

Student Apprenticeship Evaluation

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ECOTEC

Research Report
No 345

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Annex A – Presentation of the Initial Findings

Annex B – Attendees at the Initial findings Presentation, 19th October 2001

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Study

Research Aims

The aim of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of the Student Apprenticeship initiative. A key aspect of this study was to identify the success of Student Apprenticeships in appealing to employers; schools and colleges; students and training providers. This research is timely, as the Student Apprenticeship initiative has operated as a pilot to date, and the evaluation will provide baseline information and good practice to assist in the national roll out of the initiative.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study project were to:

- Identify the numbers moving onto Modern Apprenticeships and other routes/ outcomes on progression from Student Apprenticeships, such as moving into further or higher education or employment;
- Identify and describe the merits of completing the Student Apprenticeship prior to entering a Modern Apprenticeship;
- Clarify the impact of Student Apprenticeship on academic study, and identify outcomes in terms of qualifications attained;
- Describe the role of the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator in each local Learning and Skills Council, and assess the impact of this role on the national roll out of the initiative;
- Assess the potential benefits and disadvantages of Student Apprenticeship models for the pre- and post- 16 age groups;
- Develop case studies to demonstrate best practice in the implementation of the Student Apprenticeship scheme to inform a national roll out of the initiative.

1.2 Methodology

The research methodology employed for this study combined a variety of techniques to gain evidence from primary and secondary sources.

Initial desk research was undertaken to provide background information for the study. Baseline information regarding participation in Student and Modern Apprenticeship programmes was collected from a range of sources, including the Learning and Skills Councils (previously the TECs), and information collected by the DfES (and previously DfEE). Participation in the Student Apprenticeship initiative is demonstrated in terms of participation rates and take up trends, particularly with regard to gender and ethnic minority considerations. An overview of the local context in each region was also collected, to demonstrate the sectors in which the Student Apprenticeship initiative has been focused to date.

The vast majority of the evidence referred to in this report is drawn from primary data, gained through fieldwork. The fieldwork was undertaken through two distinct stages.

Stage One consisted of face to face semi-structured interviews with employers and training providers. Stage Two involved both individual and collective interviewing, through semi – structured telephone interviews with schools, colleges and young people; and focus groups with young people (pre and post 16 groups).

1.3 Key issues and structure of the report

Student Apprenticeship pilots have been focused in three areas to date: Walsall, Birmingham and Bristol. The Student Apprenticeship model has been tailored in each area to suit local conditions, the needs of local employers, and interest generated in the initiative amongst local schools, colleges and training providers. The Walsall and Bristol areas have focused on piloting the initiative with the post 16 age group, whilst activity in Birmingham has been tailored to working with the pre-16 group. (However, the Birmingham initiative was promoted and offered across the 14-18 age range, but the schools selected for participation resulted in delivery being steered towards the pre-16s). The evaluation demonstrates good practice and issues emerging from the three pilot areas to provide the backdrop for recommendations on the strategic implementation of a national roll out of the initiative.

The report will draw out the key issues emerging from the implementation of the Student Apprenticeship initiative to date, identifying issues from both strategic and operational perspectives. The report is largely retrospective, identifying lessons learned by practitioners and demonstrating good practice, from both individual organisations and agencies working in collaboration. The report will finally consider some of the key issues impacting on a national roll out of the Student Apprenticeship initiative, and contextualise these within wider policy and operational considerations.

The report is structured around the presentation of initial findings from the Student Apprenticeship evaluation, which was presented to the Department for Education and Skills and representatives from the national and local Learning and Skills Councils on the 19th October 2001. A copy of the presentation is provided in Annex A.

2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE INITIATIVE

2.1 The aim of Student Apprenticeships

Student Apprenticeships were created in order to introduce Sixth form and college students to the world of work. They consist of structured work placements that are linked to the student's educational timetable. The students gain vocational skills in the workplace, on a weekly basis. This differs from conventional 'work experience' as there is the expectation that once their education is complete, students will be employed and ideally, progress to an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship.

2.2 Local context and trends in SA participation

This section provides a brief overview of the sectors Student Apprentices were employed in, by area and gender.

Cross Comparison

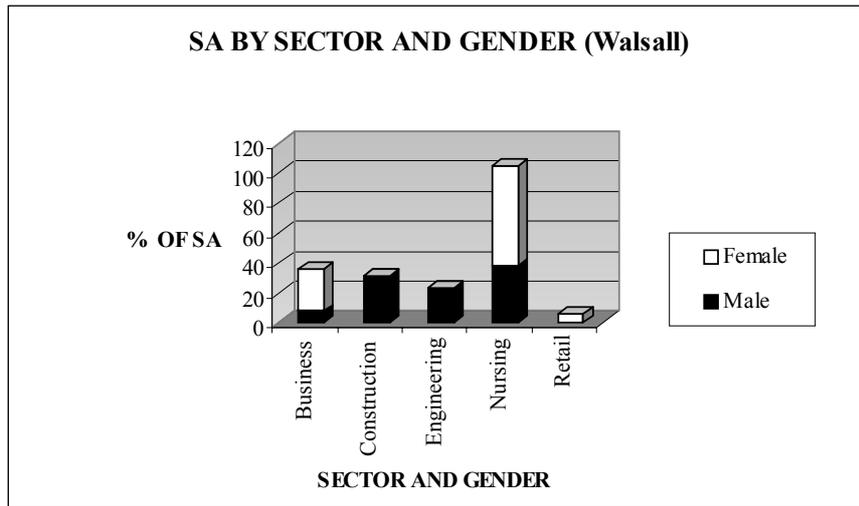
Student Apprentices were employed in a broad range of sectors. There were distinct variations in the sector focus of each of the pilot areas, which will be described in more detail below. Bristol offered the widest variety of occupational sectors (7), followed by Walsall (5), and Birmingham (3). Common sectors offered across all three areas included construction and engineering.

In terms of gender, Birmingham recruited 75% of males, compared to a more even split between the genders in the Bristol and Walsall areas (60% male participation). In terms of ethnic groups, a small percentage of British Asian people participated in the initiative in Birmingham and Walsall. However, no ethnic minorities took part in the Student Apprenticeship initiative in the Bristol area.

Walsall

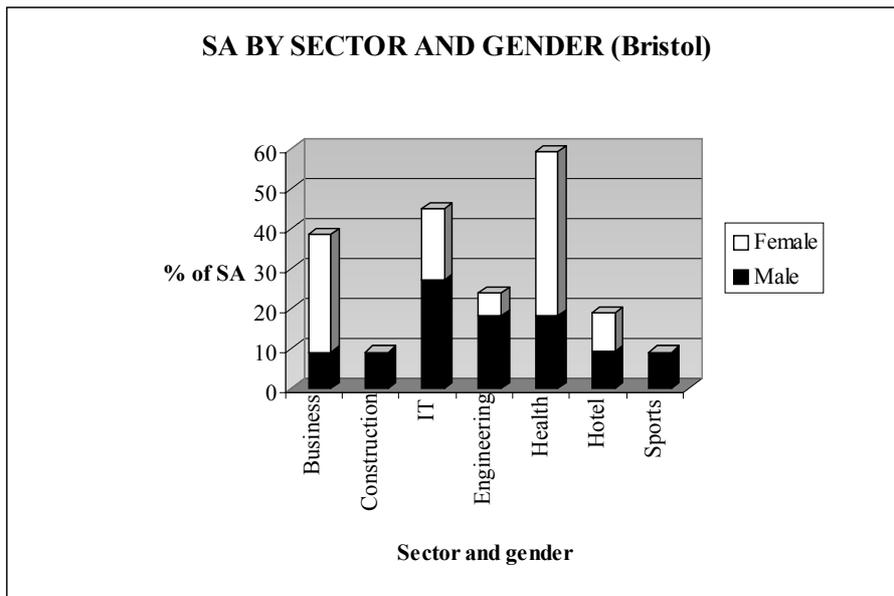
The most popular sector for SA in Walsall was nursing (57%) followed by business (20%) and construction (13%)¹. In terms of gender the most popular sectors for male SAs were construction and engineering. The most popular sectors for female SAs were nursing and business. A small percentage of British Asian people participated in the initiative in Walsall.

¹ Participation rates are given in percentage terms by gender.



Bristol

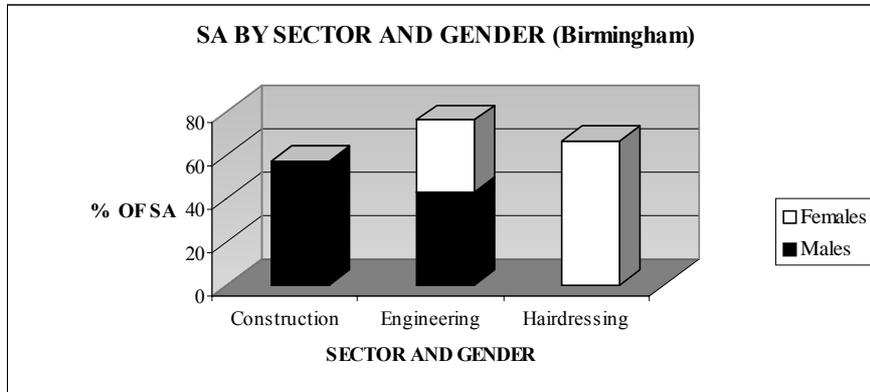
Bristol offered the highest number of options (7) of the three pilot areas. The most popular choices for Student Apprenticeship participation were health, IT, engineering and business². Only one participant from an ethnic minority took part in the Student Apprenticeship initiative in the Bristol area.



² Participation rates are given in percentage terms by gender.

Birmingham

In Birmingham the most popular destinations were construction and engineering (40% each) followed by hairdressing (20%). There is a clear gender split with males doing construction and engineering and females doing mainly hairdressing³. A small percentage of British Asian people participated in the initiative in Birmingham.



³ Participation rates are given in percentage terms by gender.

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION CONTEXTS

The implementation contexts for the Student Apprenticeship initiative differed significantly in the three pilot areas. This section will identify some of the key differences in the implementation structures applied in each of the areas, in diagrammatic form.

3.1 Implementation Structure

This section illustrates the strategic implementation structures that have been applied in the Student Apprenticeship areas. The models demonstrate how the initiative has been implemented distinctively within each locality. A brief description is provided for each model, providing an indication of the key variations between localities. It is important to note that the models represent the broad implementation pattern in the localities, and that there were inevitably some deviations from the broad patterns in different circumstances.

The roles and responsibilities of each of the main agencies/ practitioner groups will be considered in more detail in section 5, focusing on selection and retention issues.

Strategic Implementation Models

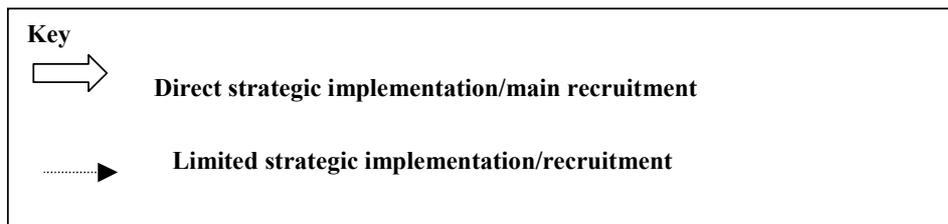
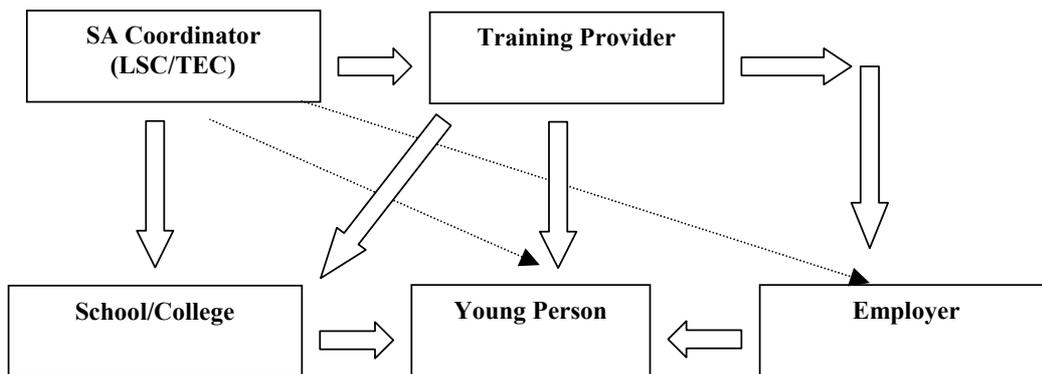
The models show the level of involvement of different agencies in each area. The level of involvement reflects stakeholders' perceptions of their expected/ preferred level of involvement. For example, direct involvement commonly demonstrated that practitioners viewed the role as fulfilled. Where indirect involvement is indicated stakeholders often referred to the need to increase the level of involvement of a particular agency or group. For example, the indirect involvement of the school/ college with the training provider was often cited as a source of frustration or an area where liaison could be improved. It is important to note that a key feature in all three models is the lack of involvement between schools/ colleges and employers. Whilst there were examples of good practice developments in this area, all three localities could benefit from the development of strategic links between schools/colleges and employers.

Walsall: Post-16 model

Key variations:

- Training Provider key role in the selection of companies and young people
- Lack of school/ college links with employers
- Sector specific
- Participants were required to undertaken units of accreditation towards NVQ and/ or Key Skills

Walsall



It is important to note that the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator and the Co-ordinating Body had a greater role in the implementation/ recruitment of Student Apprentices to the initiative in the years prior to the evaluation. The Student Apprenticeship initiative was pioneered in Walsall and prior to the cessation in funding in the year prior to TEC closure (in the lead up the amalgamation of the four TEC area into the Black Country LSC), the TEC played a key role in the implementation of the initiative. This was through the conducting of in-school assessments with Year 11 pupils. The assessments consisted of a mixture of Saville and Holsworth technical and personal test batteries. The Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator explained the opportunities available through the SA and MA schemes. Following testing, the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator notified candidates of their scores, and forwarded them an application form and a certificate. The tests were conducted by a trained consultant. At the time of the evaluation, the Black Country LSC was hoping to reinstate these assessments, or replacing them with Key Skills assessments. These activities were very

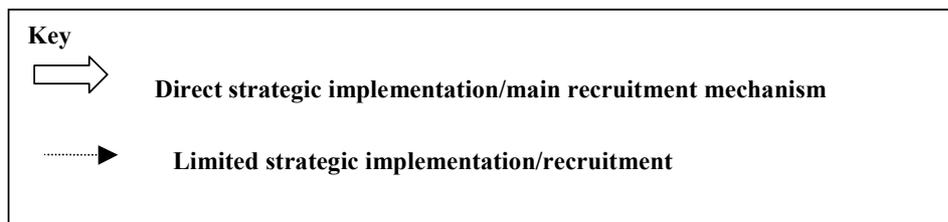
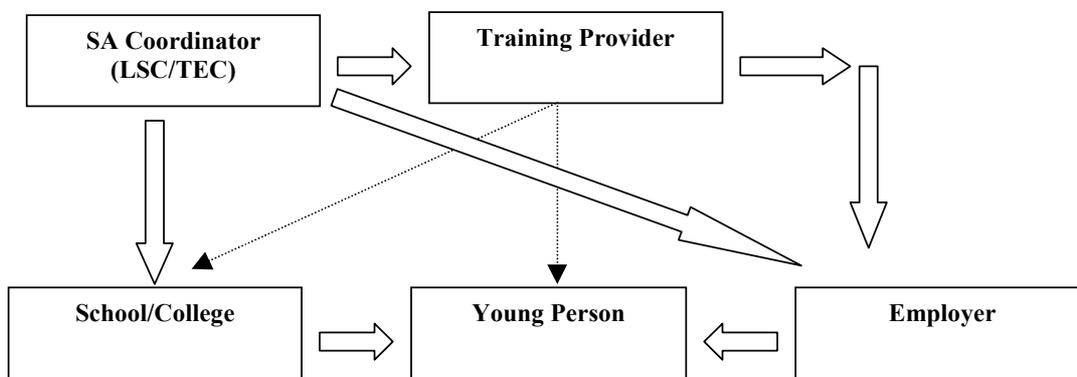
successful in promoting the Student Apprenticeship initiative to young people at an earlier stage.

