

Education and Lifelong Learning



Work Experience in Scotland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background and context

1. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, provides the legal basis to allow students below the statutory school leaving age to participate in work experience towards the end of their compulsory education. Work experience remains an established feature of the education system and its profile has risen with the growing focus on enterprising education and skills development. In 2002 the Determined to Succeed Review Group recommended that all pupils over the age of 14 should have an opportunity for work-based vocational learning linked to accompanying relevant qualifications.

2. *Skills for Scotland*¹, the national skills strategy, acknowledged the role that work experience can play in supporting young people to make positive transitions from school. In doing so it can contribute to the National Indicator² to increase the proportion of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations. The skills strategy includes a commitment to “build new and more engaging models of work experience.”

Aims and objectives

3. The aim of the scoping study was to inform policy development through the mapping of current work experience provision across Scotland. “*Establishing the range and nature of work experience opportunities provided across the range of pupils’ abilities and needs, i.e. the ‘what’, ‘how’, ‘when’ and ‘for whom’.*” (Scottish Government 2008)³ Specific objectives within the research were to: identify the benefits for school pupils; consider barriers to equity of opportunity; highlight examples of good practice; and recommend improvements to provision.

Method

4. The method combined desk and field research. The former included a policy review and a scan of approaches to work experience in comparator countries. The fieldwork included a survey of work experience co-ordinators across Scotland⁴ and a survey of a sample of (109) employers. The employers were drawn from 6 local authority areas where intensive fieldwork was conducted: fieldwork included pupil focus groups in 18 schools, key witness interviews and stakeholder workshops involving teachers, employers and parents. The process also included a workshop with voluntary sector organisations.

Findings

- The percentage of 16 year old school leavers has halved since 1980, with a reducing proportion going into employment: this raises questions about the

¹ Skills for Scotland: a lifelong skills strategy: Scottish Government 2007

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/scotPerforms/indicators>

³ Scoping study on work experience to inform review of work experience within Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government research specification March 2008

⁴ 28 local authorities responded to the survey

timing of work experience in schools.

- Scotland is unusual in having a universal commitment to work experience when most comparator countries restrict it to those in vocational education. However, the fit between work experience and the wider curriculum is limited in Scotland.
- There is consensus that work experience aims to raise pupils' awareness of the world of work. However, there is disagreement around the extent to which placements should relate to pupils' areas of study and/or career aspirations.
- 38,502 pupils had a work placement in 2007/08 in the 28 authorities which responded to the survey. In this period an estimated 86% of S4 pupils had a work experience placement. The most common reason for exclusion was cited as 'behavioural problems'.
- 30,494 employers were on the database in these areas. 72% were private sector organisations, 25% were in the public sector and 3% were voluntary sector organisations. The biggest motive for employer involvement was to give something back to the community.
- With some notable exceptions, in most areas work experience co-ordinators were disappointed with the level of public sector participation as an employer.
- Although there is a wide spread of industrial sectors involved, a majority of co-ordinators feel the employer profile does not reflect the local labour market. The biggest under-represented sector is reported to be construction.
- 60% of co-ordinators report that it is increasingly difficult to engage employers. 86% thought that concerns around compliance were a major reason for this.
- Most mainstream schools offer a one week placement for S4 pupils. This puts huge pressure on demand for placements and some authorities see this model as unsustainable and undesirable. With a limited focus on personalisation and flexibility, the high volume model is at odds with curricular reform.
- The scale of the mainstream model presents challenges to schools in terms of offering the levels of support suggested in the national guidance.
- Growing numbers of non-mainstream schools are providing work experience opportunities – usually beyond S4. The lower volumes allow for much higher levels of support to pupils and there are innovative delivery models supporting pupils with additional support needs. There are concerns that vulnerable pupils *within* mainstream schools do not receive adequate levels of support.
- Self-found placements account for 30% of the total. Although a vital source of opportunities, they raise concerns about equity access.

- 25% of area co-ordinators thought that any account of pupils' experiences of part-time work was taken when matching pupils to placements.
- There is no record of the levels of investment in work experience. Nor is there any co-ordinated approach to recording impacts, although the study identified qualitative benefits recorded by pupils, employers and schools.

Conclusions, options and recommendations

5. The study identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the current work experience model in Scotland as follows:

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The universal principle • High participation rates • Widening access • Employer commitment • Professional management and co-ordination • Commitment and enthusiasm of staff • Impact on many young people • Popularity amongst pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of universality in practice • Lack of shared understanding of the aim of work experience • Lack of detail on resources and impact • The current high volume mainstream delivery model • Weak links with the wider curriculum and engagement of subject teachers • Weak recognition of achievement • Uneven commitment from schools and authorities • Limited parental engagement • Weaknesses relating to compliance • Limited public sector role as an employer

6. The following four options are presented to the Scottish Government:

- Retain the status quo: continue with the current model.
- Discontinue work experience: stop providing work placements in school.
- Refresh the current model: retain the approach whilst tackling the weaknesses.
- Re-engineer the model: adopt a more personalised approach to work placements.

7. The report sets out a number of recommendations. These include retention of work experience and of the universal principle. However, it is also recommended that the national guidance be updated to reflect the changing policy context and to stress that pupils should access a work placement which is meaningful for them at an appropriate point in their education. This reflects the Government commitment in Building the Curriculum 3⁵ to provide “extensive opportunity for personalisation and choice for young people” in the senior phase of learning.

⁵ Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching Scottish Government 2008

CHAPTER ONE: THE RESEARCH, BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings from scoping research on work experience in Scotland commissioned by the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Employability for Young People Division. The study was carried out between June and September 2008.

1.2 The research was undertaken against a background of an increasing focus on skills development for all children and young people as part of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Background

1.3 Work experience has been part of the Scottish education system for almost 30 years. *Determined to Succeed* – the strategy for enterprise in education which emerged from the review of Education for Work and Enterprise⁶ - has been a significant influence on the increased profile of work experience in recent years. The review group⁷ identified work experience as an effective means of preparing young people for the world of work and made specific recommendations impacting work experience as follows:

Recommendation 2 – All pupils over the age of 14 must have an opportunity for work-based vocational learning linked to accompanying relevant qualifications; and

Recommendation 11 – Learning and Teaching Scotland must review and improve existing guidance and support materials for work experience.

1.4 More recently, curricular reform driven by *Curriculum for Excellence* (CfE), has recognised the important role for schools in preparing children and young people for adult life, including employment. The Curriculum Review Group report⁸ noted that the curriculum should

“include a wide range of experiences and achieve a suitable blend of what has traditionally been seen as ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’.”

1.5 The sharper focus on equipping pupils with skills for life and work is also a key theme in the national skills strategy⁹. This highlights the importance of young people's successful transition from school to the world of work and identifies the important role work experience can play. The Scottish Government asserts, in the strategy, that it will

⁶ Later renamed “Enterprise in Education”

⁷ *Determined to succeed: A review of enterprise in education*: Scottish Executive. 2002

⁸ *A Curriculum for Excellence: The Curriculum Review Group*: Scottish Executive 2004

⁹ *Skills for Scotland: a lifelong skills strategy*: Scottish Government 2007

“build new and more engaging models of work experience and learning and teaching about enterprise and ensure that young people are aware of the full range of options available to help them recognise and develop their skills.” (Scottish Government 2007)

1.6 It was against this background that the Government undertook to examine current practice in work experience across the country.

Aims and Objectives

1.7 The overarching aim of the study was to:

“... inform policy development through the mapping of current work experience provision across Scotland; identifying the ‘learning and development gains’ for participating school pupils and barriers to equity of opportunity; highlighting examples of good practice in a global context for further examination; and recommending improvements to provision.” (Scottish Government 2008)¹⁰ The brief stated that this would be achieved by:

- Establishing the range and nature of work experience opportunities provided across the range of pupils’ abilities and needs;
- Gaining a full understanding of the range of opportunities provided;
- Highlighting examples of good practice in relation to work experience in a global context; and
- Making recommendations for new and improved models of work experience and how these can be embedded within *Curriculum for Excellence*.¹¹

Method

1.8 The methodology was designed to capture the views of all stakeholders with an interest in work experience across the country. It included:

- A web-based survey of all 32 local authority-based work experience co-ordinators (who manage and administer local operations), seeking their views on all aspects of work experience: 28 responses were received. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 3.
- Extensive stakeholder consultation in 6 selected local authority areas¹¹. The areas were pre-agreed with the Research Advisory Group¹² and provided a fair sample in terms of size, location and geography. In each of these areas the researchers conducted a series of individual *key witness* (face to face) interviews, and a stakeholder workshop which typically involved a mix of

¹⁰ Scoping study on work experience to inform review of work experience within Curriculum for Excellence: Scottish Government research specification March 2008

¹¹ The selected areas were South Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Falkirk, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee and Aberdeenshire.

¹² The Scottish Government formed a Review Advisory Group to oversee the study

teachers, employers and a small number of parents who were identified through local authority contacts. Participating teachers included secondary staff with pastoral and/or subject responsibilities: primary school and college staff were also involved. Consultations were also held with teachers in 18 schools across these areas, 3 of which were special schools involving Headteachers, senior managers, pastoral heads and subject teachers.

- Eighteen pupil focus groups were held - 3 in each of the 6 selected local authority areas, involving 158 pupils from mainstream and special schools. Special school participants included pupils with moderate and medium level support needs, mainly in relation to learning disabilities. Local authority co-ordinators identified the participating schools.
- A telephone survey of 109 employers across the 6 local authority case study areas who provide work placements for pupils, and a small number of organisations previously – but no longer - involved. Employers were identified by authorities and the sample reflects the local database profile. The employer questionnaire is attached at Appendix 4.
- The process also included a workshop with leading voluntary sector organisations across the country¹³. These are organisations involved, amongst other things, in working with young people with additional support needs, including emotional and behavioural difficulties, young offenders and cared for and looked after children and young people. The session primarily explored the barriers their clients face in accessing placements and the effective approaches being undertaken by these agencies to tackle them.

1.9 In addition, the research team conducted 2 elements of desk-based research. This consisted of (a) a policy review in relation to work experience, focussing on government policies relevant to work experience; and (b) a scan of approaches to work experiences beyond Scotland. The comparator countries were identified using a number of criteria, including

- their comparability with Scotland – including size, geography, socioeconomic profile;
- the comparability of their systems with the Scottish education model; and
- the availability of research and policy documents in English.

1.10 This element was complemented by a number of consultations with experts from other countries¹⁴.

Report structure

1.11 The remainder of the report is set out as follows:

¹³ Participating organisations are detailed at Appendix 7

¹⁴ Consultations with specialists in Finland, Ireland, England and Denmark

- Chapter 2: The context for work experience in Scotland

This draws on the desk research to set the background for the work experience review. It considers the original rationale for work experience and the changing labour market; and examines relevant policy.

- Chapter 3: Approaches to work experience beyond Scotland

This draws on the fieldwork and desk research to describe the approach to work experience in comparator countries.

- Chapter 4: The work experience model in Scotland

This draws on the fieldwork and desk research. It describes the current work experience model, considers the aims of work experience, provides an overview of the offer; and examines related roles and responsibilities. It also examines issues around compliance.

- Chapter 5: Work experience in practice

This draws on fieldwork evidence and examines operational issues, including matching, timing and equity; and considers the impact of work experience.

- Chapter 6: Local area profiles

This draws on fieldwork evidence provided by stakeholders and presents a summary of the 6 local area case studies, drawing out common themes.

- Chapter 7: The employer perspective

This presents the results of the employer survey.

- Chapter 8: Conclusions

This presents the overall conclusions and highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the current work experience model in Scotland.

- Chapter 9: Options and recommendations

This sets out 4 options for the Scottish Government to consider and the recommendations for improving provision.

CHAPTER 2: THE CONTEXT OF WORK EXPERIENCE IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

2.1 This chapter sets the context for the study, tracing the origins of work experience in schools and providing an overview of the current picture. It also positions work experience within wider policy contexts, explaining its relevance in relation to the Scottish Government's overall priorities. It draws on evidence generated by the fieldwork and desk research conducted during the study.

Background

The Offer

2.2 The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended, provides the legal basis to allow students below the statutory school leaving age to participate in work experience towards the end of their compulsory education. This was aimed at pupils reaching the school leaving age either during their 4th year or by the end of the winter term of 5th year. Recent national guidance on work experience states that:

“...school pupils are entitled to undertake a period of work experience from 1 May in their S3 year if they are going to reach school leaving age either during their S4 year or at the end of the Christmas term of their S5 year.” (Scottish Government 2006)¹⁵

2.3 Introduced at a time when most pupils left school on completion of S4, the original rationale for work experience was to provide young people about to leave compulsory education with a taste of the work environment prior to them entering the labour market.

The current position

2.4 Today, the work experience concept remains in place and there is an expectation that all pupils will have the opportunity to participate. Although administration and management of the process have changed, the model is largely the same as when it was introduced. For most mainstream secondary schools this takes the form of a one week work placement organised during a pupil's 4th year.

2.5 Over recent years the Government has grown increasingly aware of differing approaches to local delivery and differing levels of priority across the country. This has suggested that the commitment to the universal principle varies between local authority areas.

2.6 Such disparity questions the current state of work experience in Scotland, in particular, the universal concept and the extent to which the current offer operates. The scoping research was commissioned to examine these issues in detail.

¹⁵ Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education – work experience guidance 2006 p 24

The changing context for work experience

Labour market influences since the 1980s

2.7 Since the 1980s there have been dramatic changes to Scotland's labour market and to young people's relationship with it. In 1980, two-thirds of pupils left school aged 16 and 65% of them went directly into employment¹⁶. In 2008 the details are quite different. The latest school leaver data¹⁷ shows that a minority – 33% - left school aged 16. It also shows that of those leaving school a minority (34%) went directly into employment¹⁸.

2.8 These changes reflect structural shifts in the labour market. Key amongst which is the reduction of threshold entry job opportunities requiring lower manual skill levels. It also reflects the decline of the Scottish manufacturing sector, which historically provided employment for many young male school leavers

Employers' concerns: recurring themes

2.9 The introduction of work experience was also influenced by employers' desire to see school leavers better equipped for work - partly fuelled by a fear that curricular changes had reduced schools' ability to prepare pupils for work. This remains a familiar refrain today. At both Scottish and UK levels, research consistently suggests that employers are concerned about young people's readiness for employment.

2.10 Research into work experience commissioned by the CBI¹⁹ referred to the CBI's Employment Trends Survey (2006) which found that over 50% of employers surveyed were not satisfied with the generic employability of school leavers. A study of Scottish employers conducted by TERU²⁰ reported that significant numbers of the case study employers believed school leavers to be poorly prepared for work. This was often identified through frequent absence, poor timekeeping, an inability to work on their own, difficulties communicating and organising themselves, poor attitude to training and career development and an apparent lack of any sense of responsibility to their employer.

