

# Education and Lifelong Learning



## Work Experience in Scotland Appendices

# **WORK EXPERIENCE IN SCOTLAND**

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**2008**

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### LOCAL AREA CASE STUDIES

#### 1. ABERDEENSHIRE

##### **The local work experience offer**

###### *Background*

1.1 The work experience programme in Aberdeenshire reflects a recent developmental history which is different from most other areas of Scotland. Further important changes are now underway, and the national review has been undertaken at a time of significant transition.

1.2 The origins of this lie in the decision by Aberdeenshire Council in 1994 to withdraw from offering a universal S4 offer based on support from a central work experience unit. Between the period of local government reorganisation in 1996 to 2000 this had been operated as a joint initiative with Aberdeen City Council.

1.3 Between 2000 and 2007 work experience continued as a limited and localised operation within individual schools. In effect this was a targeted offer to specific groups of young people such as those undertaking specific non academic focused programmes, or young people requiring specific work experience to advance their onward career progressions. In some schools the programme became increasingly reactive to requests from individual young people.

1.4 In 2007, the Council revisited this issue, in recognition of the growing potential fit between work experience and other developments linked to policy drivers such as Determined to Succeed, Curriculum for Excellence, and More Choices, More Chances. From the academic year 2007/8 a staged rollout began to reintroduce the concept of a universal offer. This began in 2 of the 17 mainstream secondary schools, and will be extended to a further 5 in 2008/9. It is anticipated that all schools will be making a universal work experience offer by 2009/10.

1.5 The national work experience research study therefore arrived at an interesting time. The concept of a universal offer was seen as much newer and fresher than in other areas and there was a significant sense that it was a period of “start up” developmental challenges. The local scenario also enabled an element of compare and contrast between the pilot schools now operating the new universal model, and those still delivering a more restricted approach.

###### *The model*

1.6 In the summer of 2008, the model in Aberdeenshire was a patchwork of different approaches, reflecting the stage of individual schools on the journey towards reintroducing a universal offer – focused at this stage on S4 students.

1.7 From 2008/9 seven schools are seeking to offer a placement for all pupils in S4 based primarily on the concept of an identified block week of placements – with

each school having a single week or two weeks over which to source placements. Some flexibility for pupils is retained including part time placements, placements out-with the block week, and in a few cases extended work placements.

1.8 The remainder of schools provide a more limited offer – normally locally developed. This includes a more, restricted and targeted series of placements. In these circumstances, young people access placements as groups and through more customised routes.

1.9 More flexible and smaller numbers of placements are still available for students in S5 and S6. The former are often linked to Christmas leavers. Placements in S6 are commonly linked to the need to the growing demand for potential HE/FE progression routes to see relevant work experience on CVs and personal statements.

1.10 For young people in Aberdeenshire's 4 Special Schools the model has some significant differences. These are considered further in the following section.

### *Scale of operation*

1.11 In the academic year 2007/8 a total of 800 placements were organised in Aberdeenshire. The vast majority of these were for S4 pupils. This represents a significant increase from 2006/7 and this rapid growth pattern is projected to continue in the next two years.

### *Profile of participating employers*

1.12 1,100 employers currently support the work experience programme. These are very heavily concentrated in the private sector. By scale there is a reasonable mix – around 10% of participating employers are categorised as “large” employing over 250 people; 30% medium (with between 25 and 250 employees); and 60% SMEs employing under 25 people.

1.13 In terms of occupational sector, the spread of opportunities is wide with the highest number of placements available in:

- Creative, media and education – 550
- Business services – 350
- Hospitality and leisure – 240
- Construction and building services – 210
- Manufacturing and engineering – 185
- Retail and wholesale - 170

1.14 The opportunities available are viewed as providing a reasonable match to pupil demand. In 2007/8, 50% of pupils accessing their placement through the central database are recorded as receiving their first choice.

1.15 In terms of employer engagement, a key area of weakness at present appears to be the very limited number and range of opportunities provided by Aberdeenshire Council. Approaches to develop these appear to encounter barriers. Given that the Council is the second largest employer in the area, has a huge range and geographic

reach of employment opportunities, and has a corporate responsibility to deliver school work experience, this is a key future development issue. The central unit has raised this issue on a number of occasions with Council colleagues, and whilst some progress has been made this has been random and relatively small scale. Increasing demands on the system through reintroducing a universal offer means that this low level of engagement from such a critical employer as the local authority needs to be revisited as a matter of priority.

### *Pupil participation*

1.16 As indicated, the Aberdeenshire model is in the process of returning towards a universal offer to all pupils. Overall 22% of S4 pupils undertook placements in 2007/8, but this figure is of limited value given that the range between individual schools at this development stage is inevitably wide. For example, in the two schools reintroducing the wider offer in 2007/8 – Portlethen Academy and Banff Academy – percentages of S4s receiving a placement were estimated as 85% and 78% respectively.

1.17 For these schools, this is a reasonable success rate, particularly given the low starting base in 2007 due to the previous absence of a wider offer for a significant number of years. The approach was effectively new to everyone involved in this pilot year – pupils, staff and employers. Uptake levels are now projected to increase based on the experience and lessons learned.

1.18 Efforts were and will continue to be made at both school and authority level to maximise the placement uptake rates. Pupils not undertaking a placement are expected to attend school during the placement week, where a number of simulated experience activities are often arranged. But in practice attendance is not guaranteed.

1.19 The reasons for young people not undertaking a placement are varied, and include young people who:

- For behavioural reasons are not considered appropriate for a placement
- Simply refuse any placement options, and show very little interest in the process
- Are too immature to go out at this stage of their development
- By S4 are attending school intermittently, or not at all
- Have parents who are against the concept of work experience and see it as a distraction from their main educational experience

1.20 In addition, a range of “one off” reasons can impact on the uptake of work experience. For example, when the week is near a school holiday - the October break or September weekend – some pupils are on extended holidays with their parents.

1.21 Whilst relatively small in number, the young people who miss out on work experience are recognised as cause for concern. In the schools visited as part of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes other venues were also used such as community centres and libraries to increase the sense that pupils were doing something “different”. This was reinforced through the use of external inputs, for example from army officers.

study, the core of this group is an identified cohort of young people with issues which firmly place them at risk of not progressing in education, employment or training following school. Amongst other issues, they are often recognised as young people who have little support from home, and who are living in households where the experience of work is not common. As a consequence, they are often those who could most gain from a good work experience offer.

1.22 This is not a large number of young people – perhaps up to 10 in the largest secondary schools. But whilst considerable effort is put into reducing the incidence of pupils with no work experience, consultations suggest that provision for young people needing more choices and chances may need to be approached from a different perspective. It was also suggested that many of these young people will never access, and ever benefit from, the standard block week model; and that more flexible and customised approaches, integrated with their wider educational support package, are needed.

### *The matching process*

1.23 The matching process in mainstream schools has essentially two elements:

- i. Matching through the use of “self found” placements. Within this process, pupils are introduced to the concept of work experience and then invited to identify an opportunity through direct approaches to relevant employers, or through utilising networks of family and friends. They are asked to complete initial paperwork, which is then subjected to standard health and safety checks. In the 2 schools piloting the universal offer in 2007/8 a target of 50% was set for self found places, this was all but achieved in both settings.
- ii. Matching through use of the centrally operated “Trywork” database which contains details of the centrally sourced work experience opportunities across Aberdeenshire. Pupils can mark any placements which appeal to them: these requests are reviewed and, if suitable, agreed by the school work experience co-ordinator. As indicated, 50% received a first choice placement in 2007/8.

1.24 In the Special Schools the process is generally more customised, reflecting the nature of the pupils and the much smaller numbers supported.

1.25 In reviewing the overall matching process, a number of underpinning factors are important:

- The need to consider the purpose of work experience – in particular whether it is primarily generic in function (i.e. to provide a broad understanding of the world of work) or to advance understanding of, and connections to, an identified area of vocational interest
- The need to recognise the practical reality that at this stage in many young people’s development they do not have any 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 that is created - and will increasingly be imposed on the process - by the rollout of the universality principle - by the sheer volume of placements which require to be sourced by schools within either a 1 or 2 week block

1.26 Positively, despite some of these challenges, in the schools reintroducing the universal offer, most pupils who want a work experience successfully access one, and often in an area of expressed interest. But some pupils need considerably more support and encouragement in either the self found or database access options.

1.27 The importance of the young person attaining a placement in an area of expressed vocational preference was a subject of some debate. While stakeholders recognised that this is by no means the sole purpose of work experience, they felt, on balance that achieving this match should be given some priority. It is much more likely to result in a positive experience for both the pupil and placement provider. The flip side of placing a young person in an opportunity in which they have no expressed interest would be counter-productive.

1.28 Self found placements are recognised as important – particularly over the next few years as the concept of a universal offer is reintroduced. They not only provide additional immediate places for young people, but also grow the central database: an estimated 60% of self found places are converted to opportunities within the database in subsequent years.

1.29 Over time the percentage of self found placements by school is projected to decrease – to perhaps around 20% of all placements. This will be complemented by a growth in the opportunities on the central database. As self found placements are absorbed into the latter, a sense of saturation of opportunities is anticipated – particularly in largely rural areas with more limited employer bases.

1.30 The issue of self found placements raises two questions. Firstly, the potential concern amongst consultees that young people with more supportive work focused backgrounds and family units will generally be better placed to source an opportunity - but because of these factors may need it least. This is both true and unavoidable. The counterbalance to this is that by these young people taking the self found option, they leave the centrally sourced opportunities to other young people who are not as likely to gain via this route. This will demand (a) continual growth in self found opportunities, and (b) sufficient scale and breadth in the opportunities within the central database.

1.31 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 his/her father or mother in their workplace, and being given a lift to and from the workplace each day, is experiencing a genuine taster of the “world of work” and a test of their ability to plan and access the placement. In these circumstances, a number of consultees noted that the placement may be the most convenient option – for the pupil and school – but it is perhaps not the best.

1.32 This links to the pressures of volume as a universal offer is rolled out. One school visited, for example, was seeking to source approaching 180 S4 placements over a two week period. The pressure on staff charged with doing this is enormous. In this context, any self found placement is understandably very welcome for the school work experience co-ordinator – catering for another pupil, and releasing pressure on the central database places. There is neither the time nor motivation to check all aspects of the placement, and to ensure that it delivers the intended benefits. Without significant new resources to support the process, this would appear an almost inevitable “quality versus quantity” consequence of the current aspiration to offer a place to all young people in S4.

1.33 A final point on the matching process is recognition by the authority’s work experience co-ordinating team of the need to align, as far as practical, information on the demand for places from pupils and the supply from employers. This is particularly relevant to the proactive development work of the central unit’s workplace assistant. At present, the Trywork database is limited in its capacity to feed in demand information – more of this on the system could provide more focus to the employer engagement work. Further development of the system is planned.

#### *Opportunities beyond S4*

1.34 Further opportunities for work experience are available in both S5 and S6. But the numbers are much lower – in 2007/8, 5% of S5 pupils sourced a placement and 4% of S6 pupils. These placements can be more varied in nature – perhaps extended over a longer period but on a part time (day a week) basis.

1.35 The low number of placements in S5 largely reflects concerns that a week out of Higher study is far more significant (and potentially damaging) than for Standard Grades in S4. Normally only young people in exceptional circumstances would access these opportunities – perhaps if they had missed out in S4, or because they had sourced an extended work placement as an anticipated Christmas leaver.

1.36 In S6 work experience tends to be much more explicitly related to vocational pathways. This links to the increasing preference in academic institutions for appropriate work experience placements to appear on CVs when applying for courses. This is most common for professions such as medicine, vets, teachers and lawyers.

#### *A “universal offer”?*

1.37 Aberdeenshire’s process for rolling out a universal offer is critically connected to the nature of opportunities beyond S4. Discussions are underway to redefine what this could mean in practice. These revolve around the opportunities and advantages of extending this beyond the standard 1 week block placement in S4 to incorporate:

- The universal offer being a work experience opportunity at some point between S4 and S6



- Some scope within this for young people to opt in to the offer at some point in this period – dependent on their interests, maturity, and the identification of likely post school progression routes
- Work experience opportunities based on a wider range of delivery options – a block week; part time placements over a number of weeks; or extended work placements
- Increased targeting within the process – for example to ensure people likely to leave in S4 are prioritised for placements in this year, whilst other more academically focused pupils may more appropriately seek a placement in S6

1.38 These developments are both exciting and challenging. They have the potential to be consistent with, and support, Aberdeenshire’s forthcoming response to Building the Curriculum 3 within the education reform programme Curriculum for Excellence. This will generally revamp the S4-S6 curriculum to ensure it delivers opportunities for all children and young people to develop the 4 capacities for learning, as set out in Curriculum for Excellence, and open up opportunities for radical new thinking on the practical nature of the S4-S6 educational experience.

1.39 Discussions with both employers and young people as part of this study confirm attractions in the S4-S6 universal work experience offer as outlined above. Employers see it as potentially more customised, and likely to ensure young people on placements are more motivated and mature, and often with a clearer idea of future work aspirations. In rural areas, it was also noted that work experience spread in this way – as opposed to a block week – would ease pressure points where the employer base was relatively small (normally in the outlying and more rural areas).

1.40 The young people – whilst generally positive about their S4 experience – also commonly noted that they would welcome another chance at a placement when they had become older.

1.41 It was recognised by stakeholders, however, that introducing an offer of this nature will not be straightforward, and will require detailed consideration of its practical implications. It was noted that in schools, it will be significantly more complicated to organise and administer, and the gain of most S4 pupils being out of the school for a common week would be lost. Moreover, most teaching staff noted that a week out of a standard grade class was far easier to accommodate within the curriculum than in the more concentrated study period required for Higher examinations in S5.

1.42 In this model, pressure would also remain to ensure pupils anticipated to leave at the end of S4 received their work experience in this year. In general, many stakeholders noted that this group of young people are less immediately attractive to employers – and less likely to interest them in terms of the opportunity for access to their future employees. The “sell” of work experience at this stage would probably require to be differentiated from the S5 and S6 offer.

1.43 A final concern on the proposed new model expressed by some consultees is that it may reduce the current opportunity for a young person to go on work experience more than once – for example for primarily generic world of work reasons in S4, and then more specifically linked to a professional/vocational pathway in S6. The new model would not necessarily preclude this, but the central work experience co-ordinating team felt that the “additional” opportunity should be self found and there is no reason why it should not be sourced out-with term time. Arguably, this would reflect a much more “real world” experience for the young people.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

1.44 Aberdeenshire is currently in a new phase of progressing work experience in schools with development of a new model underway. While much work remains to be done, a number of key strengths are apparent.

1.45 The commitment to move to a universal offer represents a clear signal of the importance of this, and is rooted in a wider appreciation of the challenges and opportunities provided by key policy drivers such as Curriculum for Excellence. More Choices, More Chances. A sensible and phased rollout has been established to implement the changes. Within this there is already evidence of many more young people receiving a work experience opportunity.

1.46 A further strength in Aberdeenshire is the lessons learned from recent history. Whilst a decision has been taken by the authority to extend the offer, some of the experiences of delivering a more targeted and restricted experience remain very valuable. These are feeding into emerging thinking on a redefinition of what is meant by a “universal offer” with exciting and potentially ground breaking thinking on establishing this as a flexible S4-S6 entitlement. This approach chimes closely with the objectives of work experience and the many benefits employers and young people have indicated they want from the programme.

1.47 In practical terms a sensible matching process has been developed, and the relationship between growing opportunities on the central database and the role of self found placements is practical and constructive.

1.48 From discussions with stakeholders some key development issues are apparent. Ongoing scrutiny on the appropriateness of some self found placements is required to ensure these truly meet the objectives of work experience. The role of the authority as an employer in the process is currently limited and disappointing and without further development will significantly limit the aspirations to roll out the principle of universality. Finally, some limitations on the ability of the ‘Trywork’ database to allow the cross referencing of information on the demand for and supply of places should be addressed.

#### **The local delivery model**

##### *Participating schools*

1.49 Some form of work experience is offered in all of Aberdeenshire’s 17 mainstream secondary schools, and its 4 Special Schools. But as previously discussed,

the current nature of the service is significantly different between schools. Two schools introduced a universal offer in 2007/8 and this will be extended to a further 5 in 2008/9. The remaining 10 are projected to complete the process of change in 2009/10.

#### *Non mainstream schools*

1.50 Work experience is not offered to all young people in Aberdeenshire's 4 Special Schools but only to those identified by school staff as being able to cope with this, and with the likelihood of benefiting. Once pupils are identified, the schools tend to source most of their placements directly through locally developed networks, and often from employers with a specific commitment to supporting this client group.