Bristol: Post-16 model

Key variations:

- Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator key role in the recruitment of companies and young people
- Lack of school/ college links with employers
- Learner centred
- Participants were encouraged to undertake units of accreditation

Bristol



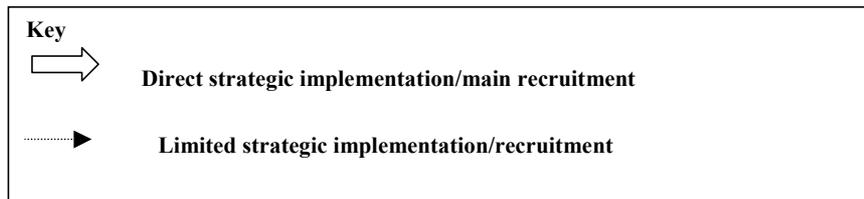
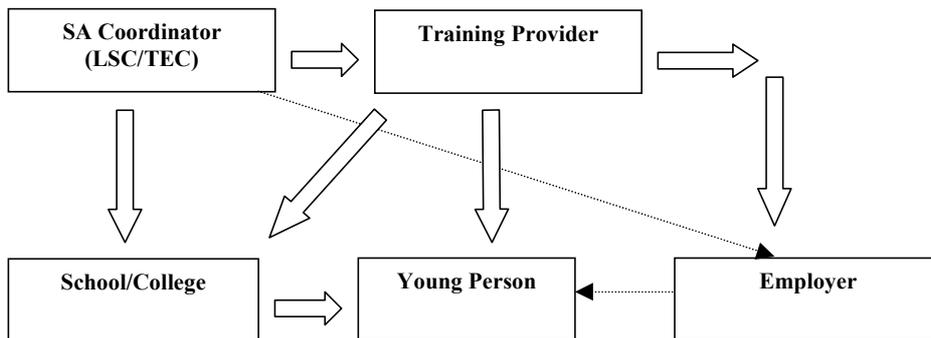
Birmingham: Pre-16 model

Key variations:

Training providers key role in recruitment, training and provision of work based experience

- Less direct employer involvement. The majority of placements were provided by training providers who also functioned as employers. (Some large local employers also provided the training element of the Student Apprenticeship).
- Lack of school/ college links with employers
- Sector specific
- Participants were encouraged to undertake units of accreditation where this was viable

Birmingham



4.0 PROMOTION OF THE INITIATIVE

Promotion of the Student Apprenticeship initiative has been limited to date, owing to a lack of resources for the development of promotional materials. This has resulted in the knock-on effect of limited information being available on the structure of the initiative. Whilst the flexible implementation of the initiative to suit the needs of individual young people and companies has worked well during the piloting phase, there is a need for clearer targeting of the initiative through co-ordinated promotion in the national roll out of the initiative.

However, there are clear examples of good practice in promotional materials produced during the piloting of the Student Apprenticeship initiative, developed at both strategic policy and practitioner levels. These will be discussed in more detail below.

Promotional materials

To date the majority of material development has been undertaken by the individual LSC's, (and formerly the TECs), producing a range of leaflets. Training providers have also produced promotional leaflets and distributed these to local schools and colleges. A number of schools have produced promotional materials, such as display noticeboards featuring existing Student Apprentices. The Department for Education and Skills produced a formal promotional booklet for the initiative during 2001, featuring case studies of how the scheme had been implemented in two of the pilot regions; Walsall and Bristol.

Promotional events

Training providers have been involved in a number of events to promote the initiative, as visiting speakers in schools; holding discussion groups with relevant year groups; attending careers events, parents evenings and industry days. The Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinators from the LSC's in several areas have also promoted the initiative in schools. One teacher in a Bristol school referred to:

'The link between the school and [the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator], invite her to speak at the school and then distribute the information to Careers and around the school'

Schools and Colleges have also undertaken Student Apprenticeship promotion themselves. This has included presentations in assembly, tutorials and open evenings. One participant said:

'The Head of 6th Form...said it was the next best thing to going to university', and 'Leaflets were handed out at a tutorial with applications forms to be filled in if [we were] interested'

Involving previous Student Apprentices in promotional activities

Good practice has been developed by several providers to involve previous participants in promotional activities for the initiative. For example, Foundation and Advanced Modern

Apprentices at Walsall Manor Hospital Trust who recently completed their Student Apprenticeship promoted the scheme to Year 11 pupils at the secondary school they attended. They also attended a parents' evening for Year 6 pupils, to discuss the benefits of the initiative in raising awareness of subject choices and as preparation for a career. The school referred to the positive image projected by the previous Student Apprentices, (wearing their uniforms). Participation in such promotional activities had the additional benefit of reinforcing the personal development of the previous Student Apprentices, in terms of their confidence and communication skills.

Lack of employer involvement in promotional activities

Employers have had limited involvement in the promotion of the Student Apprenticeship initiative to date, and have attributed this to several factors. Promotional activities were viewed as being the responsibility of the Learning and Skills Council and training providers by a number of employers.

Some employers stated that they were reluctant or felt unable to promote the initiative, as they were unclear about the formal structure of the initiative. Employers also stated that they lacked the time and resources to go to schools and colleges to recruit directly, and viewed this as the training provider's role. Employers were satisfied that the training provider would make all the necessary information available to students.

However, some good practice examples of employer involvement in promoting the initiative were evident, demonstrating the motivation of employers to promote the Student Apprenticeship initiative. For example, one employer spoke of the initiative providing a valuable opportunity for the company to undertake a:

'PR exercise in the community' by 'supporting learning and development' in the locality.

Distinguishing the Student Apprenticeship from Modern Apprenticeship programmes

The research findings demonstrated several instances of confusion in the distinction between the Student Apprenticeship and Modern Apprenticeship models. This was evident amongst a minority of responses from both the young people and employer groups. Whilst this can be attributed in part to the length of time that had expired between their involvement in the initiative and the interview, this does demonstrate the importance of, and challenge for, clearer promotion of the initiative. This is particularly important with the minority of employers that do not differentiate between training programmes, to them participants were 'just an apprentice.'

Increasing education provider awareness

Several schools were not aware of the initiative, despite pupil involvement. The Student Apprenticeship was not clearly distinguished from other initiatives which enabled work experience to be undertaken by pre-16s who had been disapplying or poor attenders. This is a particular concern given by employers. However, increasing the involvement of schools in

the initiative should be viewed as a strategic development issue for the LSC and education managers, rather than a personal motivation/ commitment issue for individual teachers. As noted in the final section of the report, schools face considerable financial and performance pressures that curtail their involvement in work based learning programmes.

4.1 Issues for future implementation: promotional activities

Engaging young people's interest

Participants in the initiative felt that the initiative needs more publicity and targeting to attract potential recruits. The way the initiative is currently published was viewed as 'boring'; students suggested that the initiative should be promoted in teenage literature, in magazines such as 'More' and 'Sugar'. They also suggested advertising the initiative on local TV and radio, and via posters displayed in prominent places.

Parental Involvement

Schools, colleges and training providers commonly referred to the influence of parental opinion on pupil choice. Promotion to parents has mainly been confined to discussions with teachers, and in limited cases, with training providers and previous Student Apprentices, at parents' evenings and school events. Practitioners maintained that it was necessary to increase parental awareness of the initiative as an alternative route for their children into employment or higher education, so that the initiative was seen as part of a career plan, rather than as a last resort. One training provider expressed this as:

'parents need to be made more aware of the help that is available outside the academic world and the positive value of alternative routes, and that these different routes can lead towards university but that real experience, which will help the young person find work, is picked up along the way'.

School Liaison

Timetabling and teaching commitments limit the potential level of school involvement in promotional activities, and a national roll out of the initiative may benefit from the creation of a link person between the school and other providers.

Agency collaboration

The development of inter-agency collaboration is important, to raise awareness of the initiative and ensure that it is considered alongside other career choices. One training provider referred to this as:

'people need to be made aware at quite an early stage, so schools have a role to play in promoting the Student Apprenticeship, and the careers service as well... it needs everyone to pull together and market the Student Apprenticeship.'

The role of the Connexions Service is a particularly important issue for a national roll out of the initiative, as their involvement in the direct promotion of the initiative to young people had been limited to date. The role of the Careers Service in the past has been mainly in facilitating links between training providers and local schools.

Professional marketing to employers

A number of training providers and employers referred to the need for the programme to be seen as a marketing opportunity, and for the LSC to develop a clear marketing strategy in collaboration with providers. One training provider commented:

'The way information is presented to employers needs to be professional and explain the service being offered clearly'

They also suggested that the initiative could be marketed to employers as an opportunity to invest in their future workforce:

'grooming someone for the future with your company'

Training providers maintained that a professional marketing approach was essential if the initiative was to attract the interest of large employers.

A cross section of practitioners endorsed the need to increase the promotional aspect of the Student Apprenticeship initiative, but stated that additional funding would be required to fund some of these activities and increase the capacity of the initiative to cope with increasing demand for Student Apprenticeship placements.

5.0 SELECTION, RECRUITMENT AND TAKE UP

5.1 Players in the selection process

The selection and recruitment process for the Student Apprenticeship initiative is driven by a number of key players. Although the specific nature of the process differed within each area participating in the pilot, clear trends can be demonstrated regarding the involvement of key players in the selection and recruitment process. (The main differences are illustrated in the implementation models, in section 3). The main players in the selection process are schools and colleges; employers; training providers; and the Learning and Skills Councils (formerly the TECs).

Clear evidence emerged from the research demonstrating that targeting strategies were employed by the selectors, reflecting their particular standpoint and purpose for being involved in the initiative. The report will now consider these strategies in turn, before considering the actual interview process.

5.2 Recruitment Criteria

This section will highlight the main recruitment role of the key players in the selection and recruitment process, and the criteria they employ to make these assessments. It is important to note that the role of each agency differs in each area. These variances are demonstrated in the implementation models illustrated in section 3. Factors affecting the selection and recruitment process itself will be considered in more detail in section 5.4

Training Providers

Training providers in the Walsall and Birmingham areas have been instrumental in recruiting employers to take part in the initiative. The majority of employers involved in the initiative in these areas have previously been involved in Modern Apprenticeship programmes. Training providers have provided a pivotal role in the Student Apprenticeship initiative in these areas, gaining information on candidates from schools and colleges, screening clients and forwarding the details of appropriate candidates onto employers.

Training providers had a less direct role in the recruitment process in the Bristol region, a significant proportion of this work being undertaken by the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator. (This role is discussed later in this section).

The recruitment criteria employed by training providers was consistent across the three pilot regions, and was informed by several main considerations. General presentation and communication skills were viewed as particularly important, essential for the creation of a good impression with a company. As training providers depend upon local employers to provide placements for a range of programmes, it was important that Student Apprentices create a good impression, and were seen as viable candidates for employment by employers. A number of training providers referred to the importance of 'not wasting employer time'.

Training providers were also motivated by recruiting Student Apprentices that would be likely to wish to progress onto either a Foundation or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship.

Links with the Careers Service/ Connexions

Although the direct involvement of the Careers Service in the recruitment of young people to the initiative has been limited to date, a number of training providers have utilised the Service as an intermediary in order to establish relations with local schools and colleges. One training provider described this process as follows:

'we tend to get more referrals from Careers and Connexions and we use that to get a better relationship with schools'

Employers

Employers highlighted specific requirements that informed the recruitment criteria they employed in the appointment of Student Apprentices. It is illuminating to note that employers frequently referred to the demonstration of interest and a level of aptitude for the industry as being more, or at least as important, as the qualification being studied by the young person or their previous attainment levels. Employers commonly referred to the value they place upon candidates demonstrating a willingness to learn and appreciate the company focus, having the 'right approach and right attitude'. Communication and presentation skills were particularly valued in the interview process, many employers referring to the importance of feeling that the candidate would 'fit in', demonstrating common sense, initiative, keenness and commitment.

School/ Colleges

Schools had little influence over the actual recruitment process, although they had significant influence over the initial selection and screening process. There was little evidence of collaboration between schools and colleges and training providers/ employers at the interview stage. However, some schools did in effect influence the recruitment process, by only identifying several potential students to participate in the scheme, significantly curtailing the opportunity for the training provider or employer to recruit from a pool of potential candidates. This was most apparent in the Birmingham pilot.

Learning and Skills Councils

The role of the Learning and Skills Council in the recruitment and selection process has varied significantly between the regions. In some areas, such as Walsall, the role of the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator has largely been a developmental role, designing materials and standards for the initiative in addition to publicising and bringing other TECs and LSCs on board. With the emergence of the Black Country LSC, responsibility for the Student Apprenticeship initiative has been divided into two distinct roles, one focused on strategic development, and the other with a remit for operational issues. The role of the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator in Birmingham has mainly focused on increasing the

involvement and interest of providers in the locality. Although the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinators in both the Black County and Birmingham have been involved in fielding queries and managing the application process, they have not been directly involved in the selection of young people onto the initiative.

The Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator in the West of England has played a key role in promotion and encouraging the participation of local companies in the initiative. Whilst Training providers in the Walsall and Birmingham areas have largely been responsible for employer involvement, the SA Co-ordinator in the West of England has played a key role in the recruitment of companies to provide placements for Student Apprentices. The West of England pilot has emphasised SME involvement in particular, and the Co-ordinator for the region has established significant links with small businesses in the area to offer placements in a wide variety of sectors. The pilots in the Birmingham and Walsall areas have been more sector specific in the main, and the majority of employer links were already established through involvement in Modern Apprenticeship and other programmes. (However, there has been some involvement of SMEs in the Walsall region, providing placements to fit with individual young people's requirements).

The Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator for the West of England also provided an administrative function for the student selection process. The Co-ordinator identified and agreed all placement opportunities with local employers, and then advertised and marketed placements to schools, colleges and potential Student Apprentices. The Co-ordinator forwarded all application forms and CVs received from young people to employers. This provided employers with a range of CVs, allowing them to make their own decision regarding the potential of applicants from a range of backgrounds, and with varying educational attainment levels. Employers selected promising candidates for interview, and made their own selection about young people to offer Student Apprenticeships to. Vacancies were pitched at candidates with the potential to achieve NVQs at level 3. The Co-ordinator and teachers provided support for students during the application process. This system worked very effectively in Bristol, although a minority of employers stated that they would have liked to have received more CVs for consideration. This indicates the potential the initiative has for expanding participation in the event of a national roll out of the initiative.