2.11 The TERU study concluded that there is a need to

“work harder at the process of preparing school leavers for the workplace and provide an opportunity for the key stakeholders to look in detail at the options for achieving change.” (Futureskills Scotland 2006)

2.12 To achieve this, 2 key areas of priority were suggested:

- The provision of a real workplace experience whilst still at school, and

¹⁶ Destinations of early school leavers: Howieson Cathy , University of Edinburgh 2004

<http://www.ces.ed.ac.uk/PDF%20Files/Brief028.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/07/28100032/56>

¹⁸ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/12/07093501/0>

¹⁹ Time Well Spent – Embedding Employability in work experience, DFES March 2007

²⁰ Scottish school leavers and their understanding of the world of work – Futureskills Scotland 2006

- The development of closer ties between those charged with supporting young people into the labour market and employers

2.13 In terms of work experience specifically, the TERU report proposed more effective and ideally longer work experience programmes, tailored to the needs of the individual in terms of their abilities and skills. It argued that this should be aligned with seeking out more employers who are willing to host school pupils for periods of work experience. These relate to wider suggestions around greater involvement of employers generally in preparing school leavers for the workplace; developing enterprise programmes, and improving information to schools about employers' requirements and recruitment practices.

2.14 These points link to feedback on the employer perspective set out in Chapter 7 of this report, indicating that despite almost 30 years of work experience much work remains to be done in terms of preparing young people for working life. In the early 1980s work experience was one of the few interventions with this aim, however as skills development for young people has risen in the policy agenda this has changed. In 2008 work experience is now recognised as but one of a range of activity designed to help schools and other learning providers support young people to develop the skills they will need for working life.

Policy context

2.15 The current framework of education and lifelong learning policies in Scotland represents a coherent set of drivers which point to practical/applied learning – and within that, work experience – as an essential component in the many opportunities to help young people to develop the skills they will need for their future.

Strategic background

2.16 The Government's *Economic Strategy*²¹ makes clear its overarching purpose *is increasing sustainable economic growth, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish*. It sets out a number of targets through which it will measure progress towards that fundamental aim. These include targets on increasing productivity and reducing inequalities (both spatial and individual). The *National Performance Framework* further defines the breadth of the Government's ambition for Scotland. It sets 5 overarching themes, 15 outcomes, and 45 indicators through which those outcomes will be measured. Together this supports an outcomes-focused approach to performance that requires the alignment of all public services to a single, clear and consistent set of priorities identified in a Single Outcome Agreement. SOAs are currently in place for all 32 local authorities and an outcome-based approach will be implemented in other public bodies from April 2009.

2.17 The *Scottish Government's Concordat* with COSLA contains a specific commitment to vocational education/skills – working in partnership with colleges, local employers and others as appropriate to give more school pupils opportunities to experience vocational learning.

²¹ Scottish Government: The Government Economic Strategy (2007)

Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy²²

2.18 This strategy brings together key policies to provide a comprehensive approach to lifelong learning and skills development in Scotland spanning early years through adulthood. Specifically, it gives a clear commitment to young people *about the routes to education, employment and training, the support they can expect and to increasing opportunities for, and the esteem accorded to, vocational learning and training.*

2.19 It stresses the need to *make the link between the classroom and the world of work to allow young people to understand the relevance of what they learn, building new and more engaging models of work experience as a means for them to gain awareness of the range of options available to help them recognise and develop their skills* and highlights the important role for schools and other partners, including employers in doing so.

2.20 The Strategy highlights the need to address issues relating to the employability and progression of young people, including those needing *more choices and chances*, particularly around the transition from school to the world of work and adult life. It reflects the Government's wish that all young people stay in learning after 16 since this is recognised as the best way of improving their long-term employability.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

2.21 *Curriculum for Excellence* provides the framework for defining the contribution of learning from 3-18 to the National Outcomes. It offers better educational outcomes and promotes skills development (on a par with knowledge and understanding) for all children and young people, providing more choices and chances for those that need them. It aims to support all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors and challenges schools to engage with other partners – including employers – to this end. *Building the Curriculum 3: a framework for learning and teaching* outlines the entitlements for young people during the senior phase of learning, i.e. S4-S6, including planned opportunities for continued skills development and support to achieve a positive and sustained destination.

2.22 The development of *Skills for Work qualifications* - which have significant employability and work-related themes; and are aimed primarily at S3/4 pupils - are a result of this focus. These qualifications are supported by employers – in design and delivery – and often include practical workplace experiences.

2.23 Development work on CfE is also considering how best to give greater recognition to achievement by young people beyond National Qualifications.

²² Scottish Government: Skills for Scotland: a lifelong skills strategy (2007)

Determined to Succeed²³

2.24 Historically, work experience has been the main way of informing young people about the world of work. The *Review of Education for Work and Enterprise*, established in 2001, examined work experience as part of its remit ‘to assess the effectiveness of Education for Work and Enterprise in schools, in preparing young people for the world of work and encouraging an enterprising culture in later life; and to examine the scope to improve Education for Work and Enterprise in fully supporting Scotland’s priorities for education, and its economic success.’ The Review concluded with *Determined to Succeed: A Strategy for Enterprise in Education* which included 2 recommendations providing a catalyst for development of work experience as cited in Chapter 1.

2.25 *Determined to Succeed* is central to delivery of *Curriculum for Excellence*. *Determined to Succeed – Policy Expectations for Local Authority Delivery 2008-2011*²⁴ sets out how enterprising education will continue to support curricular reform, including through opportunities for developing skills for life and work.

More Choices, More Chances²⁵

2.26 The Scottish Government’s strategy to reduce the proportion of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training was published in 2006. It recognises that not being in education, employment or training is an unacceptable waste of potential, selling young people short and making no sense, economically or socially. It further recognises that a ‘standard’ curriculum often does not respond to the specific needs and circumstances of many young people and that such young people often need more choices, chances and support to keep them engaged in learning and to progress to positive and sustained destinations. *Curriculum for Excellence* will ensure more tailored provision, including opportunities to develop skills for life and skills for work for those needing more choices and chances.

Key points

- The Education Act (Scotland) 1980, as amended, provides the legal framework allowing young people to participate in work experience.
- Although the proportion of pupils leaving school after S4 has halved since its introduction, the broad shape and timing of work experience in Scotland remains unchanged.
- Research evidence indicates that employers continue to voice concerns about the work-readiness of school leavers.
- Key national policy drivers support the principle of work experience as an intervention which can help link the classroom with the world of work.

²³ Scottish Executive: *Determined to Succeed: A review of enterprise in education* (2002)

²⁴ http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/Images/CommunicationsLAGuidancephase2_tcm4-492583.pdf

²⁵ Scottish Executive: *More Choices More Chances* (2006)

CHAPTER 3: APPROACHES TO WORK EXPERIENCE BEYOND SCOTLAND

Introduction

3.1 Scotland is not alone in facing challenges around preparing young people for an increasingly unpredictable labour market. In order to identify potential lessons from abroad, this study involved a scan of comparable and notable approaches to work experience beyond Scotland. Countries were included largely due to their comparability or because they have a reputation for good practice in preparing young people for work. A detailed account of this element is attached as Appendix 2.

Comparator countries

Overview

3.2 Few other countries share Scotland's universal approach. In fact, outside the UK aspects of the Scottish work experience model are regarded with some surprise. This reaction was most notable in countries where there is a strong dual system which offers a separate academic and technical pathway beyond the mid-point of secondary education. In these countries – which include Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands – pupils pursuing a technical route will have a series of work-based learning opportunities linked to their course of study. However, in these countries, pupils who are pursuing an academic route are unlikely to have any interaction with a workplace whilst at school. This contradicts Scotland's universal approach and belief that all young people – regardless of their preferred progression route – can benefit from work experience.

England

3.3 In England, much of the curricular reform is focused on the plans there to raise the participation age to 18 from 2015. Hitherto, work experience there has operated much as it has in Scotland, with the exception that it usually consisted of a 2-week placement. From September 2008 Diplomas, have been introduced, an integral component of which is work experience.

3.4 The Department for Children Families and Schools (DCFS) is piloting 5 Diplomas across England²⁶. Each includes 10 days compulsory work experience which can be taken in a block or on a modular basis – with one or more employers. The placements will be directly related to the young person's vocational area, and they will be expected to achieve set learning goals. Although no accreditation will be awarded for the placement *per se*, some of the learning outcomes may form part of the student's overall portfolio.

3.5 The current system will remain in place so no pupils will miss out, although the new Diplomas have generated discussion about the need to prioritise access to

²⁶ These relate to Engineering, Construction, IT, Media and Health

work placements. In this event, a key determinant is likely to be the young person's proximity to the labour market.

Ireland

3.6 In Ireland, work experience is a key element within the 'Transition Year' programme which is offered to pupils between the Junior Cycle (aged 12 to 15) and the Senior Cycle (aged 15-18). It provides an opportunity for pupils to experience a wide range of educational inputs to develop life skills and prepare for work. The Transition Year is offered in around 75% of all Irish schools, and students spend an average of 15 days on work experience, with all schools offering a minimum of 5 days (or one working week's) experience.

3.7 It is not clear from this research how successful the work experience component of the Transition Year programme has been, and if there are any potentially transferable elements or points of learning. However, a study undertaken in 2003²⁷ indicated that participation in the Transition Year appears to increase both informal and formal links with the labour market. It also noted that in addition to the work experience placements, a considerable proportion of pupils were also in paid part-time employment, and concluded that this may have a detrimental effect on subsequent educational success for some students. However, this conclusion does not concur with research in Scotland, which identified many positive aspects of part-time work for pupils²⁸.

Australia

3.8 The Australian system, although not directly comparable to work experience as operated in S4 in Scotland, is highlighted because of the development of a number of school based vocational education programmes which incorporate work experience as a key element. "VET in Schools" are programmes for pupils in upper secondary education and are part of the "senior secondary certificate" which credit towards a nationally recognised VET qualification.

3.9 In addition to these programmes, Australia operates school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, allowing secondary pupils to undertake a training qualification and work with an employer (as a paid employee) while studying for their senior certificate.

²⁷ The Transition Year Programme: Innovation within Upper Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland: The Economic & Social Research Institute, Dublin, September 2003

²⁸ Howieson at al "The nature and implications of part-time employment of secondary school pupils" Scottish Government DtS Research Findings No 47 2006

3.10 A Government Inquiry into vocational education in schools²⁹ in Australia reported on a number of issues around work placements in schools which might be of potential interest. It noted that the benefits of work placements were identified, both by students and industry, as a key factor of the most effective VET programs. It also highlighted the challenging nature of organising placements and noted that external co-ordination, such as in a cluster arrangement of schools can reduce logistical difficulties and competition amongst schools for placements.

3.11 It also noted the pressure within the educational system created by the demand for work-placements. As Sections 5 and 6 of this report show, placement capacity is also an issue in parts of Scotland, particularly in the more rural areas.

Key points

3.12 Overall, it is difficult to draw direct lessons from beyond the UK due to the limited comparability between systems. However, the global review has raised some important questions such as:

- Is retention of the universal principle correct?
- How helpful is the current approach where all pupils undertake work experience at the same point in their education – regardless of their proximity to the labour market?
- How useful is a work experience placement which bears little or no relation to a young person's vocational interest or likely future career, particularly when there are a number of other interventions through which young people can experience the world of work?
- What impact does having a work experience placement make on pupils' prospects of gaining a positive and sustained post-school destination?

29 Learning to Work: Inquiry into vocational education in schools, Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2004

CHAPTER 4: THE WORK EXPERIENCE MODEL IN SCOTLAND

Introduction

4.1 This chapter focuses on the work experience model in Scotland. It covers the aims of work experience and provides an overview of the current delivery framework, including an analysis of the participating employers. It also sets out the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders and considers issues relating to compliance and accreditation. It is designed to complement Chapter 5, where the focus is on work experience in practice. Key questions here include:

- What is the purpose of work experience?
- What is the scale of work experience in Scotland?
- What range of sectoral opportunities is available?
- What are the respective stakeholder roles and responsibilities?
- What compliance mechanisms are in place and how effective are they?
- How effective are the links between work experience and the wider curriculum?

4.2 Evidence here is drawn from the literature review, the work experience co-ordinator survey, local stakeholder workshops, pupil focus groups and the interviews with key witnesses.

The aim of work experience

4.3 Work experience plays an important part in preparing young people for adulthood by providing opportunities for them to develop skills they will need for their future life and work. For many participants, it is their first opportunity to spend time in a real workplace, away from their peers in a new environment³⁰. As such it provides an opportunity to learn more about themselves, as well as finding out about the world of work.

4.4 Work experience was originally introduced to provide a taste of the work environment for those about to leave school. Chapter 2 outlines changes in patterns of school leavers, with most young people now staying in education beyond S4 and entering the labour market at a later stage.

4.5 The school curriculum has also changed. There is now a higher priority on preparing pupils for the world of work and, an emphasis on schools working in partnership to provide a flexible personalised offer to pupils. *Curriculum for Excellence*, in Building the Curriculum 3, stresses the importance of this, as follows:

“Those involved in planning the curriculum will need to integrate personal support with learning. There will be a significant but important challenge for schools, colleges and other agencies together to achieve this.”³¹

³⁰ Howieson (2006) estimates that 48% of S3 pupils have part-time work and by S6 the figure is 83%

³¹ Scottish Government: Building the Curriculum 3 (2008) page 10

4.6 Pupils have numerous opportunities to engage with employers as a result of enterprise in education, school-college partnerships or voluntary sector interventions like the Princes' Trust XL programme. Consequently, by S4, today's pupils are more likely to have engaged with employers and the work environment than their predecessors. In fact, many pupils will have had this experience during primary school³².

4.7 The changing landscape and inter-connecting policies question whether the aim of work experience has altered.

4.8 The Government's current stated definition is that:

"The essential purpose of an effective work experience programme is to enhance the education of young people and their understanding of the world of work."³³ (Scottish Government 2006)

4.9 Two of the key groups surveyed during this research, work-experience co-ordinators and employers, broadly agreed with the Government and identified a similar priority aim for work experience which was:

"Raising pupils' understanding of the workplace and the needs of employers"

4.10 However, the fieldwork has identified some disagreement amongst stakeholders in relation to the fit between work placements and pupils' future career goals. Some note that with almost half of pupils having experienced a work-environment through enterprise in education and other education interventions, and through part-time work, the aim should be more ambitious than awareness raising. They argue that work placements should be more closely linked to pupils' core areas of study and their career aspirations.

4.11 Those who have disagreed with this in the workshops have done so largely on practical grounds. Their view is that although this may be aspirational, lack of suitable placements renders it undeliverable. This is largely due to the current mainstream school model's focus on most pupils undertaking a work experience placement at the same point in their school career. However, changing that approach would allow the aims to be more ambitious, and the flexibility proposed by Building the Curriculum 3 may provide an opportunity to do this.

4.12 The evidence provided by this research will help inform these key issues, in line with the commitment set out in the national skills strategy to improve work experience.

³² Scottish Government: Determined to Succeed – Three Years On (2007) provides good examples of primary school activities

³³ Determined to succeed: Enterprise in Education: Work Experience Guidance 2006 p5

Overview of work experience in Scotland and employer profile

Participation

4.13 The survey of local co-ordinators shows that work experience operates on a significant scale in Scotland. In 2007/08 38,502 pupils had a placement in the 28 local authorities surveyed. In each area the number of placements ranged from 330 to 5000, with the average figure being 1,375.

4.14 Work experience placements are most common in S4. The co-ordinators estimate that in 2007/08 on average 86% of S4 pupils participated; an estimated 9% of S5 pupils; and an estimated 11% of S6 pupils. Low participation rates in S5 are stated as being due to pressure on studying for Highers.