1.51 This more customised and targeted approach to young people in Special Schools is considered by both the authority and schools to be appropriate, and there are no plans to extend the principle of universality to this sector. The level of support required for some pupils is so great that for them a work placement would be inappropriate. The smaller numbers involved and the detailed knowledge and understanding that the Special Schools have of their pupils make this approach practical, and enables opportunities to be offered in a more flexible way than the standard block week of work experience.

1.52 Health and safety checks for young people with ASN require to be more extensive and customised to each individual pupil. The risk assessments made are not global in applicability, and cannot be transferred. Often these signal the need for some extra supervision in the workplace. The physical restrictions of some premises can on occasions be insurmountable in catering for some young people in this group.

#### *Role of the FE and voluntary sectors*

1.53 The FE and voluntary sectors are primarily involved in work experience as providers of placements.

1.54 During the Aberdeenshire consultations, some College staff expressed concerns on the implications of a roll out of a universal school offer as they felt this could potentially result in additional competition for placements with the FE sector, which often requires these as an integral part of their courses and qualifications. They felt there was a need to clearly articulate to employers the difference between school and College work experience: this should reflect the fact that college students were older and normally involved in a specific course related to the placement and, as a consequence, they perhaps offered more in productivity terms to employers, and were more often on placement to explore specific work opportunities. College staff felt that without clear communication of these differences, employers could become confused – potentially damaging both programmes.

#### *Programme management and coordination*

1.55 Work experience is managed at authority level within the Determined to Succeed team. As of June 2008, the team consisted of:

- 1 coordinator
- 2 health and safety assessors
- 2 administrative assistants
- 1 part time (50%) work placement assistant

1.56 In its current form the team is only very recently in place. Its role includes: general management and administration of the programme; health and safety and risk assessments; database maintenance; production of support materials; training; and proactively sourcing central placements.

1.57 Within individual schools there is a network of work experience co-ordinators who normally have non class contact time allocated to undertake this role as part of a wider guidance function. Other staff within the guidance team also tend to provide support. Where the programme is moving back towards a universal offer, this represents a very significant workload which normally starts towards the end of S3 and becomes increasingly challenging as the week (or weeks) of block placement approaches.

1.58 Within the direct placement period, coordinators increasingly seek to recruit volunteers within the wider school staff to support, monitor and mentor pupils in their placements. The intensity of this role varies but commonly includes a phone call during the placement, and some form of debriefing thereafter. The involvement of other school staff in this way has the obvious attraction of sharing the load in the placement week, but it is also viewed as beneficial in involving a wider group of teachers in the work experience process, and what it is seeking to achieve.

1.59 The relationships and responsibilities between the central unit and schools are well developed and supportive, and the support provided by the unit very positively viewed by school staff. There is, however, a need to note that in terms of the quality control of work experience, current mechanisms require that this lies with the individual schools. The central unit can develop systems, support materials, and offer training and advice, but it has no “policing” role in terms of delivery. There is, for example, no system in place to verify if pre placement health and safety and risk assessment briefings are undertaken, and key documentation such as pupil’s work experience diaries are kept and reviewed at school level – not forwarded to the central unit.

1.60 Formal review of whether procedures are operated in practice require to be through mainstream inspections of schools – the degree to which work experience is a significant part of these depends on the degree to which it is integrated in the curriculum.

### *Health and safety checking*

1.61 The 2 dedicated health and safety assessors in the central work experience unit provide a comprehensive and well developed system of health and safety checking. This normally includes:

- An initial visit to a potential new placement opportunity to check the premises, identify a job description, and undertake a risk assessment

- A regular series of review visits, with the frequency of these based on a low/medium/high risk rating – the latter are visited more often
- Specific checks if a placement opportunity is being matched to a young person with additional support needs

1.62 The process works well, and only a few placements are completely rejected – often for obvious and unsurprising reasons. The assessors take a constructive approach, and whilst ensuring legislative and regulatory requirements are upheld at all times, try to work with placement providers to identify job descriptions which will work for young people at school. In general, employers are cooperative on this but inevitably some are either overprotective (often in the oil industry) or old fashioned in their views of the workplace.

1.63 All placements have to be separately checked and approved by Aberdeenshire’s central co-ordinating team in recognition of the legal liabilities of the Council. For example, separate approval of a placement by Aberdeen City Council would not be transferable. Most placements are cleared by visits from health and safety staff, but in exceptional circumstances (i.e. a placement at Gatwick Airport) an analysis of e-mailed paper work is undertaken.

1.64 Overall, health and safety is not considered a major barrier to the work experience programme in Aberdeenshire by any of the stakeholders consulted. This is clearly assisted by the self contained resources to support this with the co-ordinating unit.

#### *Placement support*

1.65 The model of placement support varies between schools, but generally involves:

*Pre-placement* – this normally starts before the summer break in PSE classes addressing work experience units. It involves issues such as the world at work, and health and safety, and as the placement week approaches more specific preparatory work. In some schools this has linked to specific classes such as Social and Vocational Studies and Active Citizenship groups.

*During placement* – individual school approaches vary but this would normally involve a call to the employer to check progress and that the young person has arrived on day 1. Where the programme is rolling out to a wider universal offer these calls are ideally divided between the broader group of “volunteer” teaching staff who have agreed to support the programme. Employers are then expected to contact the school if any difficulties arise, including non-attendance.

*Post placement* – again there are variances from school to school but this normally involves a short review period within the PSE class or equivalent, where pupils will review the paperwork from the placement such as log books,

and the feedback received from employers. Mentoring sessions may also be held with volunteer support teachers.

1.66 In some schools, the work experience week is also being used in other parts of the curriculum. Most notably, pupils are writing essays on their placements which are being used in Standard Grade English portfolios.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

1.67 Aberdeenshire is in the process of a significant rollout of work experience which demonstrates a substantial recommitment by the authority to the programme. Feedback and performance from the two schools in phase 1 is encouraging, and a further 5 are already positively engaged in developing the 2008/9 universal offer.

1.68 The process is now supported by a strong and integrated central delivery team who provide very significant support to schools and generally co-ordinate the programme. Proactive development of new placements is part of the remit, alongside dedicated resources to support health and safety checks and risk assessments. The approach of the latter staff incorporates a sensible balance of applying appropriate safety guidelines, whilst constructively trying to work with employers to overcome potential barriers. Overall the result is that health and safety is not a significant barrier to delivering work experience in Aberdeenshire.

1.69 In most schools a system is in place to ensure continuity between placement preparation, placement support, and post placement review. This is integrated to a degree with elements of the wider curriculum.

1.70 The approach to work experience in Special Schools is more customised with a much more individually customised approach. This is supported by well developed local networks of employers.

1.71 The biggest development issue for Aberdeenshire is the necessary pressures that rolling out the universal offer will bring in terms of the overall volume of the placements to be sourced and supported. This will create specific pressures in schools with smaller adjacent employer bases. Linked to this is the potential competition with other initiatives and agencies seeking similar placements – most notably the FE sector.

1.72 Responsibilities for the overall quality control of the work experience system is perhaps not fully appreciated by all stakeholders at this stage – in particular the respective roles of schools and the central unit. The various consultations suggest that some work to clarify these may be of value.

### **The local employer experience**

#### *Reasons for being involved*

1.73 The reasons employers in Aberdeenshire become involved in work experience reflect those of many other areas, but the emphasis and priority is different. Employers more commonly cite reasons of clear “self interest” in terms of the

opportunity the programme offers to gain early access to their future workforce - in effect making work experience a part of their overall recruitment strategies. This appears to relate to the nature of the local labour market which is very buoyant - and has been for a considerable period of time. Within this there is also what could be termed the “distorting” factor of the oil industry which provides a wide range of very well rewarded job opportunities. Employers out-with this sector are continually striving to “compete” against these attractions, and work experience is one way of stimulating an early interest in potential new recruits.

1.74 This is generally helpful to the programme – it is viewed by the staff sourcing placements as a more robust reason for employer involvement, with the potential for the pupil-employer-school relationship to be based on more of a “win-win” basis. But it has some wider implications. Firstly, it means employers are much more likely to want pupils with a very clearly expressed vocational preference. Secondly, it potentially skews the programme towards prioritising higher achieving young people. Thirdly, it may limit the extent to which a young person receives a wider and more rounded work experience offer.

1.75 These factors are not unique to Aberdeenshire – but probably more important. It is a local scenario which demands a specifically local response.

#### *Existing links with schools*

1.76 Nearly all of the placements were organised in Aberdeenshire through the local coordinator, although some of the employers did have links with particular local schools to deliver a range of other work related activity.

#### *Views on concept*

1.77 The majority of employers see work experience as a way of raising pupils’ understanding of the workplace, with two thirds of the employers seeing this as the most important rationale. Around half of the employers felt that it could also be a way of helping pupils to make a career choice. Nearly all think that a week is an effective way of achieving this.

#### *Views on work experience model in practice*

1.78 Employers felt that work experience was well coordinated in Aberdeenshire and had few problems other than sometimes poor management of the programme among some schools.

1.79 Around 90% felt that pupils were briefed for their placement, although half did not think they were well prepared as a result.

#### *Suggested changes*

1.80 The majority of the employers in Aberdeenshire expect that the young people coming to them on placement will have an interest in their industry. Suggested changes therefore referred mainly to ways of increasing understanding of the industry

so that young people can select their placement based on a better understanding of careers and better matching of pupils to placements.

1.81 Employers also recognised that they could improve the benefits and effectiveness of placements by making sure they tailor experience to individual pupils. This also requires schools and the Education Authority to be flexible.

### **Benefits of work experience**

1.82 Within the consultations in Aberdeenshire there was a general sense that the work experience programme was valuable and positive. In order of significance, gains were apparent for pupils, employers, and schools. The main focus was on how the programme helped the development of young people. A summary of the key gains by stakeholder group are provided below.

#### *Pupils*

1.83 The opportunity to:

- Gain general insights into the world of work, and the core disciplines required in this setting
- Practically experience of work in a vocational area of interest – with the potential to either confirm this as a vocational option or to gain an early warning signal that this is *not* what they may want to do (both of these were recognised as of equal significance)
- Manage punctuality and attendance, and for some to develop independent travel skills
- Gain confidence and maturity by operating and mixing effectively in a different and “adult” setting
- See the appliance of key skills in a practical setting
- Input a practical element to their CVs or personal statements – which is increasingly important to FE/HE institutions and employers
- 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)
- Mix with other people and further develop social skills – particularly (but not exclusively) relevant for young people with additional support needs

1.84 Finally, it is important to note that in all the consultations with both staff and young people who had undertaken a work experience placement, 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.



## *Schools*

1.85 The main benefit for schools is that they are the indirect beneficiaries of the gains realised by their pupils. In a significant number of cases, staff cited more motivated and mature young people returning after their placement, some of whom had a new or renewed sense of direction.

1.86 The work experience programme also contributes to aspects of the school curriculum through PSE and other related classes, and as indicated is establishing ways to link to mainstream subjects such as English.

1.87 In practical terms, the block week of work experience also provides the schools with a week each year when the vast majority of S4 young people are absent. This offers an invaluable period of development time by reducing class contact time for teachers significantly. This will increase in importance as a consequence of the rollout of a more universal offer.

1.88 Finally, work experience has the potential to further strengthen the links between the schools and employers – adding value to the wider Determined to Succeed offer. It forces further contact on the “real time” local labour market, and involves pupil support and other volunteer staff in direct contact with employers. In practice, the extent to which these gains are realised, however, should not be overstated. There is potential in Aberdeenshire - as elsewhere - to make them more of a reality.

## *Employers*

1.89 Although we have seen from the employers’ section that sourcing future employees is important, it is not the sole motivation for employer involvement. Other commonly cited reasons include:

- Corporate social responsibility/“goodwill” – giving young people a work experience chance is simply a “good thing” to do, and strengthens the local community within which the employer operates
- Employers are often parents and see the value of providing work experience opportunities as a result – and sometimes directly in the self found access routes
- Having young people in the workplace can be refreshing, good fun, and raise staff morale
- It enables some ongoing insight to the world of education, how it is changing, and what this may mean for the future of their business

## **Development priorities**

1.90 From the research undertaken, this study concludes that the key future development issues in Aberdeenshire are suggested as:

1.91 *Defining the nature of the universal offer:* as indicated, Aberdeenshire is in the process of a radical change in the work experience programme. Whilst this is generally to reintroduce a more universal offer, further work is required to define the exact nature of this. Discussions on developing this as a more flexible S4 to S6 experience have very considerable potential value – particularly if they are integrated into wider curriculum changes. But considerable further detailed work is required on how this will happen, and the related implications in operational terms.

1.92 *Developing further connections with the wider curriculum:* linked to the above, as work experience continues to become a larger programme in Aberdeenshire, further consideration is required as to how it becomes a “part of” as opposed to an “add-on” to the current curriculum offer.

1.93 *Managing the general rollout of the universal offer:* irrespective of the precise nature of the future work experience model, the number of placements required will rise very significantly over the next 2 years. This will inevitably lead to additional pressures and the need for significant growth in placement opportunities. In addition to potential “competition” between schools, some discussions should be held with FE colleges on how their equivalent programmes can best complement school activity.

1.94 *Fitting employer expectations to the universal offer:* in Aberdeenshire employer motivations to support work experience in schools are more strongly focused on the opportunity to gain early access to potential future employees. Whilst this is positive, it also creates a tension with the aspiration to provide a work experience placement for all young people. Some young people - many of whom will require opportunity in S4 - may not be immediately attractive to employers in this wider context. This requires balance, and potentially a differentiated promotion of the programme to employers.

1.95 *Clarifying quality control issues:* identifying the responsibility for ensuring all aspects of work experience are delivered as expected requires to be more clearly articulated. At present, many aspects of this can only be undertaken by individual schools, and it is important that work experience is covered within the authority’s wider inspection procedures.

1.96 *Developing the role of Aberdeenshire Council as a placement provider:* as a major, varied, and geographically spread employer, the potential of the Council to support work experience as an employer has not been realised. Further opportunities must be developed, especially as the overall scale of the programme continues to grow.

1.97 *Further development of the Try-work database:* the database should seek in future to establish improved capacity to provide information on how the supply of placement opportunities meets demand from pupils. This would provide further focus to proactive development work with employers.

1.98 *Addressing the specific challenges of rural areas:* cutting across all of the challenges in Aberdeenshire, is the need to recognise and respond to the very varying needs of individual schools, and particularly those located further from the city of

Aberdeen. These schools face particular challenges linked to the nature and scale of the local employer base, and limitations in the transport infrastructure. This reinforces the need for flexibility in the overall work experience delivery model.

1.99 Remembering that work experience is only aspect of work related education – the employer survey in particular strongly signals there is still a need for provision of relevant information and to encourage other types of employer involvement with schools.

### **Final reflections**

1.100 Given the unique development situation in Aberdeenshire, it is a particularly interesting and informative area case study for the national review. Having operated for a significant period with a very limited local offer, it comes to the development of a new universal offer with a fresher perspective, based on the pros and cons of a more targeted previous approach.

1.101 An overall key message within this is the enthusiasm and commitment to new developments which - whilst undoubtedly challenging - are seen as justified by the many gains of a good work experience programme. This commitment is evident at both school level and within the central team; the resources now allocated to the latter are also evidence of the renewed importance given to this agenda by the local authority.

1.102 The authority and schools believe the plans for redefining the universal offer as a more flexible experience spanning the S4-S6 period are ambitious and challenging; but these have yet to be significantly tested in practice. They will, without question, add a range of additional organisational challenges – particularly for schools - and this will require a detailed examination of the resource time expected from teaching staff. But the gains are seen as potentially significant, and the new approach would certainly appear to align closely with some of the aspirations of pupils and employers.

1.103 In some ways Aberdeenshire may find this new approach easier to achieve *because* it doesn't have a recent history of a universal S4 offer, and the attachments to this that are more apparent in other areas. But central to making this a practical reality will be the degree to which the future work experience model can be recast to support the authority's adoption/implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

1.104 Future developments in Aberdeenshire are consequently likely to be of particular interest to other local authority areas considering the nature of their own future work experience approach.

## **2. DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY**

### **The local work experience offer**

#### *The model*

2.1 The purpose of work experience in the Dumfries and Galloway area is clearly articulated by the local authority as providing opportunities for pupils to go into the workplace and observe attitudes to work and a working environment. The local education authority is responsible for coordination of work placements, a role it took on in 2007 from Careers Scotland.

2.2 While all pupils are entitled to work experience, there is no requirement to take part at a particular time or for placements to last a particular time. There is an expectation that schools will be flexible and organise a placement at the time and stage which best suits the pupil. Several schools still aim to have one week when all of the pupils go out on placement, however schools may offer opportunities up to 4 times per year.