5.3 Take-up Issues

Take-up levels in the Student Apprenticeship pilots have been high, both amongst employers, training providers and young people. A range of providers, including the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinators from the LSCs, and teachers in schools have referred to receiving applications and enquiries from young people far in excess of the number of available placements. Local employers have demonstrated their interest in the initiative as a recruitment mechanism and as a means of attracting people into industry at an earlier age. One training provider referred to the initiative as providing employers with a 'trial', treating the process as if:

'they were interviewing for a job'

Training providers have been keen to become involved in the initiative, although resourcing issues to date have limited the number of Student Apprentices they could work with. (This issue will be considered in more detail in section 12 of the report).

Take up of the initiative to date has demonstrated several key issues in relation to the involvement of schools and colleges. Schools and colleges have tended to align specific study programmes with the initiative, thereby limiting the involvement of young people to specific groups. The way in which the initiative has been perceived and channelled by schools and colleges has had a fundamental impact on the delivery of the initiative. The calibre of pupils selected by schools/ colleges to take part will steer training provider and employer decisions and involvement in the initiative to some extent. Whilst targeting has not constituted a major concern in the piloting phase, this demonstrates the central role schools/ colleges play in the delivery of the initiative. This suggests the need to develop a strategic framework for schools, to guide student selection in line with regional targeting priorities in the event of a national roll out of the initiative.

Take-up issues in relation to equal opportunities will be considered in section 12.

5.4 Issues for Future Implementation: Factors impacting on the selection and recruitment process

Work interests

The ability to demonstrate a real interest in the business of the company or provider offering the work placement was a key factor in how apprentices were selected and recruited. Whilst this was most evident from the employer's perspective, this was also a key consideration for training providers. For example, training providers referred to the importance of maintaining sound links with local employers, and therefore candidates should only be recommended to employers if they were confident that they would make a positive addition to the company. This has been a particularly important issue in the initiative so far, given the high percentage of company involvement from the SME sector. Employers expected potential Student Apprentices to demonstrate an understanding and genuine interest in the work of the company. This issue is considered in more detail in sections 10 and 11.

Study Programme

A young person's study programme often acted as an informal screening process, prior to recruitment. Schools and colleges operated clear selection processes at a subject level rather than on the basis of individual pupils' interests. Education management therefore systematised selection and recruitment onto the Student Apprenticeship initiative. Schools and colleges identified a range of study programmes that they viewed as relevant or compatible with the initiative, sometimes limiting promotion of the initiative to students on these courses. For example, in some schools the GNVQ Co-ordinator had responsibility for operating the initiative, suggesting that pupil involvement should be sought from within the boundaries of those studying towards GNVQs.

However, as discussed in the following section, significant variations were evident between the three models, with some schools offering a significantly more individualised targeting approach.

Schools applying the pre-16 model were influenced by the truancy factor, commonly employing the Student Apprenticeship as a means of trying to re-engage disaffected or under-motivated pupils. These schools cited involvement in training or the work place as a key tool in the development of these pupils, and therefore selected pupils who were underachieving, truanting or at risk of exclusion to participate on the course. In addition to the benefits this has for the individual young person, it also provides the school with a valuable opportunity to establish links with other providers. For example, one teacher referred to the initiative as enabling the school to extend their existing links with the local college to deliver GNVQs, by adding the third dimension of employment experience. It was envisaged that students would complete two days in school, two days in college and one day a week in a work environment. Additional support was provided for these young people during their placement.

Reconciliation with study commitments

The reconciliation of the Student Apprenticeship with study commitments was a significant factor affecting whether young people could be selected to take part in the initiative. Timetabling represented the primary consideration in education management systems. Teachers commonly referred to the fact that pupils were expected to spend one full day a week on the Student Apprenticeship, and so this largely limited participation in the scheme to people either studying GNVQs, or 1-2 A/AS levels.

Schools and colleges were reluctant to encourage students studying for more than two A/AS levels or an Advanced GNVQ to become involved in the initiative, as the work experience element of the initiative might have the unintended consequence of deflecting students' attention from their studies. Although there was little evidence from the evaluation to suggest this, there was a real concern amongst schools and colleges that this could result in students achieving lower grades or even dropping an examination subject.

Complementing academic study

Providers viewed the Student Apprenticeship as combining more appropriately with Intermediate than Advanced GNVQs. The Intermediate level provided more opportunities for utilising practical experience gained through the placement in students' GNVQ portfolio. Several providers referred to the Student Apprenticeship as having less relevance for those undertaking Advanced GNVQs, both in terms of evidence based activity and the academic demands of their course. However, it is important to note that this viewpoint may stem from funding arrangements. For example, a student progressing onto an AMA with an NVQ level 3 may result in less outcome funding for the provider. It could therefore be seen as in the providers' financial interests to focus Student Apprenticeship activity at the Intermediate level. Funding structures should therefore be given careful consideration in any future roll out of the initiative.

In practice, the piloting phase of the Student Apprenticeship initiative demonstrates the ability of the initiative to act as a stabilising factor for student study. This issue will be considered in more detail in Section 6, on retention issues.

Tailoring the initiative to individual need

Several good practice examples emerged regarding the flexible implementation of the initiative, tailored to individual need. This was most evident with young people studying 3/4 A/AS levels, or NVQs at level 3, who had a clear idea of their future career aspirations, and who wished to progress into either an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship or direct employment. For example, one training provider established a placement for a pupil at an accountancy firm on a flexible basis, in order to reconcile the placement with her study commitments on A level programmes. The apprentice was able to attend the placement for half days, and did not attend every week. The placement proved particularly successful and the apprentice is now employed by the accountancy firm, and is studying for her AAT examinations. The initiative was also tailored to the individual requirements of the young person at a construction company, providing work experience for a boy undertaking an NVQ level 3 in construction. The apprentice worked on a number of sites, and was subsequently sponsored by the company through University.

As the comments above demonstrate, there are significant factors impacting upon the selection and recruitment process prior to the young person having the potential to influence their selection onto the Student Apprenticeship initiative via the interview process.

6.0 ATTAINMENT AND RETENTION

6.1 Attainment issues

This section will consider the impact of the initiative upon attainment rates from the educational perspective, drawing on the responses of schools/ colleges and young people, and will then turn to a consideration of wider attainment issues emerging from the employer perspective.

It is difficult to quantify the impact of the Student Apprenticeship on attainment, in terms of qualifications gained, for a number of reasons. Most students were part way through their scheme of study before they started their Student Apprenticeship, and few were on the initiative for the full duration of their study programme. The average duration of a Student Apprenticeship was between 6-9 months. Schools and colleges were therefore cautious to directly attribute attainment improvements to the pupil's placement. However, considerable anecdotal evidence was gained from both teachers and pupils, which viewed the initiative as having a decisive impact on improvements in attainment levels. For example, one teacher referred to an 'incredible difference' in the pupils that had become Student Apprentices. These pupils re-sat an AQA test after participating in the initiative for six months, and attained significantly higher scores. The teacher attributed this improvement to the 'practical experience' gained through their SA placements, which had 'connected' the 'isolated parts' of the theoretical course. The teacher asserted that she had 'not seen the same improvement' in other students who were undertaking exactly the same course, but were not involved in the Student Apprenticeship initiative. Another teacher maintained that a pupil had:

'performed at a higher standard than had [she] not done the placement'.

Student Apprenticeship placements did provide a proportion of participants with the opportunities, experience and skills development to directly acquire Key Skills, particularly in Communication, IT and Application of Number.

Reconciling the Student Apprenticeship with the school/ college timetable and the duration of the placement were key issues limiting the impact of the initiative upon attainment rates in the piloting phase. Some pupils were only active in the scheme for a six month period, because the initiative was not established until January, and the pupils' study programme was completed in June/ July. Placements were often structured to finish towards the end of the study programme, to allow students time to concentrate on revision for examinations. A number of teachers suggested that it would be beneficial for Student Apprenticeship placements to begin earlier in the academic year, thereby enabling pupils to participate in the scheme for at least 8 months. This would still allow time at the beginning of the academic year for pupils to adjust to their new programme of study. One teacher highlighted this difficulty as:

'the timetable is fixed so that it is possible, but it is difficult if the placement is not decided until November'

It is important to note a key variable in relation to retention issues within the pre-16 group. Whilst it was not clear that participation in the Student Apprenticeship initiative had had an immediate impact upon the attainment levels of this group, in relation to their GCSE/ GNVQ studies at school, there were clear indications that the initiative had raised the longer term learning aspirations of participants. Young people in this cohort, whilst often admitting to their lack of interest in the school curriculum, referred to their intention to acquire NVQs in the workplace after leaving school, mainly aspiring to careers as in the skilled manual field. This demonstrates several important issues in relation to expectations/ provision for the pre-16 group. It suggests the need for schools to be more involved in the determination of the aims and objectives of the placement with employers, and their subsequent implementation, if the purpose is for the initiative to have a direct impact upon attainment at school. However, this finding also reinforces school and employer convictions that some pupils may be best educated in alternative settings to the school environment.

Attainment issues produced a range of responses from employers. A significant proportion of employers interviewed for the evaluation raised concerns about assessing the benefits of the initiative through its ability to impact on attainment levels. Employers maintained that this was a small component in the benefits to be gained through participation in work based learning placements. The relevance of the school curriculum and attainment levels to employers largely depended on the sector they were based in, and the nature of their business.

Good practice was demonstrated in the development of direct links between the curriculum and the business sector. For example, a student undertaking a GNVQ in Business Administration referred to the employer placement, (with a building society), as:

‘enhancing [his] business understanding through first hand experience’.

This student was able to undertake an organisational structure study as part of his placement, providing direct coursework evidence for his GNVQ. This example demonstrates how Student Apprenticeship placements can be used to raise attainment levels, and equally importantly, enhance the understanding of the young person in applying the theory of the classroom to the practicality of the workplace. The benefits of Student Apprenticeship placements in helping pupils to develop a greater understanding and application of knowledge gained in school/ college to employment practice was viewed as an immeasurable benefit of the initiative, and was often viewed by teachers in the post 16 pilot as having:

‘a positive effect on achievement in school’

However, a number of employers referred to the difficulty of relating the curriculum to specific sectors. For example, a number of employers were freight forwarding companies, which require very specific technical knowledge and skills. These employer placements therefore focused on introducing the young person to the industry, rather than on drawing tenuous links with the SA’s studies at school or college. Employers frequently referred to the importance of Student Apprentices displaying transferable skills rather than high attainment levels in specific subjects. A minority of employers also referred to their concern that qualifications taught in schools and colleges do not meet ‘employer requirements.’

6.2 Retention issues

There is little direct evidence regarding the impact of the Student Apprenticeship initiative on retention rates. Students selected to take part in the initiative in the main, particularly the post 16 group, were not viewed by their school/ college as being at high risk from dropping out of their study courses prior to their involvement in the initiative. However, a proportion of the post 16 students participating in the initiative had reduced the number of subjects they were studying, prior to becoming Student Apprentices. The placement helped maintain their level of interest in their studies, by demonstrating the prospects in the workplace if they achieved at a particular level.

Retention issues were more apparent with the pre-16 cohort in the piloting phase. This target group was more at risk of dropping out of school, owing to lack of motivation, or engagement with the school and learning process. Teachers and young people involved in the pre-16 pilot did refer to incidences where involvement in the Student Apprenticeship initiative had had a positive impact upon the retention of young people at school. Several training providers maintained that improved school liaison could have helped retain the few early leavers and persistent non-attenders at school.

6.2.1 Recognition for positive early leavers

An important aspect of the retention issue is the recognition of positive reasons for leaving a study programme prior to completion. This is particularly relevant to the Student Apprenticeship initiative, given that many of the participants were aiming for employment, either as Modern Apprentices or mainstream employees. A small percentage of participants in the post 16 areas left courses early, and these incidences were viewed as positive outcomes by the young people themselves, the school/ college and employer. The knowledge and experiences gained through their Student Apprenticeship enabled several people to reassess their career aspirations and course choice. In some instances the programme had raised the students' aspirations and confidence in their own abilities so significantly that people applied for higher level courses. For example, one participant left her nursing Student Apprenticeship early, as she decided she wanted to study nursing at degree level. This entailed her altering her study course from an Intermediate GNVQ in Health and Social Care to the Advanced GNVQ.

Increasing Student Apprenticeship awareness of employment opportunities and career pathways represents another dimension to the issue of positive reasons for young people to leave their study programme prior to its completion. Young people and employers frequently referred to the benefit of the initiative in promoting informed career choice. This was viewed as a real benefit to both employers and young people. For example, one Student Apprentice left her programme of study early after making:

'an informed choice before taking [it] as a career'.

This demonstrates the importance of flexibility in enabling young people to change their study programmes in line with a reassessment of their career objectives.

Within the pre-16 model there were several exceptions to the rule, in that participation in the Student Apprenticeship did not improve pupil retention at school. However, both the schools and employers involved in these cases referred to a marked improvement in the attitude and ability of these young people as a result of their involvement in the initiative. One teacher referred to the 'behaviour' of one boy who:

'didn't want to come to school [as] improving beyond all recognition' in the workplace as he 'understood the discipline and plain speaking' on the shopfloor.

Some of the young people who did continue attending school felt that they were 'marking time' until they could start work. As noted above, involvement in the Student Apprenticeship initiative did raise the longer term attainment aspirations of these young people.

6.3 Issues for Future Implementation: Alternative education settings

The section above demonstrates the value and benefits to be derived from the provision of education in alternative settings for disappplied or at risk pupils. A national roll out of the Student Apprenticeship initiative could therefore offer considerable potential for policy development and practitioner development with pathfinder schools around the development of an alternative vocational curriculum for disappplied pupils.

Retention could also be enhanced through reconciling the SA with study at an earlier stage in the academic year. This would involve considerable forward planning for schools and colleges, recommending that Student Apprenticeship placements be negotiated during the Summer break, to ensure:

'guaranteed placements, so that the timetable can be worked out around it'.

7.0 MOTIVATIONAL ISSUES

The Student Apprenticeship pilots achieved a significant impact on participant motivation. Evidence of improved student motivation levels was clear to all stakeholder groups involved in the delivery of the initiative: schools; colleges; training providers; employers; and particularly the young people themselves. This section will demonstrate how the initiative increased participant motivation in three key regards.

7.1 Relevance of academic study to employment

Students' motivation in relation to their academic study increased significantly as a result of the SA placement, demonstrating the relevance of the individual's school or college work to the workplace and their career aspirations. For example, business studies students, undertaking G/NVQ and A/AS level courses referred to the development of their 'commercial skills and awareness' through their placement. Placements within a range of businesses from accountancy firms to new media SMEs provided business studies students with an advantage in providing evidence for units of their coursework. This significantly increased the motivation of the young person both within their academic study and their placement, and they were aware of their increasing skills development through the practical application of their business knowledge. This stimulated the interest and desire of young people to learn, as the placement was closely aligned to the career aspirations of the Student Apprentice.