4.15 Local rates vary considerably, as the local area case studies show. For example, in Dumfries and Galloway engagement rates in S5 and S6 are much higher, for reasons that are explained in the local area appendix. In special schools pupils are also more likely to participate beyond the S4 stage.

Timing

4.16 In most areas, schools work with a central co-ordinating team and are allocated one week, or 2, when placements are made available to them. The drive in most schools is to place as many S4s as possible, and there is pressure on school co-ordinators to place more young people each year. In larger secondaries this can mean organising placements for up to 400 young people in one week, and this responsibility largely falls to the work experience co-ordinator.

4.17 In parts of the country this approach is increasingly being acknowledged as neither sustainable nor desirable. Where the debate is furthest advanced, practical considerations have been a catalyst. Lack of placements – particularly of the right quality – is a key limiting factor. Once the focus shifts away from S4, the bottleneck is removed and other options emerge.

4.18 This timing is not suitable for all pupils either. The lack of flexibility within the mainstream system allows little scope to prioritise those who most need placements – for example those nearest the labour market. The volumes also mean that those who need additional support may not receive it: this issue is discussed further in Chapter 5.

4.19 Overall, the inflexible timing of the current model runs contrary to the commitment to provide the flexible and personalised curriculum promoted by Curriculum for Excellence.

Employer involvement

4.20 Schools are reliant on employers for providing opportunities for their pupils. Each local authority maintains a local employer database which currently accounts for

30,493 employers across the 28 areas³⁴. These databases range in size from 166 to 5,375 employers with the average being 1,173 organisations.

4.21 The Scottish Government was interested to know if it was becoming more difficult to engage employers in work experience: the figure below summarises the co-ordinator responses:

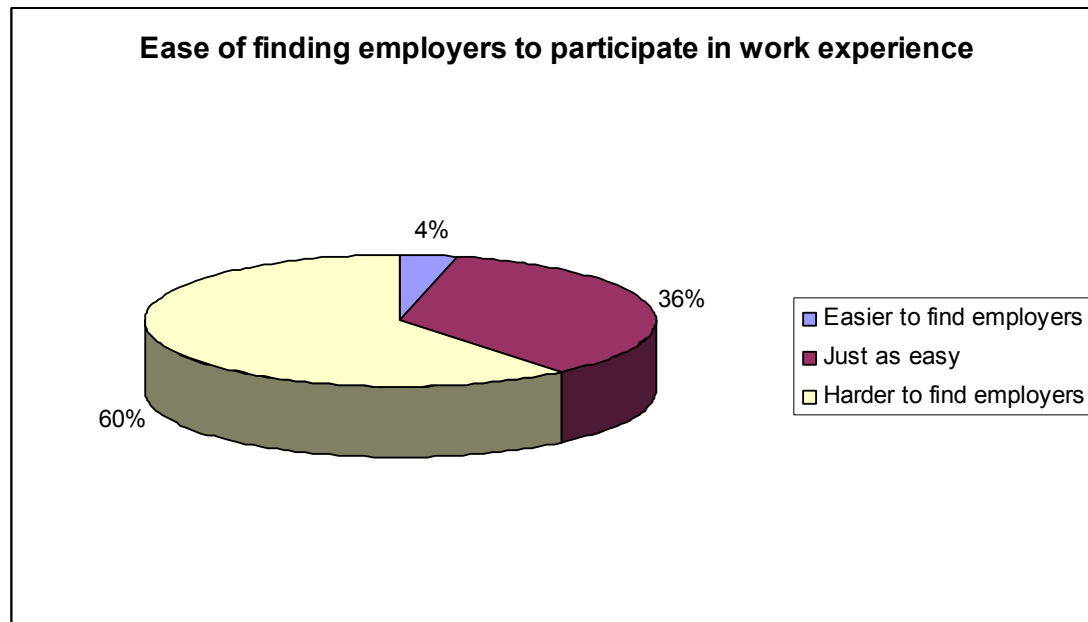


Figure 1: Source: Work Experience Co-ordinator survey (n=28)

4.22 This illustrates that in most cases it is becoming more difficult to engage employers in work experience. Asked why, the most common response from local co-ordinators was 'legislative requirements' followed by 'risk assessments/insurance'. In depth discussions indicate that this is affecting companies of all sizes. Typically, for very small firms the additional paperwork and insurance-cost implications are a factor.

4.23 However, larger organisations are also affected. In one authority the largest private sector employer has withdrawn from work experience because, in their view, changes to health and safety requirements prohibit offering 'meaningful' placements. The company continues to offer a work-shadowing programme for S6 pupils interested in chemical engineering. This is seen to work well because the pupils' added maturity and subject interest means that they are willing to have a less 'hands-on' opportunity.

4.24 The interpretation of legislation also varies amongst larger organisations across the country. For example, in some areas a major supermarket will only offer opportunities to pupils aged 18, whilst in other areas 16 year olds are placed with the company.

³⁴ There will be overlaps between these databases, for example national employers and where contiguous authorities are using the same employer.

4.25 These issues are further discussed in the Compliance section below, and possible responses to this challenge are presented later in the report.

Employer profile

4.26 The co-ordinator survey indicates that more than half (59%) of participating employers are from small organisations with fewer than 25 workers. More than a quarter (28%) are medium sized, employing between 25 and 250 employees whilst 13% employ more than 250 people. A large majority (72%) are private sector, 25% public sector and 3% are voluntary sector organisations.

4.27 In most parts of the country better engagement with the public sector is stated as a development priority. Although amongst the largest employers in every area, local authorities are not heavily involved in providing work placements. However schools themselves do tend to offer placements. The study has identified good practice in Glasgow and South Lanarkshire where all Council departments are actively involved – but these are a minority. The NHS is even less engaged, and health is routinely identified as a sector where there is a shortage of placements. Again, many co-ordinators highlighted improving routes into the NHS as a development priority. There may be opportunities here to learn from successful employability initiatives linked to Health³⁵. Other public sector services have a mixed profile across the country, with the Strathclyde Police Programme in Glasgow worthy of interest³⁶.

³⁵ Such as Working for Health, developed by NHS Glasgow and delivered by the Wise Group

³⁶ A local division offers a one week placement to twelve pupils interested in joining the force. The format provides an insight into different aspects of the service

4.28 In terms of the sectoral spread, Table 1 shows the total and average number of placements by industrial sector, as reported in the local co-ordinator survey.

Table 1: Work placement employers by industry		
Sector	Average No. of placements in each local authority area	Total No. of placements
Agriculture & Fishing	45	1074
Biotechnology, Medical and Chemical	27	466
Business Services	196	2741
Construction & Building Services	103	2483
Creative & Media, Education	204	4697
Electricity, Water & Gas Supply	19	298
Energy	3	30
Financial Services	21	469
Health, Care & Social Work	122	2921
Hospitality & Leisure	78	1801
IT & Telecoms	27	558
Manufacturing & Engineering	80	1687
Mining & Quarrying	0.1	1
Personal Services	90	2075
Professional Services	78	1645
Property & Real Estate	15	207
Public Administration & Defence	78	1555
Publishing, Printing & Defence	6	68
Retail & Wholesale	159	3493
Transport, Storage & Distribution	32	774
Travel, Tourism & Leisure	44	968
Other (inc unclassified)	174	2429

Source: Work Experience co-ordinator survey

4.29 Co-ordinators were asked if the range of opportunities reflected the local labour market: 58% thought it did not. By a large margin, construction is the biggest mismatch, with factors limiting engagement including high risk levels, the prevalence of small contractors and the sector's nomadic nature. In many areas the placement opportunities in construction are provided by the public sector, as in City Building³⁷ in Glasgow.

³⁷ City Building is an arms length organisation which holds the maintenance and repairs contract for Glasgow City Council

4.30 Other priority gap sectors identified by co-ordinators included IT, local government, health and social care, agriculture, hospitality and tourism. Three local authorities reported surpluses in health/social care³⁸ and hair and beauty.

4.31 In the employer feedback, presented in Chapter 7, we discuss the fact that employers often see work experience as a way of promoting their sector to young people. This study has identified a number of sectors where employers have concerns about the image and profile of their industry amongst young people. One of the most prominent of these is engineering. Consultation with some prominent industry representatives highlights a desire to work more closely with schools to tackle this. The challenge to attract new talent appears to affect all sectors of the industry and as well as concerns from leading private sector employers, this study has identified ways in which the public sector is addressing this problem – as in the example from the Falkirk local area case study.

4.32 Most authorities (19) thought that their local employer database was quite a good fit with the type of placements pupils wanted. Seven thought it was a poor fit, with gaps reported in construction and vehicle maintenance/mechanics. Our local area fieldwork confirms that these sectors are under-represented, whilst pupils reported that there were too many placements in care and education. Rural areas face particular challenges, not only in terms of sectoral availability but also as a result of transport limitations. This has led to some creative solutions, such as the development of Virtual Work Experience, described in Chapter 5.

4.33 The Co-ordinator survey is interesting because when asked to identify the strengths of their current offer, the most popular response (39%) was the range of placements on offer. However, when asked to identify the development priorities the top response was to generate a wider range of placements. Suggestions on how to do this included:

- Increased promotion nationally and locally.
- Involve employers from a wider area to meet demand.
- Bring all local authority departments on board.
- Share good practice in employer forums.
- Address the gender gap in placements offered.
- More flexible placement length.

³⁸ These reflect high levels of placements in childcare and residential care homes rather than opportunities within the NHS

Roles and responsibilities

Area co-ordination

4.34 Local authorities are responsible for discharging young people's entitlement to work experience and for ensuring appropriate systems, processes and resources are in place to support effective delivery. As the guidance³⁹ states

“It is for the individual education authority to be aware of its obligations to its pupils.”

4.35 Most local authorities fund work experience through core budgets. Each authority has a central co-ordinating team responsible for delivery, including managing the local employer database and usually overseeing health and safety checks, generating support information and liaising with schools around the placements. One of the main advantages of the centralised approach is that it avoids employers being approached by all of the local schools.

4.36 The study was undertaken during a transition period when 6 local authorities were assuming responsibility for delivery of work experience – from academic year 2008/09 - due to Careers Scotland's withdrawal from this service. Table 2 shows the shifting profile of delivery agencies.

Table 2: Co-ordinating organisations		
	2007/08	2008/09
Local Education Authority	15	18
Gateway	3	6
Chamber of Commerce	3	3
Individual School	1	1
Careers Scotland/Skills Development Scotland	6	-

Source: Work Experience Co-ordinator survey

4.37 Where delivery arrangements are changing, they are welcomed by the respective local authorities as an opportunity to revisit and refresh the approach to work experience. Ways in which this is being done are considered later in the report.

At school level

Mainstream schools

4.38 Each mainstream school has a teacher with lead responsibility for co-ordinating work experience. In very large schools – and those with a stated commitment to this agenda – this may be a full-time position. In most schools it is combined with other responsibilities. Beyond this, the involvement of teachers largely relies on the school culture, which is set by the Headteachers. A strong ethos of enterprise and employability is reflected in a strong team supporting the co-ordinator.

³⁹ Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education – Work Experience Guidance 2006

In schools where this commitment is low or missing, the co-ordinator's role is said to be solitary and marginalised.

Non-mainstream schools

4.39 Outside mainstream provision the pattern is different, although senior management buy-in is seen as important. Where this occurs, work experience is high on the school agenda and resources are committed to support it. A number of the local area case studies illustrate good examples of where groups of staff are extensively involved in making work experience valuable for young people outside the mainstream system.

Other sectors

Further education

4.40 The study explored the role of the FE sector and found that it is involved in work experience solely as a provider of placements. Colleges play an important role in equipping pupils with skills for life and work, most notably through school college partnerships. Although development and delivery of Skills for Work qualifications is an important part of this relationship, colleges currently have no other locus within the existing school work experience arrangements.

Voluntary sector

4.41 The study explored the role of the voluntary sector in relation to work experience. This had 2 focal points: the role of the sector as an employer; and to examine how its activities support and complement work being undertaken in schools. As an employer, there are very low levels of participation, averaging only 3% of total placements. The pattern is uneven with much higher figures recorded for urban areas, but overall it indicates an opportunity to widen the database from this source. In Scotland the sector is a major employer, with up to 107,000 employees⁴⁰.

4.42 Voluntary sector organisations have an important role in preparing young people for work, particularly those with additional support needs. For example, Kibble Works provides an employability programme aligned with its business streams; the Prince's Trust delivers the XL programme pan-Scotland and Includem works with young people in the youth justice system and is developing a programme of learning materials in partnership with Standard Life. It also includes ENABLE Scotland, whose job coaching service for pupils with learning disabilities is discussed in Chapter 5.

4.43 The workshop with voluntary organisations highlighted some of the difficulties they face working with schools, particularly mainstream schools. Although many have extensive expertise of working with young people with additional support needs, it is not always easy to transfer this expertise through work with schools. The participating organisations saw this partly as a cultural challenge,

⁴⁰ <http://www.scottishcorpus.ac.uk/corpus/search/document.php?documentid=1266>

where teachers do not fully understand the role of the sector or the skills it can bring. They also identified it as a curriculum issue, where school managers can struggle to see where these type of interventions might fit within the curriculum.

Compliance

4.44 The term ‘compliance’ is used to cover regulatory requirements placed upon local authorities and schools, in relation to work experience. The guidance states that:

“Schools and local authorities have a common law duty to look after the young people they educate and to carry out their undertaking in such a way as to ensure that they do not expose young people to risks to their health and safety. They must take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves that the placements they arrange will be safe.”⁴¹ (Scottish Government 2006)

4.45 Every workplace and job in which a placement is to be undertaken are subject to a Health and Safety check prior to placement. Risk levels are assessed on a cycle as follows:

- High risk – checked every year
- Medium risk – checked every 2 years
- Low risk – checked every 3 years

4.46 The work experience co-ordinator survey asked if insurance costs, child protection legislation and health and safety issues were deterring employers from participating, 86% of respondents said ‘Yes’. The table below evidences this.

Table 3: Reasons for saying that compliance issues are deterring employers		
	No.	%
Reduced employer participation in programme	9	56
Direct feedback from employers	3	19
More requests for information relating to legislation	1	6
Less practical work experience available due to restrictions	1	6
Evidence through risk assessment reviews	1	6
More self-found placements	1	6

Source: Co-ordinators’ Survey (n=16)

4.47 Concerns identified by co-ordinators were corroborated by stakeholders in fieldwork. These sources identified the following specific issues relating to this:

- Multiple Health and Safety checks

Every local authority conducts a Health and Safety check on participating employers. This means that an employer who provides placements to multiple areas will be multiple checked.

⁴¹ Determined to succeed: Enterprise in Education: Work Experience Guidance 2006 p24

- Child protection

Child protection legislation introduced in 2003⁴² encourages local authorities to ensure that individuals in a childcare position are not disqualified from working with children. This is variously interpreted by authorities, some of which require a Disclosure Statement. Aside from the added bureaucracy to local authorities/delivery partners, this has prompted a small number of employers to withdraw on principle, although this is not reported as being a major issue in terms of numbers.

Work placement co-ordinators expressed some concern about the length of time it can take for Disclosure Scotland checks to be processed which sometimes result in placements falling through. This is particularly common when self-found placements for new employers are arranged by pupils late in the day.

- Insurance

The guidance highlights responsibilities for placement providers and local authorities on insurance cover for participating pupils. The necessary cover is provided through the employers' liability policy and public liability insurance. This appears to operate effectively, although there are increasing reports of micro-businesses reviewing their participation as premium costs rise.