2.3 Certain groups of pupils are given priority. These are pupils without part time work, Christmas leavers and pupils who might benefit from extended work placements.

#### *Scale of the operation*

2.4 In the academic year 2007/08 912 placements were organised in Dumfries and Galloway.

#### *Profile of participating employers*

2.5 A feature of the employment base in the area is the high number of very small private sector businesses which offer the bulk of employment in the area, although the biggest single employer is the local authority. Private sector businesses offer the bulk of the placements (85%) with the public (10%) and the voluntary sector (5%) offering the remainder.

2.6 Small businesses, with less than 25 employees also provide about 80% of the placements with only 10% in organisations with more than 250 employees.

2.7 The placements are offered across a wide range of industrial sectors with the largest numbers in:

Creative, media and education - 175

Retail and wholesale - 108

Animal related - 71

Business services - 60

Hospitality and leisure - 58

Personal services - 52

2.8 Places are tight. There are 1100 employers in the database, but there is a need to allocate around 1000 places each year. Several of the consultees felt that there had been a reduction in the number of employers engaged in recent years. This appears to be due to an issue around risk assessment costs which is discussed further below.

2.9 The main gaps in the placements are in the public sector, specifically in the local authority and the NHS, two of the largest employers in the area. This has been a concern to all of the stakeholders in work experience in the region for some time and the council is currently encouraging all departments to offer placements, particularly in the trade and professional job areas as these tend to be where there are the greatest shortages.

### *Pupil participation*

2.10 Dumfries and Galloway offer work experience to all pupils, but it remains optional. At S4 around 85% of pupils participate in work experience. Reflecting the pupil centered nature of the work experience programme and the desire to offer a placement at a time and stage that suits the pupil, there are also relatively high rates (40%) of participation in S5 and S6. These might be extended work placements or shorter placements to help pupils who need specific experience to help them to get on a particular course when they leave school. However, this will vary across schools dependent on a number of factors including the school's policy towards work experience, the extent to which young people might be involved in other vocational activities and the availability of placements.

2.11 There is also recognition that work experience can have many benefits for young people excluded or disengaged from school and so extended work experience is one of a range of alternative provision offered to these pupils. If it is decided that work experience would be beneficial these young people are given a good deal of support to increase the likelihood that they will get a place.

2.12 However, despite the emphasis on maximising chances to get a place there are young people who miss out. The main reasons why pupils do not get a placement tend to be the following.

- Shortages of work experience placements in certain geographical pockets. The general difficulty of getting enough appropriate placements is compounded by the patchy availability of placements at all in certain geographical areas
- Getting to the placement. In a rural area access to placements can be complicated by the limited transport. Transport costs can also prove to be a barrier for pupils from poorer families. This is seen as one of the main difficulties in the area and is of course linked to the uneven availability of placements across the area

2.13 Pupils from workless households, pupils with additional support needs and pupils with behavioural problems which might mean that they are excluded from school are least likely to get a work experience place. Yet these pupils and others

requiring more choices and chances should be priorities within a more flexible approach to work experience.

2.14 One explanation for this is that it can be difficult to find an employer willing to take on a young person with greater support needs. However, stakeholders involved in ensuring Curriculum for Excellence delivers for all children and young people, including those needing more choices and chances also felt that commitment to ensuring this group gets a place is uneven across the schools. Provision for this group of young people is working well for those whose education is delivered outwith the mainstream setting, but not so well for those who are learning within mainstream schools.

2.15 However, consultees suggested that in most cases the young people who miss out are able to access alternative vocational experiences through other programmes. Much of this support is seen as more valuable than work experience – particularly where it includes a strong vocational element such as Skills for Work qualifications, which are delivered through partnerships between schools and colleges and Careers Scotland and where there is a focus on young people at risk of having a poor transition from school. Those in S4 who miss out because of a lack of placements will be given priority in S5 and S6.

#### *The matching process*

2.16 The majority of placements allocated to pupils in Dumfries and Galloway are via the council's web based database. A very low proportion of the placements (5%) are arranged by the pupils themselves through friends and family.

2.17 Pupils select – from the local database - up to three choices of placement based on work type. Where possible they will be given their first choice. Account of part time work and volunteering is taken, with pupils not involved in these prioritised over those who are.

2.18 Dumfries and Galloway's stated purpose for work experience is to deliver an experience of work and not necessarily a particular type of job. However, it was clear from the consultations with schools that if a young person wants to have a placement in a career area in which they are interested every effort is made to make this happen.

2.19 This is not always possible due to the limited availability of local placements. The young people interviewed suggested that they tended to accept the limitations of the placement allocated and recognised that it could offer valuable experience even if it was not in their chosen career area.

#### *Opportunities beyond S4*

2.20 Work experience is available for S5 and S6 in Dumfries and Galloway and aims to provide opportunities for pupils who:

- Fail to get a placement in S4

- Need to get specific experience to enter a particular further or higher education course may do some targeted experience
- Are less engaged in school and may benefit from extended work experience as part of their curriculum

### *Strengths and weaknesses of the local offer*

2.21 There are several features of the approach in Dumfries and Galloway recognised as strengths, including:

- The flexibility of delivery which is allowed. However, there are variations in the extent to which schools practice such flexibility. Most schools still feel that the traditional model of one week's work placement for the whole of S4 is the only feasible way work experience can be managed. More flexible approaches were only really being applied in relation to the extended work experience placements
- The child centred nature of the programme which sees those most in need of the vocational experience being prioritised
- The proactive team of work experience coordinators in each of the schools across the authority and their effective approach to sharing good practice through regular networking meetings
- The apparent effective structured approach to work experience in each of the schools with good preparation of pupils before they went out, attempts to debrief effectively when they returned and to integrate work experience well into the curriculum.

2.22 The issue of the limited access to placements and sometimes poor fit between the available places and pupil aspirations is one that needs to be addressed. Stakeholders also felt there was a need to develop a more cohesive partnership with public sector employers such as the Police and the NHS and encourage the local authority to offer placements across all departments.

### ***The local delivery model***

#### *Participating schools*

2.23 All 15 mainstream schools in Dumfries and Galloway participate in the work experience programme. Additionally, work experience is an important part of the curriculum at the off site school in the area.

#### *Non-mainstream schools*

2.24 Dumfries and Galloway has one unit for pupils who have difficulty participating in mainstream education. In this school there is a strong focus on skills for work and aim to assist pupils to access an extended work experience that consists of a day a week for as long as it can be sustained. This can begin in S3 or when the pupil is aged 15. For those who are disengaged the work experience can be a useful

alternative to provision in school – it is often a more positive experience and also more appropriate. An extended work experience was seen as giving pupils an experience that is different from school, develop work related skills and help them to continue learning.

2.25 Young people are well prepared for their work experience before they go out on placement. This consists of classroom based work to consider the learning outcomes that there should be and health and safety briefings. After the placement is finished there will be debriefing in school about what happened and learning outcomes.

2.26 Although the work experience is offered to all pupils it is not always possible to find an ideal placement as not all employers are able to offer the greater degree of supervision necessary for these young people on placement. While there is every attempt to ensure a good fit between the placement and student aspirations this is not always possible. Many of these young people are interested in trades but this can be difficult due to health and safety issues.

2.27 As with the mainstream, there is a feeling that the local authority could be more proactive in offering placements to young people in this situation. Currently, placements are patchy across the authority and there is a need for greater will and leadership within departments.

2.28 Forming good contacts with employers is vital to the success of these placements. The employers know that they are taking on a pupil who has specific issues. Schools have built up their own list of employers as they feel that personal contact with the employer is very important

#### *Role of FE and the Voluntary Sector*

2.29 In the role of employer, the colleges provide a good variety of placements in Dumfries and Galloway and, as a provider offers ‘get into work’ type access courses. The voluntary sector has limited involvement in work experience.

#### *Programme management and co-ordination*

2.30 The programme is managed at the local authority level by a full-time officer whose responsibilities includes the coordination of work experience; they are part of the local Determined to Succeed Team which is part of the Planning and Development Team in the Education Department in Dumfries. The coordinator administers the database, liaises with the schools and also has a development role, encouraging schools work experience coordinators to learn from each other and also for pushing the policy agenda forward. The coordinator also attempts to engage employers in offering placements especially in geographical and sectoral area where there are fewer placements.

2.31 Each school has a work experience coordinator responsible for arranging and supervising placements. At the school level, organising work experience is seen as very labour intensive. One of the schools visited has a dedicated coordinator who does not have any teaching responsibilities. This dedicated post allows a level of



detailed planning and effective support for pupils to make sure that they get a personalised approach and the best chance of a successful placement. Very importantly, it also allows some work to engage employers and in particular to meet with employers face to face. This was seen to be one of the factors important for successful engagement. School managers feel that teachers with teaching responsibilities could not manage this effectively.

2.32 In some schools admin support is given to the teacher through office staff. In another of the schools visited this was seen as invaluable. The admin assistance had helped boost the database of employers and to have a staff member that can liaise with the employers and encourage them to offer placement.

2.33 There seems generally to be a good relationship between the school coordinators and the work experience coordinator located in the education authority. Schools have shared their employer contacts so that they are now on the central database.

#### *Health and safety checking*

2.34 Health and safety checking did raise barriers to the effective delivery of work experience in Dumfries and Galloway. The first of these related to costs. Since the local authority took work experience back 'in house' and until relatively recently, health and safety checks were carried out on a contractual basis by a risk management company. These proved costly and meant schools had to consider carefully whether any new placements should be arranged. In practice schools have attempted to maximise the value of any placement by encouraging the employer to take on more than one pupil and offer placements for at least 3 years. To reduce costs, the council is planning to conduct more risk assessments internally and also to train staff to carry out low level risk assessments.

#### *Support pre, during and post placement*

2.35 The consultations with the schools suggested that teachers have a good awareness of local employers and their needs and try to make sure that the placements are successful by matching young people to appropriate employers and also making sure that pupils are prepared before they go on placement.

2.36 Schools have developed their own models of placement preparation across the region. However, the following methods are typically used across all of the schools:

*Pre placement* - class based work on what to expect in a work environment, an induction pack containing key contacts, 'dos and don'ts' and health and safety information, employer visits and individual support from pupil support staff.

*During the placement* - pupils have a designated support person in the workplace and may be visited or telephoned by the school or a support agency to check on progress.

*Post placement* - generally all pupils have an opportunity so have a discussion in class and some may have a one to one debrief with a teacher. Pupils may

complete a log book on placements and this can be used as evidence for an Intermediate 1/Access 3 qualification, but not all of the schools do this.

2.37 There is some evidence that this is working reasonably well. All of the pupils who took part in the focus group felt that they were well prepared for a placement. Teachers and other stakeholders suggested that it was very rare that placements broke down.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

2.38 Although placements are centrally coordinated in Dumfries and Galloway schools retain a good deal of autonomy to organise placements to meet the needs of their pupils and reflects local socioeconomic conditions. The schools visited as part of the fieldwork felt that they had developed reasonably good models which were meeting local needs. Drawing together their experiences it is possible to identify some practice within schools which contribute to effectiveness. These include schools developing good relationships with local employers and a 'whole school' approach to work where everyone involved values it.

2.39 Issues related to health and safety is constraining the delivery of work experience at the moment. The authority is currently looking at how the volume and pace of checks can be improved, but this needs to start soon.

### **The local employer experience**

#### *Reasons for being involved*

2.40 Although it still remains difficult to find placements, it appears that there is relatively strong commitment to work experience among employers. A recent canvas undertaken by the authority in upper Nithsdale suggested that over 80% of local employers would be willing to take on a work placement. Most employers in Dumfries and Galloway are motivated by social responsibility and want to put something back into their local community. However, a proportion also recognised that they can benefit, in terms of getting access to potential new employees and developing staff training opportunities.

#### *Existing links with schools*

2.41 Almost 70% of the employers interviewed in Dumfries and Galloway had links to particular local schools. This was higher than in other areas and may reflect the rural nature of the area. These links allowed employers to provide a range of other work related activities in local schools.

#### *Views on the concept*

2.42 Most of the employers feel that the main aim of work experience is to improve pupils' understanding of the workplace. It can also assist pupils to make better career choices. The majority of the employers (94%) wanted to continue to offer work experience placements as they see value in helping young people to understand employer's expectations.

### *Views on the work experience model in practice*

2.43 The majority of the employers said that they organised the work experience directly with the schools, rather than through the local area coordinator. This is likely to be a reflection of their links to the local school in their community. However, only about a third felt that work experience was well coordinated in the area. Some of the problems encountered included competing requests from local schools, poor management by the schools and lack of communication between the schools and the local coordinator.

2.44 The employers provided a reasonable range of activities in the work experience and more than 70% provided what might be expected as the basis of any experience: induction, a briefing on the company and feedback to the school.

2.45 Despite schools saying they spent a lot of time on preparation for placement few employers felt pupils were well prepared for work experience, but they generally found that the young people have the attributes that they need for the placement.

2.46 As there are so many micro businesses in Dumfries and Galloway it might be expected that many of them will find it difficult to offer a week's placement with adequate supervision at once. However, even although about half of the businesses surveyed were small, most felt that a week's placement was effective.

### *Suggested changes*

- Although there is commitment to work experience, engaging with employers needs to be continual to keep them involved. At the moment much stakeholder activity is focused on the public sector, but the private sector needs to be supported too
- Although there is general endorsement of the week's placement model there is perhaps a need to further consult with employers about whether there could be greater flexibility. Small employers in particular, may actually find it easier to provide a place if there was greater flexibility over timing
- Most employers are fearful about the risk assessment process because of fears about litigation – but it seems that some of them assume that they have the responsibility of organising the assessment. Offering to do the risk assessment and making sure that employers know that it is not their responsibility can reduce these fears.

### **Benefits of work experience**

2.47 The majority of stakeholders in Dumfries and Galloway were generally supportive of the concept of work experience and felt that it is a useful way to prepare pupils for work. The main benefits identified for pupils, schools and employers are as follows.

## *Pupils*

2.48 The consultations with the young people highlighted that for the majority, work experience is a very enjoyable experience and one that they find valuable. Pupils learned about the world of work in general and also about particular careers in which they had an interest. In some cases this had changed their ideas about work and meant that jobs that they had previously felt were unattractive could be a possibility. Work experience then could often lead them to expand their ideas of what might be a career choice.

2.49 Other benefits were often more personal. Several pupils said that it increased their self confidence, and others felt that it increased their social skills and ability to work in a team. Most felt that it increased their confidence about leaving school.

2.50 For pupils with additional support needs one of the main benefits can be an increase in confidence. As we have seen in the section on non mainstream schools, for disengaged pupils work experience can be a useful alternative to provision in school – it is often a more positive experience, is different from school and can allow them to develop work related skills.

## *Schools*

2.51 Schools continue to perceive work experience to be of value. Although they recognise it takes a lot of commitment and impacts on the wider curriculum especially if they want to be flexible. However in the schools visited the benefits of work experience seemed to be outweighing these costs. Benefits included:

- A way of taking forward the Curriculum for Excellence
- Providing a real world experience that can be used in the classroom
- Invigorating and motivating young people; and increasing their focus. In particular, extended placements can help some pupils to be less disaffected
- Promoting links with local businesses

## *Employers*

2.52 For employers key benefits of engagement included:

- Promoting good relationships with local community
- Targeting future employees
- Providing a training opportunity for staff

## **Development Priorities**

2.53 A recent paper issued by the authority's Education Department sets out the challenges affecting the delivery an effective work experience programme in

Dumfries and Galloway. These include the difficulties of securing good quality placements, the potential for curriculum disruption caused by work experience (and particularly a more flexible model) and the increased pressures placed on schools around doing more risk assessments, increased monitoring of placements and loss of teaching time. All of these challenges can reduce the perceived benefits of work experience relative to costs.

2.54 The fieldwork undertaken also identified the following as key issues:

- All of the stakeholders highlighted that increasing the number of quality placements is a key developmental priority
- Availability of placements across the region – not just in small pockets
- Barriers are rurality and limited involvement of the public sector

### **Final observations**

2.55 The Dumfries and Galloway case study usefully highlights the difficulties of delivering an effective work experience programme in a rural area. In addition to the usual organisational issues common in other areas, the stakeholders recognize that the scale and range of and accessibility to local opportunities is challenged by the nature of the rural economy and the important need, therefore, to engage the public sector to match the private sector commitment. At a local level schools recognise that building close relationships with local employers is time consuming but can be rewarding in terms of increasing placement offers and involving employers more broadly in work related learning.