Participants and practitioners involved in the initiative frequently attributed an increase in student motivation levels to the development of their transferable and interpersonal skills. The development of an analytical problem solving ability, for example, significantly increased the participant's self-confidence and motivation, as they now felt they were in a position to make a valuable contribution to the work of the employer. The development of these skills was often interlinked. For example, one participant felt he had gained:

'technical skills with using machinery and confidence...I think it will help me to get a job'

This view is reinforced by the response from a school teacher, who referred to the value of the initiative as providing participants with the opportunity to:

'develop confidence and competence...actual skills on the job'

The development of communication skills in particular were identified by Student Apprentices as increasing their motivational levels, as they felt that this increased their confidence to interact with people in a professional manner, both face to face and on the telephone. A College teacher referred to a Student Apprentice who:

'came across very difficult situations on a on-to-one communication level which challenged her and developed her communication skills'

These experiences increased the motivation of young people to achieve their Key Skill in Communication, as they could see the importance of this skill as the foundation of their workplace competencies. For example, participants in a focus group referred to the level of 'respect' and 'appreciation of others' they received as a result of their Student Apprenticeship. They attributed this directly to their improved ability to interact with a range of people, from fellow employees to clients and the public.

7.2 Increasing Student Awareness of Entry Requirements

Motivational improvement was also evident in Student Apprentices as a result of their placement increasing their awareness of the entry grades required for their chosen career pathway, or to follow their career aspirations. The advantages of undertaking work-based learning in conjunction with academic study were expressed by one training provider as:

'for GNVQ students' [the Student Apprenticeship] is ideal because they are able to demonstrate competencies and put theory into practice'

The importance of achieving a sufficient level of competencies through their GNVQ motivated participants to work more diligently towards the completion of their portfolio. Students participating in a focus group referred to this as giving them a 'push' to do their coursework, which they viewed as a 'nice pressure', maintaining that the Student Apprenticeship and their study programme was 'well balanced'.

7.3 Life after School

The Student Apprenticeship initiative also impacted upon the motivational levels of participants by increasing their awareness of opportunities available to them upon leaving school. This was particularly apparent with the pre-16 cohort, many of whom had negative and pessimistic attitudes towards their future employment prospects prior to involvement in the initiative. These views were often based on very limited knowledge of the workplace and employment opportunities, and reinforced by their negative educational experiences. Student Apprenticeship placements significantly increased the motivation and aspiration levels of the pre-16 group, although this was mainly focused on future employment prospects, rather than increasing their motivation in relation to their academic study. Student Apprentices from the pre-16 group referred to their placement as:

'very good, gives you a chance to see what real work life is like', and

'good to see what its like for a job after school'

The success of the Student Apprenticeship in increasing young people's motivation to continue their study post compulsory schooling is demonstrated in the following section. This is particularly apparent with the pre-16 group, many of whom wished to achieve NVQs in the workplace through Modern Apprenticeship programmes, rather than achieving academically within the school setting.

7.4 Support Issues

The level of support that should be provided for Student Apprentices requires careful consideration. A limited level of support had been provided for Student Apprentices in the pilot areas. This section will discuss the support arrangements offered by each provider in the placement process, before considering some of the key issues relating to appropriate support provision for a national roll out of this initiative.

Training Providers

The support provided by training providers was formally focused around organisational and administrative matters, such as conducting assessments and reviews of young people on their placement. The frequency of these reviews varied, but training providers were normally contracted by the LSC/TEC to undertake four reviews during the placement. However, there was clear evidence from the evaluation to demonstrate that the informal support provided by the training provider was an important aspect of their role, some apprentices viewing the training provider 'like a friend'.

Training providers provided an additional support mechanism for Student Apprentices. This was their capacity to act as facilitators in the identification and arrangement of progression routes for young people. These occurred most commonly on two levels. Firstly, the Student Apprenticeship provided training providers with recruits for their Modern Apprenticeship programmes, and therefore they were able to provide young people with advice and support in the identification of their chosen specialisation. Training providers also helped apprentices maintain links with employer placements; and identified skills gaps in need of intensive development. Training providers were therefore in a position to provide a seamless transition route from school/ college to paid employment as a Modern Apprentice (at either the Foundation or Advanced levels). Secondly, in a minority of instances in which the young person was sure that they wanted to move into direct employment, training providers supported young people through providing employer contacts and a reference.

Good practice was evident in terms of agency collaboration to tailor support requirements to the needs of the individual and their employer. For example, a number of training providers were conscious that their assessment of the young person in the work place was reducing the amount of time the young person was on the shopfloor. This was a key consideration for some employers, where the young person was following a clear progression route and therefore needed to acquire a high level of skills through the placement. In these instances, rather than reviewing the young person in their placement, the training provider would make alternative arrangements to visit the young person at school or college to discuss their progress. Whilst this may reduce the ability of the training provider to make a direct assessment of the young person in the workplace, it demonstrates how the agencies involved have collaborated to tailor their support to suit the needs of the individual. In the vast majority of instances where this has occurred, the arrangement was viewed very positively, from the perspective of the young person, training provider, employer and school/ college.

Employers

The provision of support within the employer placement was largely viewed as the responsibility of the manager of the department in which the young person was placed. Despite the fact that the Training Contract drawn up and signed at the commencement of a placement identifies a 'mentor', in practice this is a named contact for signposting purposes, rather than a person with a responsibility to discuss progress and provide direct support to the young person. However, the vast majority of young people interviewed were extremely positive about their placement, and felt that they were well supported by their employer.

Flexible support arrangement worked well in the pilot, particularly given that a significant proportion of Student Apprentices were placed in SMEs, receiving support from a range of individuals. This type of support provided a number of benefits, for example providing the young person with experience of working with a cross section of employees, and reducing the potential for them to become dependent or reliant on one staff member. This is a key consideration in the development of successful mentoring schemes, and the hands-on support approach adopted by the majority of employers involved in the Student Apprentice. This prepared the young person well for the workplace, helping them to develop independence, and self reliance skills essential for the workplace, whilst providing signposting to members of staff for support or guidance where necessary.

School/ College

The level of support provided for Student Apprentices by their School or college was normally limited to the commitment of the teacher designated as having responsibility for the initiative within their school. This was often the GNVQ Co-ordinator, or Head of Sixth Form. Few schools demonstrated a formal support structure. Consequently, young people, employer and training provider perceptions of the support provided by schools varied significantly.

Good practice could be discerned in the level of support provided by a number of individual teachers, with a number of young people referring to their teacher as 'brilliant to talk to' as she:

'listened to what they had to say [about their placement], and then they could carry on with their coursework'.

However, employers commonly referred to the lack of school/ college involvement in the placement. Although not all employers believed that it was necessary or important for schools/ colleges to play a more significant role in the placement process, as this helped the young person develop a sense of independence and reliance on their own ability in the workplace.

Peer group

The peer group clearly provided an important source of support for Student Apprentices working for larger employers. The supportive environment that had been established over the duration of the placement period was tangible in both the focus groups held with young people from the pre- and post-16 groups, as they feel ‘part of a team’ and spur each other to ‘carry on’. Whilst the development of this type of support will mainly develop on an informal basis, providers should consider how approaches could be developed which harness this team work approach in the national roll out, such as team building activities that can be built into the placement.

7.5 *Issues for Future Implementation: What level of support should be provided for Student Apprentices?*

Whilst the above descriptions demonstrate the limited level of support that has been provided for Student Apprentices to date, it is important to remember that the ultimate aim of the initiative is to prepare young people for the work place. Many employers spoke of the primary importance they placed on evidence of workplace orientation skills in a Student Apprentice, such as adaptability, flexibility and working on their own initiative (with some supervision). It is important then that the development of a support structure does not inhibit the potential for young people to take responsibility for their own actions, and that they learn how to interact in the workplace. One employer stated that it is important that Student Apprentices were treated as ‘employees, not students on work experience’.

It is important to differentiate between the support needs of participants in the pre- and post 16 groups. For example, many participants within the post-16 model had reached a level of maturity and self-assurance that meant they were able to take responsibility for their own learning and work based learning experiences, asking for help as required. As noted above, limiting the level of support provided for the post-16 group was essential to ensuring they became self reliant and able to work on their own initiative, and to be viewed as a viable employee. A group of Student Apprentices participating in a post 16 focus group articulated this as:

feeling ‘more serious’, as they were allowed to ‘work on their own’, and felt ‘more in control’ of their learning and development as a result.

The views of these post-16 students can be viewed in direct contrast to opinions expressed by some pre-16 participants. Pre-16 students participating in the Student Apprenticeship initiative appeared to require significantly higher levels of support. This is evident from both employer comments, and young people themselves. For example, one of the rare incidences of a placement being terminated early was perceived by the employer as ‘lack of interest’ from the students, as the participants ‘wouldn’t speak or participate’. This suggests an underlying support issue, with these pupils clearly requiring guidance, and reassurance. This is particularly important for some pre-16s, who require support to make the mental transition from the sheltered school environment to mainstream work experience. For example, some young people expressed their disappointment that their school or college had not been more

involved in their Student Apprenticeship, and felt that they were left to fend for themselves in the employment arena. One young person expressed this as:

'I would have liked them [school] to come out more often and see how I am getting on'

The development of a framework for a national roll out of the initiative would need to give careful consideration to the development of support mechanisms for the pre- and post 16 groups, that goes beyond practical and administrative considerations. It is not clear what form support for the post-16 cohort should take, as many young people cited the informal support they received from employers and school teachers as being the most beneficial. Informal support would seem to be the most appropriate support mechanism for the post-16 initiative, as opposed to the introduction of a formal mentoring structure. Informal support would provide the flexibility and autonomy post-16s need for them to remain in control of their development, but there would need to be some mechanism for ensuring this did occur.

However, a pre-16 support model would need to give careful consideration to the role of a structured support system, led by the school or other agencies. The provision of support and continuity is essential for this group, to enable pupils to be able to benefit from and have the confidence to actively participate in their placement.

8.0 COMPLETING A STUDENT APPRENTICESHIP AS A PRECURSOR TO A MODERN APPRENTICESHIP

The initiative demonstrates a number of merits in completing the Student Apprenticeship prior to entering a Modern Apprenticeship. This section will illustrate how the initiative prepares people for becoming Modern Apprentices, through skills acquisition, the development of work interests and aspirations and personal development and employability skills.

8.1 Skills Acquisition

Employers working in a number of sectors required employees with a specific set of skills. These skills were not part of the national curriculum, and therefore employers in industries such as foundries and freight forwarding have traditionally ‘started from scratch’ with training Modern Apprentices. (The limited application of the national curriculum to some sectors was discussed in more detail in section 6). The Student Apprenticeship therefore provides an opportunity for young people to acquire practical workplace skills, making them more attractive to employers wishing to recruit Modern Apprentices. This type of skills acquisition was particularly beneficial to the pre-16 group, in which people were often more concerned with acquiring the skills required by employers rather than the school curriculum. The majority of the pre-16 group developed important trade skills during their placements, such as in joinery or carpentry, that aided their progression onto Foundation Modern Apprenticeships.

8.2 Developing areas of interest and realistic aspirations

Traditionally young people committed themselves to Modern Apprenticeship programmes without prior experience of working in the field, resulting in high drop out rates being recorded by some Modern Apprenticeship programmes. The Student Apprenticeship initiative helps to fill this breach in the training market, by providing ‘taster’ apprenticeships. One training provider referred to the initiative as enabling young people to:

‘get to know what a job is about, without the pressure to achieve’

This proved important for both the pre- and post-16 cohorts. The majority of pre-16 participants were disapplying, or underachieving at school and had negative experiences of formal expectations of achievement. This group reacted well to the culture of the workplace, which gave them the opportunity to try a range of trades before developing skills that would lead them into a particular Foundation Modern Apprenticeship programme. The Student Apprenticeship enabled this group to make an informed choice about their career development, with participants developing interests and enthusiasm for their chosen industry. One participant expressed this as:

‘I liked everything, the work that I done’

Participation in the Student Apprenticeship was also beneficial for post-16 students wishing to undertake Modern Apprenticeships. In the main these students were aiming to progress into Advanced Modern Apprenticeship programmes, but a minority initially progressed into a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship. The majority of the post 16 participants were undertaking their placement alongside significant coursework and examination demands. Participants from this cohort frequently referred to the value of the Student Apprenticeship in enabling them to explore their work related interests without the burden of compiling paperwork for assessment purposes. This ensured that the placement remained focused on the needs of the workplace, providing a realistic grounding in employment. One teacher viewed the benefit of this being in that it gave the participant the insight to be:

'more realistic about what work in their field is really like'.

A training provider reflected upon the Student Apprenticeship as enhancing participants' interest and aspirations, by providing:

'job prospects, a change of scenery, money, an opportunity which does not mean going to university, help in making career decision and to see if what they have chosen is really for them'

8.3 Employability skills and personal development

The development of employability skills through the Student Apprenticeship was a key factor in preparing participants for training as Modern Apprentices. The acquisition of presentation skills, time keeping and self-discipline were viewed as essential skills, both by employers, training providers and young people. A training provider from Bristol maintained that:

'the Student Apprenticeship prepares young people for the structure of a working day and it might prevent them from dropping out of a Modern Apprenticeship in the future'

Participants in one focus group referred to the Student Apprenticeship as preparing them for the importance of time keeping, as the employer told them that if they were not punctual in their Modern Apprenticeship programme, they would not get paid. The Student Apprentices reacted well to this type of training, claiming that they would 'make sure they were there' on time, to ensure they were paid.

Personal development and interpersonal skills were also viewed as essential skills to be gained through a Student Apprenticeship in preparation for Modern Apprenticeship training. Employers commonly referred to the importance of the young person displaying the 'right attitude', and demonstrating that they would 'fit in' to the company.

The combination of employability and interpersonal skills gained by Student Apprentices helped them to develop an orientation to, and acceptance in, the workplace. This was a particularly important issue for SMEs, which commonly viewed the Student Apprentice as a member of the staff team. Capacity issues for SMEs in particular meant that the real benefit of the initiative was:

‘in its ability to help both sides’

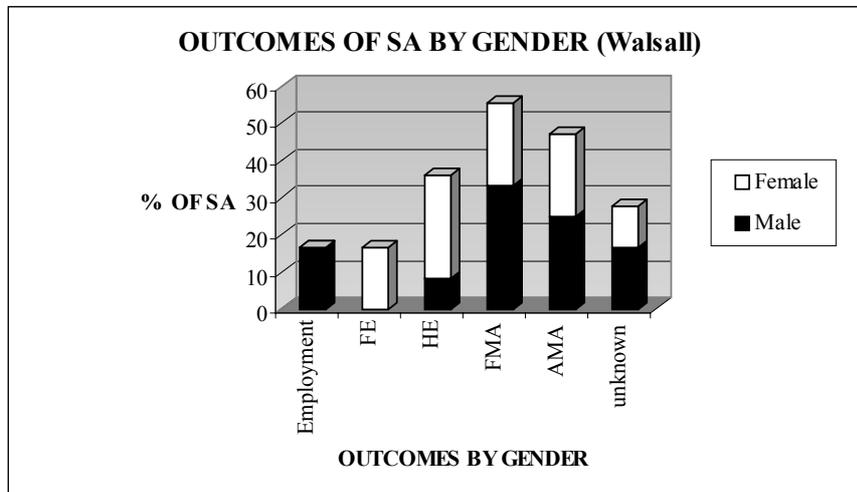
A number of employers referred to this as a ‘win-win’ situation, in which the employer benefited from an additional employee that could ‘help out in busy situations’, and the young person gained practical hands-on work experience. A number of placements demonstrated particular good practice in the inclusion of the Student Apprentices in project work. In these cases, the company recognised the skills and up to date knowledge of the young person and provided the opportunity for the young person to apply it to a live project, whilst making a substantial company saving in terms of staff or consultancy costs. Post-16 Student Apprentices that had been utilised in this way viewed it as excellent grounding for progression into an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship.