4.48 The co-ordinator survey showed that 12 authorities had taken active steps to address compliance issues, which have included:

- Providing advice and support around legislative requirements.
- Conducting risk assessments.
- Attempting to streamline Health and Safety procedures.
- Engaging Skills Development Scotland (Highlands and Islands) in supporting SMEs' participation.

4.49 In addition, some Sector Skills Councils have produced guidance packs for their sector setting out specific activity that could be done as part of work experience. This responded to suggestions that employers were either using health and safety concerns as an excuse or were genuinely confused about what young people could and couldn't do on work placement.

Recognition of achievement

4.50 Building the Curriculum 3 acknowledges the value of pupils being able to evidence the full range of their capabilities. It states that:

“To help promote the benefits of young people's wider achievements to employers, higher education, further education and others, we are developing proposals with local authorities and schools to ensure that young people's

⁴² The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act

wider achievements beyond National Qualifications are recognised more effectively.”⁴³ (Scottish Government 2008)

4.51 There are a number of qualifications within the portfolios of the SQA and other awarding bodies relevant to work experience but the local area case studies show that approaches to accrediting work experience are uneven both across the country and within authorities. Accreditation of work experience is most commonly through National Qualification unit, Work Experience (Access 3, Intermediate 1 and 2). However, only a minority of schools in each authority offer this to pupils. Authorities in Glasgow, Falkirk and Edinburgh, are actively promoting this approach in schools. Pupils had mixed views on the value of accrediting work experience: some felt it was important to have a tangible outcome whilst others felt that citing the experience on a CV was just as important – and equally understood by employers.

4.52 *Curriculum for Excellence* offers opportunities to consider both accreditation of work experience, including communicating the value of any accreditation to pupils, teachers, parents and employers; and recognition of work experience as part of pupils’ wider achievements.

Key points

4.53 The key points in this section were that:

- Pupils have contact with employers through enterprise in education, Skills for Work qualifications and other vocational programmes, and part-time work. Work experience is no longer their first experience of work and this raises questions about the overall aim of the current model.
- Most schools provide work experience through a one week block in S4. In some areas this is viewed as unsustainable, due to the pressure for placements.
- Work experience operates on a major scale with an estimated 86% of mainstream S4 pupils participating across the country. 34,493 employers are involved across the 28 local authorities surveyed.
- 72% of employers on local authority databases are from the private sector. Although there are notable exceptions, the public sector could assume a more proactive role as a host employer.
- 58% of co-ordinators did not think that their employer database reflected the local economy. The biggest mismatch relates to construction.
- A majority of co-ordinators report that it is becoming more difficult to engage employers. 86% cite compliance as a deterrent for employers.
- The local area case studies indicate that approaches to accrediting work experience across the country are uneven.

⁴³ Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching Scottish Government 2008

CHAPTER 5: WORK EXPERIENCE IN PRACTICE

Introduction

5.1 This section focuses on work experience in practice: it examines

- the nature of the activity;
- perceived benefits of different approaches;
- outcomes for young people;
- the extent to which work experience is inclusive and the equity barriers; and
- links with part-time work undertaken by pupils.

5.2 The evidence is largely derived from the work experience co-ordinator survey and the local area fieldwork.

Matching

The process

5.3 Matching pupils with employers is an important part of the process. Across Scotland, this has 2 primary elements: self-found and centrally managed placements.

5.4 Self-found placements are estimated to account for 30% of the total. This involves pupils being introduced to the concept of work experience and sourcing an opportunity through direct approaches to employers, or networks of family/friends. They complete initial paperwork to facilitate standard health and safety checks.

5.5 Centrally managed placements are most common and are available through local databases. Pupils can highlight any placements which appeal to them: these requests are then reviewed and, if suitable, agreed by the school work experience co-ordinator. Pupils commonly get 3 choices, and the survey indicates varying proportions of pupils gaining their preferred option. Based on responses from 18 authorities, the average likelihood is 66% but this varies between 20% and 100% at the local level for 2007/08.

5.6 In special schools the process is generally more customised, reflecting pupils' support needs and the much smaller numbers involved. Frequently, the local database provides a useful starting point, but schools often enhance this through established networks. Some employers offer placements only to young people in these settings.

Issues to consider

5.7 Teachers and work experience co-ordinators highlighted the following issues as being important for effective matching:

- Clarity around the purpose of work experience and in particular whether it is primarily generic (providing a broad introduction to the world of work) or has a more specific vocational focus.

- The need to recognise that many young people in S4 have no idea what they want to work as when they leave school: in terms of a vocational preference there is simply nothing to match to.
- The pressure imposed on the process by the volume of placements which require to be sourced by schools within a one or 2 week block. Where numbers are high the scope for quality matching is very limited.
- In rural areas with fewer employers and weaker transport infrastructures matching pupils to the right placement is a particular challenge.

Work experience and part time-work

5.8 Recent research⁴⁴ has indicated that young people who need more choices and chances are less likely to have a part-time job and also least likely to have work experience: this is borne out by this study of work experience. A minority of area co-ordinators (25%) thought that pupils' experiences of part-time work was taken into account when placements were organised. This would appear to be a missed opportunity.

5.9 In Dumfries and Galloway the authority's work experience model is an example of one which recognises young people's part-time work. Pupils who have not had a part-time job are given priority to work experience placements.

5.10 Pupil focus groups indicated that many young people make a clear distinction between work experience and part-time work. Part-time jobs are about earning money and gaining independence whilst work experience is about acquiring a more rounded understanding of the work environment, and perhaps of a specific job or industry sector.

5.11 One (Skills Development Scotland) consultee summarised this by comparing the comparative experience of working part-time with having a placement at a large national supermarket. In the former case the young person does a job – working the till, restocking shelves etc – without any insight into the bigger picture. Conversely, a good work experience placement will provide a more detailed understanding of the retail sector, derived from an overview of how the business operates and explanation of the variety of career paths available within the company and the sector.

The role of self-found placements

5.12 The importance of self-found placements cannot be understated. They are in practice the “engine” of the process – not only providing immediate places for young people, but also because some of these places are subsequently converted to database opportunities. At present, for most areas it is the main proactive mechanism for growing the central pool of opportunities.

⁴⁴ Howieson at al “The nature and implications of part-time employment of secondary school pupils” Scottish Government DtS Research Findings No 47 2006

5.13 The issue of self-found placements raises 2 questions. The first relates to equity, and the potential concern that young people from a work-connected family or community will generally be much better placed to source an opportunity than those from a workless household or community. The counterbalance to this is that applying the self-found option releases centrally sourced opportunities to those who are not as likely to gain via this route.

5.14 The second question is whether the nature of some self-found placements are consistent with the objectives of work experience. For example, whether a young person working directly with their parent in their workplace, is experiencing a genuine taster of the “world of work”. Does it test their ability to plan and access a placement - particularly if it was arranged by a parent or they are being driven to work each day? Part of the overall experience is to encourage young people to think about their strengths and areas of interest; and to investigate labour market options. Consequently, although the self-found placement may be convenient for the pupil and school, it may not always be effective.

5.15 Much of these discussions come back to the fundamental questions which run through this entire report, relating to:

- the purpose of work experience;
- the resources invested in it; and
- the impacts and benefits derived from it.

Equity and access

Links between underachievement and poor post-school transitions

5.16 This review has been interested to explore how universal the work experience offer is, and the extent to which it supports those with the biggest barriers to progression.

5.17 Work experience is designed to help young people to make a successful transition from school into the labour market. More Choices, More Chances highlighted that Scotland has one of the highest number of young people not in education, employment or training within the OECD and identified groups of young people more likely to leave school into negative destinations. *Curriculum for Excellence* promotes a partnership approach to ensure the education system works more effectively for the lowest performing 20% cohort in schools. These themes were reinforced by a recent OECD report which concluded that despite improved staying on rates, Scotland’s education system was less effective than others in supporting social mobility. It stated that:

“...there is a strong social area association in Scotland between under-achievement at school and unemployment levels amongst school leavers.”⁴⁵
(OECD 2007)

⁴⁵ OECD: Quality and equity of schooling in Scotland 2007 p110

Participation in work experience

5.18 The survey of work experience co-ordinators indicates that in 2007-08 an estimated 86% of S4 pupils in mainstream schools participated in work experience. When asked why some young people did not get a placement, only 9 of the 28 co-ordinators responded⁴⁶. Of those who did respond, the biggest single reason given was 'behavioural problems'.⁴⁷

5.19 A number of factors contribute to behavioural issues preventing participation, including teachers' concerns about negative consequences as a result of sending pupils who may misbehave out on placement. This indicates that within many schools work experience is used as a lever, with those who misbehave (or who are behind in their work) refused access.

5.20 These concerns are understandable. However, one of the problems is that the pupils whose behaviour is most challenging within the school system are often those who struggle to make positive transitions beyond. Non-participation in work experience may exacerbate this, reinforcing their sense of failure and their disconnection from the wider peer group.

Work experience for pupils with additional support needs

5.21 The fieldwork identified accounts of young people with disruptive records in mainstream school thriving in work placements, and pupils with the most challenging behaviour successfully completing work placements. This was seen as deriving positive benefit for the young person, for their peers – in terms of less disruption – and for teachers. These benefits have been identified in both mainstream and special schools.

5.22 An example of where work experience is working well for pupils with behavioural issues is a small Day Unit in one local case study area which supports excluded pupils. It has a strong commitment to work experience within the curriculum. In 2007-08 every pupil undertook a placement, generally in high profile local companies. Those not ready for an external placement were offered a supported placement in the Unit, for example in the kitchen or working with the janitor. Two key features were identified as helping make this happen. First, the Unit Director's hands-on enthusiasm, commitment and direction. Second, and related, the allocation of resources – largely, committed personnel. This means intensive preparation and support for pupils, and extensive work with employers throughout the experience.

5.23 Similar commitment and enthusiasm around employability is evident in a growing number of special schools across the country. Consequently, many young people who would not have been involved a few years ago are now participating in work experience, often with impressive results. Smaller pupil numbers allow these schools to invest the time needed to ensure pupils' and employers' experiences are positive. The local area case studies provide examples of some of the support models in place to facilitate this.

⁴⁶ Two non-respondents said that they objected to the question

⁴⁷ Poor literacy and numeracy was the second response and English being a second language the third

Challenges for special schools relating to work experience

5.24 Despite this progress, not all pupils yet get work experience and delivery remains complex and challenging. A special school in one authority which has pupils with a range of learning disabilities highlights particular challenges in sourcing opportunities. It has placed employability at the heart of its curriculum and each year the school 'seniors' (S6) who can, participate in a supported work placement. This involves going into the work place one day per week for a full term supported by a job coach from ENABLE Scotland.

5.25 The feedback from pupils and staff is that for many of these young people work experience can have a significant positive impact. It places them in an open working environment which often boosts their confidence and develops their wider skills. A work placement can also raise their employment expectations. For example, one pupil explained that whilst working on a placement in a supermarket he realised that he was capable of doing a job that people are paid for.

5.26 However, it also raises questions about their future options. Not all will be capable of working unsupported in the open labour market, but may be able to undertake supported or part-time work. Yet, not one single pupil has ever progressed from the school in question into employment. The school is working hard to address this, and the work experience programme is an important part of their efforts.

5.27 It is also worthy of note that, of the 56 families in the school mentioned above, only 8 have anyone in work, and many are third generation workless households. The Headteacher reports that families who are reliant on state benefit income from their disabled children are often anxious about employability. They often require considerable support from the school in order to see the value and relevance of work experience and other related interventions. Therefore, in addition to their disability, these young people are additionally disadvantaged by a culture where there is no ethos of employment.

5.28 Consequently, work experience for young people with additional support needs raises challenging questions around their future engagement with the labour market. It also raises questions about equity and access. Although improving outside the mainstream system, provision of work experience remains uneven, even though the number of pupils with learning disabilities who are participating is increasing. In some areas pupils with behavioural difficulties in the non-mainstream establishments are also being supported to take part, but this is not universal. The determining factor in most cases is the attitude of senior management and a culture of enterprise and employability in the school. But these schools are competing with mainstream schools and other agencies for a limited number of employer places, so their task remains hugely challenging.

Equity challenges facing mainstream schools

5.29 The focus, in mainstream schools is on participation numbers. Through lack of any other measurement indicators, co-ordinators are under pressure to place more pupils each year. Consequently, some young people who may not be ready for this experience go out although the benefits are questionable. The local area fieldwork suggests that those in mainstream schools who are less confident and more vulnerable are often unlikely to receive the support required to make the most of this experience. Within the local More Choices More Chances partnership in Dumfries and Galloway, the view is that the at-risk group is better supported on work experience outside the mainstream system. This study suggests that this view is echoed across much of the country.

5.30 This study has raised key issues about equity and access. It has shown that the current model is not universal, with some of those who would benefit greatly from work experience being least likely to get it.

Work experience preparation

The approach in mainstream schools

5.31 Work experience co-ordinators were asked to describe ways in which pupils are supported prior to a work placement. The responses in the table below:

Table 4: Ways in which pupils are supported prior to work placements		
	No.	%
Class-based work on what to expect in a work environment	25	89
Individual support from guidance staff in preparation for the placement	25	89
Pupils given an induction pack (e.g. key contacts)	23	82
Pupils visit the employer placement prior to their work experience	15	54
Contact employer by telephone prior to placement	3	11
Health and safety roadshow/course	3	11
Group talks by LA coordinator	1	4
Pupils supported through a variety of school materials	1	4

Source: Work experience co-ordinator survey (n=28)

5.32 Stakeholder workshops indicate that the quality of preparation varies from school to school. Most commonly, class-based support is provided in PSE sessions through work experience units, typically covering generic issues relating to the world of work and health and safety. In some cases more focused work is conducted just prior to placement. Preparation is influenced by the quality, experience and capacity of the school-based co-ordinators. In schools where work experience is low priority, teachers with this remit can feel isolated and unsupported.

5.33 Pupil focus groups indicate that it is not uncommon for the preparation to be cursory. Some pupils struggled to recall having any class-based preparation, other than receiving a few guidance leaflets and a letter setting out expected behaviours.

5.34 Although over 50% of co-ordinators claim that pre-placement visits to employers are undertaken, very few of the pupils consulted recalled having received an offer of such support.

5.35 On the basis of the fieldwork it would be difficult to describe the preparatory work in all cases as it is envisaged in the national guidance – “well planned, involving thorough preparation by young people, teachers and employers.”⁴⁸

The approach in special schools

5.36 Pre-placement preparation is much more significant in special schools, with teachers giving pupils extensive support, often involving joint investigation of websites or web-based career planning tools. For some, work experience provides an opportunity to travel independently – often for the first time – and planning this forms an important part of the overall preparation. This phase also provides an opportunity for pupils to address personal anxieties by discussing concerns with staff.

5.37 There is also extensive liaison with employers to ensure the placement will be appropriate, and can involve reassuring employers who have misgivings about participating. In one case an employer was anxious about hosting a pupil with autism. Following information and support from the school the employer fed back to the school that the business had gained a better understanding of the condition and related issues as a result of their involvement in work experience.

5.38 All 23 pupils with additional support needs involved in the study had an accompanied visit to the workplace prior to placement. The support was variously provided by teachers, Pupil Support Assistants and job coaches, the latter often provided by ENABLE Scotland, who work with Glasgow City Council. Some pupils in Glasgow had also had pre-placement work tasters through Careers Scotland’s Bridges to Work programme⁴⁹.