2.56 The public sector also needs to make a commitment to match the private sector.

2.57 The case study also illustrates the difficulties of trying to introduce greater flexibility into the work experience model. There is recognition that a more flexible approach is needed for pupils with additional support needs and who are disaffected and there is a pay off in terms of better subsequent engagement in school or in work, training or education post school. However, schools are unconvinced about the case for mainstreaming this for all pupils and feel that the traditional week's model minimises disruption and is most manageable.

### 3. DUNDEE

#### **The local work experience offer**

##### *The model*

3.1 The Dundee model is based around a universal offer of one week's work experience to pupils in S4 in the mainstream and Special School. The programme is managed by the local education authority. A coordinator, located in the Education Department, manages the creation and allocation of places through a web based database. Each of the schools has negotiated a 2 week slot in the session during which all of the pupils go out on placement.

##### *Scale of operation*

3.2 In the academic year 2007/08 a total of 1056 placements were organised in Dundee.

##### *Profile of participating employers*

3.3 Dundee has over two thousand employers on its database but not all of these are currently offering placements. It has not been possible to get a detailed breakdown of the type of employers participating. However, consultees within the education department felt that there is a reasonable spread of participating employers across the public, private and voluntary sectors although the majority of placements are in the private sector. The consultees' perceptions were also that the range of employers involved also broadly reflects the local employment base. However, placements in some types of work, most notably 'professional' types of jobs are more limited than other types of jobs and this causes problems for some pupils interested in these kinds of placements.

##### *Pupil participation*

3.4 There is generally a high uptake of work experience placements in Dundee schools although the proportion of pupils participating can vary across schools. In the current year, 87% participated in 4th year in a system where all pupils are encouraged to participate. Young people who miss out on placements are dealt with separately by the work experience coordinator at the request of the schools.

3.5 While there is a good deal of emphasis on the notion that the offer of work experience in Dundee is universal, schools ultimately decide who goes and who does not based on a number of factors. These include the importance placed on work experience within individual schools, and the degree of support pupils are offered and the availability of placements. The three schools visited reported a shortage of placements on the database so that not all pupils in S4 could be offered a place in an occupational sector of their choice. The schools responded to this in different ways with two of the schools encouraging the pupils to find their own placements. The other school used allocated placements on a first come first served basis. Inevitably, not all pupils in all schools will get a place in the sector of their choice.

3.6 Historically it has not been necessary for the authority to identify whether there is an issue around widening access, because overall participation rates are high, and because the centrally planned one-week placement model is tried and tested, and is an efficient way of organising work experience within the present system.

3.7 Pupils who miss out tend to be those with behavioural problems or not attending school. However, individual schools may increase support to enable these pupils to take part if they feel work experience would be of value.

3.8 The following three initiatives - which include work experience as part of their programmes - have proved helpful in supporting pupils who have disengaged from education:

- PACE - People Access to College and Employability, for pupils with significantly challenging behaviour who may spend the last year (or even 2 years) in college rather than school
- Pathways aims to help pupils in the last 6 months of school to access vocational studies and help them make a progression onto an option post school, eg Get Ready for Work
- A programme for Christmas leavers in partnership with the Local Authority's Economic Development Department which offers work experience opportunities to a number of pupils from schools where there are fewer positive destinations

3.9 In these programmes work experience is part of a range of options offered with support. These pupils will face a range of barriers including lack of education, poor literacy and numeracy skills and behavioural problems which mean that work experience might not be immediately appropriate. According to the providers of these programmes, these other problems need to be addressed first before the pupil is ready to go on placement.

#### *The matching process*

3.10 Across all schools, including the Special School and off site establishments, the matching process is coordinated via the Education Department's web based system. Each of the schools also has a teacher who coordinates the placements and liaises with the coordinator in the Education department to make work experience happen.

3.11 The centrally coordinated nature of the system allows the paperwork to be standard across schools and allocation of places is relatively straightforward and fair. Pupils bid for up to their 3 preferred placements based on job type. The pupils' choices are then matched to the available placements by the computer. The coordinator reports that 82% of pupils get their first choice of placement. Self-found placements are added to the central database so that there is a record for every pupil's work experience. The system allows manual matching of placements to pupils if required.

3.12 According to the Education Department, the centrally coordinated matching process encourages high rates of participation in work experience by pupils. If schools played the lead in arranging placements there could be work-load issues for teachers. It would also lead to employers being contacted on an ad hoc basis with the possibility of them becoming frustrated with the system. Nevertheless around a third of pupils arrange their own placements which they do through family or friend contacts. They are not permitted to cold call employers. Some of these are organised to make up the shortfall of placements, but others are arranged because the placements offered on the database do not match pupils' expectations. Although the programme is primarily seen as a way of pupils increasing their understanding of the world of work, many pupils continue to see it as a way of finding out about a particular career and are therefore less than satisfied when a placement is not in the field of their particular career interest.

3.13 However, it is recognised that for some pupils, there may be value in allowing a pupil to find out more about a particular vocational interest. This is afforded to the pupils participating in Dundee's vocational scheme within FE colleges and is achieved by manually matching these pupils to particular places rather than thorough the computer selection programme.

3.14 The single Special School in Dundee has also drawn on the database to assist in finding placements, but has more commonly found the placements through its own work to identify employers who are willing to offer placements to this particular group of pupils.

#### *Opportunities beyond S4*

3.15 While the focus of work experience in Dundee is for pupils in S4, there are opportunities for pupils in later years. In S5 where a pupil is a Christmas leaver and would like work experience instead of going back to school, the Education Department, along with the school and the employer, will attempt to facilitate this. The pupil remains on the school role until his or her official leaving date and the employer liaises with the school as far as attendance is concerned. If attendance becomes a concern then the pupil forfeits the place and the school follows up any issue. This can be on a part time or sometimes full time basis depending on the particular needs of the young person.

3.16 In S6, where pupils perhaps do not have a full school timetable work placements can be organised. These placements tend to be undertaken by pupils intending to do certain courses such as teaching, medicine or nursery work where it is helpful to have relevant experience. This type of placement is generally one afternoon per week in the final year of school.

3.17 Pupils in the Special School in Dundee may do work experience in the year it is most appropriate for them. In some cases this may be S4, but it is more common in the S5 and S6.



### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

3.18 There is a very definite model of work experience in Dundee understood by all of the stakeholders locally. The approach is viewed as structured, well tested and efficient. Through its application, nearly 90% of pupils in S4 participate in work experience. Nevertheless, some stakeholders, particularly teachers, felt aspects of the model may need to be reviewed. The fieldwork raised some questions around the:

- Overall availability of places
- Range of places on offer
- Accessibility of work experience to pupils who have greater support needs

### **The local delivery model**

#### *Participating schools*

3.19 All 10 mainstream and the one Special School participate in the work experience programme.

#### *Non-mainstream schools*

3.20 Improving pupils' understanding of the world of work is an important element of the curriculum in Dundee's Special School and can involve a range of activities including work experience. Work experience is viewed as a very positive way of developing pupils' understanding of work and consequently attempts are made to offer work experience to as many pupils as possible. However, the majority of pupils in the school need considerable support, usually from pupil support staff. In some cases, where an external placement is not possible they may offer an in house work experience – e.g. via the office/janitorial work etc. Work experience placements tend to happen when the pupil is in S5 or S6 – in the year that they are leaving.

3.21 The main difficulty organising work experience is finding suitable placements for pupils with more support needs. For these pupils the most appropriate placements tend to be ones which offer a few hours once a week – the idea is to try to build up the time they spend on placement. Flexibility around the child's needs and abilities is key and the programme must suit the needs of the child and these are variable.

3.22 Placements tend to be most successful when employers are able to contribute to the planning for the placement and the school can be flexible around the employer's needs. It is important that the employer is well supported. Crucial in this is a lot of face to face contact and aim to address all of their needs and concerns.

3.23 Although there is joint work to identify placements through the Education Department, this has not yielded enough placements so the school has developed its own links with employers. While this is proceeding relatively well, it is a labour intensive process.

### *Role of FE and the voluntary sector*

3.24 The FE and the voluntary sectors are currently involved in work experience as providers of placements.

### *Programme management and co-ordination*

3.25 Work experience is delivered by a Work Experience Coordinator based in the Educational Development Service of the Education Department. The programme is overseen by the Quality Improvement Officer who is responsible for Determined to Succeed. The coordinator has some part-time assistance to manage the database and conduct health and safety checks.

3.26 Within each of the schools a work experience coordinator will have responsibility for coordinating the school's programme. This task typically includes encouraging the pupils to select a placement from the database or organising their own placement, returning the forms to the local authority to input to the database, carrying out any admin work associated with the work experience, organising placement visits by teachers when the pupils are out of school, and preparing pupils for the placements. All of this is usually done alongside teaching responsibilities.

### *Health and safety checking*

3.27 According to the coordinator, there is some evidence that health and safety issues are preventing employers from offering placements in some employment sectors but specifically on building sites.

### *Placement support*

3.28 The database of placements on offer provides pupils with a range of information about the placement including the work hours, key duties, dress code, lunch and contact names. This designed to help the pupils make an informed choice about their placement. In addition the local authority has developed a model of preparation which is available to all of the schools if they wish to use it. Schools have the option of aligning work experience with a relevant SQA National Qualification. This means that while the detail of placement support varies across the schools there are certain elements which tend to be offered across each school. These involve the following.

*Pre placement* - Generally, pupils will receive additional information other than the details of their placement in class beforehand which will cover health and safety and expectations around the learning outcomes of work experience.

*During placement* - Pupils are usually visited by a teacher at some point on the placement depending on the availability of teachers and their time commitments. Pupils may also be visited on the placement by the local authority coordinator. Pupils may also complete a log book identifying what they did and learned on the placement.

*Post placement* - Post placement generally involves a debrief session in class. The extent to which the experience is used across the schools in other areas of the curriculum will vary, but the fieldwork identified some examples, such as presentations in English.

3.29 Pupils had mixed views about the usefulness of the placement log book and consequently did not always use it. Some of the schools planned to review the materials they are using and the pupils' comments seem to support the need for updating.

3.30 The pupil focus groups highlighted that most pupils felt that they had been adequately prepared for placements before they went out. They had more mixed views about whether they felt supported on placement. They commented that if the employer made sure the pupil was given something to do throughout the placement, pupils felt supported. It is fair to say that this represents the majority of the placements. However, when placements are not well structured this can have a negative impact: *'it can make you feel like a liability to be honest'*. In one focus group pupils commented that they did not feel that the issue of preparation was about pupils: rather it was that employers were not always well prepared to have a young person on placement.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

3.31 The centrally coordinated approach to work experience was seen as a key strength by the stakeholders working in the local education authority. This made work experience easier to manage for schools and they argued that greater flexibility around self-found placements would reduce participation and increase coordination problems.

3.32 Schools were less convinced of the value of the centrally organised system and identified 2 main weaknesses. The first of these was around the shortage of placements in specific sectors. Some are due to external factors in the economy which means that employers are less inclined to offer a placement, but some due to systemic factors. For example, one school reported that self found placements were added to the database, but if they were in a company already offering a place they were not regarded as additional. In these circumstances, the self found placements were not adding to the overall pool of placements.

3.33 The second weakness was the lack of flexibility about when the work experience happened. Schools have to negotiate a particular slot in the school session. Inevitably, there are times in the session when schools would find it easier to accommodate work experience into the S4 timetable. In general, schools worked round these problems, and whilst there is a recognition of the issues it is felt that the administrative advantages offered through a centralised system outweigh the difficulties of schools being allocated slots.

3.34 Currently there is little scope for pupils to have an alternative to a one week placement in S4. We have seen in other areas of the report that this is not always the best model for all pupils, particularly pupils within the MCMC group. To date it is probably fair to say that there has been little specific focus on the work experience

needs of young people needing more choices and chances in Dundee due to the universal nature of the approach. However, consultees felt there is now greater interest and practice beginning to emerge. The key thrust of this is to deliver greater flexibility in the programme so it is more pupil led and takes into account the value that work experience can have in reducing pupils' risk of not being in education, training or employment when they leave school.

### **The local employer experience**

#### *Reasons for being involved*

3.35 Employers are contacted 3 times every year by the central coordinator to find out whether they want to participate in work experience and how many places they can offer at what times. Around half of the employers tend to get involved because they want to give something back to the community, but another important reason is establishing links with potential employees. Over 70% of the employers felt that young people who come to them on placement have a poor understanding of the employment opportunities in their sector and so it is important that employers share with them their expectations of future employees.

#### *Existing links with schools*

3.36 Although employers surveyed did report some links with individual schools, the majority (70%) of the placements were organised through the central coordinator.

#### *Views on concept*

3.37 The majority of employers in the Dundee area see that the purpose of work experience is to increase pupils' understanding of the world of work. Just over half also say that it can help young people make a better career choice. Most of the employers also endorse the model of a week's placement and feel that a week is long enough to develop an overview of a job.

#### *Views on the work experience model in practice*

3.38 A high proportion of the employers (90%) felt the programme in the Dundee area was well coordinated and reported no real problems with coordination. However, few felt young people were well briefed or prepared to come to the placement.

3.39 The employers appear to provide a reasonable work experience to pupils within the authority area. Over 80% said they provide an induction and over 70% assign a mentor to the young person. However, just over half said they provide feedback to the pupil while on placement and to the school.

#### *Suggested changes*

3.40 The local coordination team felt that it is getting harder to engage specific employers such as those operating on building sites because of the difficulties surrounding health and safety legislation and increased regulation. All of the

employers interviewed for the survey, however, said that they would continue to offer work experience placements.

3.41 Employers felt the main change they would like to see is improvement in preparation, including better matching of the pupil to the placement.

3.42 It appears that once Dundee employers are involved they tend to stay involved, largely because they want to provide an opportunity for young people and there appear to be few problems.

3.43 Around a third of the employers did say that the programme could be better publicised. Although employers on the database are contacted directly there may be a need for raising the profile of the programme to encourage new employers to offer placements.

### **Benefits of work experience**

3.44 The consultation in Dundee suggested that work experience delivers a range of benefits for the stakeholders involved. The majority of young people interviewed wanted to take part in work experience and generally were positive about their placements.

3.45 Some of the benefits identified were as follows.

#### *Pupils*

The opportunity to

- Experience the world of work and increase their understanding of the world of work
- Improve their understanding of the link between school subjects and the world of work
- Help them learn responsibility and increase their life skills
- Increase their confidence and self esteem
- Improve their decision making – careers
- Lead them (perhaps) to a part time job
- Reflect their experience in job applications
- Make them feel more confident about leaving school in general

#### *Schools*

- Inculcation of life skills
- Pupils see greater relevance in school subjects and can become more enthused about a career
- Guidance staff get to see another aspect of pupils' personalities
- Makes/keeps teachers aware of the world of work

## *Employers*

- Raising their profile
- Keeping them abreast of developments in education
- Targeting potential future employees and help with recruitment

### **Perceived strengths and development priorities**

3.46 The Dundee case study shows how the Education Department has responded to a fairly large pool of generally geographically accessible employers by creating a central database that aims to address the organisational needs of employers, schools and pupils.

3.47 Staff within the Education Department value work experience highly and believe the local model is effective and provides a good experience for the majority of pupils.

3.48 Inevitably, not all of the stakeholder see this system as totally fit for purpose:

- Schools did not always find it user friendly, maintaining that there was still a large administrative burden and wanting more flexibility around timing of placements
- Schools and pupils felt the need to increase the number and variety of placements on offer

3.49 Dundee City Council and its schools are responding to some of these issues. The main developmental priority identified by the coordinator was the need to increase the number of placements offering 'professional jobs' although it was recognised that there could be confidentiality issues in this kind of placement.

3.50 One of the schools visited was aiming to address this by attempting to increase opportunities for the more academic pupils to find out more about the career areas they are interested in. They are hoping, in 2009 to work with a number of departments in the school which have their own links with businesses. For example, the technical department has links with Michelin and Betts (Homes) and they would work with the employer to develop a work experience project that would be more realistic for these pupils. The work experience might not be a week - but might be over a few weeks for a few hours per week.

3.51 Much of the activity around the needs of young people who need more choices and chances to date has focused on identifying the group and some pilot work. There is recognition among stakeholders that more needs to be done to integrate support for this group into the current model.

### **Final Reflections**

3.52 Dundee's model of work experience is a centrally planned one, focused on S4 which has been gradually refined over the years. Although this has achieved high

levels of participation, among some stakeholders there is recognition that the model may have to be adapted to better suit pupils with a range of needs. This includes the more able pupils and also those who need more support.

## **4. FALKIRK**

### **The local work experience offer**

#### *Background*

4.1 Falkirk has a growing reputation for promoting enterprise and employability in schools, and pupils' exposure to working environments forms an important part of this. At the key transition points into and beyond secondary education the authority is working creatively to support pupils. Work experience therefore forms part of a wider suite of interventions designed to equip young people with skills for life and work.

