensions which will benefit both her and the salon in the long term. The essence of the MA scheme is what appealed to the employer, as it provides young people with the unique opportunity to carry on with learning and gaining qualifications but also earning money at the same time, taking the first step on the ladder to working life.

'just the fact that you are working and learning at the same time, you don't feel tied down so much,at the end of the year from working really hard and learning really hard you are going to get a qualification at the end of it. The MA is a solution because if you are in a dilemma where you want to work but at the same time you want to go back to college, it makes it hard because you have to give up one for the other, it is not always the case where you can do both'

The fact that Camilla could gain experience and learn at the same time was felt to be the 'wonderful thing' about the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. Hands on experience was therefore viewed as being key to the scheme so that when young people approach employers in the future they will not be stuck in the 'catch 22' situation where they have the qualifications and knowledge but no experience.

Research in Central London

London Central Learning and Skills Council
Centre Point
103 New Oxford Street
London
WC1A 1DR

www.lsc.gov.uk

Tel: 0845 019 4144

Fax: 020 7904 0710

Email: londoncentralinfo@lsc.gov



Learning+Skills Council
London Central