The placement experience

Support for pupils

5.39 In practice, mainstream pupils get limited support during placements. Although 81% of co-ordinators reported that pupils get personal visits from staff, none of the mainstream pupils consulted recalled having had this. The most common situation is one where the pupil only has contact with the school during their placement if there is a problem. This highlights a mismatch between the theory and practice relating to work experience.

5.40 Almost all of the pupils had been allocated a workplace supervisor and where the placement worked best – as we describe below – there was a clear programme of work which they oversaw. This was not the experience of all of the focus group participants, with an estimated 40% feeling the structure of activities lacked clarity.

⁴⁸ Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education – work experience guidance 2006 p10

⁴⁹ Bridges to Work supports a group of ASN school pupils with interview preparation, work visits, tasters and aftercare support once in a positive destination

Tasks undertaken by pupils

5.41 There is huge diversity in what pupils do during a placement. In some cases, for example veterinary surgeries and hospitals, the focus was on shadowing with only limited hands-on experience. Pupils understood the reasons for this, and as those in such placements were generally self-found with a vocational interest, they were satisfied with the role.

5.42 Some sectors are better able to provide pupils with practical experience. These included nurseries and primary schools, where pupils worked directly with younger children; and hospitality and retail where it was possible to engage with customers. Several pupils had deliberately chosen placements that might lead to part-time work.

5.43 Some of the placements described as ‘most successful’ were those involving pupils in specific projects or tasks. One authority highlighted an example which involved pupils conducting a project on behalf of the business whilst on placement. This approach reflects the employer’s difficulties attracting engineers and resulted in a decision to recruit by ‘growing their own’. It also includes an arrangement between the business and a local secondary school to jointly produce curricular materials. This is an example of how work placements can help incubate wider relationships between schools and employers, to mutual benefit.

The experience of pupils with additional support needs

5.44 Those on a supported placement are assisted at all times, including when carrying out their allocated tasks. In advance of the placement, schools liaise with employers to agree the scope of the arrangements so the tasks are appropriate. For these pupils the job coach is an essential part of the experience.

5.45 For pupils with additional support needs on a non-supported placement, teachers will be in regular telephone contact and all pupils are visited during the experience. It is also necessary to provide extensive support to young people with behavioural problems, who may lack the emotional and communication skills to handle some situations. An example from one of the day units was of an employer who requested that a pupil be withdrawn because no matter the task to be done this pupil struggled to grasp and complete it. However, when the Unit staff member visited, the pupil was completely unaware of any problem. This experience highlighted a need for the Unit to work intensively with this pupil on improving self-review skills.

Placement de-briefing

5.46 All pupils are expected to record their work experience as part of their self evaluation. On return to school there is usually, though not always, an opportunity to discuss the overall experience in class - normally in a PSE session. However, few mainstream pupils were satisfied with the opportunity to discuss their experience once back in school. Although 44% of co-ordinators report that pupils have a one-to-one debriefing with staff, none of the focus group participants indicated that they had had this offer. This sits uneasily with the national guidance which indicates that the most effective placements “... include debriefing and self-evaluation for all those involved,

ensuring all young people reflect on the learning that has taken place...⁵⁰. Again, this highlights discrepancies between the guidance and the experience in many schools.

5.47 Within many schools there is awareness of the need to improve this part of the service. For many young people the current model is rushed, with little opportunity for them to process the experience with adult mediation. One senior education manager commented, “*for most young people work experience is a bit of a blur.*”

5.48 The model in special schools is distinctive and allows staff to spend much more time with pupils identifying what they learned about the workplace – and about themselves. In one school pupils produce a DVD-based CV which includes key learning points from their placement. In another, the good and bad points are identified and discussed in a small group setting.

Impact and benefits of work experience

5.49 A number of factors currently limit the ability to gauge the impact of work experience in its current format. These include a lack of clarity about its core aims and the absence of any articulated learning objectives for pupils. It has already been noted that, as a consequence, the only metric is around participation numbers.

5.50 Local authority co-ordinators were asked if work experience was evaluated locally: 67% of respondents answered in the affirmative. When asked how this was done, they provided the following responses:

Table 5: Evaluation methods		
	No.	%
Internally conducted review which includes the views of key stakeholders	10	56
External evaluation which includes the views of key stakeholders	4	22
Reviews/meetings with school staff, pupils and or coordinators	4	22
Online survey for pupils	1	6
Committee papers to inform councillors	1	6
Monitor pass rate for qualification	1	6

Source: Work experience co-ordinator survey (n=28)

5.51 The study team requested copies of evaluation reports but none were provided. This suggests that the overall approach to performance measurement is patchy and is an area requiring future attention. This highlights another mismatch between the model of work experience set out in the national guidance and local practice.

5.52 Some authorities are looking to progress this. For example, the Improvement Plan for Edinburgh, discussed earlier, sets out the overall aim of the authority, the local improvement objectives and a framework for monitoring and evaluation – linked to HGIOS 3. As authorities are at different starting points there may be scope in

⁵⁰ Determined to Succeed: Enterprise in Education – work experience guidance 2006 p10

helping to share emerging good practice in relation to performance measurement, and this point is further discussed in the final chapter of this report.

5.53 In the meantime, the lack of a coherent performance assessment framework does not mean that there are no benefits derived from the current approach to work experience. It does mean however, that benefits are anecdotal and impossible to gross up to either an authority or national level.

5.54 The key benefits for the various stakeholders are set out below. These were derived from the pupil focus groups, consultations with teaching staff in schools, the local area co-ordinator survey and the wider stakeholder workshops.

For pupils

5.55 One of the key messages emerging from pupils is that work experience is a unifying experience for many participants. It is undertaken by most mainstream pupils and operates as a shared experience where regardless of ability they are on the same level. Other pupil benefits identified by teachers and local area co-ordinators include the opportunity to:

- gain insights into the world of work, and key disciplines required in this setting;
- gain practical experience of work in an area of interest linked to a particular job/career – with the potential to either confirm this as an option or to signal that this is *not* what they may want to do (both of these were recognised as of equal value);
- manage attendance, and for some to develop independent travel skills;
- gain confidence and maturity by operating in a different and “adult” setting;
- develop and observe skills in a practical setting;
- input a practical element to their CVs or personal statements;
- establish a lead to either a part-time job, or potentially a full-time job in the longer term;
- earn some money (though this was not common); and
- mix with other people and further develop social skills (for young people in special schools in particular - but not exclusively).

5.56 It is important to note that in the consultations with teachers, employers and young people who had had work experience, a fairly consistent message was that it was enjoyable, and something the pupils looked forward to. Whilst not in itself a reason to operate the programme, it is not without significance.

For schools

5.57 Schools identified several benefits. In relation to pupils, the main benefit for schools is that they are the indirect beneficiaries of pupils' gains. In all 18 case study schools, staff cited more motivated and mature young people returning from their placement, some of whom had a new or renewed sense of direction. Some pupils returned with such enthusiasm for work that they found it hard to settle back into the school routine.

5.58 There was little doubt from the educationalists involved in this study that work experience contributes to pupils' overall employability and therefore contributes to schools' transition strategies. There was further recognition that this, together with the sharper focus in schools on school leaver destination statistics, could contribute to increasing the proportion of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations.

5.59 There are strong messages in this study from schools and employers that work experience offers them the optimum type of relationship. A specific benefit deriving from this is the potential to exposure to labour market issues. One teacher noted that it was just as important to place teachers in industry as it was pupils, particularly given their influencing role with pupils. Excellence in Education through Business Links (EEBL) – the national teacher placement programme - was praised for offering this opportunity, but there is a widespread view that much more needs to be done to help teachers understand the labour market.

5.60 In practical terms, the absence from school of an entire year group – for a whole week - creates valuable space in which teachers can engage in their own personal or curriculum development activity.

For employers

5.61 The main benefits identified by employers link to earlier points relating to the engineering sector, particularly around future recruitment. The top benefits identified in the employers survey are concerned with raising the profile of the organisation and stimulating an interest in careers in their sector. Promoting interest amongst pupils in their sector was the single most important benefit, identified by 55% of the employer sample. Further detail on these findings is provided in Chapter 7.

Fit with the curriculum

5.62 Currently, there is little systemic fit between work experience and the curriculum. Each school has its own approach and the profile of work experience varies depending on its standing with the senior management. Where this is high, and the culture of the school is supportive, cross-curricular links are more likely to be in place. The converse is the case where work experience has low status.

5.63 The study set out to identify examples of good practice in linking work experience to the wider curriculum. This proved difficult and the consensus in the case study areas was that this is an important area for improvement. There were examples in South Lanarkshire and Aberdeenshire where English Departments ask pupils to produce a piece of creative writing based on their work experience.

However, these appear to have arisen as a result of interested members of staff rather than from any co-ordinated cross-departmental initiative in the schools. The fieldwork also indicates that the links between pupils' areas of vocational interest, including Skills for Work qualifications and similar programmes; and their placements is generally weak.

5.64 At the authority level a number of areas are beginning to grasp this issue. In Aberdeenshire work experience has recently been reintroduced⁵¹ after a gap of some years. Rather than blanket provision there is an aspiration to focus on high quality placements linked to key curricular areas rather than on volume.

5.65 The approach in Edinburgh, involving key employers, is also interesting. A Work Related Learning Improvement Plan has been developed, central to which is an aspiration to embed this area in schools, linked to the HGIOS Framework. Here, as in other places, the argument is that until this agenda is one of the key areas against which performance is measured, it will remain marginal and its quality ad hoc⁵².

5.66 Most comparator countries position pupils' work experience within vocational programmes. In Scotland, both curriculum guidance and the national skills strategy signal an intention that work experience is an integral part of a wider framework for skills development.

Virtual work experience

5.67 The role of Virtual Work Experience (VWE) was explored through consultation with relevant personnel and a scan of the VWE⁵³ resource.

5.68 An internet-based resource, VWE is available to schools and aims to support and complement – not to replace - real work placements. Access issues in relation to work experience have arisen throughout this study and schools may use VWE to provide a 'virtual' experience alongside other related activity. Specific challenges around access raised by stakeholders have included:

- In rural areas, limited presence of some sectors combined with transport issues;
- Physical access difficulties for some young people with limited mobility or other particular challenges; and
- Health and safety concerns limiting pupils' opportunities in some sectors

5.69 VWE uses gaming technology to provide insights into the workplace through role play in a virtual environment, enabling young people to better understand the working environment. It currently contains 6 virtual worlds – Contact Centre, Food and Drink Production, Hairdressing, Beauty and Nails, Passenger Transport, Retail and Trauma (NHS). Users are guided through these worlds by an avatar and the

⁵¹ Supported by Determined to Succeed supplementary funding available in 2006-08

⁵² The Edinburgh partners note that at present work experience provision is accorded little priority in HMIE inspections

⁵³ <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/virtualworkexperience/>

experience for young people mimics the real work experience process in that they are briefed, charged with conducting a series of tasks, then debriefed and given an opportunity to reflect. Key information is available on some 70 individual jobs and on the sectors represented.

5.70 Guidance for schools on the use of VWE is being developed. It will suggest ways in which the resource can be used to support work experience, enterprising teaching and learning across the curriculum and career planning.

5.71 VWE will be tested in a cohort of schools: an evaluation is planned and will inform future developments. This resource potentially has a valuable role to play in supporting schools and their partners to plan and deliver effective work placements and to link the curriculum to the world of work.

Key points

- Based on a response from 18 authorities, an estimated 66% of pupils are matched to their preferred placement choice.
- Lack of clarity about the detailed aims of work experience and the stated learning objectives make it difficult to gauge impact and some authorities are now addressing this. There are identified qualitative benefits for pupils, schools and employers.
- Around 30% of placements are ‘self-found’. Although these help grow the database and free up centrally-sourced placements for those unable to secure their own, they raise issues around equity of access to opportunities between the highest and lowest achievers
- In most areas, pupils’ part-time work is not reflected in planning work experience placements. Previous research indicates that the most disadvantaged pupils are least likely to have part-time jobs: some of these pupils are also likely not to have a work placement so, overall, will have fewer work-based opportunities than many of their peers.
- An estimated 14% of pupils do not participate in work experience. The most likely reason for this is ‘behavioural problems’. This suggests that pupils most likely to need more choices and more chances are amongst those least likely to have a work placement.
- There are examples, generally in non-mainstream settings, of support which enables pupils with additional support needs to undertake work placements. Successful approaches are most likely to be from establishments with strong senior management support and sufficient resource.
- The high-volume approach in mainstream schools puts pressure on the system, making it difficult to provide support as envisaged in the national guidance.
- Currently the fit with the wider curriculum is limited. The local area case studies have identified examples, but these are ad hoc. Plans for developing

the curriculum provide an opportunity to strengthen these links.

- Virtual work experience is potentially a useful tool to support work experience and can help connect the wider curriculum to the world of work: it may also help address access barriers.

CHAPTER 6: LOCAL AREA PROFILES

Introduction

6.1 A major element of the research involved in-depth study in 6 areas selected on the basis of achieving a balanced geographical spread and a rural/urban mix. Fieldwork was conducted in:

Aberdeenshire	Falkirk
Dumfries and Galloway	Glasgow
Dundee	South Lanarkshire

Method

6.2 A standard approach - with some local variations – was taken in each area. It included:

- Visits to 3 mainstream schools.
- Visits to, or discussions with staff in special schools.
- Focus group discussions with pupils who had participated in a work experience placement in the academic year 2007/8 (158 pupils participated).
- Individual or group consultations with work experience co-ordinators and support staff; school co-ordinators and other teachers; employers; and key partners.
- Detailed discussions with 109 employers through telephone consultations.

6.3 Full reports on this fieldwork are contained as Appendix 1, and the messages from these are reflected throughout the report. This chapter provides a brief summary of the general approach to work experience and the key development messages from each area.

Aberdeenshire

6.4 Aberdeenshire's work experience programme was in a unique period of transition at the time of the research with a phased reintroduction of a universal offer underway after a period of years when this had not been available. In 2007/8, 2 mainstream secondaries had reintroduced this approach, a further 7 had begun the development work to make this offer in 2008/9, and the remaining 8 schools were anticipated to move to the universal approach in 2009/10. These developments marked a significant change from the work experience model since 2004 which had largely been based on an ad hoc and variable approach by different secondary schools.

What	A phased development process towards a newly defined “universal offer” for all young people from S4.
When	As appropriate to pupils, at a point between S4 and S6 – integrating with new developments linked to <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i> .
How	Supported by a newly established dedicated Work Experience Co-ordinating team within the Determined to Succeed section of the authority's Education Department. School delivery through an identified teacher co-ordinator with a wider Pupil Support role.
For whom	All young people from S4 onwards.

Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need and opportunity to embed further developments within the wider opportunities presented by <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i> • The practical challenges of re-introducing a volume work experience system – especially on a flexible delivery model • The importance of a dedicated central team with clear protocols on the respective responsibilities of this team and individual schools – particularly in respect of quality control • The advantages of having dedicated health and safety capacity directly within the central team • The need to encourage public sector employers to offer more placements • The need to be sensitive and adapt to the specific challenges of schools serving more rural and remote areas
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Dumfries and Galloway

6.5 Dumfries and Galloway operate aspects of the work experience programme differently to many other areas. This includes: a more flexible interpretation of a universal offer; more variation in how work experience happens for individual pupils; and some prioritisation in who get access to opportunities. This approach is partly a result of geography, as Dumfries and Galloway is a large area with very significant rural and remote areas.