4.2 Until 2007/08 the local work experience programme was managed by Careers Scotland (CS) but this is changing as the local authority assumes responsibility from 2008/09. This is therefore a transition period for the local model, which is raising fundamental questions which are at the heart of the national review – most notably in relation to the purpose of work experience and its fit with the wider curriculum.

#### *The model*

4.3 To date, the Falkirk model has consisted of a universal offer of a one week work experience placement for all S4 mainstream school pupils. Schools are allocated a one or two week slot<sup>2</sup> when opportunities are available to their pupils using the centrally operated "Work It" database<sup>3</sup>. There is also an opportunity for pupils to access 'self-found' placements through their networks of family and friends and in the area more than one in every four opportunities is found this way.

4.4 Discussions with schools, pupils and employers revealed that they are all keen to introduce greater flexibility within the model. There are some examples of this, such as the two week placement in Animal Husbandry at college; half- and full-day sessions – for S5 and S6 pupils; and one day a week over a term for pupils attending Special Schools. Historically, the contractual arrangements between Falkirk Council and Careers Scotland did not allow for much flexibility, however options for greater flexibility are being considered within the new management arrangements. This is a positive step, although not without resource implications.

4.5 Work experience opportunities are less structured and more limited beyond S4. The intensity of S5, with a two term 'dash for Highers', means that the numbers engaging at that point are relatively low. For those staying on to S6, the potential opportunities widen, although this is yet to be fully reflected in the local work experience model.

4.6 Work experience is also available to pupils in Falkirk's Special Schools, but not universally. One Special School offers 2 weeks work experience for its S5 and S6 pupils who are felt able to benefit from an external placement and a non-mainstream centre ensures that pupils can undertake work experience either through an external

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<sup>2</sup> Schools with larger S4 rolls are given two weeks

<sup>3</sup> One of the two allocated weeks at a mainstream school is during the Easter holiday, when around 30% of the year group go out on placement. Employers are said to be particularly impressed by this commitment



placement or, if more appropriate, in the supported environment of the centre itself. Although they have links with the central system, both institutions tend to find placements through their own networks.

### *Scale of operation*

4.7 In the academic year 2007/08 a total of 1,676 work experience placements were organised in Falkirk. As this is almost 3 times the number of employers registered on the local database it indicates pressure within the system to find the required amount of opportunities.

### *Profile of participating employers*

4.8 On assuming responsibility for managing the local work experience programme Falkirk Council chose to continue the database managed by Careers Scotland. The local authority team is currently checking the database to verify the live host organisations, and this work will be completed for the start of the 2008/09 academic year.

4.9 In 2007/08 there were 648 employers on the local database with a split between 78% private sector (higher than national average) and 22% public sector (lower than the national average)<sup>4</sup>. Our review suggests that more could be done by the larger public sector employers – the local authority and the NHS – to provide work placement opportunities. Falkirk has no voluntary sector organisations on its database which suggests that there is scope to develop this aspect of the employer offer.

4.10 Feedback from the local authority work experience co-ordinator indicates that finding placements is becoming more difficult each year: reasons cited for this include employers' resistance to paperwork, previous bad experiences and issues around the age of pupils<sup>5</sup>. The co-ordinator is also aware, from anecdotal evidence, that employers in small businesses are disengaging due to concerns around Child Protection legislation, Health and Safety requirements and rising insurance costs<sup>6</sup>.

4.11 These issues are not confined to smaller organisations. A significant and major employer in the area previously participated in the work experience programme, but has now withdrawn primarily due to Health and safety restrictions. In the business' view these made it difficult to offer participants a 'meaningful' placement. The business now only provides a work shadowing opportunity for S6 pupils interested in chemical engineering.

4.12 Another distinctive element of the local offer is the arrangement between schools and the local authority itself. For 5 years this has offered two placements for pupils interested in a career in engineering, partly driven by the sector's recruitment challenges and the need to promote a more positive image to young people. The

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<sup>4</sup> Across Scotland 72% of employers are private sector, 25% public sector and 3% voluntary sector.

<sup>5</sup> In particular, some major retailers will not take pupils on work placement until the age of 18

<sup>6</sup> One long standing employer, a local coach firm, withdrew whilst the study was under way due to rising insurance costs

Department also has a growing relationship with a local secondary school which includes the joint development of curricular materials.

4.13 In relation to the wider sectoral spread in Falkirk, there is a reasonable range with a prevalence of opportunities in the following sectors:

Creative, media and education - 319

Retail and wholesale - 268

Public administration and defence - 205

Looking at how the database reflects the local industry sector profile, the central co-ordinator's view is that there are no surplus imbalances but a need for more placements in relation to travel, tourism and leisure. In terms of the fit between the database offer and the aspirations of pupils, again the team sees a mismatch with gaps identified for traditional trades, health/medical, vehicle maintenance and construction.

4.14 There is currently no mechanism for knowing what proportion of pupils access their first work placement choice, although the fieldwork suggests that this is quite high.

#### *Pupil participation*

4.15 Falkirk Council presents work experience placements as a universal offer to all S4 pupils within mainstream schools although there is no record of the number of year group pupils who participated in 2007/08. Pupils not undertaking a placement are expected to attend school during the placement week, but in practice attendance is not guaranteed.

4.16 The reasons for young people not undertaking a placement are varied, and include young people who:

- For behavioural reasons are not considered appropriate for a placement
- Simply refuse any placement options, and show very little interest in the process
- Are too immature to go out at this stage of their development
- By S4 are attending school intermittently, or not at all
- Have parents who are against the concept of work experience and see it as a distraction from their main educational experience

4.17 Consultations in with pupils and school staff in the Falkirk area indicate that there are 2 primary reasons why pupils may not participate. The first group consists of those whose work is well behind and who are expected to use the week to catch up with their peers. The second are those young people who are prevented due to issues around poor attendance and behaviour. Many pupils felt that this is unfair, as young people who dislike school may respond well to a work environment. However, discussions indicate that staff often prefer to err on the side of caution and are reluctant to place a young person who may present challenges for the employer.

4.18 Yet, one of the non-mainstream establishments consulted indicated that even the most challenging young people can successfully undertake a work experience

placement with appropriate levels of planning and support. The latter point is key in relation to provision in the mainstream system, where the volume of numbers makes additional support difficult.

### *The matching process*

4.19 The matching process in mainstream schools has essentially two elements:

- i. Matching through the increasing use of “self found” placements – estimated as 28% of the total in 2007/8 although the actual figure may be higher, and the team will gain a better feel for this after managing the programme directly. Within this process, pupils are introduced to the concept of work experience (usually in PSE classes) and then invited to identify an opportunity through direct approaches to relevant employers, or through utilising networks of family and friends. They are asked to complete initial paperwork, which is then subjected to standard health and safety checks.
- ii. Matching through use of the centrally operated “Kingfisher” database which contains details of the centrally sourced work experience opportunities allocated to each school. Pupils can mark any placements which appeal to them, and these requests are then reviewed and, if suitable, agreed by the school work experience co-ordinator. Pupils commonly get three choices, and our focus groups in schools indicate that a large majority of pupils obtain their first choice placement.

4.20 Self-found placements occupy an important role in the Falkirk area where there is more than double the demand from placements as there are registered employers. The flow of opportunities arising from self-found placements into the system provides potential growth, with the possibility of employers staying within the system once they have been processed by the team. But the issue of self found placements raises two questions. Firstly, the potential concern that young people with more supportive and work focused backgrounds and family units will generally be better placed to source an opportunity - but because of these factors may need it least. This is both true and unavoidable. The counterbalance to this is that by these young people taking the self found option, they leave the centrally sourced opportunities to other young people who are not as likely to gain via this route

4.21 The matching process for pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) is a little different from the mainstream model. At one Special School involved in the study, the starting point is the same, as staff and pupils consider what is available from the employer database. Beyond that the process is more intensive and involves extensive input from staff to engage with prospective employers. The selection exercise can also raise challenging but important issues for the pupils – often fuelled by expectations derived from television – so there is a higher level of staff involvement within the school too. The study identified a number of issues at the matching stage which included:

- Open competition with other schools for placements
- A shortage of placements for pupils with additional support needs in accessible sectors like retail

- Limited engagement in the programme by the NHS and Falkirk Council

4.22 Staff at the school believe that it is important for their pupils to be visible to employers, as part of a two way process. For the employer it reminds them that these prospective employees are in the labour market and may raise questions about how well the organisation can accommodate them. For the young people the matching exercise introduces labour market issues they will have to face before long. This includes the importance of handling failure, which many young people grapple with at this age.

4.23 The matching process at the Falkirk Day Unit is similarly labour intensive and relies upon well-disposed employers willing to provide a young person with an opportunity. Although the Centre accesses placements from the database, in practice many pupils go to employers where the employer has a personal connection with the unit staff team. Again, the selection process presents issues for the pupils, as it is not uncommon for them to come from workless households with limited exposure to the labour market.

#### *Opportunities beyond S4*

4.24 As in most other parts of the country, the level of work placements in S5 is low. This largely reflects concerns that a week out of Higher study is far more significant (and potentially damaging) than for Standard Grades in S4. Normally only young people in exceptional circumstances would access these opportunities – perhaps if they had missed out in S4, or because they had sourced an extended work placement as an anticipated winter leaver.

4.25 Through the Positive Transitions programme Falkirk has one of the country's most innovative and successful approaches to winter leavers. Work experience placements are central to this, as part of a wider vocational programme delivered by the Council's Employment and Training Unit (ETU). Pupils remain on the school role and can participate on a part or full time basis. Whilst on the programme, pupils at Braes High School carried out environmental improvements to a quadrangle in the building, providing positive role models to others.

4.26 The work experience picture changes again in S6 where two patterns are evident. The first links to the increasing preference in academic institutions for appropriate work experience placements to appear on CVs when applying for courses. This is most common for professions such as medicine, vets, teachers and lawyers. Schools are keen to access mini-placements (half or one day) over a term in line with these requirements.

4.27 The second pattern – which is not mutually exclusive with the first – is for pupils in S6 to have a wider set of column choices which includes opportunities to give back to the community. This might be through volunteering as a classroom assistant in their feeder primary school, providing maths mentoring or via other forms of school service. Both of the local schools involved in this study are looking to extend this type of provision, and work is under way to formalise the current offer available in S6.

4.28 Falkirk Council's management of the programme should support this trend, as the team is scoping out options for more flexible placement arrangements.

4.29 It is worth mentioning that many other enterprise and employability related activities are under way in schools. The former includes senior pupils at Grangemouth High operating a school bank in partnership with the Royal Bank of Scotland. In addition to Positive Transitions, the latter includes interventions such as The Prince's Trust XL Programme, Activate and Skills for Work.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

4.30 Discussions with local authority and school staff indicate that employability and enterprise are now clearly embedded in Falkirk Council's schools, largely through Determined to Succeed. However, many of them feel that the local work experience model has not kept abreast of these changes and now needs to be restructured to achieve a better fit with the wider suite of interventions. Transfer of responsibility for the management of the programme to Determined to Succeed team is widely seen as a good opportunity to start addressing this, through closer links with other Enterprise in Education activity. In the year ahead there will be a particular focus on trying to offer a more flexible range of opportunities.

4.31 Moving forward, there are a number of strengths which can be built upon. There is a fairly good database of participating employers and a healthy level of 'self-found' opportunities which can help add to this. Most pupils manage to secure a placement of their choice although there are gaps, notably in the construction sector. The application and matching process is useful for pupils as they provide a personal statement (requiring some self-reflection) and go through an Internet-based process, which is increasingly how employers recruit.

4.32 The commitment to ensuring that young people in non-mainstream schools can access work experience is also identified as a local strength. The effort and commitment taken to support pupils with additional support needs in the special school means that in many cases these young people will have a more meaningful experience than their mainstream peers – particularly those with lower levels of confidence.

4.33 Many of the weaknesses are typical of the national picture. Difficulties engaging some key industry sectors is clearly one of these. Another is the challenge to retain employers – particularly those from smaller businesses – in the light of rising concerns about Health and Safety, child protection and overall risk management. A good example of this is the withdrawal of perhaps the highest profile local private sector employer from the work experience programme. Another common – though by no means national – issue is the need to engage the public sector more effectively and it is also notable that Falkirk has zero participation from the local voluntary sector.

## **The local delivery model**

### *Participating schools*

4.34 All nine mainstream secondary schools in the Falkirk area take part in the work experience programme.

### *Non mainstream schools*

4.35 The only special school in Falkirk, offers work experience to pupils able to go out on placement.

### *Role of the FE and voluntary sectors*

4.36 The FE sector is primarily involved in work experience as a provider of placements. Prior to the introduction of Skills for Work qualifications, the college also provided vocational tasters for S3 pupils but these terminated once Skills for Work qualifications was introduced.

4.37 The voluntary sector has no current locus in Falkirk either as a provider of services or placements in relation to work experience.

### *Programme management and coordination*

4.38 The management of the programme now sits with a small team within the Education Department's Determined to Succeed team. This is still in development and will consist of a lead EiE Co-ordinator and a supporting administrative officer. The team has responsibility for maintaining the employer database and liaising with schools, and will be supported by a health and safety consultant.

4.39 Each school has a designated work experience co-ordinator who fulfils this role within a wider pupil support remit. In addition, there is input to the programme from other subject staff teachers although this varies from school to school.

### *Health and safety checking*

4.40 The central co-ordinating team within the local authority's Determined to Succeed team has assumed responsibility for health and safety checking. Again, it is important to point out that the team has recently assumed responsibility for the local database and is currently validating all of the live records. The authority is likely to continue the rolling programme of checks previously undertaken by Careers Scotland which saw the following inspection cycles depending on the estimated risk level:

- High risk – once a year
- Medium risk – once every two years
- Low risk – once every three years

## *Placement support*

4.41 The model of placement support varies between schools, but generally involves:

4.42 *Pre-placement* – Much of the pre-placement activity is embedded in PSE classes throughout the year – to such an extent that some young people might not recognise it as such. Covering Health and Safety, Work and Pay and other topics, it forms part of the wider curriculum. As the placement date draws near, there are opportunities to cover specific issues. In the three mainstream school focus groups little or no time had been spent on practical preparation – such as getting to work – and none of the 32 pupils had visited the workplace beforehand. However, they felt well informed and had guidelines and log books to help with the structure. Most were comfortable with the levels of support, although a small number would have liked additional input prior and after the experience. Pupils also received a letter prior to their placement advising them on their behaviour as a representative of the school.

4.43 At the special school the pre-placement input was very different. Pupils are offered opportunities from the central database as well as from the school's own network of employer contacts. After the pupils have selected their placement they spend one morning per week preparing in the January and March leading up to the placement. This involves considering all aspects of the experience – from working out travel routes to asking about toilet breaks – and in the week prior to the placement pupils write to their employer to thank them in advance. School staff believe that it is important to ensure that the experience is valuable and positive – so this level of preparation is necessary.

4.44 *During placement* – In practice the support provided to students whilst in the workplace is limited. Neither of the mainstream school focus groups provided any examples of pupils being contacted or visited during the placement, nor was anyone contacted by telephone. However, almost all of the pupils had a workplace supervisor although no-one had any need to call upon their services during the placement week. In practice, the relatively large numbers on placement make it difficult for staff to provide any meaningful support unless requested.

4.45 Again, the ASN pupil experience is quite different. Each pupil had a visit from the work-experience co-ordinator as well as highly structured input each day from their work-based supervisor.

4.46 *Post placement* – Within mainstream schools the debriefing tends to be informal and handled in PSE sessions. There are no opportunities for one to one debriefing, although none of the pupils felt that this would have been necessary. In both schools there was a sense that the volume of placements meant for very limited group reflection.

4.47 The Carronrange pupils had structured debriefing sessions in class with their teacher. Their feedback indicates that this was useful and allowed them to unpack their experience and consider the implications for their future studies and career plans.

### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

4.48 The work-experience programme in Falkirk is well established and effectively delivered, with a model that has been refined over the years. All of the mainstream schools are involved, and most pupils appear to access their preferred choice of placement.

4.49 Local delivery arrangements for pupils with additional support needs and behavioural problems is impressive, and shows that much can be achieved when numbers are smaller and resources are more focused.

4.50 There is no doubt however that fundamental questions are being raised about the current model's applicability and fit with the wider enterprise and employability agenda. The scale of the operation does not allow for much of a personalised experience for pupils, whilst the rigidity of the system means that there are limited opportunities in S5 and S6 when they may be more useful to some pupils.