9.0 PROGRESSION ROUTES

This section is sub divided into two main sections, to consider progression routes from the Student Apprenticeship. Firstly as a precursor to Modern Apprenticeship programmes, and secondly progression into a range of alternative outcomes, including direct employment and higher education. The section will commence with a series of graphs illustrating the range of Student Apprenticeship outcomes by locality and gender. It should be noted that the data collected in each locality was different in some respects and this is reflected in what it has been possible to report.

Walsall

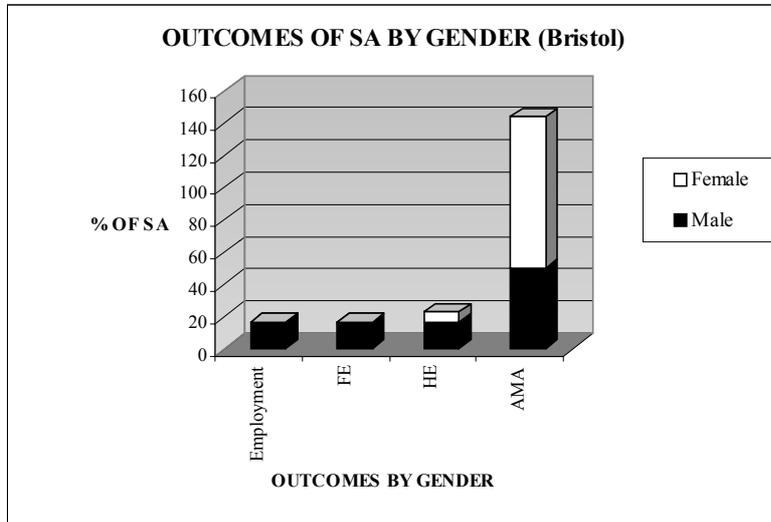
The main outcome for Student Apprenticeships was Modern Apprenticeships with 27% Foundation MA and 23% Advanced MA. A further 20% progressed onto further education and 10% to Higher education. In terms of gender there is quite an even split across most categories⁴.



⁴ Participation rates are given in percentage terms by gender.

Bristol

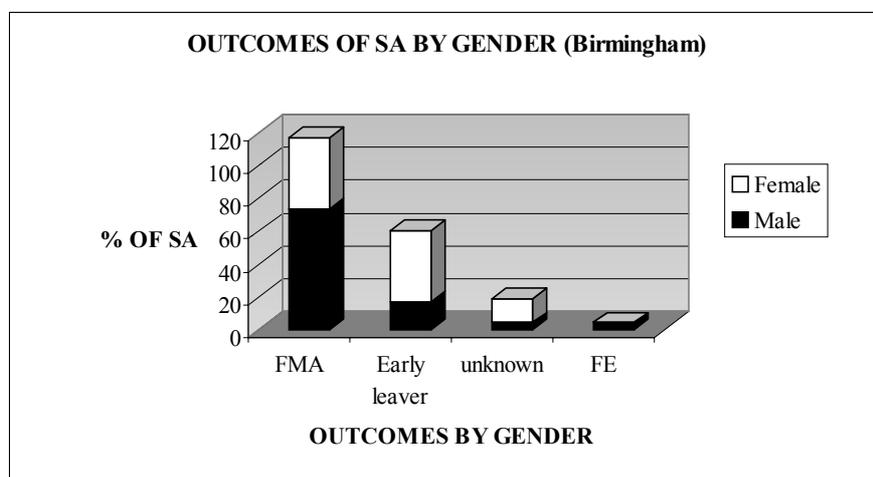
The outcomes of participants in the Bristol pilot demonstrated a gender balance in terms of the proportions of males and females moving into various destinations. The majority of male and female participants progressed into an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship, with a minority moving into higher education or direct employment⁵.



⁵ As above.

Birmingham

In terms of outcomes, over two thirds progressed onto Foundation Modern Apprenticeships and over twenty per cent left early. The reasons for leaving early included personal problems, illness, wanting to concentrate on exams and a lack of interest in the particular occupation. In terms of gender three quarter of SA were males in Birmingham and the remaining females. There were no noticeable differences in terms of gender by outcomes.⁶



Quality and Reliability of the data

The graphs demonstrate distinct trends in progression in each area. However, making broader assertions regarding the potential of the initiative to produce particular outcomes on the basis of these findings should be viewed with caution, owing to the small scale piloting of the initiative to date. Several anomalies in the pilot regions affect these results. For example, the higher percentage of post 16s in the Walsall area progressing onto FMAs rather than AMAs can be attributed to the fact that a significant number of these placements were undertaken in the Health field. Funding constraints compel the Health Authority to ensure all SA's acquire an NVQ2 prior to their registration as an AMA. The Health Authority would be financially penalised if all candidates did not first acquire an NVQ2 as the HA is paid to provide this and this is included as an indicator of their performance as a training provider. This issue has a marked impact upon the MA destinations of Student Apprentices in the Walsall pilot. This issue should be borne in mind in considering the Outcomes graph for Student Apprentices in the Walsall pilot illustrated above. Were it not for these funding considerations, SAs holding GNVQ Intermediate would progress directly into AMAs, rather than FMAs.

The data presented has been collated from a variety of sources, (including information provided by training providers, and LSCs), and cross-referenced where possible with the

⁶ Participation rates are given in percentage terms by gender.

fieldwork undertaken. However, the lack of systematised data collection by practitioners and the elapse of time between some placements and this evaluation (over two years in some instances), has meant that it has not always been possible to cross reference data. A minority of outcomes have therefore been inferred following the trends of a particular placement/sector/ establishment. The figures should therefore not be regarded as absolute and ECOTEC does not assume any responsibility for errors in the available data.

The lack of systematised data collection by practitioners on the outcomes of Student Apprenticeships is particularly evident in the Walsall and Birmingham areas, both of which recorded a significant number of destinations as ‘unknown’. It is likely that some of these candidates did progress onto Modern Apprenticeships, and therefore the data presented should be viewed as a conservative estimate of numbers progressing onto FMAs and AMAs.

9.1 Moving into a Modern Apprenticeship

The graphs clearly summarise the potential of the Student Apprenticeship initiative to lead to direct outcomes in terms of Modern Apprenticeship placings. Training providers and employers frequently referred to the Student Apprenticeship as an effective initiation for Modern Apprentices. For example, a Bristol employer epitomised this view as:

‘ideally the student enjoys it [the Student Apprenticeship], and starts working towards an AMA and starts a job’

Training providers and employers viewed one of the key benefits of the Student Apprenticeship being its ability to recruit people at a younger age who would subsequently progress onto Modern Apprenticeships. The Student Apprenticeship was frequently viewed as a ‘prolonged interview’, and a ‘pre-selection process’, allowing both the employer and the young person to gauge their suitability to a particular industry before committing themselves to a Modern Apprenticeship.

9.1.1 Accelerating progression as a Modern Apprentice

There is clear evidence from the Student Apprenticeship pilots that the initiative places participants in an advantageous position upon the commencement of their Modern Apprenticeship. For example, training providers and employers from a range of sectors referred to the acquisition of skills gained through the Student Apprenticeship providing:

‘a national progression route to a Modern Apprenticeship...[participants] should be able to gather evidence for key skills and bring it forward’

This training provider perspective demonstrates how the initiative can provide a seamless transition into a Modern Apprenticeship. Employers and previous Student Apprentices referred to the high level of confidence, motivation and industry awareness demonstrated by Modern Apprentices that had followed this route. For example, Modern Apprentices working in the health sector were given responsibilities on hospital wards from the outset of their Modern Apprenticeship, as they were known and trusted by the ward staff, having been

trained in specific competencies through their Student Apprenticeship. Employers frequently referred to the accelerated progression of previous Student Apprentices that went on to be employed as Modern Apprentices, owing to the communication and interpersonal skills they had developed. Employers in companies ranging from multi-media SMEs to large hotels referred to the ability of previous SAs to represent the company and liaise directly with customers and clients, viewing the Modern Apprentice as a valued, established member of the staff team.

9.1.2 Foundation Modern Apprenticeships

The majority of Student Apprentices that progressed onto the FMA programme originated from the pre 16 cohort, although some post 16s also entered Modern Apprenticeships at this level. This section will focus on the progression of pre-16s into FMAs, as the limited post 16 involvement is discussed in section 9.1.4.

The Student Apprenticeship was viewed as a 'good foundation' by employers and training providers in preparation for the FMA. The majority of Student Apprentices in the pre-16 cohort had low or no academic qualifications, and had largely disengaged with the school as a learning environment. The initiative prepared these young people for vocational learning in a work based context, through practical skills acquisition and training in employment issues such as health and safety. This approach was very successful both in re-engaging the young person with the learning process and in preparing them for successful study through NVQs (levels 1 and 2) as a Modern Apprentice.

A best practice example of the implementation of the Student Apprenticeship as a precursor to the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship is illustrated in the case study in section 11.

9.1.3 Advanced Modern Apprenticeships

The majority of post 16s participating in the Student Apprenticeship pilots moved into AMA positions, although a significant minority of post 16s progressed into a range of alternative outcomes, as discussed in sections 9.1.4, 9.1.5. and 9.2.

The Student Apprenticeship prepared young people to undertake AMAs in a wide range of sectors, from IT and accountancy to the health sector and the hospitality industry. Many participants that combined their SA placement with Advanced GNVQ or A level study at school or college made a subsequent successful transition into employment as a Modern Apprentice. Employers identified the advantages of recruiting an AMA through this mechanism as knowing the person 'fits in', understands their company requirements and markets, and is committed to the same goals.

Schools and colleges participating in the pilot maintained that the Student Apprenticeship helped their students prepare well for an AMA, as it

'helped clarify their career progression plans'

The Student Apprenticeship was mainly targeted at high calibre young people and was viewed by the majority of educators as:

'working better for those who know they don't want to go to university'

Student Apprentices who subsequently progressed into AMAs viewed the placement as having provided a sound grounding in employment practices, and as preparing them well for work based learning.

9.1.4 Limitations of the Student Apprenticeship initiative as a precursor to Modern Apprenticeships programmes

Despite the success of the initiative in preparing young people for Modern Apprenticeships, a number of key issues emerged which limit this.

The Student Apprenticeship as a precursor to the Advanced Modern Apprenticeship

Employers have implemented the SA initiative in a variety of ways to involve young people in their business at an earlier stage. According to employers, the relevance of the SA as a precursor to the AMA depends upon the sector a company is working in, their skill requirements, and staffing shortages. For example, some companies have viewed the SA initiative as a mechanism for identifying people that they would be prepared to sponsor through degree programmes, with the goal of longer term recruitment and meeting the company's skills needs. This is relevant to certain sectors, notably 'newer' industries such as IT and multi media, and also some of the more traditional industries such as construction.

Employers viewed Modern Apprenticeships as being focused on the development of specific skills and competencies. For example, one employer drew the distinction between training people to work at the craft/ operational levels and managerial levels. The former scenario was given as an example of when the company would employ a Modern Apprentice, and the latter an instance in which the company may support a young person to complete a degree programme. However, it should not be inferred from these examples that Student Apprentices are compelled to make a progression choice between the work based learning route and higher education. This issue will be discussed in more detail in section 12.

The Student Apprenticeship as a precursor to the Foundation Modern Apprenticeship

Employers viewed Foundation Modern Apprenticeships as only being of relevance to certain sectors, and specific occupational levels within those sectors. For example, within the health care sector, the SA was viewed as a precursor for the FMA for those who had not completed their level 2, and as a precursor for the AMA for those working at level 3. However, the MA is only part of the career pathway for a proportion of the careers in the health field. Physiotherapy and midwifery are studies at degree level, and so it would be irrelevant for people aiming for careers in these fields to be placed on an MA, as it would be at a lower level than their previous achievements. It would create more work for the young person, and is not part of the progression route.

9.1.5 Issues for Future Implementation: Progressing onto a Modern Apprenticeship

Several factors emerged from the evaluation as influencing the promotion of Modern Apprenticeship programmes to young people. The first related to the vested interest of practitioners in ensuring Student Apprentices follow the MA route. Training providers frequently referred to their organisation as a 'commercial venture' and owing to limited funding had often implemented the SA initiative as a 'good will gesture'. Some training providers involved in the pilot did not receive any funding for Student Apprentices, and it was apparent that these providers had adopted a longer term view in that the Student Apprenticeship provided them with a recruitment mechanism to ensure their Modern Apprenticeship numbers for the following year.

Conversely, a number of employers, particularly SMEs defined the value of their involvement in the initiative in financial and operational terms, asserting that:

'you can recruit people relatively cheaply'

and that there were:

'commercial benefits of getting people early and training them in our own way'

In a minority of cases, employers utilised the initiative as an earlier and cheaper recruitment mechanism than employing a Modern Apprentice. Whilst the majority of Student Apprentices who remained in employment with their placement provider did progress into a Modern Apprenticeship, a minority were employed directly as mainstream staff members. Employers cited a recession within their sector, which had led to a climate of voluntary redundancies and freezing recruitment, as curtailing their involvement in Modern Apprenticeship programmes.

This section therefore demonstrates that the economic climate and resources available to a practitioner organisation affects attitudes and approaches towards the Student Apprenticeship programme as a precursor to Modern Apprenticeships. A practical issue cited by Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinators, training providers and employers as potentially reducing the numbers of Student Apprentices that progress onto Modern Apprenticeship programmes is the time lag in completion of the SA and commencement of MA programmes. The majority of SA placements were completed in June or July of the academic year, with Modern Apprenticeship placements scheduled to start the following September. A cross section of providers raised concern about this, referring to young people that 'fell by the wayside' during the Summer vacation.

A minority of training providers had developed contingency plans to involve the young people in activities during this gap in provision, maintaining that:

'if there is a gap between the Student Apprenticeship ending and the Modern Apprenticeship beginning then the training provider needs to keep in touch and track the young person quite closely'

For example, one training provider in Bristol had recruited previous Student Apprentices onto a six week intensive training programme in Communication and IT skills, to maintain their interest and prepare them for employment as Modern Apprentices the following Autumn. However, this responsibility should not reside solely with training providers. A number of training providers pointed to:

'a need for a combined effort from schools, training providers and employers to make the links between the Student Apprenticeship and Modern Apprenticeships'.