What	A universal opportunity for all pupils from S4 – but presented as optional in terms of participation.
When	Varied by school but in many schools much more flexible than the standard block week model – in some schools work experience opportunities are offered up to 4 times per annum in S4.
How	Since 2007 delivered by dedicated officer within the authority's Determined to Succeed Team. Each school has a work experience co-ordinator. Health and safety checks historically outsourced but this process is under review.
For whom	Within the universal principle, some targeting in the offer towards winter leavers, young people without part-time jobs, and pupils needing extended work placements. Relatively large share of S5 and S6 pupils go on work experience (c40%).
Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to balance the attractiveness of a more flexible work experience offer with the practical and resource requirements this places on schools • The importance of options which are wider than the core block week • The continued high uptake of an S4 opportunity, despite an approach which presents this as optional to pupils • The issues raised by a prioritisation process which seeks to link work experience directly to school leaving dates • The additional challenges of providing a meaningful and equally valuable experience to pupils in rural areas • The concerns that health and safety regulations and insurances may weaken an already stretched range of placement options

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for greater public sector placements – particularly in rural areas • The potential to reduce the costs and increase the effectiveness of the programme through developing in house health and safety options
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Dundee

6.6 Dundee operate work experience based on the traditional model. There is considerable local support for this approach which is viewed as a relatively strong “tried and tested” method which is well understood across all stakeholders.

What	Largely traditional model for S4 pupils based on one week block placement.
When	Schools normally allocated specific week in S4 – fewer but more flexible options available in S5 and S6.
How	Delivered by small dedicated team located in Determined to Succeed Team of the authority’s Education Department. Health and safety checks undertaken both internally and with some external assistance. Lead teachers identified in schools to co-ordinate placement activity.
For whom	Mainly S4 pupils.
Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The enthusiasm for retaining the block one week offer in S4, but with individual schools requesting increased flexibility on when this happens • The need to consider further work experience opportunities for young people seeking to progress to related tertiary qualifications • The need to be able to more effectively interrogate the placement database to specifically identify gaps or potential gaps in placement supply • The need to continue to positively promote work experience to potential placement providers

Falkirk

6.7 The work experience programme in Falkirk was at a key stage of transition when the research fieldwork was undertaken. This was triggered by the transfer of its management and delivery from Careers Scotland to Falkirk Council from the academic year 2008-09. Within the wider local context, the local authority is very keen that future delivery of work experience connects to its growing prioritisation of enterprise and employability within schools.

What	At present primarily the standard one week S4 placement but local authority now keen to review and augment this.
When	Standard one week of block placements allocated to each school.
How	Via a dedicated team in the Determined to Succeed Team within the authority’s Education Department: also responsible for health and safety checks. Within schools an identified teacher co-ordinates the programmes as part of a Pupil Support remit.
For whom	Mainly S4 pupils at present but anticipated to change.

Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of redefining the future work experience offer by connecting it directly to other enterprise and employability interventions developed by local partner agencies • The need to increase placement opportunities within the public and voluntary sectors • The importance of further work to ensure appropriate opportunities are provided for young people needing more choices more chances • Further development of a flexible S5 and S6 work experience offer • The need to embed work experience more effectively and systematically within the curriculum • The importance of underpinning future work experience delivery with a robust and measurable evaluation framework
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Glasgow

6.8 Work experience in Glasgow is characterised by the sheer scale of demand for placements. This is exacerbated by historically high numbers of young people needing more choices and chances, and the relatively large numbers in non mainstream school settings. Significant innovative work is underway to further connect work experience to the local authority's growing emphasis on developing employability skills within education. In practice there are very significant variations in the approach between schools.

What	Primarily based on standard model of a block week placement in S4.
When	Individual schools allocated specific weeks for S4 opportunities.
How	Delivered by dedicated team located in Determined to Succeed Team of the local authority's Education Department. This role incorporates health and safety checks. Lead teachers identified in schools to co-ordinate placement activity as part of Pupil Support remit. Dedicated central support staff also allocated to Special Schools.
For whom	Mainly S4 pupils.
Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The significant focus and innovation apparent in linking the provision of work experience to wider initiatives underway to support young people in need of more choices, more chances • The strong commitment to making an appropriate offer to young people outwith mainstream schools • The significantly higher than average involvement of the voluntary sector in both providing placements and supporting other aspects of programme delivery • The important supportive role of the local authority as an employer in providing placements • The need to continue to focus placement development work in sectors where pupil demand for placements exceeds supply – construction, health and hospitality • The need to consider the development of a wider offer for S5 and S6 students, whilst seeking to deliver a very demanding S4 offer

South Lanarkshire

6.9 South Lanarkshire operate a well established work experience model based primarily on the concept of a week long placement for all young people in S4.

What	Primarily based on standard model of a block week placement in S4.
When	Individual schools allocated specific weeks for S4 opportunities.
How	Delivered by small dedicated team located in Determined to Succeed Team of the local authority's Education Department. Health and safety checks are undertaken externally. Lead teachers identified in schools to co-ordinate placements.
For whom	Mainly S4 pupils but with more flexible options in S5 and S6
Key development messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The general enthusiasm for the universal offer in S4 – across all stakeholders • The need to continue to address the issue of young people who do not access a placement, and consider whether some form of work experience for them may be better integrated into alternative approaches • The strong commitment by South Lanarkshire Council to embed work experience into a co-ordinated programme for young people making the transition from special schools • The strong and practical support of the Council as an employer to supporting the work experience programme • The need to consider whether health and safety and risk assessment processes are more effectively provided through resources directly located within the central co-ordinating unit • The pressures of volume resulting from the operation of a primarily block week universal S4 offer, and the subsequent implications this has for monitoring the quality of individual placements

Common themes and variances

6.10 The case study fieldwork highlighted a number of consistent themes including:

- General support for the principle of a universal work experience offer.
- Recognition in all areas that sourcing the right quantity and range of placements remains a challenge given volume pressures on the system.
- Emerging concerns that tightening health and safety and insurance requirements may result in employers withdrawing from participation.

- The need to increase focus on providing opportunities for young people who need more choices and chances, often by connecting to other flexible curriculum based interventions.
- Aspirations to develop a stronger and more varied offer for pupils in S5 and S6.
- A consolidation of the co-ordinating role within local authorities.
- The need for close working relationships between central co-ordinating units and school staff, and for clear protocols to ensure appropriate quality control.
- Limited evaluation processes or monitoring measures beyond the number of placements sourced.

6.11 On a number of issues there was also evidence of significant variations in approaches and future development aspirations, including the:

- degree to which the standard block week model targeted on S4 pupils requires to be significantly changed;
- degree of involvement and commitment to offering placements by the public sector – with inputs from local authorities particularly varied;
- extent to which some level of targeting and prioritisation is applied based on when individual young people are anticipated to leave school;
- involvement of the voluntary sector in providing placement opportunities;
- extent to which Health and Safety checks are controlled within co-ordinating teams, as opposed to being outsourced; and
- main motivations for employer involvement – particularly the degree to which gaining access to potential future employees is a major factor

CHAPTER 7: THE EMPLOYER EXPERIENCE

Introduction

7.1 This chapter presents the results of the telephone survey of employers which sought a range of information from employers including:

- Background details about the organisation.
- Nature of the organisation's links to local schools.
- Views on the work experience concept and model.
- Views on how work experience is proceeding in practice.
- Views on the benefits gained from an employer's perspective.
- Ways work experience might be improved.

7.2 A sample of 180 employers was generated from the work experience co-ordinators' databases (30 from each case study area), including a small number of employers who are no longer offering placements. Of the 180 employers approached, 109 were interviewed across the case study areas as follows:

Aberdeenshire	10	Falkirk	17
Dumfries and Galloway	21	Glasgow	21
Dundee	20	South Lanarkshire	20

7.3 Key characteristics of the employer organisations surveyed are as follows:

- The majority (66%) of organisations are private sector. 25% were in the public sector and the remainder were charities, voluntary organisations or social enterprises.
- Just under half (47%) have less than 25 employees, 38% have between 26 and 250 employees and 15% over 250.
- 27 industry sectors were represented including, farming, manufacturing, construction, retail, services and the public services.
- Between them, these employers offered 945 placements in 2007-08, with, on average each employer offering 9 placements.
- 96% say they intend to continue to offer work placements.

Existing links with schools and other programmes

7.4 One of the associated benefits of work experience identified by schools is the potential to involve employers in other work related activities. 40% of the employers said they had links to a particular school. These links enabled a range of work-related activity to take place in addition to work experience, including mock interviews, site visits to employers, mentoring, and recruitment fairs. Only a small proportion of the employers provided training for young people:

- 9 offered Get Ready for Work;
- 15 provided Skill Seekers posts; and
- 14 offered Modern Apprenticeships.

The work experience concept

7.5 Employers have a range of reasons for being involved in work experience (Table 6). The majority are motivated by a desire to give something back into the community, but it is clear they derive other benefits from involvement, including the opportunity to try out potential employees.

Table 6: Employers' reasons for being involved in work experience		
	Number	%
Give something back to the community	74	72
Establish links with potential employees	53	52
Good public relations	41	40
Opportunities for staff to act as mentors	37	36
Better education business links with local schools	35	34
Access to new thinking and ideas	15	15
Want to benefit pupils	10	10
To help pupils make career choices	9	9
Pupils specifically requested a placement at their premises	7	7
Historical commitment to providing work experience	7	7
Other	7	7
Access to cheap/free labour	4	4

Source: Employer survey: $n=103$

7.6 The kinds of benefits gained by the employers are further explored in Table 7.

Table 7: Benefits gained through offering work experience		
	Number	%
Promoting interest among students in relevant careers/sectors	60	58
Increasing organisation's local reputation or profile	48	47
Developing recruitment (access to future prospective employees)	46	45
Developing and motivating existing staff, e.g. coaching skills	43	42
Understanding young people better	39	38
Improving the quality of future employees	20	19
Informing recruitment practices	14	14
No benefits gained	21	20
Other	10	10

Source: Employer survey: $n=103$

7.7 20% of employers report they see no benefits. 62% of those who reported no benefits were small organisations with fewer than 25 employees. For these employers the main reason for being involved in work experience – cited by over 70% of the employers - was giving something back into the community. 24% of the employers who saw no benefit, however, engaged in work experience to help them establish links with future employees, but it seems they do not recognise this as a benefit.

7.8 Other employers clearly see that there are benefits, both for the employment sector in general and within companies. Many of these relate to recruitment issues, both on the supply and demand sides.

7.9 There is a range of views about the aim of work experience. The employers were asked ‘what, in your view, is the aim of work experience?’ and also asked about what they thought was the most important aim. These results are reported in Table 8.

7.10 Although 59% of employers see it as a way of helping young people find out more about their career choices, it seems clear that first and foremost, employers see that the aim of work experience is to raise pupils’ understanding about the workplace and the expectations of employers about employees. 60% see this as the most important aim. Only a very small proportion of employers, 6%, perceive that an aim of work experience is to develop pupils’ skills.

Table 8: Employers’ views on the aims of work experience				
	General aims		Most important	
	Number	%	Number	%
Raises pupils’ understanding of the workplace and the needs of employers	89	82	63	60
Helps young people to make career choices	64	59	37	35
Improves employability skills through engagement in the workplace	21	19	2	2
Encourage them to work locally as they see quality of local employers	2	2	2	2
Learn life skills (pupils with learning disabilities)	1	1	1	1
Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills relating to their future careers	6	6	0	0
Allows pupils to adjust to a different environment	4	4	0	0

Source: Employer survey: $n = 109$, for ‘most important’ $n = 105$

7.11 Employers largely perceive that the work experience model delivered in their area is achieving these aims. Table 9 shows employers’ ratings (out of 5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree) of the extent to which they feel local work experience models are achieving these aims. The table suggests that work experience models in the localities fit with the employers’ conceptualisation of the aims and is delivering these aims.

Table 9: In this area work experience...(%)						
	Strongly agree	2	3	4	Strongly disagree	<i>n</i>
Raises pupils' understanding of the workplace and needs of employers	58	24	9	6	3	97
Helps young people to make career choices	45	33	12	6	5	98
Improves employability skills through engagement in a workplace	28	31	25	13	3	95
Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills related to their future careers	23	31	29	12	5	94
Helps young people understand how their subjects are applied in work situations	21	31	23	14	10	96

Source: Employer survey

Views on a one week placement

7.12 Employers generally believe that a one week placement is an effective method of meeting these aims:

- 36% said it is very effective.
- 57% said that it is quite effective.
- only 7% said it is not effective.

7.13 Overall, 67% of employers feel that one week is long enough. 24% felt that this is long enough to give young people a good taster of the industry. Other employers felt that it was long enough to settle into a workplace, get a good overview of an individual business and get a taster of the 'real world'. These employers felt that it would be difficult for many employers to offer more than one week due to the supervision needed.

7.14 However, of those employers that do not view the current work experience model as effective in meeting its agreed aims 29% felt that one week was not long enough.

7.15 Only 17% said they would prefer day release arrangements, but 20% said they would offer longer work experiences.

7.16 On balance then, the survey suggests that employers are positive about the work experience concept and tend to favour one week's placement as the best option.

Employers no longer participating

7.17 Although we looked to interview some employers who were no longer providing placements, the majority who agreed to be interviewed were still offering them (95%) and only 5% were no longer involved. The purpose of interviewing these employers was to investigate the reasons for their withdrawal and find out whether there are any ways they could be encouraged to take part again. The main reasons for not participating were the following:

- 2 felt pupils needed to be older to benefit from work experience.
- 2 said their workloads were too busy to take pupils.
- 1 felt pupils are not sensitive enough to work situations.
- 1 said a mismatch between the pupil's interest and placements occurred too often.
- 1 said they had insurance /legal problems having children in the workplace.
- 1 said pupils are too restricted as to what they can do by H&S etc.
- 1 said pupils not fully briefed on the employer and what they do.

7.18 The main changes which would encourage these employers to participate again would be:

- Help with sorting out legal and insurance problems.
- Day release over several weeks.
- Relaxation of health and safety requirements for placement to be useful.
- Reduction in workloads.

Preparation for the placement

7.19 We were interested in employers' views about how well prepared pupils were for placements. Only 13% of the employers were involved in the selection of the young people who come to them on placement. However, the majority are satisfied with this as only 19% of those not involved in selection would like to be.

7.20 Most employers found that the young people who came to them on placement had been briefed, but 57% felt that they were still not prepared for the placement and 8% that they were not ready at all. Overall, only 35% of young people are assessed as being well briefed and fully prepared to go on placement (Table 10).

Table 10: Employers' views on pupils' preparation for placement		
	Number	%
Most pupils are well briefed and arrive prepared for the placement	35	35
Most pupils have been briefed but are not fully prepared for the placement	57	57
Most pupils have been poorly briefed and are not ready for the placement	8	8

Source: Employer survey: $n = 100$

7.21 Further comment on the lack of preparation is provided by employers' perceptions about the pupils' understanding of their industry. Just over half (51%) felt that the pupils had a poor understanding of the demand of their industry and did not know about the range of career opportunities it might afford.