### **The local employer experience**

4.51 Falkirk Council has inherited a database of 648 employers from Careers Scotland and is currently verifying how many of these remain *live*. The fieldwork included a survey of a small group of (17) local employers, with the following results:

#### *Reasons for being involved*

4.52 The biggest single reason employers participate in work experience (53%) is to give something back to the local community. For almost one third this is complemented by a desire to establish links with potential future employees.

4.53 35% of the sample were concerned that pupils did not have a good understanding of their sector and the career opportunities within in, and the characteristics they were most interested in seeing amongst pupils were:

- Interest in the workplace
- A good work ethic
- Willingness to learn

4.54 Almost two thirds of respondents (65%) felt that they usually had pupils with the right combination of positive attitudes.

4.55 Two of the seventeen employers have withdrawn from the programme. They cited a variety of reasons for no longer participating which included:

- Insurance/Health and Safety problems
- Immaturity of participating pupils
- Poor briefing and mismatch of previous pupils



### *Existing links with schools*

4.56 Only two of these employers had wider links with particular local schools beyond work experience. Participation levels with other initiatives – such as Get Ready for Work and Skillseekers – were low.

### *Views on the concept*

4.57 More than half of interviewed employers (53%) thought that the one week placement model was ‘very’ effective and a further 41% thought that it was ‘quite’ effective. In terms of its aims, the most popular view (65%) was that work experience raises pupils’ understanding of the workplace and the needs of employers.

### *Views on work experience model in practice*

4.58 Most employers had been involved through links with the central co-ordinator and there was a high level of satisfaction with the overall management arrangements – 88% saying it was well organised.

4.59 In terms of preparation however, satisfaction levels were less impressive. Only 24% thought that pupils had been well-briefed and arrived fully prepared. 59% thought that pupils had either not been briefed or had been poorly briefed by their school in advance of the placement.

4.60 Three of the employers had had a visit or advance information sent about the pupil, and another two had had information sent in advance. Seven employers had not received any advance support.

### *Suggested changes*

4.61 The employers had a number of suggestions for improving work experience in the Falkirk area. These included:

- Improved advance support, for example
  - Better matching of pupils to placements they are interested in
  - More background information provided to employers
  - Involvement of employers in pupil selection
  - Jointly agreed goals set between schools and employers
  - Clearer programme of work for pupils
  - Employers visiting schools in advance
- More incentives for employers – for example
  - Financial benefits (e.g. lower rates)
  - Less paperwork
  - Council support around Health and Safety legislation
- Greater programme flexibility – i.e. longer and shorter placements

## **Benefits of work experience**

4.62 Overall, the work experience programme was viewed by employers as being beneficial for all participating stakeholders in Falkirk. Young people were especially enthusiastic about the concept – both in theory and in practice – and employers also identify positive reasons for being involved. Although the stated benefits to schools vary, there are also clear messages here about the positive aspects of being involved.

4.63 A summary of the key gains by stakeholder group is provided below.

### *Pupils*

4.64 The pupils participating in the focus groups were unanimous that work experience is a positive part of the curriculum. Although they had changes to suggest, not a single person argued that work experience should be discontinued. Further examination reveals that part of this is just the novelty of ‘being out of school’ and it also highlights that the more structured the placement the greater the benefits to pupils.

4.65 The benefits which they identified included the following:

The opportunity to:

- Increase their understanding of the skills and attitudes employers are looking for
- Gain an insight into a particular business, sector or job type – which can confirm or alter pupils’ career intentions
- Demonstrate an ability to operate responsibly in an adult environment
- Gain practical experience which can be included on their CV
- Have the prospect – in some cases realised – of finding part-time employment

### *Schools*

4.66 Education<sup>7</sup> staff identified a number of benefits for schools. One of the most interesting was a belief that the uncertainty of the future labour market places schools and employers in a similar position where there are benefits to closer partnership working. Work experience placements can provide links into employers from which longer term relationships can develop.

4.67 A specific benefit deriving from this is the exposure of teachers to the changing requirements of employers. One consultee noted that it is at least as important to place teachers in industry – given their influencing role – as it is to place

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<sup>7</sup> Central work experience co-ordinators, school-based co-ordinators, school management and teaching staff and local authority education officers

pupils. Through their links with employers teachers can refresh their own skills and expertise and gain a better understanding of how they can shape their curricular delivery. Programmes like Excellence in Education through Business Links (EEBL) were praised for offering this opportunity, but there is a widespread view that much more needs to be done in this area.

4.68 In relation to their pupils, the main benefit for schools is that they are the indirect beneficiaries of the gains realised by their pupils. In a significant number of cases, staff cited more motivated and mature young people returning after their placement, some of whom had a new or renewed sense of direction. In some cases – including in the non-mainstream settings for young people needing more choices and chances, including additional support needs – pupils returned with such enthusiasm for work that they found it hard to settle back into the school routine.

4.69 In the Falkirk area, as across Scotland, there is a sharper focus on school leaver destination statistics driven by the Government's National Indicator relating to increased positive leaving destinations. There is little doubt in the views of teachers [and staff in the authority's Education department] that work experience contributes to pupils' overall employability. In therefore schools' transition strategies.

4.70 Finally, in practical terms, the block week of work experience also provides the schools with a week each year when the vast majority of S4 young people are absent. This offers an invaluable period of development time by reducing class contact time for teachers significantly.

### *Employers*

4.71 Employers indicated that they are involved in work experience for a number of reasons. Participation in the programme is time consuming and resource intensive, so employers would not be involved if there were no benefits to be gained. The study indicates that in Falkirk the following are important to participating organisations:

- *Promotion of the company as a potential employer* – Hosting a work experience placement gives employers a chance to gauge pupils' future potential and a chance for the organisation to showcase its progression opportunities. For some sectors who may struggle to find recruits – including retail, hospitality and engineering – this is welcomed by employers
- *Pupil awareness of skills required* – the placement is a two way street in relation to skills awareness raising. On the one hand it allows pupils to understand the aptitudes employers are looking for. On the other, it provides employers with a current perspective on the skills levels of young people approaching the end of compulsory schooling. It also provides an insight into the changing education system
- *Opportunities for staff development* – hosting work placements gives employees an opportunity to develop a wide range of key skills which include planning preparation, communications and mentoring

4.72 Sourcing future employees is not the sole motivation for employer involvement, other commonly cited reasons include:

- Corporate social responsibility/“goodwill” – giving young people a work experience is simply a “good thing” to do, and strengthens the local community within which the employer operates
- Employers are often parents and see the value of providing work experience opportunities – and, as such, sometimes directly in the self found access routes
- Having young people in the workplace can be refreshing, good fun, and raise staff morale

### **Development priorities**

4.73 The work in Falkirk has highlighted issues which are country-wide and which will be raised in the main report, most notably around rising costs of insurance and administrative concerns in relation to Health and Safety and Disclosure.

4.74 Beyond this, the local development issues, identified by the central co-ordinator and other stakeholders are to:

- Widen the range of placement opportunities – which means more participating employers and a more diverse spread of industrial sectors, including Construction, Retail, and Health
- More fully engage major public sector employers – the NHS and Falkirk Council – the latter through a departmentally-focussed model along the lines offered by other authorities, eg Glasgow and South Lanarkshire
- Actively engage with the local voluntary sector as an untapped source of work placement opportunities
- Identify employers willing to provide quality placements to young people who need more choices and chances and ring fence these so they are not open to competition from mainstream opportunities. Explore opportunities for these placements to be as flexible as possible in terms of format and duration
- Improve the overall relationship with employers which would include more targeted communications, more effective marketing and better recognition of the contribution made by participating employers
- Develop a more customised placement offer to pupils from S4 onwards. This would include extended placements during term and holiday periods as well as mini-placements which could take place on a recurring basis throughout the school year

- Explore ways to embed the work experience concept more effectively within the curriculum through links with the teacher placement programme, requiring staff to assign curricular activity linked to the placements and involving staff as mentors
- Strengthen the approach to evaluation to provide a clearer picture of the impact of the work experience programme

### **Final reflections**

4.75 Changes to the management arrangements, combined with the constructive educational environment in Falkirk mean that there is a genuine opportunity to refresh the approach to work experience. This process has tapped into an already ongoing dialogue around how this might evolve, and being connected to the wider national debate will no doubt be useful as the authority takes this discussion forward.

## **5. GLASGOW**

### **The local work experience offer**

#### *Background*

5.1 In relation to work experience, Scotland's largest city presents significant opportunities as well as significant challenges. The delivery model is well-established and in recent years great strides have been taken in widening access to work experience opportunities, particularly for pupils outside mainstream education.

5.2 As an authority, Glasgow has sent out a clear message to its schools that the employability agenda crucially matters. Consequently, the profile of work experience - reflected in growing participant numbers – has risen over the past three years.

#### *The model*

5.3 The Glasgow model consists of a universal offer of a one week work experience placement for almost all S4 mainstream school pupils. As in many areas, schools are allocated a one or two week slot when opportunities are available to their pupils using the centrally operated "Work It" database. There is also an opportunity for pupils to access 'self-found' placements through their networks of family, friends and direct approaches to companies they are interested in working with.

5.4 Glasgow's socioeconomic profile means that significant proportions of young people struggle to make a smooth transition into the labour market. Tackling this issue has become a major educational priority, in line with Government policy; and this is being taken forward by ensuring that Curriculum for Excellence delivers for all children and young people, including those needing more choices and chances. In Glasgow this has been reflected in a growing focus on widening access to work experience, with innovative approaches yielding exciting results for schools and young people.

5.5 These developments, which are described fully below, are the result of rising aspirations amongst young people, enthusiasm amongst teachers and the commitment of employers. They have been ably supported by a skilled and dedicated team based within the Education Services' Determined to Succeed unit.

5.6 The authority fully recognises that much work requires to be done to ensure all young people have access to appropriate work experience opportunities. However, it is further recognised that there is considerable good practice in evidence which can be developed further and which can help shape provision across the country.

#### *Scale of operation*

5.7 In the academic year 2007/08 a total of 5,000 work experience placements were organised in Glasgow. This is the largest number in any single local authority area. However, unlike many parts of the country, the Glasgow area has a wealth of employers registered on the database some offering a number of placements over the

school session. This indicates a high level of commitment to the programme amongst local employers.

### *Profile of participating employers*

5.8 The Glasgow city database has evolved over a period of almost ten years. In 2007/08 there were 5,375 employers on the local database. This is a mixture of companies who supply placements on an annual basis (1461) and companies who commit to students sourcing their own (3914). This provision is further split between 69% private sector (lower than average), 24% public sector (slightly lower than average) and 7% voluntary sector (more than double the national rate)<sup>8</sup>. In terms of organisational size, small businesses account for the largest share (65%) of hosting employers, with 20% defined as medium (25-250 employees), and 15% large businesses (more than 250 employees).

5.9 Glasgow City Council assumes an important role as a host organisation, with an extensive placement programme involving all Services. This operation is co-ordinated at a corporate level (have omitted remainder of this sentence). Arms length management organisations, which provide services on behalf of the authority, are also important work placement providers. City Building is a major provider of construction placements as is Culture & Sport for the many sport and leisure opportunities in the city.

5.10 Another part of the public sector which is testing new approaches around work placements is Strathclyde Police. One of the city's divisions currently offers a one week placement to twelve pupils interested in joining the force. The model includes an opportunity to experience different parts of the service include the mounted police, the dog handling unit and the Force training centre. Participants are selected on the basis of an application they make to the local division.

5.11 As in almost every part of the country, the Glasgow co-ordinator reports that it is becoming increasingly difficult to find employers to participate. Again, as in other areas there are a number of factors at work here, which include:

- Increasing competition for placements
- Changes in business practices
- Implications of Health and Safety legislation

5.12 In relation to the sectoral spread in Glasgow, there is a reasonable range with a prevalence of opportunities in the following sectors:

Business Services - 1,693  
Health, care and social work - 693  
Creative, Media and Education - 542

5.13 There is a common view among stakeholders that the employer profile on the database does not accurately reflect the local labour market. Although better served than many other areas – thanks to City Building – there is still a shortage of

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<sup>8</sup> Across Scotland 72% of employers are private sector, 25% public sector and 3% voluntary sector.

construction placements. Another underserved area is hospitality, which despite its growing importance to the city's economy remains underrepresented on the programme. The final significant gap is Health, and Glasgow, like many other parts of Scotland, is seeking a more constructive partnership with the NHS.

5.14 This study's fieldwork with educational professionals and pupils suggests that the city has a surplus of placements in Administration and Care.

5.15 In terms of fit with pupils' aspirations, it is estimated that around 50% of participants access their first choice of placement.

### *Pupil participation*

5.16 Glasgow strives to ensure that work experience is universally accessible across the city and within mainstream secondary schools an estimated 97% of S4 pupils participated in 2007/08. In the same year the participation rate for S5 and S6 pupils was 15% and 5% respectively. Pupils not undertaking a placement are expected to attend school during the placement week.

5.17 Our research suggests that in the city the main reasons for pupils not taking part are, in order of frequency:

- Behavioural issues
- English as a second language
- Access issues – e.g. around transport and territoriality
- Additional support needs
- Literacy and numeracy problems
- Limited number of work placements

5.18 The lack of a strong work ethos is certainly a barrier in some households. In these homes there is rarely much parental enthusiasm or encouragement for young people to take up a work experience placement. This issue can be further complicated in households where workless families with children who have learning disabilities. In such cases the lack of work ethos can be compounded by the family's reliance on the benefits attached to the pupils' disability. In schools where this is common, staff have to work hard to promote the work experience concept to parents.

5.19 The travel issue may be one more expected to arise in a rural setting. However, in Glasgow it is less likely to be around lack of transport provision, and more about young people's comfort levels travelling through different parts of the city. Although this has arisen in the fieldwork – generally mentioned by teachers – it has not been presented as a major barrier by pupils participating in the focus groups. A larger study might reveal this as a more important factor.

5.20 In terms of the additional support issue, although this remains a barrier to some young people, Glasgow has made great strides in widening access to work experience placements. A number of pioneering approaches – discussed below – mean that many young people who would not previously have had this opportunity are now fully participating.



### *The matching process*

5.21 The matching process in mainstream schools has essentially two elements:

5.22 Matching through the use of “self found” placements which in Glasgow in 2007/08 was estimated to account for 30% of the total. Within this process, pupils are introduced to the concept of work experience and then invited to identify an opportunity through direct approaches to relevant employers, or through utilising networks of family and friends. They are asked to complete initial paperwork, which is then subjected to standard health and safety checks.

5.23 Matching through use of the centrally operated “Work It” database which contains details of the centrally sourced work experience opportunities allocated to each school. Pupils can mark any placements which appeal to them: these requests are reviewed and, if suitable, agreed by the school work experience co-ordinator. Pupils commonly get three choices, and the focus groups in schools and consultations with the central co-ordinating team indicate that around half of pupils obtain their first choice placement.

5.24 As in other areas, self-found placements occupy an important role in Glasgow. As we note elsewhere in this report, this flow of opportunities into the system provides potential growth, with the possibility of employers staying within the system once they have been processed by the team. But the issue of self found placements raises two other questions. Firstly, the potential concern that young people with more supportive and work focused backgrounds and family units will generally be better placed to source an opportunity - but because of these factors may need it least. This is both true and unavoidable. The counterbalance to this is that by these young people taking the self found option, they leave the centrally sourced opportunities to other young people who are not as likely to gain via this route.

5.25 The fieldwork in the Glasgow area suggests that at the other end of the social spectrum, pupils from deprived backgrounds frequently suggest self-found placements. Often these can present difficulties in relation to health and safety checks. One example cited by the central co-ordinating team, was where sole-traders in the construction sector had offered a placement and the checking process had exposed unbearably high levels of risk.

5.26 In Additional Support Need (ASN) Schools there are particular challenges around matching, but also some advantages. The process is much more resource intensive and requires a higher level of staff input per pupil. This includes working with the young person to identify an opportunity that would be of interest and which they could undertake. The fieldwork involved two ASN Schools in the city where the local database is a useful resource, but where the connection with employers relies much more on personal contacts. Consequently, many opportunities are self-founds, and committed staff in both of these schools are the key to facilitating the relationship between the employer and the young person.

5.27 In terms of available opportunities, the development of a major retail centre has been very helpful for one ASN School and the local authority itself is an invaluable source of construction placements. However, it remains a challenge to find

appropriate opportunities for young people with additional support needs when set alongside the demand for placements for young people in mainstream schools, colleges and private training centres.

5.28 As relationships become established, some employers will preserve placement opportunities for young people with additional support needs. For example, the East End ASN School which participated in this fieldwork now has excellent relationships with Boots and Morrisons who are willing to take multiple placements from the school. Another good example from the ASN sector was found where an ASN School has formed a strong working relationship with a local plumbing business. This partnership, now in its second year, involves four pupils with complex support needs, being supported by two teachers to undertake a work placement every Friday. The experience is accredited and is proving to be a very positive part of these pupils' school life.