Training providers viewed the facilitation role played by the school as particularly important in:

'maintaining the students' interest and incentive'.

These practical considerations further demonstrate the need for the Student Apprenticeship to be built into Modern Apprenticeship frameworks.

9.2 Alternative Outcomes

A minority of Student Apprentices progressed onto a range of alternative positive outcomes. Although the majority of employers were ideally aiming to retain Student Apprentices as MAs, they commonly expressed the sentiment that:

'they will gain something from it whatever they do'

This section will consider the two main alternative outcomes for Student Apprentices: direct employment and higher education, from both the individual and the organisational perspective.

9.2.1 Direct employment

A minority of Student Apprentices were keen to become full time members of the workforce, and did not wish to follow the Modern Apprenticeship route, either because they felt the skills level achieved through their A/AS level or G/NVQ study equipped them sufficiently for their chosen profession, or because the skills required in their sector required more specific training. For example, one Student Apprentice with an accountancy firm chose to pursue her career development through the industry based AAT examinations, rather than a Modern Apprenticeship.

One employer described the Student Apprenticeship as preparing a young person for an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship or direct employment as a process of:

'introducing [a young person] into an organisation, seeing if they like the job and the culture of the organisation, and there may be a possible job at the end of it'

A number of employers viewed the Student Apprenticeship as a sufficient training ground, one referring to the initiative having:

'trained up a very good member of staff'

9.2.2 Higher Education

Following participation in the Student Apprenticeship, a small percentage of young people decided to enter higher education. Some of these young people had hoped to study at degree level before starting their Student Apprenticeship, and viewed the placement as an opportunity to gain:

'real experience on their CV'

This resulted in several previous Student Apprentices being sponsored by the company whilst at University, or being guaranteed holiday work and the potential of a career following the completion of their higher education.

For others, the Student Apprenticeship raised career aspirations and helped participants to reassess their career choice. For example, several post 16s discovered that they could study their chosen profession at degree level, leading them into jobs with higher status and greater levels of responsibility than they would have aimed at prior to their Student Apprenticeship.

10.0 THE POST 16 MODEL

10.1 Benefits of the post 16 model

The Student Apprenticeship has demonstrated considerable success in the piloting phase in preparing young people for progression into an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship and alternative positive outcomes, including higher education and direct employment. The evaluation revealed very positive feedback on the post 16 model from employers; training providers; schools and colleges; and young people themselves. This section will consider some of the key benefits of the post 16 model in more detail.

Diverse application

The post 16 model has proved very adaptable and flexible, having been applied to a wide range of sectors and occupations with consistent success. Sectors involved have ranged from the new IT, design and multi media sectors, to more traditional occupations such as engineering and accountancy.

The post 16 model has also demonstrated its success in being combined with a range of qualifications. Student Apprenticeships have most commonly been utilised to complement A/AS level or G/NVQ study, and have demonstrated considerable flexibility in being tailored to provide the apprentice with experience to help them inform their future career and study aspirations.

The Student Apprenticeship model has not been applied in a prescriptive manner, and has therefore afforded providers and participants an invaluable opportunity to explore how the initiative might contribute to the creation of a range of career pathways. This has resulted in the Student Apprenticeship helping young people identify their own career pathway into a range of destinations, including: Advanced Modern Apprenticeships; sponsorship through university with guaranteed future employment; and direct employment in industry specialisms.

Balancing study with practical work experience

The Student Apprenticeship has proved of equal value to students studying A/AS levels, G/NVQs, and BTEC National awards (although few participants in the pilots were studying for the latter qualification). The apprenticeship enables young people to develop a greater understanding of academic theories and their relation to the workplace. This worked particularly well for business studies, engineering, construction and IT students, who were able to apply their technical knowledge to live projects in the field, such as designing a websites, dealing with business management systems and site planning. One training provider described the initiative as:

'for GNVQ students it is ideal because they are able to demonstrate competencies and put theory into practice'

Young people consistently referred to the benefits of combining their academic study with practical work experience, in terms of skills acquisition, motivation to achieve, and career aspirations. These factors have been considered in more detail in sections 6 and 7 of the report.

Key Skills acquisition and evidence for coursework

Participants in the post 16 pilots consistently referred to the positive impact the initiative had had upon their Key Skills development, particularly in Communication, IT and Application of Number. Teachers and training providers frequently stated that a Student Apprenticeship can:

'Significantly strengthen a young person's CV'

as they could

'use the experience directly to feed into assignments'

Practical examples of these benefits include the development of communication skills through dealing with customers on the telephone, learning how to respond to general queries and how to field them within the company. These skills can then be translated into providing evidence for the Key Skill in Communication, and units in Business Studies GNVQs.

Providing a transition to the work environment

The post 16 model has demonstrated considerable success in providing a transition from school or college to the work environment. The structure of the Student Apprenticeship enabled employers to make a real contribution to this process, as one employer stated, the company was able to provide:

'real work experience' owing to the 'sustained period of time' which the placement operated for.

Employers were able to involve Student Apprentices in live projects, as the young person could make a sustained contribution over a number of weeks or months. Employers, particularly from SMEs, frequently referred to this as a 'win win situation', as the company could benefit from the up to date skills of the young person, whilst providing the apprentice with the opportunity to channel their practical ideas in a commercially viable way.

Stimulates Personal Development

The post 16 model significantly benefited participants in providing them with opportunities to enhance their personal development. One teacher referred to the Student Apprenticeship helping the young person to develop their:

'confidence, maturity and acting more business like...[becoming] used to working with different people and their attitude to work'

Employers frequently cited 'maturity' and the 'ability to work on their own initiative' as the most important qualities for an apprentice to demonstrate and develop through the placement. A range of providers from employers, school and colleges and training providers attributed a significant aspect of the success of the post 16 model to the view that:

'16 and 17 year olds have the independence and ability to go to different places and meet different people'

The success of the Student Apprenticeship can therefore be seen in part in its ethos of 'learning by doing', equipping people with both the skills and personal capacity to make a successful transition into the workplace.

Case Study – Walsall Manor Hospital Trust

Incorporating the Student Apprenticeship into framework development

Summary:

Walsall Manor Hospital Trust has applied the post 16 model to the health sector to create a career pathway from the Student Apprenticeship into Modern Apprenticeship programmes, leading to a range of careers in nursing. The Student Apprenticeship has been built into the Trust's nursing cadet framework, which enables apprentices to progress onto a Foundation or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship (depending upon GNVQ attainment), subsequently progressing onto nurse training through Wolverhampton University. The framework provides a clear structure for participants, offering a range of subsequent study and career options. The Student Apprenticeship provides a general grounding and orientation to the hospital environment, providing participants with experience of a range of wards, staff teams and teaching specialisms. This increases their awareness of the range of careers available within the nursing profession, enabling them to make informed career choices. The framework provides stability for the participants, providing them with a guaranteed job for the first two years following the completion of their nurse training. This enables the Trust to make long term staffing projections, enabling them to budget and invest resources more strategically.

Good practice:

This model demonstrates good practice in the development of a multi-agency, co-ordinated approach.

Employers: The Student Apprenticeship enables the employer to make a significant investment in its future work force. The employer has developed a ward rotation structure for participants, enabling them to gain first hand experience of a range of specialisms.

Training Providers: The training provider, Spring Skills, has collaborated with the employer and school to establish the most effective system for undertaking the assessment and review process. This now takes place in school, so that it does not impact upon the time spent learning practical skills on the wards. The review and assessment process focuses on developing links between practical experience and GNVQ study, identifying evidence for units.

School: The GNVQ Co-ordinator at the St Thomas Moores school, attended by all the SAs, discusses participant progress with the employer, training provider and young people on a regular basis. The SAs discuss their ward experiences at the beginning of the following lesson, to

explore any issues or concerns the group may have, and identify links with the GNVQ curriculum. The teacher referred to an ‘incredible difference’ in the understanding and knowledge of the Student Apprentices.

Young People: Participants in a focus group referred to their Student Apprenticeship as ‘brilliant’, enabling them to develop both as people and in professional terms in a supportive environment. The placement had enabled them to make an informed career choice, and significantly raised their career aspirations, one maintaining that:

‘I would have been working in a factory if it hadn’t been for the Student Apprenticeship’

The Student Apprentices have now progressed onto Modern Apprenticeships, and felt that their progress had been accelerated because of the experience gained as an SA. They referred to the level of responsibility, respect and acceptance as a ‘member of the team’ they were given from the outset of their MAs.

Comment:

This model has significant potential for replication in a national roll out of the initiative, demonstrating how the Student Apprenticeship can be built into career pathways to map a clear progression route for young people in their chosen career. The case study demonstrates how rigours framework development provides strategic development which has long term benefit for the participants, practitioners, and employers. This good practice model provides a blueprint for framework development leading to Modern Apprenticeships and higher education.

10.2 Disadvantages of the post 16 model

Several disadvantages are evident within the post-16 model, which could limit the roll out of the initiative to a cross section of participants in post-16 education.

Timetabling issues

The school timetable limited the number of students that would be eligible for participation in the initiative, as the Student Apprenticeship placement required one full day a week. Schools were generally supportive of the initiative, one maintaining that it is:

'only a problem if it leads to missing lessons'

Although there were isolated incidences of Student Apprenticeships being reduced to half a day a week or alternate weeks, this was only really possible towards the end of a placement, as employers required a full day to be able to 'work with' the apprentice. This meant that the vast majority of post 16s involved in the pilots were only studying 1 or 2 A/AS levels, or an Intermediate GNVQ. Those studying a greater number of subjects or vocational subjects at a more advanced level, could not be released from the timetable for a full day to take part in the Student Apprenticeship initiative.

An additional complication in relation to timetabling issues was the disparity between the school and workplace day. A number of employers complained about the 'short afternoon', as Student Apprentices anticipated finishing their placement at the same time as school (often around 3:30pm). Employers maintained that they 'wanted an apprentice for a full day', if they were to have a beneficial impact upon their progress.

Pressure of curriculum and examinations

Owing to the pressure of the curriculum, the majority of schools and colleges maintained that the initiative:

'is better for students doing only a few days per week'

This was necessary so that young people did not feel overloaded and reduce the number of subjects they were studying in order to undertake a Student Apprenticeship. Schools and colleges maintained that students studying 3 or 4 A/As levels or Advanced GNVQs required the full working week to complete their academic studies, and therefore could not participate in a Student Apprenticeship without jeopardising their academic study.

10.3 Issues for future implementation: post 16 model

Targeting

Whilst the post 16 model has been implemented with considerable success, selective targeting is evident, which may be an issue for a wider roll out of the initiative. Schools,

colleges and training providers, and the majority of employers involved in the pilots were adamant that the Student Apprenticeship:

'Works better for those who know that they don't want to go to university'

viewing the initiative as:

'attracting mainly the weaker advanced level students'

Providers maintained that the value of the Student Apprenticeship was in providing a placement that could help young people launch their careers in a particular sector. One teacher articulated this view as:

'Young people who have decided on a career pathway and simply want to get on with it'

The high level of successful placements and outcomes from the post 16 pilots suggest that this targeting approach is very effective and rewarding, both for young people and employers. The apprenticeship enables young people to identify and realise their career aspirations, and provides employers with apprentices that can make a significant contribution to their business, with the potential of longer-term employment with the company, or within the industry. However, there have been isolated examples from the Bristol area of how the Student Apprenticeship can prepare people well for University, both in terms of skills levels and commercial awareness, and also in terms of improving their future employment prospects. A national roll out of the initiative should therefore give careful consideration to the targeting of the post 16 model.

Employer buy-in

The post 16 model offers considerable potential for wider replication through effective promotion to employers. A number of SMEs interviewed for the evaluation referred to their involvement in the initiative being in part an opportunity to update the work related skills of their existing employees. For example, several Student Apprentices demonstrated high level IT skills, and their involvement in live projects therefore provided informal staff training for several employees. The cost benefit of such involvement in the initiative to SMEs is considerable, many of whom do not have the capacity or resources to send their staff on IT courses to implement new pieces of software. One training provider identified the employer benefit of involvement in the initiative as:

'encouraging employers to prepare for the future'

Cost benefit promotion could therefore increase employer buy-in to the initiative.

11.0 THE PRE 16 MODEL

The implementation of the pre-16 Student Apprenticeship has met with varying levels of success. However, it is important to note that the vast majority of training providers; schools and colleges, and young people involved in the initiative believed that there are real benefits to be derived from developing the initiative with the pre-16 group. The main challenge for the pre-16 model relates to the appropriate level of employer involvement. This section will therefore identify the main benefits and disadvantages of the pre-16 model that emerged during the piloting phase, and will finally consider issues for the future implementation of the initiative with the pre-16 target group.

11.1 Benefits of the pre 16 model

Awareness raising and challenging expectations

The pre-16 model made a significant impact upon raising the awareness and expectations of the pre-16 participants, the majority of whom were either disapplying from the school curriculum, or were under achieving and de-motivated within the school environment. The majority of participants had disengaged with the school learning environment. One of the main benefits of the Student Apprenticeship initiative was in being able to take these pupils out of the school environment and provide them with constructive training in a work based setting.

Young people participating in the initiative were positive about the experiences they had gained as an apprentice, commonly referring to it increasing their knowledge of the workplace and the type of careers available to them. A proportion of the apprentices felt that the initiative had significantly challenged their expectations regarding their future career prospects, which had been fatalistic prior to their Student Apprenticeship placement. Many had previously low career aspirations and the initiative provided information on the level of qualifications they would require to enter their chosen career path.

Employers and training providers referred to a marked improvement in the attitude of disapplying pupils following their Student Apprenticeship. Although the placement did not increase their motivation about their schooling, it gave them a 'positive purpose' about their future. One teacher in the Birmingham area referred to the behaviour of their pupil as having:

'improved beyond all recognition' in the workplace.

The young person reacted well to the training environment provided by the employer, valuing the influence it would have over his future career prospects in the industry.

Trialing career options

The Student Apprenticeship enabled pre-16s to trial career options before deciding on their post 16 training or work based route. A significant proportion of the work based placements

offered in the pre-16 pilot areas were provided in a sheltered training setting. In these instances, one organisation acted as the training provider and the employer for the young person. This approach was mainly trialed in the hairdressing and construction industries, and was particularly successful. The advantages of this approach will be considered in more detail in the case study below.

Placements with employers in the open labour market were successful in demonstrating the reality of working in industry to participants, helping them to form a realistic understanding of a range of careers.

Providing a transition route into a trade or career

A key benefit of the Student Apprenticeship was to help under-achieving pupils with low motivation, to develop a sense of direction to help steer their transition from school into a trade or a career they were interested in. Several schools worked closely with training providers to provide a co-ordinated approach to advising the young person about their future options. A number of schools will be piloting the initiative for the first time this Autumn, and one of these referred to their intention being to incorporate the Student Apprenticeship into their existing partnership with a local college to deliver GNVQs. Teachers and young people frequently referred to the importance of the Student Apprenticeship in acting as a 'bridge' between school and the workplace.

The Careers Service also worked closely with several providers in the pre-16 pilot, helping the training provider in the support and tracking of participants.