7.22 Employers have few expectations about the skills they expect of young people, with 63% not seeking specific skills. Among the employers looking for skills, the 4 most important were:

- communication 31%
- literacy 28%
- numeracy 23%
- ICT 23%

7.23 Knowledge of and interest in the placement is more important to employers than skills. Additionally, employers were looking for pupils to have appropriate attitudes to work experience and certain behaviours in the workplace. These varied widely but the attitudes included a willingness to learn (41%), showing an interest (37%), being enthusiastic (31%), and having a good work ethic (17%); the behaviours included punctuality (10%), being presentable (10%) and having a friendly and polite manner (6%).

7.24 Despite perceptions about the lack of preparation, over 80% of the employers report the young people who come to them on the placement usually have the combination of attributes needed for the placements that they offer. The implication seems to be that the employers are happy with the young people they get on placement but feel that they would get more out of it if they were better prepared. This may have implications for both the amount of time devoted by schools to placement preparation and what they do to prepare. It suggests that current preparation may not be achieving what it sets out to do.

Employer support

7.25 The report indicates a variety of methods of engaging employers in work experience in Scotland. There can also be variation in the amount of support offered to employers. Overall, support tended to be limited and fairly infrequent, with only 41% saying they had had some advance support as follows:

- 20% had had an advance visit from a pupil or school staff.
- 24% said they received information about the pupil in advance.
- only 10% said they were sent information about the work experience programme in advance.

7.26 This must be balanced against the fact that in the majority of the case study areas the work experience programme is well established and the employers were not new to the experience. Nevertheless, as 98% of employers who had received advance support found it useful or very useful, this may be an area for improvement.

7.27 There were few suggestions for improving advance support, so it appears that those who are getting support find it adequate. The main suggestions from a small number of employers included:

- More background information on pupils to be provided – particularly those with additional support needs.
- Schools building up relationships with employers.

The work experience model in practice

7.28 The majority of placements (60%) are organised through the local area co-ordinator in each of the case study areas. However, 44% of employers also said they organised placements directly with schools and 33% through family contacts. 10% responded to a request from an individual employee. Some of the employers used more than one of these methods.

7.29 Employers reported few problems with the overall co-ordination of the work experience programme, with almost 90% saying that it was well or very well co-ordinated in their area. Only 11% said that it was not well co-ordinated with the main problems being competing placements requests from different organisations, mismatch between requests and the number of places or poor administration and organisation by the school.

7.30 The main ways to overcome these co-ordination weaknesses suggested by employers related to better communication and administration processes, but there were only a small number of comments.

The employer offer

7.31 Work experience can deliver greater benefits for pupils if quality placements are offered. Although quality can be determined by a number of factors, placements are more likely to be considered high quality if they include a range of work related processes and activities and give pupils a true insight into working. A range of processes were included in the work placements (Table 11).

Table 11: Processes included in the work placement		
	Number	%
Induction including Health & Safety	77	75
Feedback to schools	71	69
Briefing on the company	64	62
Assignment of mentor	59	57
Regular feedback on pupil performance	45	44
Personal time management	23	22
Teacher visit to the placement to see progress	15	15
Leaving/exit interview	15	15
Goal/objective setting	13	13
Interview	8	8
Completion of an application form	2	2

Source: Employer survey: $n=103$

7.32 A range of activities were also included (Table 12).

Table 12: Activities included in the work experience placement		
	Number	%
Observing and noting different employees roles, responsibilities and behaviours	75	73
Gaining overview of what company does and career opportunities offered	73	71
Working with computers	44	43
Dealing with customers	38	37
Developing a specific piece of work or project	30	29
General duties around workplace as required	27	26
Working with numbers	26	25
Letter writing	17	17
Attending meetings	14	14
Taking part in in-house training and development	10	10
Attending presentations	8	8
Administration duties	8	8
Delivering presentations	4	4

Source: Employer survey: $n=103$

7.33 Although a range of processes and activities are covered we might have expected a higher proportion of employers to have included these processes and activities in their placements. There are clearly gaps, in particular:

- 25% of pupils do not have an induction.
- 31% do not get any feedback to their school.
- 38% do not get any briefing on the company.
- 57% have a mentor or named person they can go to if they have any problems during the placement.
- Only 15% of pupils have a visit from a teacher.

Improving work experience

7.34 The survey confirms that there is a strong commitment to work experience across employers. 96% of those currently offering placements said that they would continue to offer them. There were a variety of reasons for this including:

- for 18% - gives something back into the community;
- for 18% - to help young people make career choices;
- for 17% - to access potential future employees;
- for 16% - to give young people an understanding of the workplace;
- for 13% - a problem free experience of providing placements; and
- for 12% - promotes interest in the opportunities in the sector among young people.

7.35 Employers feel that their own contribution to work experience is largely effective; with over half saying no changes are needed to improve effectiveness. Changes mentioned by only a small number of employers largely referred to tailoring placements in order to meet individual needs better.

7.36 However, employers felt there were 3 areas where schools could improve work experience to increase effectiveness and deliver more benefits for pupils. These were:

- Improvement in preparation - 26% felt there could be improvements in pupil preparation involving improvements in matching pupils to placements and increasing the information pupils receive beforehand.
- Increased support for pupils - 19% felt schools could improve support for pupils, for example through ensuring they have an objective, structure and ask for feedback.
- Increased support for employers - 19% felt support for employers could be improved through more communication and more background information on pupils in advance.

Key points

7.37 The employer survey provides some corroborating evidence that employers 'get' work experience. Throughout the interviews there was clear understanding of purpose evident and also strong commitment to work experience as a model.

7.38 Although work experience was generally proceeding smoothly, there was evidence of weaknesses in the model including a need for better preparation of pupils, improvements in the standardisation and quality of placements and improving communications between schools and employers.

7.39 The majority of employers think one week's placement is working well. However, this is not a universal view, and provided any changes in the model take employers' needs into account it is likely they would be receptive to change to increase effectiveness and benefits.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

8.1 This chapter contains the overall conclusions from this study and details the strengths and weaknesses of the work experience model. The recommendations in the final chapter are cited here for ease of reference.

Conclusions

8.2 This study has been conducted against an evolving policy context. It has considered the current model and its delivery as part of wider interventions designed to achieve the Government's ambitions for young people to be successful learners; confident individuals; responsible citizens; and effective contributors. It has also examined how work experience contributes to the Government's stated priorities.

8.3 The starting point in this chapter is to highlight the strengths of the current work experience arrangements across Scotland.

Strengths

8.4 The study identified positive aspects of the existing model in Scotland, in summary:

The universal principle

8.5 The universal principle is at the heart of the Scottish model. It is a challenge to deliver, but signals that the skills acquired through workplace experiences are important and relevant for everyone, regardless of their educational pathway. In doing so it suggests that this is not simply about developing a narrow set of vocational competencies, but about developing a wider set of skills for learning, life and work.

8.6 This research shows that pupils, teachers and employers value the universal principle, suggesting it is appropriate and correct – and should remain.

8.7 Recommendations (i) and (ii) will build on this strength.

High participation rates

8.8 Undertaking a work placement is the norm for the majority of secondary school pupils in Scotland. Within the mainstream school system, participation rates are high with, on average, 86% of S4 pupils participating.

8.9 Although this study has not examined data for previous years, anecdotal evidence suggests that participant numbers are rising. Work placements are routinely identified by schools as a key element in an effective transition strategy.

8.10 Recommendations (i), (ii) and (iii) will support the continued growth and improvement of work experience.

Widening access

8.11 Rising participation rates mean that increasing numbers of young people – though not all – are accessing a work placement opportunity in mainstream schools. Increasingly, they are also a feature of the educational offer for young people with additional support needs. The study has identified flexible and innovative approaches which have evolved to support the latter young people to take up placements.

8.12 The study gives examples of these, which include extended placements, supported placements and input from job coaches. Excellent partnership models between schools and other agencies – including Skills Development Scotland and the voluntary sector – are an important part of this. There is much good practice from these approaches that could inform mainstream provision.

8.13 Recommendations (i), (ii), (iii), (viii) and (x) will support widening access to work experience opportunities.

Employer commitment

8.14 The study shows that over 30,000 employers are recorded on the 28 local authority databases reviewed. A high proportion of these are small, private organisations whose main reason for participation is to give something back to the community. This includes being prepared to give opportunities to young people with additional support needs.

8.15 The study shows that work experience can be a catalyst for wider school-employer partnerships leading to joint development of curricular materials, with development opportunities for teachers.

8.16 Public sector involvement is disappointing but there is strong commitment in some areas. South Lanarkshire Council's 'Work It Out' programme is one of these, as it clearly acknowledges the authority's corporate responsibility as a major local employer. Its transition package is hugely valued by special schools and provides a model which can be adopted more widely throughout the country.

8.17 Another exception is Strathclyde Police's annual taster of 'life in the force' offered in Glasgow. This model should be more widely known as it has potential for replication beyond the city.

8.18 Finally, it is important to stress that employers find work experience an easy concept to understand. Faced with a fast changing educational environment, this is one aspect that has remained largely constant – and in many respects is welcomed for that.

8.19 Recommendations (v), (viii) and (x) will all further strengthen the existing work being undertaken with employers in relation to work experience.

Professional management and co-ordination

8.20 Employers indicated that professional management and co-ordination of work

experience is a key strength. Although it can be an unsung part of the operation, the value of having a professionally co-ordinated service cannot be overstated.

8.21 The brokerage role between schools and employers reduces the scope for inefficiencies, avoids competition for placements, manages priorities and achieves best matching of demand with supply.

8.22 One of the biggest deterrents for employers is the administration associated with a work placement. Local area co-ordinators assume an important role in minimising this. They are also playing an important part advising smaller businesses on compliance issues.

8.23 Recommendation (viii) will help to build upon these existing strengths.

Commitment and enthusiasm of staff

8.24 In the case study areas, the commitment and enthusiasm of staff has been an important contributory factor to successful co-ordination. There are many examples of this in schools. There, co-ordinators are often likely to have ‘fallen into’ this role – which is then often difficult to give up. The review has shown the challenge that faces teachers in this job – for example, organising a group of 400 pupils to go out in one week – which requires a high level of organisational skills. Successful co-ordinators also tend to be tenacious as well as exceptional communicators.

8.25 This is a challenging role in schools where senior management are fully signed up and where enterprise and employability have a high profile. It is doubly so in the schools where this is not the case, and the study has identified examples where school-based work experience co-ordinators feel marginalised and unsupported.

8.26 Many of the recommendations, but in particular (i), (iii), (v), (vii) and (ix) will further develop this strength, whilst addressing the issue of support for school-based co-ordinators.

Impact on some young people

8.27 The research sought to identify ‘the learning and development gains’ for participating pupils. The study has revealed significant limitations in recording impacts which are discussed in the *Weaknesses* section.

8.28 However, the systemic inability to measure impact does not mean that there is none. All of the young people consulted were able to identify benefits derived from work experience. These were most pronounced amongst those outside the mainstream education system, and some examples are presented within the report. For some of these young people, participation in a work placement is a life changing experience, which will have a major influence on their future decisions.

8.29 Recommendation (iv) will allow for a clearer picture of the impacts gained from work experience.

Popularity amongst pupils

8.30 It would be remiss to discuss the strengths of the current model without noting that young people enjoy it. Going on work experience remains, for many pupils, a rite of passage within school and a signal that they are moving to a different stage of their education. It assumes a degree of self-responsibility amongst participants and places them for a short time in a new environment.

8.31 Recommendations (i) and (ii) will re-assert the value and aims of work experience whilst recommendation (iii) will lead to a more meaningful placement experience for many young people.

8.32 The review has also identified a number of weaknesses around the current work experience model in Scotland and the principal ones are set out and explained below.

Weaknesses

Lack of a shared understanding of the aims of work experience

8.33 This review identified differing views about the detailed aims of work experience. The key issue here is whether work experience is primarily about providing a generic introduction to the workplace or whether it should be more ambitious, and more closely aligned to pupils' study areas and career goals.

8.34 The current high volume delivery model prohibits the latter and does not allow for a more tailored approach. There is simply insufficient capacity in the system. The report notes that local authorities identified this as a problem and are taking steps to address this. These have included aiming to better align placements with pupils' aspirations, and restructuring the timing and pupil access opportunities to facilitate this.

8.35 These aims – and the restructuring to deliver them – sit comfortably with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

8.36 Recommendation (i) and (ii) addresses this issue.

Lack of detail on resources and impact

8.37 Local authorities are responsible for delivering work experience and, with very few exceptions, this is funded through Grant Aided Expenditure from central government. At present there is no way of knowing exactly how much is invested in work experience in Scotland. However, the Concordat and National Performance Framework mean that all public sector funding contributes to the Government's overall purpose. This may lead to greater transparency in future.

8.38 In addition to the lack of knowledge around resources, it is not possible to determine the full impact of work experience. Although authorities have various mechanisms for assessing aspects of the programme there is no coherent culture of monitoring and evaluation. In the light of this, the only metric applied to work

experience is the number of participants. This is an activity – rather than a performance – measure and it provides no understanding of the quality of the intervention and the impacts resulting from it.

8.39 The review has identified some parts of the country where some of these questions are being raised and some authorities are now addressing this issue. The study has also identified work being undertaken beyond Scotland which can inform this development process⁵⁴.

8.40 Recommendation (iv) is designed to address this current weakness.

The current mainstream delivery model

8.41 The employer survey shows that a strength of the current delivery model is that it is clearly understood by employers. Pupil focus groups indicate that most young people enjoy their work experience and that the block placement model suits schools.

8.42 However, there are a number of disadvantages associated with the current block placement model. School-based and area co-ordinators indicate that the scale of the operation means that a disproportionate amount of effort goes into the management and administration. Some have argued that this is at the expense of support which might enable the experience to be more meaningful for pupils.

8.43 The current model is generally a one size fits all approach, rather than a customised experience. As a consequence, young people go out on work experience at a fixed point in their school career – rather than at a point which might best suit them. The current system therefore fits around the management of the school timetable rather than the needs of learners.

8.44 Recommendation (iii) in the final chapter focuses on the need to address these aspects of the current model.

Weak links to the wider curriculum

8.45 Work experience is currently somewhat separate from the mainstream curriculum. The review case studies identified examples of where work experience works well with particular subjects; but they were ad hoc rather than as a result of systemic planning.

8.46 In this respect the UK countries are markedly different from most other developed nations. It is notable that the countries identified by the OECD as our more successful peers (including Finland and Norway) have systems where work-related placements form a core part of the vocational curriculum. A more integrated approach to work experience in Scotland would concur with the policy thrust behind the national skills strategy and *Curriculum for Excellence*.

8.47 Most of the case study areas identify a need to strengthen this aspect of work

⁵⁴ Report of Impact Measures: Department for Children, Schools and Families 2008

experience; however this will require addressing a number of barriers, including a clearer articulation of expected learning outcomes together with encouragement and support to involve subject teachers.

8.48 Recommendations (i), (ii), (iii), (vii) and (viii) all relate to this weakness.

Weak recognition of achievement

8.49 The current approach to accrediting work experience is uneven across the country and within schools. Although there are appropriate national qualifications available, the fieldwork indicates that very few schools currently apply them.