#### *Opportunities beyond S4*

5.29 As in most other parts of the country, the level of work placements in S5 is low. This largely reflects concerns that a week out of Higher study is far more significant (and potentially damaging) than for Standard Grades in S4. Normally only young people in exceptional circumstances would access these opportunities – perhaps if they had missed out in S4, or because they had sourced an extended work placement as an anticipated winter leaver.

5.30 The Soccer Success programme, piloted in 2007/08, is an innovative example of engaging young people through a mixed support package which includes a period of work experience. The project is delivered by the city's two major football clubs, in partnership with a range of agencies including the (omit local) education authority, colleges, Skills Development Scotland and the Princes Trust. Open to all schools in the city, Soccer Success targets winter leavers and uses the attraction of sport to connect with disaffected young people. The project offer combines fitness training (and coaching skills) with vocational training and outward bound opportunities. It also includes a relevant work experience placement organised through the central Determined to Succeed team.

5.31 Soccer Success is only one of a wide range of interventions on offer in schools across the city. As well as the local authority's role as a hosting employer, it also manages a significant vocational education programme across the city. Delivered in conjunction with the colleges, this is a cross-sectoral initiative which usually includes a work placement opportunity. The programme offers a variety of courses targeted at pupils from S3 through to S5.

5.32 In addition, voluntary sector organisations have a good working relationship with many of the city's schools. Many of these are targeted at young people with additional support needs in both mainstream and special schools. Examples of these include the Prince's Trust's XL programme and the support provided by ENABLE Scotland which is described more fully below.

### *Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses*

5.33 One of the strengths of the work experience offer in Glasgow is the overall scale of the offer. There are healthy levels of employer involvement across the city, with the local authority setting an excellent example of what the public sector can do. Strathclyde Police also demonstrate how a co-ordinated approach to work experience can help form part of an employer's longer term recruitment practices. Unfortunately, although there are abundant placement opportunities in social care, links with the health service are weaker and this has been identified as a gap to address.

5.34 Schools and the central co-ordinators report a mismatch in terms of placement availability and the city's growth sectors, and specific shortages have been noted above. Were it not for City Building, construction would be an even bigger shortfall in the city.

5.35 Many pupils in the city face significant barriers in relation to work experience. Relatively high levels of worklessness have been noted both by teachers and the Determined to Succeed team as a significant factor, whilst issues of territoriality were also reported as limiting the work experience offer to pupils.

5.36 However, the overall message is strongly positive, with clear examples of innovation and commitment in place, many of which have only recently emerged.

### **The local delivery model**

#### *Participating schools*

5.37 Across the city, twenty nine mainstream secondary schools can participate in the local authority's co-ordinated work experience programme. One does not, due to challenges with pupils accessing placements outside the local area, and manages its own programme.

#### *Non mainstream schools*

5.38 Twelve ASN Schools participate in the programme as well as five specialist units within mainstream secondaries, supporting pupils with a range of conditions including Autism, hearing and visual impairments. Five social work day care units and one alternative to secure units are also involved.

#### *Role of the FE and voluntary sectors*

5.39 The FE sector is involved as a provider of work placements, as well as being a core partner in the local authority's vocational education programme. The voluntary sector is also a provider of work experience placements, on a larger scale than the national average.

#### *Programme management and coordination*

5.40 Glasgow has a strong and well-established team co-ordinating its work experience placements across the city. Based within the Education Service and part of

the Determined to Succeed team, the work experience team manages the database, conducts Health and Safety checks and works closely with schools to align opportunities for their selected weeks of participation.

5.41 Within the team, dedicated staff work with ASN Schools, ensuring that appropriate levels of support are available when necessary. This may be provided by Careers Scotland (Skills Development Scotland) or by ENABLE Scotland.

5.42 Each school has a designated work experience co-ordinator who fulfils this role within a wider pupil support remit. In addition, within some schools there is input to the programme from other subject staff teachers although this varies from school to school.

#### *Health and safety checking*

5.43 The central team is responsible for conducting Health and Safety checks which involve the following inspection cycles depending on the estimated risk level:

- High risk – once a year
- Medium risk – once every two years
- Low risk – once every three years

5.44 A few years ago the roles of ‘seekers’ and ‘checkers’ were combined so that staff finding the placement opportunities also conduct the checks. This has helped to reduce the length of time taken by the overall process, one of the issues for schools and employers.

#### *Placement support*

5.45 The model of placement support varies between schools, but generally involves:

5.46 *Pre-placement* – Much of the pre-placement activity is embedded in PSE classes throughout the year – to such an extent that some young people might not recognise it as such. Covering Health and Safety, Work and Pay and other topics, it forms part of the wider curriculum. As the placement date draws near, there are opportunities to cover specific issues. In the two mainstream school focus groups little time had been spent on practical preparation – such as getting to work – and none of the 22 mainstream pupils who were consulted had visited the workplace beforehand. However, they felt well informed and had guidelines and log books to help with the placement. Most were comfortable with the levels of support, although a small number would have liked additional input prior to and after the experience. The pupils acknowledged that providing this support would be unrealistic due to resource limitations.

5.47 One mainstream school had piloted a new approach to support young people needing more choices and chances who are likely to leave in their S4. As the allocated placement weeks were in May (when these pupils would already have left) a special allocation was arranged for them in the preceding December to ensure that they did

not miss out. It also meant that more support time could be dedicated to them as the numbers going out on placement were so much smaller.

5.48 Pre-placement preparation is much more significant in the ASN sector. At one such school, pupils are introduced to the 'Workit' site to examine the range of choices. They also looked at other resources, including 'Planit Plus'<sup>9</sup> which helped them understand the skills required and – of much interest – the rates paid for different jobs. All of these pupils had an accompanied advance visit to their workplace and had an opportunity to raise and consider concerns with staff. One young woman with epilepsy was worried about what would happen if she had a fit whilst on placement, and staff were able to talk this through with her.

5.49 In addition to teaching staff, the school has a Pupil Support Assistant who can support pupils at this stage, and ENABLE job coaches who support pupils with higher level support needs. Bridges to Work – a Careers Scotland service in partnership with Determined to Succeed – is also available to young people with mild support needs, and they can provide interview practice and tasters prior to the placement to help orientate pupils. This service, which was provided to 22 pupils in 2007/08, also provides a one year aftercare service once pupils are in a positive destination.

5.50 Many pupils with additional support needs are taken to and from school by taxi and rarely use public transport. For those able to manage it, work experience provides an opportunity to travel independently – often for the first time – and planning this forms an important part of the overall preparation.

5.51 Support prior to the placement also involves extensive liaison with employers. As well as carving the placement to ensure it will be appropriate, this can involve reassuring employers who may have misgivings about participating. In one case an employer was anxious about hosting a young man with autism. Following the extensive information and support offered by the school the employer wrote to thank them for helping the business to understand the condition and the issues attached to it.

5.52 At one ASN School all of the work placements are extended – running for one day per week over a term – and all are supported. Going out on work experience is an exciting opportunity for the young people in this school, and there is great prestige attached to being involved. The 'seniors' who go out on placement are looked up to by other pupils throughout the school. But again, getting them to this point requires huge commitment and extensive input from staff. Pupils from this school are supported to produce their own CV on a DVD format which introduces them and talks about what they have achieved. Their work experience placement forms an important part of this innovative personal record.

5.53 All of the pupils from ASN schools who participated in the fieldwork had undertaken an accompanied visit to the employer's workplace in advance of their placement.

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<sup>9</sup> [www.planitplus.net](http://www.planitplus.net)

5.54 *During placement* – As in other areas, we found that although placement support exists in theory, in practice the volumes make it hard to provide to mainstream pupils. Neither of the focus groups involving pupils from mainstream schools (22 pupils) provided any examples of pupils being contacted by phone or visited during the placement. However, most pupils had a workplace mentor although no-one had any need to call upon their services during the placement week.

5.55 For ASN pupils the situation is quite different. Obviously, those who have supported placements have a person with them at all times, and for some pupils with significant support needs participation would not be possible without this. All of the pupils needing additional support are visited during their placement by their work experience co-ordinator, as well as having a structured input from their workplace supervisor.

5.56 *Post placement* – Within mainstream schools the debriefing tends to be done informally, with a light touch and incorporated in PSE sessions. This approach is largely due to resource limitations. There are no opportunities for one to one debriefing, and some pupils would have preferred more of an opportunity to process the key point of their work experience. Again, pupils were aware that this was due to the volume of numbers involved.

5.57 Again, in the ASN School setting much more time is spent distilling the key points from the experience. At one school, the highlights of the placement are included in pupils' DVDCV whilst at another there are small group discussions focussing on the most important learning points. All of the pupils felt that they had had a good opportunity to debrief and consider what they had taken from being out on placement.

#### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

5.58 Glasgow has a well-managed work experience infrastructure ably run by staff within the Determined to Succeed unit. Their work is supported by a strong body of committed employers – shown in the positive ratio of employers to placements – as well as by a network of twenty nine school-based co-ordinators.

5.59 The city is fortunate to have the local authority heavily involved as a provider of placements, and the participation of City Building remains key to the provision of construction opportunities.

5.60 Non-mainstream institutions are conspicuously active across the city and there is evidence of very effective partnership working amongst schools, employers and third sector agencies like ENABLE Scotland. The supported placement model is particularly effective and has successfully widened participation rates for pupils with additional support needs.

5.61 In terms of weaknesses, many of these are shared with authorities across the country. The challenges presented by rising levels of bureaucracy, particularly in relation to Disclosure and Health and Safety, make it more difficult to attract and retain employers. An even greater challenge however, is the high level of

worklessness which pervades some neighbourhoods and makes it more difficult to involve the young from these backgrounds.

### **The local employer experience**

5.62 The study included telephone interviews with a small sample (21) of city employers, all bar one of which remains involved in the programme.

5.63 Two of the employers are also involved in taking on young people through the Get Ready for Work programme and two are also involved in the Skillseekers programme<sup>10</sup>.

#### *Reasons for being involved*

5.64 The Glasgow employers had a wide range of reasons for being involved. The most important of these are summarised below:

- An opportunity to give something back to the community (91%)
- An opportunity to develop staff through providing support to pupils (91%)
- A chance to improve education/business links with local schools (81%)
- An opportunity to establish links with future employees (76%)

5.65 In terms of what employers are looking for, they cited the most important attributes as being enthusiasm, interest in the business and punctuality in that order. 62% of the sample usually host pupils with the right blend of attitudes whilst 19% seldom had that experience.

#### *Existing links with schools*

5.66 Eleven of the 21 employers have links with particular schools, which most commonly take the form of employer visits to school (29%) and reciprocal visits to their businesses (19%).

#### *Views on concept*

5.67 All of the respondents felt that the basic concept of the one week placement was effective, with 28% describing it as 'very effective'. Although some noted that it depended partly on the pupil, there was a view that one week is sufficient to provide a taster – though not an in depth understanding of the working environment. There was a view that for some pupils, a more flexible arrangement – such as 'day release' over a longer period, may be more appropriate.

#### *Views on work experience model in practice*

5.68 The key factor for some employers is the assessment process where pupils are matched to the work place. However, 62% of the Glasgow sample believed that pupils did not have a good prior understanding of the career opportunities in their industry.

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<sup>10</sup> Three employers in total – one involved in Skillseekers, one with Get Ready for Work and one with both

Several respondents believed that there was a need for improved careers guidance in schools, allied to the development of other initiatives designed to expose pupils to working environments. Amongst the ideas mentioned here were work shadowing arrangements and more visits to employers.

5.69 In terms of advance preparation, 29% felt that pupils had been well briefed and had arrived well prepared for their placement. However, a much large number (52%) felt that although pupils had been briefed they had not arrived well prepared for their placement.

5.70 In terms of support and working links before and during the placement, this was also a mixed picture. Five reported that they had been sent information about the programme in advance but seven said that they had had no advance support. The remainder were unable to respond, although a total of thirteen (62%) thought that the advance support was adequate.

5.71 In terms of the processes involved in the placement, employers had utilised the following:

- Goal setting with pupils (29%)
- Induction on Health and Safety (95%)
- Company briefing (95%)
- Assignment of a mentor (76%)
- Regular feedback on pupil performance (81%)
- Teacher visit during placement (10%)
- Exit interview (19%)
- Feedback to schools (85%)

5.72 Nineteen of the employers intend to participate in the work experience programme in future.

### *Suggested changes*

5.73 The employers suggested a number of actions which might improve the work experience programme in Glasgow. These included the following points:

- Encourage and support pupils to visit employers to get a better understanding of industry
- Educate parents on the opportunities available in different sectors
- Run a variety of workshops on the key industries and opportunities within them
- More visits to employers by teachers and careers advisers
- More flexible work placements
- Better advance support to pupils – so they know what is expected of them on a placement



## **Benefits of work experience**

5.74 The concept of work experience was viewed positively by all of the participating stakeholders. Pupils, employers and schools were all able to identify positive features derived from their involvement.

5.75 A summary of the key gains by stakeholder group is provided below.

### *Pupils*

5.76 Mainstream pupils involved in the study from Glasgow's schools were aware of benefits although these were described as 'limited'. Most agreed that it had given them an insight into particular professional areas, in some cases strengthening chosen career aspirations and in other cases altering them. Several had been on placements which were of no interest to them and had drawn the conclusion that it was a good idea to stay at school as long as possible. A small number of pupils reported that it had helped develop their confidence, but as one pupil put it – "this was not an earth-shattering experience."

5.77 The impact on pupils with additional support needs was dramatically different. Going out on placement was evidently of real significance for these young people. One said that he would describe it to younger pupils as 'the best day of your life' and a wide range of benefits were identified in the discussions. These included improved levels of confidence, a better understanding of the workplace, an insight into specific jobs and an opportunity to see if they could do the job.

5.78 One young man who had been on work placement in a major retail outlet described how he suddenly realised that he was doing a job that people were paid for. The fact that he was able to do this was clearly a revelation to him, and staff described how the work placement experience had transformed many of these pupils.

### *Schools*

5.79 Work experience is identified by schools as one of a number of opportunities through which relationships can be established with employers. This provides a number of benefits which include an insight into changing business requirements and employers' expectations of young people. One school co-ordinator had undertaken a work placement as part of the Excellence in Education through Business Links programme and had used this experience well in order to build networks within the hospitality sector.

5.80 The benefits are more evident in the ASN Schools, which are much smaller and where work experience has a higher profile. The reception area of one school is full of pictures of former pupils who have progressed into further education, training or employment. Every focus group participant knew their names and where they were now. All were keen to follow the route of these role models, and this is clearly a central focus of the school.

5.81 In another ASN School, only 8 out of 56 families with pupils in the school have someone in employment. No one has ever left that school and progressed into

work. Under the Headteacher's leadership, the school has placed employability firmly in its curriculum and the work experience placements are at the pinnacle of this. Targets relating to employability are embedded in Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and those who are 'ambulant and sensory' all go out on placement as a key part of their educational experience. When they do they go out in white shirts – provided by the school – and are very aware of their role as ambassadors and role models for those following them.