Key Skills acquisition and evidence for GNVQs

The majority of young people participating in the pre-16 pilot were undertaking a GNVQ at school, and found the practical experience gained through their placement as beneficial, providing evidence towards their portfolio. A particular advantage of the placement was that young people could complete Key Skills in a work based learning environment. This was particularly important for a minority of participants who had decided not to sit their GCSEs or complete their GNVQ in the school environment. The acquisition of a Key Skill (mainly in Communication), as part of their placement therefore demonstrates how appropriate work based learning is for this target group, illustrating their higher motivational levels to achieve in the workplace than within education.

Case Study – Carillion Training Group

Implementing the Student Apprenticeship as a precursor to the Modern Apprenticeship

Summary:

This case study highlights good practice in the development of the Student Apprenticeship structure for the pre-16 group. The pre-16 model provides a framework for implementing the Student Apprenticeship initiative with a direct progression route into a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship. Carillion Training developed a Student Apprenticeship model that provides participants with a grounding in a range of skills in the construction industry. The company supports the participants to make informed career decisions through the development of areas of interest. The Student Apprenticeship follows the same broad structure as the Modern Apprenticeship programmes, for example, providing training in health and safety issues in addition to practical skills acquisition. The framework provides the participants with clear direction and aspirations. A key feature in the success of this model is the provision of real work experience, but within a sheltered training environment. This ensures that the participants will be able to make a positive transition into open employment as Modern Apprentices, having been supported in their skills and personal development through their Student Apprenticeship.

Good practice:

Training Provider: Occupying the dual role of training provider and potential employer ensures the placement constitutes real work experience, training people to the standards required for a competent FMA. The training provision within a sheltered environment means that the young person is well supported during their placement, as the company is not operating within the same constraints as an employer, particularly SMEs, and so they can afford to spend more time guiding and coaching the SAs. The training provider represents the key link between the school, young person and potential employers.

Schools: The schools involved in this pilot valued the ability of the placement to reassess the young persons learning needs and provide them with training in a suitable environment, and the opportunity to gain Key Skills in an alternative setting. Schools referred to a marked improvement in the attitude and manner of pupils participating in the pilot.

Young People: The participants consistently referred to the placement as having developed their career aspirations, and made them feel positive about their life chances after leaving school. The participants could see the value of learning through NVQs, and valued the MA route as training was linked ‘directly to the job’.

Employer: Employer interest has been generated in recruiting previous Student Apprentices as FMAs, as they are viewed as well skilled apprentices, orientated to the demands and expectations of the workplace.

Comment:

This model has significant potential for replication in a national roll out of the initiative as it provides young people with a grounding in work place orientation, expectations and skills acquisition. Young people are therefore prepared to enter the open employment market as Modern Apprentices, equipped with the personal development and technical skills required to make them a positive acquisition to employers. This model demonstrates the potential for the Student Apprenticeship initiative to provide an initial pathway into Foundation Modern Apprenticeship schemes for the pre 16 group, with training providers creating a bridge into the open employment market.

11.2 Disadvantages of the pre 16 model

Although the Student Apprenticeship pilots with the pre-16 group have raised several concerns, this is mainly with regard to the appropriate level of employer involvement, and the motivation of schools to participate in the initiative. These concerns should however be tempered by the fact that training providers, schools and young people (and some employers), involved in the pilot did clearly derive a significant benefit from the initiative. The Student Apprenticeship programme was viewed as making a positive, important contribution to work with the pre-16 group. Its potential to succeed with this group at a national level will depend to some extent on the ability of promoters to alleviate the concerns of potential providers and employers, and on the establishment of a clear framework for delivery.

11.2.1 Limitations of applying the Student Apprenticeship to the pre-16 group

Health and Safety Considerations

Employers frequently referred to the legal limitations of undertaking work with people under 18 years of age. This was a significant issue with employers involved in the pilot areas, as a number were based in foundries, the construction industry and hospitals, which operated specific guidelines in relation to the operation of equipment. One training provider stated that pre-16 Student Apprentices were not allowed out of the training centre as this was:

‘not appropriate for the amount of time...and skills levels of the young person’

(It should be noted that it is compulsory for Health and Safety risk assessments to be undertaken for all Student Apprenticeship placements, and that pre-16 assessments must be made available to the parents or guardian of the young person).

Demonstrating interest in the workplace and future career opportunities

Some employers involved in the pre-16 pilots felt that young people had a lower level of interest in the world of work at the ages of 14 –16 years. This was attributed to their main concern being their school work, and the individuals being too young to have developed real ideas about the type of career they wished to pursue. A number of employers referred to unsatisfactory placements that had been terminated early, as the employer did not feel the young person had:

‘any real interest in the company, or was in a position to appreciate its work’

Capacity issues impacting on employers, particularly SMEs, meant that it was important that apprentices were in a position to make a contribution to the work of the company. Few viewed the pre-16s participants as demonstrating either the technical or interpersonal skills to ‘help out’ in the workplace. One employer stated that for the initiative to be useful, it must be

‘a two way process, providing a learning experience’ [in return for the young person] ‘being able to contribute to the company goals’.

Employers commonly referred to Student Apprentices as needing to demonstrate:

'a certain amount of independence and commitment'

and teachers expressed their concern as:

'many [pre 16s] are not mature enough, could not give enough, could only [work] shadow'

There was also a view amongst some employers that pre-16s viewed the placement as a way of getting out of school, rather than for its potential to inform their employment choices.

However, it is important to note that the pre-16 model has been applied to a specific target group to date (mainly those disapplying or with very low attainment levels). The willingness of employers to be involved with pre-16s of a higher calibre may be greater.

Maintaining relations with local employers

A key concern for providers in involving employers in the implementation of the pre-16 model was the support requirements of the young person. For example, employers involved in the pilot referred to pre-16s as:

'needing a lot of supervision and handholding'

which can take

'a lot of time and organisation'

The concern for training providers in arranging these placements is the impact it may have on the willingness of the employer to work with future candidates. Training providers frequently referred to the fact that their organisations were a 'commercial venture', and they 'could not afford' to lose valuable relations with local employers through providing them with a poor candidate, lacking motivation, interest or aptitude for the industry.

Limited school involvement

The potential of the pre-16 model has also been limited to date by lack of school involvement in the placement. Employers and training providers were frustrated by this lack of co-ordination, one training provider asserting that:

'schools seem to lose interest once the young people are on board'

and a number expressed their concern that the initiative did not become a 'dumping ground' for young people.

Young people's views

Young people participating in a focus group also raised their concerns about the limited application of the pre-16 model. These participants had undertaken Student Apprenticeships in the health field as 16 year olds, and felt that the situations faced in the hospital would be 'too stressful' for people under the age of 16- 17 years. This demonstrates that the sector focus of the pre-16 application would need to be carefully considered.

11.3 Issues for Future Implementation: Pre-16 model

Several factors are fundamental to the successful implementation of the pre-16 model. The role of the training provider is essential in providing a pivotal role between the employer, school and young person. An example of this approach is provided in the good practice case study above.

The promotion of the initiative to employers must be carefully managed to ensure their buy in to the longer term recruitment opportunities presented by the initiative in terms of progression onto Modern Apprenticeships and tailoring skills training to the particular needs of the company. It is particularly important that the potential cost-benefit of involvement is reinforced to employers. A number of employers referred to the pressure and demands on them to collaborate in a range of initiatives, and therefore they had to channel their involvement into the most 'suitable' schemes that matched their company requirements.

This suggests the importance of selecting employers and placements with care in any future roll out of the initiative. The pressures and demands on employers noted above suggests that Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinators have an important role to play in discussing employer requirements, to ensure that Student Apprentices are in a position to contribute to their host company, in addition to furthering their own personal development. Employer relations must be fostered and employers should be made aware of the possible additional support and time in-puts required by staff adopting the pre-16 model. The impact of an unsuccessful placement can have far reaching consequences, reducing the good will and inclination of employers to participate in the initiative, within either the pre- or post 16 model. This key concern is highlighted by the training provider quoted in section 11.2

However, perception is a key issue in this regard, as the employers that were the least enthusiastic about the pre-16 model were those with only direct experience of post 16 delivery. It is important to note that a significant number of employers did believe it was important to increase their involvement with the pre-16 age group. However, the most appropriate application of the pre-16 model was viewed by some as providing a precursor to offering a full Student Apprenticeship placement. For example, a number of employers referred to the possibility of offering taster sessions as a more appropriate activity with the pre-16 age group than providing actual SA placements. One employer in a post 16 area suggested utilising the work experience week as a taster for pre-16s as:

'a good way of recruiting people to the Student Apprenticeship'

providing an opportunity for the young person and the company to gauge whether a placement would be appropriate before either party commits to the Student Apprenticeship.

Finally, support issues are particularly important for the development of a pre-16 framework, as discussed in section 7.

12.0 ISSUES FOR THE NATIONAL ROLL OUT OF STUDENT APPRENTICESHIPS

In this final section we discuss some of the key issues to emerge from the evaluation for the national roll-out. Some of these issues constitute opportunities whilst others comprise constraints that may continue to act as restrictions on the programme.

12.1 Opportunities

12.1.1 The potential role of Student Apprenticeships in current developments in the vocational curriculum

The Student Apprenticeship programme has the potential to make a valuable contribution to some current developments in the vocational curriculum. Indeed it would seem essential that SAs are built into qualifications frameworks if they are to be mainstreamed. However some aspects of recent or proposed developments could have a detrimental impact on the potential of SAs to be combined with particular schemes of study. As this report has demonstrated, a range of issues impact upon the combining of the Student Apprenticeship with pre-established curricula, from practical considerations such as timetabling issues, to theoretical considerations such as the acquisition of evidence for coursework requirements.

Student Apprenticeships could form a core element of vocational GCSEs. The Student Apprenticeship initiative has demonstrated its versatile appeal and ability to be replicated in a wide variety of sectors, thereby making it an ideal tool for the development of vocational GCSEs in a range of subjects. In order for vocational GCSEs to achieve their potential, there is a conviction amongst NTOs and employers in particular, that the course must provide direct work experience. The Student Apprenticeship pre-16 model clearly provides a suitable ‘tried and tested’ model that could form the basis of the practical work focused element of the vocational GCSE.

Student Apprenticeships have also played a role in relation to G/NVQs. However, recent changes to the content of G/NVQs have limited the extent to which Student Apprentices can gain evidence from their work placements for inclusion in their portfolios. For example, the Student Apprentices at Walsall Manor Hospital were drawn from two GNVQ cohorts, with those following the newly structured G/NVQs referring to less potential for coursework completion through their Student Apprenticeship.

Opportunities for the pre-16 Student Apprenticeship model to contribute to the development of the vocational curriculum should however complement, rather than duplicate, developments in work related learning and the disapplication of the curriculum. These regulations are targeted at the same age group as the SA pre-16 model, and offer many of the key features of the SA pre-16 model, including employer placements. Schools have been able to apply these actions at Key Stage 4 since 1998, and the scheme is being rolled out nationally. Strategic consideration should be given to the potential of the Student Apprenticeship initiative to extend/ enhance this provision.

12.1.2 Assessment

A key issue to be addressed in the integration of SAs within wider curriculum frameworks will be assessment. Whilst Student Apprentices have been monitored through a formal review structure to date, the majority of Student Apprenticeship work has not been assessed. (Although a significant exception to this occurred in the Walsall area, in which all candidates were assessed against the NVQ units or Key Skills they were working towards with the provider). Many participants and stakeholders viewed the focus on personal and practical development rather than assessment as a major strength of the initiative, allowing the student and employer to concentrate on the development of practical workplace skills, which are recognized through the awarding of a certificate on completion of the placement.

In the Bristol and Birmingham areas, the Student Apprenticeship programme complemented the formally assessed/ examined study of participants where appropriate, providing evidence for units of G/NVQs and enabling a significant proportion of participants to gain their Key Skills, particularly their Key Skill in Communication. However, several respondents stressed their concern at the changes taking place to Key Skills, which will limit the potential for the Student Apprenticeship to contribute to the acquisition of formal qualifications.

Assessment issues should be carefully considered during a national roll out of the initiative, to ensure that the Student Apprenticeship initiative mainstreams its status and credibility, whilst retaining its flexibility, responsiveness to the local context and basis as a work based learning programme.

12.1.3 Establishment of a formal framework for the pre-16 model

The findings of the evaluation suggest that it is important that a formal framework is established for the pre-16 Student Apprenticeship model. The SA should be seen as providing a direct progression into Modern Apprenticeship programmes or direct employment if it is to appeal to employers, and to ensure training providers will invest in the initiative as a means of meeting their longer term objectives. The success of this approach can be demonstrated by the pre-16 case study in section 11, which demonstrates how the Student Apprenticeship can provide a seamless transition into a Modern Apprenticeship, particularly for vulnerable groups.

12.1.4 Duration of Student Apprenticeship placements

Consideration should be given during a national roll-out to the duration of Student Apprenticeships. Employers and schools viewed one of the key benefits of the Student Apprenticeship initiative as its ability to provide sustained placements. Employers frequently referred to the additional benefits of this, such as being able to introduce the apprentice to a number of departments in the company, and treating them as an employee. Employers were prepared to invest time in working with the young person, viewing the placement as an 'extended interview period', often guided by the longer term vision of employing the young person as a Modern Apprentice or as a direct employee. This is in direct contrast to more traditional work experience models, in which the student undertakes an intensive one or two week placement with an employer.

Schools, colleges and training providers referred to the importance of coinciding the placement with the duration of academic study. To date a significant proportion of Student Apprentices have only been able to undertake six month placements, as they were not arranged until mid-way through their study programme. Providers referred to November as being an ideal time of year for the placement to commence, thereby providing sufficient time for the student to settle into their study whilst providing time for an eight month employer placement within the academic year.

12.1.5 SAs as a means of promoting equal opportunities in workbased learning

The Student Apprenticeship framework has the potential to challenge gender segregation in the labour market for both males and females. Examples of placements organized during the piloting phase are female pupils undertaking placements in traditionally male dominated sectors such as engineering, and male participants entering career pathways in the nursing sector.

Whilst the pilot phase has made some contribution to promoting the involvement of ethnic minorities in work based learning, this could be significantly increased in the national roll out of the initiative. A key issue in this regard is securing the co-operation of schools with a significant proportion of ethnic minority pupils.

Although young males demonstrating lower ability and attainment levels have formed much of the traditional target group for apprenticeship programmes, Student Apprenticeships can also be seen to improve the longer term opportunities of this group, by demonstrating the relevance of their school work to the workplace. The pilot initiative demonstrates that this approach can raise the motivation and interest of disapplying males in particular, during the remainder of their school career.

12.1.6 The role of Student Apprenticeships in relation to higher attaining students

The Student Apprenticeship initiative has attracted a more diverse target group than traditional apprenticeship programmes, particularly from candidates with high ability and attainment levels. A national initiative could therefore make a significant contribution to promoting the work based route either as an alternative to higher education, or as a means of gaining financial sponsorship through higher education, with the security of degree study being linked to direct employment.