8.50 Some authorities are keen to push this agenda and are working hard to promote accreditation to schools and *Curriculum for Excellence* presents an opportunity to reconsider this further. However, local area feedback suggests that pupils are ambivalent to the value of formal qualifications and teachers question the additional related administration. Any steps to address this would have to take account of these barriers. *Curriculum for Excellence* presents further opportunities to consider how pupils' learning from work experience can be recognised as part of wider achievements.

8.51 Recommendations (i), (iii), (vi), (vii) and (viii) will all improve the recognition of pupils' achievement gained through work experience.

Uneven commitment from schools and authorities

8.52 In some schools work experience is perceived to be a higher priority than in others. Local area stakeholder workshops suggest that this is primarily shaped by the Head teacher's view on its relative importance, and the study has identified a mix of attitudes amongst senior management in schools.

8.53 This has ranged from Headteachers who have adopted work experience almost as a personal campaign to those who see it as a necessary distraction from schools' core business. In schools where senior management commitment was lacking, work experience was likely to have been a less positive experience for pupils.

8.54 Many of the recommendations will address this issue, including (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), and (vii).

Engagement with subject teachers

8.55 The current national guidance suggests that high numbers of subject teachers are engaged in work experience, but this is not borne out by this research. The study identified some schools in case study areas where mainstream subject teachers are actively involved in work experience. This includes teachers liaising with employers and pupils, and in some cases being involved in specific project work. However, these cases were uncommon and without any clear pattern.

8.56 Employers are keen to get teachers into the workplace. The research has identified parts of England where employers will only accept a pupil on placement if

this is preceded by a placement for a member of staff. There is also a view amongst employers – and some teachers – that the teacher placement programme (Excellence in Education through Business Links) has untapped potential linked to work experience for pupils. These areas for future development are picked up below.

8.57 Many of the recommendations, in particular (i), (iii) and (v), will tackle the need to engage more effectively with subject teachers.

Engaging with parents

8.58 Engaging with parents is a key issue where the consensus is that much more can be done. They can have a key role in advising young people, but currently have a low profile on the stakeholder map. This study was most likely to engage with them either as employers or teachers, or as parents of children with additional support needs who are heavily involved in their school.

8.59 Communicating more effectively with parents was commonly cited as a development priority. This study has identified some alternative approaches to engaging with parents, including through Glow.

8.60 A number of the recommendations provide opportunities to address this current weakness, most notably (i), (vii) and (ix).

The universal blip

8.61 The universal principle has been highlighted as an important strength. However, this review shows that work experience is not universal in Scotland.

8.62 The co-ordinators cite behaviour as the main reason for mainstream pupils not taking part in work experience, and it is inferred that those most likely to miss out are pupils in need of more choices and chances. Conversely, those pupils from more supported backgrounds can use their networks to secure self-found places. The review shows that this is a double-edged sword, as the system would struggle to cope without the estimated 30% of places which are self-found. However, it does mean that those most in need of support can be further disadvantaged by the current arrangements.

8.63 So long as the mainstream school model focuses on the current approach, where volume is the key determinant of a successful school programme, there is little scope of this changing.

8.64 Recommendations (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv) will address this issue.

Health and safety/quality assurance

8.65 There are a number of issues in relation to health and safety in this report. Most evident is the increasing difficulty engaging employers due to interpretation of the legislation and rising insurance costs. The research shows that this is affecting businesses of all sizes.

8.66 Within schools the study has also identified weaknesses in relation to

compliance, linked to the high volume approach. Although schools are required to fully brief pupils around health and safety prior to their placement, this often appears to be cursory. Authorities and schools must be reminded of their responsibility to ensure that all pupils are fully supported in line with the guidance.

8.67 Recommendations (vii) and (viii) tackle this current weakness.

Limited public sector employer role

8.68 The co-ordinator survey shows that despite its prevalence as a local employer, the public sector plays a relatively small part in work experience in many parts of Scotland. Although in most local areas pupils can access placements within in schools, the involvement of local authorities on a corporate level is limited. The NHS is equally disappointing in most parts of the country. There is scope to address this, perhaps through adapting some of the pathways models established for workless adults.

8.69 Recommendation (viii) address the question of engaging public sector employers.

CHAPTER 9: OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

9.1 This section presents four options for consideration, each supported by pros and cons. It offers recommendations to assist the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to improve work experience.

The Options

9.2 The following tables present each option together with related implications.

Option 1: Retain the status quo	
Description: No intervention from the Scottish Government and allow work experience to continue being delivered as at present.	
Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Retains universal principle• Clearly understood by employers• Efficiently co-ordinated• High participation rates• Suits school timetables• Pupils enjoy it	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of clarity around purpose• Investment levels unclear• No defined learning outcomes• No data on impact• Most needy mainstream pupils not involved• Weak links to the curriculum• Weak links to qualifications• Demand outstrips supply• Gaps in provision

9.3 The study has identified a range of limitations relating to the current model. It has also indicated that within mainstream schools, increasing participation and the ‘whole year model’ have diluted the quality of the experience for some young people. Without a significant resource injection, allowing for more support staff, this aspect of the current model is unlikely to improve.

9.4 In essence, the current model reflects a curricular ethos which was characterised by uniformity. This sits uneasily with the principles of *Curriculum for Excellence*, i.e. that “Young people should be encouraged to choose a well balanced and **coherent** programme of study throughout the senior phase which is **relevant** to their future pathways.”⁵⁵ Most local authorities would struggle to identify these principles within their current model.

⁵⁵ Curriculum for Excellence: Building the Curriculum 3 – a framework for learning and teaching Scottish Government 2008 page 40

Option 2: Discontinue work experience	
Description: Assumes that the gains for pupils through other interventions, eg enterprise in education, Skills for Work qualifications, part-time work, or Virtual Work Experience, can replace the gains from the current model.	
Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial savings • Reduce the demands on employers • Time savings in schools 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break important link point with employers • Lose real workplace exposure for pupils • Inconsistent with policy drivers • Reduce pupils' readiness for working life • Lose a part of the curriculum that pupils enjoy and find motivating

9.5 The extent of financial savings is unknown, as there is no reliable estimate of the overall costs of work experience at local or national level.

9.6 In relation to pupils' reduced readiness for working life, *Curriculum for Excellence* will enable young people to develop skills for learning, life and work across the curriculum, including through enterprising education, Skills for Work qualifications and other skill development programmes. However, discontinuing work experience would remove the universal offer of a work placement.

Option 3: Refresh the current model	
Description: Assumes that the current core model remains fit for purpose and, with the weaknesses addressed, should continue. Changes would include a re-stated purpose, greater transparency around resources, commitment to identifying learning outcomes for each pupil and the development of a shared evaluation framework	
Pros <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains universal principle • Clearly understood by employers • Efficiently co-ordinated • High participation rates • Suits school timetables • Clarity around the purpose • Transparency around resources • Clearly identified impacts 	Cons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retains high volume S4 focus • Unlikely to improve access for those most in need • Continues special schools competing with mainstream • Requires more resources • Perceived as 'business as usual'

9.7 Option 3 would provide a marked transition that retained the best features of the current model, whilst addressing the flaws identified by this study. As such it offers an ambitious change which could be implemented without major disruption to schools or employers, but may increase pressures on teachers in relation to preparation, support and follow-up for individual placements.

9.8 The concern is that by retaining the high volume approach it would not guarantee a more meaningful work experience for mainstream pupils. In particular it would be unlikely to improve the experience of those young people who do not currently participate.

Option 4: Re-engineer the model	
Description: This would redefine the purpose of work experience and stress the need for clear identification of individual learning outcomes. It would dismantle the current high volume approach and introduce pupil-centred flexibility with priority linked to labour market proximity. This would mean pupils undertaking a work placement appropriate to their own development pathway. The option would retain the universal principle but operate a more differentiated approach – including encouragement for ring fencing opportunities for non-mainstream providers ⁵⁶ . It would position work placements as an integral part of the senior phase of the curriculum.	
<p>Pros</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Curriculum for Excellence</i> provides the framework for flexibility • Opportunity for a clean break, underpinned by re-stated aims • Retains the universal principle • More pupil-centred – better prepared and more highly motivated pupils • Increased opportunity of meaningful experience – particularly for those needing more choices and chances • Transparency around resources and impacts • Reduced pressure on volumes allows scope for more creative approach in schools with S4s not going out on placement 	<p>Cons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource challenge • (More) culture change • Accommodating within school timetables • Removes the week in schools currently used for staff development

9.9 This option retains the universal principle that all young people will benefit from a work placement. Critically, though, it recognises that not all pupils will benefit

⁵⁶ This would mean certain employers reserving placement opportunities for pupils with additional support needs

from it at the same stage in their learning. This study has indicated that the high volume approach with the focus on S4 is something of a relic which appears at odds with *Curriculum for Excellence*.

9.10 Adopting this option would allow work placements to be considered as part of a well balanced and coherent programme of learning and development throughout the senior phase, making them more relevant to pupils' future pathways.

9.11 The main challenges would be financial and cultural. The resource implications would be mitigated by shifting resources away from a 'big bang' approach to one where pupils are going out throughout the year in much smaller numbers. However, this implies a much more active role for subject teachers in the work placement process, assisting and supporting pupils to make appropriate choices and to have relevant identified learning goals. This represents a major cultural shift within most schools; however it is one which is consistent with the core messages within *Curriculum for Excellence*

Recommendations

9.12 Changes to current work experience provision will have implications for all stakeholders, most significantly for the Scottish Government, local authorities and schools. The focus of the recommendations is, therefore, on a partnership approach led by Scottish Government.

9.13 Of the 4 Options set out above, the study indicates that the latter two offer greatest opportunity for strengthening 'the offer' for young people.

9.14 Although ambitious, Option 4, most closely reflects the Government's plans for skills development set out in *Skills for Scotland*, and *Curriculum for Excellence*. It would help position work placements within the senior phase of learning in the curriculum, allowing young people to build on and apply the skills developed in the earlier stages of learning; and offering flexibility and personalisation for all young people.

9.15 However, it is important to recognise the challenges this option presents. A re-engineered approach along these lines would require a configuration – and in many cases an increase – in resources. It would also require a culture change in many schools. This study shows that local authorities are at different starting points and consequently some would need a development period to fully implement the changes. However, there is already a cluster of authorities moving towards this option.

9.16 With this in mind it is **recommended** that the Scottish Government should:

- (i) Confirm the value and promote the role of work placements as an effective way to develop the skills for learning, life and work within *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- (ii) Re-state the aim of work placements, confirming the importance of universality, flexibility and personalisation. For example, the aim might be stated as being:

“To provide a meaningful work placement for all young people at an appropriate point in the senior phase of learning.”

- (iii) Ask Learning and Teaching Scotland to re-fresh existing Work Experience Guidance to reflect the policy focus. It should position work experience within *Curriculum for Excellence*, highlight the principles and practice supporting effective experiences for young people, stressing that all pupils should have an opportunity before leaving school, but not necessarily during S4. It should also highlight examples in this report of ways in which work placements might be accommodated within timetable options of the senior phase of learning – particularly in S6⁵⁷. It might include a simple flow chart, as shown in the figure below:

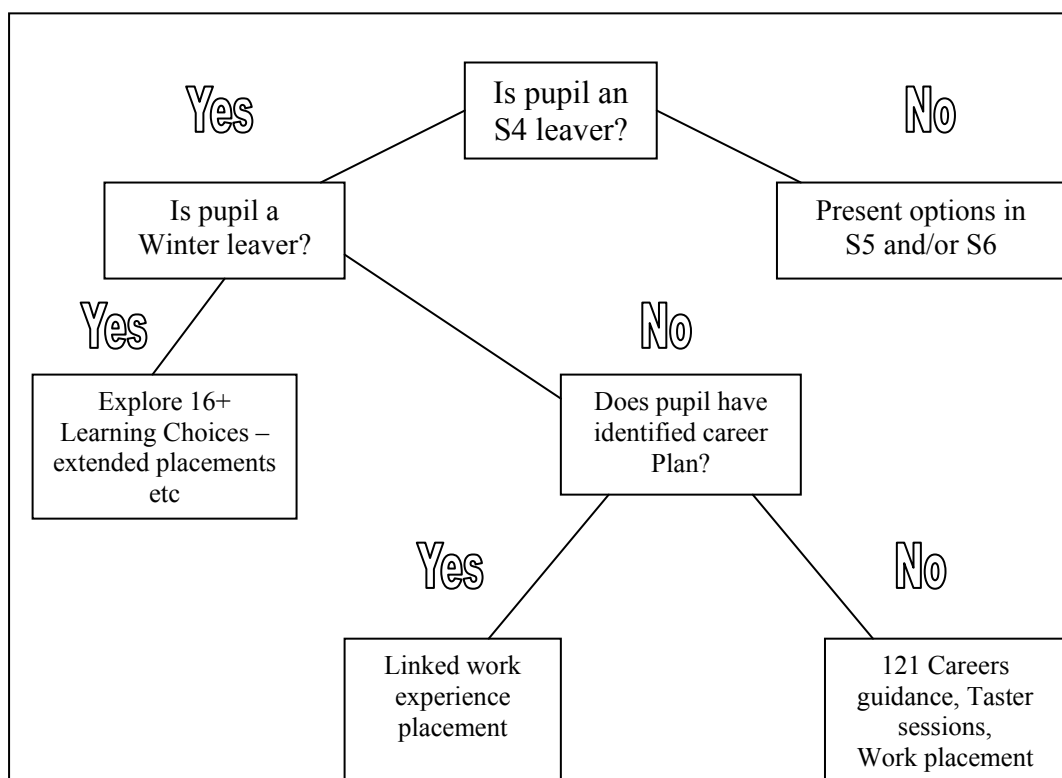


Figure 1 (Adapted from Angus Council model)

- (iv) Provide guidance on the likely learning outcomes for pupils and develop an evaluation framework for work placements. A development programme should be considered to promote this to authorities and schools.
- (v) Build capacity in teachers to support skills development by aligning work placements for teachers (delivered through Excellence in Education through Business Links (EEBL)) with pupil work placements.

⁵⁷ For examples see the Aberdeenshire, Falkirk and Dumfries and Galloway case studies in Appendix 1

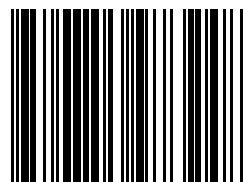
- (vi) Consider the formal accreditation of pupils' learning from work placements and ways of recognising their wider achievements.
- (vii) Disseminate good practice, including through national and local showcase events. This should highlight provision for young people needing more choices and chances, and sectoral models.
- (viii) Develop its Employer Engagement Strategy to:
 - explore opportunities to engage employers in hosting work placements for young people needing more choices and chances
 - engage with Sector Skills Alliance and key sectors to establishing effective sectoral work placement models. The engineering sector may provide a useful opportunity to develop this approach, the aims of which would be to generate a programme of structured work placements and shadowing opportunities allied to joint activity between employers and teachers to generate curricular materials.
 - encourage COSLA to promote local authority engagement in supporting work placements for school pupils
 - engage with NHS Scotland to promote the health service's engagement in supporting work placements for school pupils.
 - encourage COSLA, in the context of accountability, to explore with local authorities issues around multiple Health & Safety checking.
 - explore the recognition of employer engagement work placements.
- (ix) Identify an appropriate reference group comprising experts in this field to advise on national developments and share good practice amongst themselves.
- (x) Consider further development of Virtual Work Experience.

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