At the same time, the programme has the potential to develop a co-ordinated pathway from the Student Apprenticeship, into Modern Apprenticeships and then into subsequent study within Higher Education. There is little evidence from the evaluation of the Student Apprenticeship pilots to suggest that the scheme promotes involvement in Modern Apprenticeship programmes as a direct precursor to Higher Education. This would require a longitudinal study and is outside the remit of this evaluation. However, the initiative could promote this progression route in the longer term. Traditionally Modern Apprenticeships have led indirectly into higher education: people might work in an apprenticeship capacity within a company for a period of time (around five years), and then be sponsored to follow a

degree programme to equip them with the skills to progress within the company to a managerial level. MAs and HE are not mutually exclusive. The potential for developing this approach is demonstrated in the case study of good practice for a post-16 model of the initiative, in section 10.

12.1.7 The role of NTOs and successor bodies in the further development of the programme

The involvement of National Training Organisations has been important to the overall development of the Student Apprenticeship initiative to date, promoting the relevance of the initiative to curriculum and materials development. The Council for Administration (NTO for the Administration sector) supported the development of the initiative in Walsall. Walsall TEC invited the CfA to collaborate on the development of a learning pathway for the Student Apprenticeship initiative. CfA met with the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator, local training providers and schools. This meeting acted as a catalyst of activity, resulting in CfA utilising funding from FEDA (the Further Education Development Agency), to develop a SA framework for Business Administration. (Although the implementation of this framework has been delayed owing to funding changes with the transfer to the LSC). EMTA, the (NTO for the Engineering and Manufacturing sector) has also been closely involved with the SA initiative from the outset, for example through endorsing the programme Walsall TEC devised with a local school, to pilot the Student Apprenticeship. Healthworks, NTO for the Health sector, are currently in discussions regarding their involvement in the initiative. The involvement of NTOs would seem to be important for ensuring that SAs remain relevant to employers.

12.1.8 Extending the programme to include other public agencies

During the pilot phase neither FE nor Connexions has played a major role. However, given their general roles within education and training, the national roll-out shall need to consider the role they can best play in future.

Further Education. The sector has had limited involvement in the initiative to date, for a number of reasons, including resources and the structuring of post 16 provision in the pilot regions. However, the FE sector would constitute a key provider in a national roll out of the initiative and some links have already been made in the pilot areas.

Connexions. The Careers Service and Connexions have exhibited a limited role in the Student Apprenticeship initiative to date. This has been partly due to the fact that schools and colleges have designated careers advisers to inform young people about the initiative, and partly because it has been assumed that training providers would utilise established links with Careers agencies.

The evaluation canvassed the views of the main participants and practitioners in the Student Apprenticeship initiative concerning the level of involvement of the Careers Service in the Student Apprenticeship thus far, and the future role of the Connexions Service. Whilst most young people believed they were provided with enough information by their school/college

and the Student Apprenticeship Co-ordinator to make an informed decision, most practitioners saw benefits in increasing the involvement of Connexions.

The involvement of the Connexions Service in the Student Apprenticeship has been mainly at a strategic, planning level to date. It is recommended that links between the initiative and the Connexions Service are formalised. Whilst this is clearly pertinent for both the pre- and post 16 models, it is particularly relevant for the pre-16 client group, given that disapplying/ at risk pre-16s have formed a core target group for both these initiatives.

12.1.9 The role of employers

The scalability issue. Finding enough committed employers is likely to be a major challenge for a national roll-out. Whilst a diverse range of employment sectors have been involved in the initiative to date, a significant proportion of the organisations involved have been SMEs. SME involvement has displayed distinct advantages in providing quality and variation in work based placements, but does present significant practical challenges to the development of a national initiative in terms of the need to recruit large numbers of SMEs to meet likely demand. Many of the employers interviewed attributed the success of the initiative in part to its small scale nature, in that their company was able to absorb one or two Student Apprentices into their normal working practices as an employee. Employers commonly expressed caution/ reluctance to increase the number of Student Apprentices in their company. Introducing larger numbers of Student Apprentices into companies would require a more formalised induction and training structure, it would be more difficult to integrate them into the team, and the process would become more time and labour intensive for the employer. This would present SMEs with a significant capacity issue. Increasing the involvement of large employers might help to address this issue in a national roll out of the initiative. Indeed, several large employers have expressed recent interest in the initiative. However, the issue of sourcing enough employers to make the scheme a success is likely to remain an issue.

Diversifying employer involvement. A key issue for a successful roll out of the Student Apprenticeship initiative will be the ability to attract new employer involvement in the programme. This will require the diversification of employer involvement both in terms of attracting larger employers, as noted above, and in establishing a broader base of small local employers. In several of the pilot regions, training providers have held the primary responsibility for employer recruitment to the scheme. Whilst some training providers demonstrated significant good practice in utilising the initiative to expand their employer client base, other training providers relied heavily on existing employer contacts established through Modern Apprenticeship programmes. It may be useful for guidelines to be drawn up for training providers and other stakeholders involved in company recruitment, to ensure a consistent approach and message is applied to the recruitment process. This would seem particularly prudent given the employer concern noted in the report regarding the promotion and structure of the initiative.

Employer involvement in the pre-16 model. As the report has demonstrated, employer involvement must be carefully managed with the pre-16 group, and experience suggests that

it should be limited. Pre-16 groups can gain much of the work experience they need through the simulated work environment provided by training providers. Many of the employers, training providers and stakeholder discussions conducted for the evaluation suggested that this was the most appropriate method for working with this age group.

However, it is important to note that many of the employers who expressed their reluctance at working with pre-16s did not have direct experience of this group. Employer perceptions therefore present a significant challenge for the initiative. It is interesting to note that whilst employers who had been involved in the pre-16 pilot had mixed views on the appropriateness and real value derived from their involvement, they did feel it was important for employers to begin establishing links with this age group and that the initiative provided an important channel for employers to work with people at an earlier stage. This was viewed as potentially offering employers significant benefits, in terms of early recruitment, identification of potential MAs, and the opportunity to train the employee in the ways of the company, rather than employing people who have been trained by others.

12.2 Constraints

In this final section consideration is given to two important constraints on the national roll-out: school assessment frameworks; and a set of issues surrounding funding.

12.2.1 School assessment frameworks

School assessment frameworks provide an important constraint on whether schools become involved in the programme, and this issue needs to be addressed as part of a national roll-out. The way in which school performance is assessed inhibits the potential for schools and colleges to release pupils to take part in the Student Apprenticeship initiative. The points awarded to schools/ colleges are dependent upon the number of pupils achieving at A/ AS level, and hence points could be affected if a school involves pupils in Student Apprenticeships which reduces the number of A/AS levels courses being taken. The demands required from A/AS level study mean that a Student Apprentice can only expect to study around 2 A/AS levels in addition to their apprenticeship.

12.2.2 Funding

Funding is an issue for the national roll-out of any local initiative. However, it is pertinent to highlight some particular issues for Student Apprenticeships. These centre around sources of funds and costs, and important structural funding issues for training providers and for schools and colleges.

Funding sources during the pilot phase. The pilot initiative has relied in part upon the LSC Local Initiative Fund to date, and all areas felt this was not an appropriate means by which to fund the national Student Apprenticeship programme, as this could result in fractured, piecemeal implementation. For example, in the Birmingham area, TEC reserve funds were initially utilised to fund the initiative. With the emergence of the LSC, Core Skills funding and LIF funding were combined to fund the initiative. At the time of the evaluation,

Birmingham LSC was exploring the potential of accessing Co-Finance/ ESF funds to expand the initiative during 2002.

In addition to LSC/ initial TEC funding, the Student Apprenticeship pilots have also been resourced through considerable 'good will' to date. For example, a broad range of employers and training providers referred to their commitment to the initiative, regardless of funding. For example, in Walsall providers were prepared to absorb a large share of costs, as they valued the aim of the initiative and believed it had potential to provide a progression route onto Modern Apprenticeship programmes. This makes it difficult to assess the costs of the initiative in each locality since it suggests that a significant amount of resources have been effectively hidden. It was beyond the remit of this study to derive unit costs for the programme, but this will clearly be an imperative before the financial viability of any national roll-out can be assessed. Furthermore, the LSC will need to generate a funding unit to take account of time spent on Student Apprenticeships in the event of the SA initiative being mainstreamed.

Resourcing issues for Training Providers. Many providers included in the evaluation noted that a Student Apprenticeship was less valuable to them than a Modern Apprenticeship. Indeed a number put this very starkly in that Student Apprenticeships effectively cost them lost income since for each SA they handled they lost a MA since they only had the time to handle one or the other. Although, as just noted, some providers saw SAs as linking to MAs, this funding issue remains important.

Resourcing issues for Schools and Colleges. School and College representatives expressed significant concern and frustration at the limitations placed on the participation of their pupils in the post 16 initiative owing to the resourcing structure for schools and colleges. School funding is partly dependent upon the number of A/AS levels pupils are entered for – and hence schools felt penalised for their participation in the programme and questioned whether they could afford to release students to take part in the initiative. (Schools participating in the pre-16 initiative were not affected by these issues).

Resourcing issues for the National Learning and Skills Council

A framework will need to be developed for the implementation of the Student Apprenticeship initiative. For example, a funding unit will need to be devised to account of time spent on a Student Apprenticeship.

It will be important that all these funding issues are addressed for any national roll-out of the initiative.

Annex A – Presentation of the Initial Findings

Slide 1

**Student Apprenticeships
Evaluation**

Presentation of Initial Findings
19 October 2001

Andrew McCoshan & Jenny Williams
ECOTEC Research & Consulting Ltd



Slide 2

Aims of the Study

Generate evidence to:

- demonstrate what works and why
- inform a possible national roll out of the initiative



Slide 3

Objectives of the Study

To investigate:

- Selection, take up and recruitment
- Attainment and Retention
- Motivation
- Progress Routes:
 - 1) Preparation for a Modern Apprenticeship
 - 2) Alternative outcomes
- Benefits and disadvantages of pre- and post 16 models

Slide 4

Methodology

Desk Research:
to provide baseline information on MA participants, and local contexts.

Fieldwork:

Stage 1:
Face to face semi-structured interviews with employers and training providers

Stage 2:
Semi-structured telephone interviews with schools, colleges and young people
Focus groups with young people



Slide 5

Implementation contexts

	Walsall	Barnet	Warrington
Focus	Sector specific	Labour market	Acute specific
Training Provider Role	Role in the recruitment process, whether in school or employer placement	Distinct role in the recruitment process, whether in school or employer placement	Often combined, implies of TP and employer
Employer Role	Employer role in recruitment View as potential recruitment strategy SME, training and career partners	Employer role in recruitment Recruitment strategy SME involvement	Employer role in recruitment Recruitment strategy SME involvement
LSC/TEC Role	Links with employers' training providers	Key role in training and development	Key links to MA programme
School Role	Provision and delivery Limited information by employers, although some awareness of gaps	Employer involvement with schools, but not clear commitment	Schools involvement in delivery, but general lack of information
Career Services Role	Employer involvement	Linked recruitment with employers, but not clear commitment	Brand involvement in promotion

Slide 6

Promotion of the Initiative

- Limited to date, lack of funding and structure
- Training provider leaflets, talks
- Schools - visual material, visiting speakers, involvement of previous SAs
- Lack of employer involvement
- Students not clear about SA/MA difference



Slide 7

Selection, take up and recruitment issues

- Players in the selection process: schools/colleges, employers, LSC
- Targeting strategies employed by the selectors
- Factors affecting the selection and take up process:
 - Work interests
 - Study programme
 - Reconciliation with study commitments
- Recruitment criteria:
 - employer requirements
 - interest and some aptitude for the industry
 - willingness to learn and appreciate the company focus
 - presentation, communication skills



Slide 8

Impact on Attainment and Retention

Attainment : difficult to quantify in actual grades
 : anecdotal coursework improvement

Retention : difficult to quantify, but:
 : pre-16: both young people and teachers
 : refer to people staying on school
 : exceptions to the rule?
 : post-16: some evidence of retention but
 : issue of positive early leavers, re-
 : assessment of course choice



Slide 9

Impact on Students' Motivation

- Shown relevance of school/college work
- Given reason to achieve a grade
- Shown there is life after school!



Slide 10

Preparation for a Modern Apprenticeship

- Acquire skills relevant to the MA
- Develop areas of interest prior to MA
- Develop 'right' attitude and communication skills
- Develop employability skills: presentation, time keeping, self discipline
- Develop orientation to, and acceptance in, the workplace
- Develop realistic expectations



Slide 11

Progression Routes 1: Moving into a Modern Apprenticeship

- Accelerates progression within the MA
- Most SAs move into Foundation Modern Apprenticeships
- Access to AMAs difficult owing to level of study and employer perceptions
- Limited to certain sectors, schemes of study



Slide 12

Progression Routes 2: Alternative outcomes

- Individual : Reassessment of career aspirations
: Progression into direct employment
: Progression into Higher Education
- Organisational : Diverse implementation resulting in diverse outcomes
: Incorporating the SA into career pathways
: Direct recruitment



Slide 13

The post 16 model

Benefits

- Widely applicable
- Balances study with practical work experience
- Provides transition from school/college to the work environment
- Stimulates personal development
- Key skills acquisition, evidence for NVQs

Contd.



Slide 14

Disadvantages:

- Timetabling
- Pressure of curriculum and examinations (where more than 2 A levels)



Slide 15

The pre 16 model

Benefits

- Awareness raising, challenging stereotyping/expectations
- Trailing career options before deciding on post 16 route
- Transition route from school into trade or career
- Key skills acquisition, evidence for GNVQs

Contd.



Slide 16

Disadvantages

- Limited employer application: Health and Safety issues, working contexts
- Level of interest in workplace/ future career
- Maintaining relations with local employers
- Limited involvement of some schools



Slide 17

Future Opportunities for the SA Initiative

- Interest from other regions
- Synergy with government priorities: white paper 'Achieving Success'
- Diversification of the Initiative, e.g. large employers
- Creation of career pathways
- Promotion in line with young people's recommendations



Slide 18



**Annex B – Attendees at the Initial findings
Presentation, 19th October 2001**

Attendees at the initial findings presentation, 19th October 2001

The recommendations and issues identified in the later stages of this report, whilst being based on findings from the primary research and background desk research, are also informed by the subsequent discussions generated by the presentation of initial findings. A list of participants in these discussions is enclosed.

Attendees at the Initial Findings Presentation

Carol Proctor, Modern Apprenticeships Team, Young People's Policy Division

Steven North, Modern Apprenticeship Team, Young People's Policy Division

Wendy Worviell, Student Apprenticeship Manager, West of England LSC

Paul May, Executive Director, West of England LSC

Charles Thomas, Student Apprenticeship Manager, Black Country LSC

Tony O'Callaghan, Student Apprenticeship Manager, Black Country LSC

Julie Hope, Student Apprenticeship Manager, Birmingham and Solihull LSC

Julie Cosgrove, Director of Operations and Strategy, Black Country LSC

Andrew McCoshan, Associate Director, ECOTEC

Jenny Williams, Research manager, ECOTEC

Ian Carnell, EMTA

Barry Warwick, Young People's Programme Division, LSC National Office

Janet Ryland, Young People's Programme Division, LSC National Office