### *Employers*

5.82 Over 5000 employers are committed to supporting the work experience programme in Glasgow: this is despite the fact that it can be both time consuming and demanding.. Consultation with employers suggests that they perceive a number of benefits to being involved in the programme, in particular:

- *Promotion of the company as a potential employer* – Hosting a work experience placement gives employers a chance to gauge pupils' future potential and a chance for the organisation to showcase its progression opportunities. For some sectors who may struggle to find recruits – including retail, hospitality and engineering – this is welcomed by employers
- *Pupil awareness of skills required* – the placement is a two way street in relation to skills awareness raising. On the one hand it allows pupils to understand the aptitudes employers are looking for. On the other, it provides employers with a current perspective on the skills levels of young people approaching the end of compulsory schooling, as well as providing an insight into the changing education system
- *Opportunities for staff development* – hosting work placements gives employees an opportunity to develop a wide range of core skills which include Planning and Preparation, Communications and Mentoring

5.83 Sourcing future employees is not the sole motivation for employer involvement, other commonly cited reasons include:

- Corporate social responsibility/"goodwill" – giving young people a work experience chance is simply a "good thing" to do, and strengthens the local community within which the employer operates
- Employers are often parents and see the value of providing work experience opportunities as a result – and sometimes directly in the self found access routes
- Having young people in the workplace can be refreshing, good fun, and raise staff morale

## **Development priorities**

5.84 Based on the fieldwork and wider study, key development priorities include:

- Continued widening of access to opportunities – particularly for those outside the mainstream – and ensuring that drive is reflected in the schools and agencies working with young people needing more choices and chances. For example, ASN Schools are looking to involve pupils with more complex support needs. Outside the school system, voluntary sector organisations are also working to extend access. For example, ENABLE Scotland is seeking to widen and embed its pioneering work developed in Glasgow. Another city-based agency – Includem – is collaborating with Standard Life on the feasibility of joint materials development and placements for young people in the youth justice system
- The co-ordinating team’s challenge to maintain an appropriate database of opportunities is ongoing
- Raising the profile of the programme with employers remains a development priority, and allied to that the need to widen the net so that the database better reflects the city’s evolving labour market. In particular, the focus will be on securing opportunities in Hospitality, Health and Construction
- Embedding the whole work experience concept into the curriculum. At present, there is scope to integrate pupils’ experience more effectively within the curriculum, and this challenge is not peculiar to Glasgow, as we have seen. An important part of this will be to introduce greater flexibility within the programme, so that it can be better tailored to pupils’ identified learning needs

## **Final reflections**

5.85 No other part of the country faces Glasgow’s challenges in terms of scale and complexity. Consequently, significant resource is required simply to maintain the status quo. However, the city has done more than this, and deserves to be pleased with progress made around extending opportunities to those who most need them. The authority recognises the need to further develop work experience, with a focus on the mainstream offer, where the impact and value of the work experience placement for many young people is questionable. Again, Glasgow mirrors the wider national issues here, and its pioneering work around access can help inform that debate as it moves forward.

## **6. SOUTH LANARKSHIRE**

### **The local work experience offer**

#### *The model*

6.1 The core of the South Lanarkshire approach in mainstream schools is a universal offer to all 4<sup>th</sup> year students to undertake a single block week of work experience. Schools are allocated either 1 or 2 specific weeks (dependent on scale) when opportunities are available to their pupils via the centrally operated “Work It” database.

6.2 Wrapped around the core offer are smaller scale opportunities for pupils to undertake some form of work experience in S6, and less commonly S5. In a limited number of circumstances more flexibility is applied to the offer, including shorter term placements, week long experiences out-with the allocated block, and extended work experience opportunities.

6.3 The offer operates differently in the authority’s 4 Special Schools, and a particularly innovative and supported approach is provided for S5 and S6 pupils in these schools via the Council run “Work it Out” programme. The details of this are returned to below.

#### *Scale of operation*

6.4 In the academic year 2007/8 a total of 3,103 placements were organised in South Lanarkshire.

#### *Profile of participating employers*

6.5 A wide range of employers support the work experience programme, ranging across the public, private and voluntary sectors. By scale, there is also a reasonable mix of SMEs and larger scale employers, though there are some concerns the former are now being squeezed out of the system by tightening health and safety and insurance requirements.

6.6 South Lanarkshire Council is a key provider of placements – offering over 300 opportunities in a range of service Departments, and more via educational establishments. The Council develops and manages these opportunities through an identified central personnel officer. In terms of occupational sector, the spread of opportunities is wide, with the highest number of placements available in:

Education – 750

General administration - 374

Manufacturing and engineering – 344

Retail and wholesale – 323

6.7 The match of opportunities to pupil preferences and aspirations is viewed as reasonably good. 65% of pupils accessing their placement through the central database are recorded as receiving their first choice. The one area of concern is

opportunities for male pupils in traditional sectors such as construction and mechanics.

### *Pupil participation*

6.8 The South Lanarkshire model is premised on a universal offer to all S4 pupils. In practice, 87% of this year group undertook placements in 2007/8. This is a reasonable success rate, and significant efforts are made at both school and authority wide level to maximise this percentage. Pupils not undertaking a placement are expected to attend school during the placement week, where a number of simulated experience activities are often arranged. But in practice attendance is not guaranteed.

6.9 The reasons for young people not undertaking a placement are varied, and include young people who:

- For behavioural reasons are not considered appropriate for a placement
- Simply refuse any placement options, and show very little interest in the process
- Are too immature to go out at this stage of their development
- By S4 are attending school intermittently, or not at all
- Have parents who are against the concept of work experience and see it as a distraction from their main educational experience (this is not common)

6.10 In addition, a range of “one off” reasons can impact on the uptake of work experience. For example, when the week is near a school holiday - the October break or September weekend – some pupils are on extended holidays with their parents. In one school, the children of travelling people were cited as problematical to place due to interrupted attendance patterns.

6.11 Whilst relatively small in number, the young people who miss out on the work experience offer are recognised as a cause for concern. In the schools visited for the research process, the core of this group is an identified cohort of young people with issues which firmly place them at risk of not progressing in education, employment or training following school. Amongst other issues, they are often recognised as young people who have little support from home, and who are living in households where the experience of work is not common. As a consequence, they are often those who could most gain from a good work experience offer.

6.12 This is not a large number of young people – perhaps up to 20 in the largest secondary schools. But whilst considerable effort is put into reducing the incidence of pupils with no work experience, school based consultations in particular suggest that this issue may need to be approached from a different perspective. It was commonly felt that many of these young people will never access, and never benefit from, the standard block week model. More flexible and customised approaches, integrated with their wider educational support package, are needed.

6.13 Some options in this respect are already operating in South Lanarkshire, linked to for example: the School College partnership programme “What’s with Work”; the growing potential of extended work experience options (particularly for Christmas

leavers); and, in a different context, the approach taken through the “Work it Out” programme for pupils in the Special Schools.

### *The matching process*

6.14 The matching process in mainstream schools has essentially two elements:

- i. Matching through the increasing use of “self found” placements – estimated as 47% of the total in 2007/8 but growing and significantly higher in some schools. Within this process, pupils are introduced to the concept of work experience and then invited to identify an opportunity through direct approaches to relevant employers, or through utilising networks of family and friends. They are asked to complete initial paperwork, which is then subjected to standard health and safety checks.
- ii. Matching through use of the centrally operated “Work It” database which contains details of the centrally sourced work experience opportunities allocated to each school. Pupils can mark any placements which appeal to them; these requests are reviewed and, if suitable, agreed by the school work experience co-ordinator. Pupils commonly get three choices, and as indicated 65% received a first choice placement in 2007/8.

6.15 In the Special Schools the process is generally more customised, reflecting the nature of the pupils and the much smaller numbers supported. Some employers, moreover, specifically indicate that their placements are only available to young people in these settings.

6.16 In reviewing the matching process, the following important underpinning factors were highlighted by staff in the central co-ordinating team and individual schools:

- The need to consider the purpose of work experience – in particular whether it is primarily generic in function (ie to provide a broad understanding of the world of work) or to advance understanding of, and connections to, an identified area of vocational interest
- The need to recognise the practical reality that at this stage in many young people’s development they do not have any 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 sheer volume of placements which require to be sourced by schools within either a 1 or 2 week block

6.17 Positively, despite some of these challenges, most people who want a work experience placement get one, and more often that not in an area of expressed interest. But some pupils need considerably more support and encouragement in either the self found or database access options.

6.18 The issue of the young person attaining a placement in an area of expressed vocational preference was a subject of some debate in South Lanarkshire, as elsewhere. It is not by any means seen as the sole purpose of work experience, but on balance achieving this match should be given some priority. It is much more likely to result in a positive experience for both pupil and placement provider. The flip side of placing a young person where they have no expressed interest would be counter productive.

6.19 The importance of self found placements is fully recognised by the central co-ordinating team and schools as the “engine” of the entire process – not only providing immediate places for young people, but also because some of these places are converted to database places in subsequent years. At present, it is the main proactive mechanism by which the central pool of opportunities can grow.

6.20 But the issue of self found placements raises two other questions. Firstly, the potential concern that young people with more supportive work focused backgrounds and family units will generally be better placed to source an opportunity - but because of these factors may need it least. This is both true and unavoidable. The counterbalance to this is that by these young people taking the self found option, they leave the centrally sourced opportunities to other young people who are not as likely to gain via this route. At present this generally works well in South Lanarkshire, but it demands both (a) continual growth in self found opportunities, and (b) sufficient scale and breadth in the opportunities within the central database.

6.21 The second question is whether the nature of some self found placements are consistent with the objectives of work experience. A number of the consultations reflected on this issue. For example, whether a young person working directly with his/her father or mother in their workplace, and being given a lift to and from the workplace each day, is experiencing a genuine taster of the “world of work” and a test of their ability to plan and access the placement. In these circumstances, the placement may be the most convenient option – for the pupil and school – but it in terms of what work experience is trying to do it is not necessarily the best.

6.22 This links directly to the pressures of volume in the current universal offer. One school visited, for example, was seeking to source approaching 400 S4 placements in a two week period. The pressure on staff charged with doing this is enormous. In this context, any self found placement is understandably viewed as very welcome by the school co-ordinator – catering for another pupil, and releasing pressure on the central database places. There is neither the time nor motivation to check all aspects of the placement, and to ensure that it delivers the intended benefits. Without significant new resources to support the process, this would appear an almost inevitable “quality versus quantity” consequence of the current aspiration to offer a place to all young people in S4.

### *Opportunities beyond S4*

6.23 Further opportunities for work experience are available in both S5 and S6. But the numbers are much lower – in 2007/8, 3% of S5 pupils sourced a placement and 6% of S6 pupils. These placements can be more varied in nature – perhaps extended over a longer period but on a part time (day a week) basis.

6.24 The low number of placements in S5 largely reflects concerns that a week out of Higher study is far more significant (and potentially damaging) than for Standard Grades in S4. Normally only young people in exceptional circumstances would access these opportunities – perhaps if they had missed out in S4, or because they had sourced an extended work placement as an anticipated Christmas leaver.

6.25 In S6 work experience tends to be much more explicitly related to vocational pathways. This links to the increasing preference in academic institutions for appropriate work experience placements to appear on CVs when applying for courses. This is most common for professions such as medicine, vets, teachers and lawyers.

6.26 The S5 and S6 offer in the Special Schools is completely different, and returned to below.

### *Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

6.27 The work experience offer as developed in South Lanarkshire has a number of well recognised strengths that are commonly acknowledged amongst stakeholders. In S4 a high percentage of young people undertake a placement, and of those doing this through the database there is a reasonable rate of meeting first choice preferences. Lack of a suitable placement is not viewed as a significant reason why some young people don't go on a placement. The range of employer opportunities is good, and this is supported by a strong commitment to support the programme by the authority. Self found placements are growing in significance, and whilst these bring new challenges, this is a generally positive and important development and ensures over time some built-in growth to the central database.

6.28 Focus groups with a range of stakeholders highlighted some areas for further development and consideration. The pressure brought by the volumes generated by a universal offer inevitably leads to a lack of scrutiny on the appropriateness of some placements – particular amongst those that are self found. Moreover there are limited opportunities for males in key sectors such as construction and mechanics which lead to a lack of some pupils getting their first choice. Finally, and perhaps the key developmental challenge, is the small but significant number of young people who do not go on a placement in S4. Many of these are pupils most in need a meaningful experience, but they are unlikely to readily fit into the standard 1 week block model. Alternatives which link to other curriculum activities are needed.

## **The local delivery model**

### *Participating schools*

6.29 All 17 mainstream secondary schools operate work experience in South Lanarkshire, alongside a more specialist approach established in the 4 Special Schools.



### *Non mainstream schools*

6.30 South Lanarkshire has 4 Special Schools, all of which operate some form of work experience programme. In S4 aspects of this are similar to the mainstream offer – with a block week of placements offered.

6.31 But numbers are much lower and consequently the approach can be much more supportive and customised to individual needs. This recognises that a work experience placement may not be appropriate for all young people in S4, and that their individual educational and social development needs to be factored into whether this would be suitable. Parents are normally more involved in this process, and generally supportive of the concept of work experience as a connection to sustainable lifestyle for their child after school. Within this, however, there is often a need to inject a sense of realism as to what the placement might mean, and to sometimes dampen parental and pupil expectations around likely future opportunities for employment in the chosen sector.

6.32 Special Schools tend to source placements themselves, and have over the years built up a useful range of employer networks. Some employers only take pupils with additional support needs due to a mix of goodwill towards these youngsters, and recognition that they very seldom cause any difficulties in the workplace.

6.33 The motivation of the S4 work experience model in the Special Schools is articulated slightly differently from the mainstream setting. There is a more explicit “socialisation” objective of getting the young people to operate in an external “real world” setting – simply meeting and interacting with employees is of huge value. As a consequence, the schools often see very significant confidence gains in pupils on their return from placements. Overall, the work experience week is very popular with the young people.

6.34 In recent years, delivery of S5 and S6 work experience in the Special Schools has been fully incorporated into the “Work it Out” programme run by the Council’s Corporate Resources. This offers a comprehensive transition programme for the young people that connects their last years of schooling with progression options beyond school. It fully integrates the concept of work experience and provides this in a customised and totally flexible way. ‘Work it Out’ continues to develop a wide range of employer support networks and has led the development of the Lanarkshire Union of Supported Employment.

6.35 Through this approach, which offers continued support to the young people well beyond leaving school, work experience from S5 is fully focused on assisting young people to make a positive transition into the labour market. The programme is also rooted in a close partnership with Social Work Services.

6.36 ‘Work it Out’ has benefited from significant investment by the authority. From the perspective of the Special Schools it provides exactly the type of support needed for pupils, and has helpfully taken from them the responsibility for operating work experience beyond S4.

### *Role of the FE and voluntary sectors*

6.37 The FE and voluntary sectors are primarily involved in work experience as providers of placements. They do not have any other significant input to programme delivery, although the School-College “What’s with Work” initiative potentially offers an alternative option for some young people not connecting to the mainstream offer.

### *Programme management and coordination*

6.38 Work experience is managed at the authority level within the Education Department’s Determined to Succeed team. It is part of the remit of the Determined to Succeed Co-ordinator and involves one full time member of staff who is responsible for operating and maintaining the Work It database, dealing with enquiries from schools, and ensuring appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken. At present the latter are normally done by external consultants.

6.39 Within individual schools there is a network of work experience co-ordinators who normally have non class contact time allocated to undertake this role as part of a wider pupil support function. Other staff within the pupil support team also tend to provide support. This represents a very significant workload which normally starts towards the end of S3 and becomes increasingly challenging as the week of block placement approaches.

6.40 Within the direct placement period, coordinators increasingly seek to recruit volunteers within the wider school staff to support, monitor and mentor pupils in their placements. The intensity of this role varies but commonly includes a phone call during the placement, and some form of debriefing thereafter. The involvement of other school staff in this way has the obvious attraction of sharing the load in the placement week, but it is also viewed as beneficial in involving a wider group of teachers in the work experience process, and what it is seeking to achieve. Getting staff to volunteer currently appears relatively easy in most schools, but it was felt by school work experience co-ordinators that this may become harder as other work pressures increase.

6.41 South Lanarkshire Council’s HR function also has a significant input to aspects of programme co-ordination. An identified officer is responsible for sourcing departmental placements (excluding those in schools which are co-ordinated by the dedicated resource in the Determined to Succeed team) and checking these are appropriate. This officer also reviews progress and is the first line of contact if any issues arise in relation to placements within the authority itself.

### *Health and safety checking*

6.42 Health and safety checks and associated employer insurances were identified as the major barriers to the effective delivery of work experience in schools. These limited the opportunities which could be offered; slowed the processes; and in particular were increasingly discouraging SMEs from offering placements.

6.43 Many places, however, passed these checks relatively easily – being categorised as low risk working environments. But others either took very long to gain clearance or were rejected by health and safety assessors for reasons which at times looked overly protective of the pupils, and were not apparently reflective of the real work environment.

6.44 The central and school staff operating the programme recognised that many of these issues required consideration beyond the South Lanarkshire level, but they suggested the following local improvements:

- The opportunity to directly employ a health and safety officer within the Work Experience Unit. At present it was estimated that this could comfortably be resourced from savings made from the reduced use of external consultants, and would give programme management staff much greater direct control over the H&S checks. It would generally speed up the process
- The need to reconsider some local byelaws which appeared to rule out placements which were available in other parts of the country, e.g. working in theatres
- The need to review whether each individual authority area had to separately check common placements. For example, if a South Lanarkshire pupil wanted a placement in a Glasgow supermarket, this required a separate check even though it had previously been approved by Glasgow City Council staff. This bemused and somewhat frustrated employers
- The need to work more with employers to “carve” work experience opportunities which included only those tasks that did not contravene health and safety regulations. This depended on the willingness of the employer and on the time available for work experience co-ordinators to have detailed discussions

#### *Placement support*

6.45 The model of placement support varies between schools, but generally involves:

*Pre-placement* – this normally started before the summer break in PSE classes addressing SQA accredited work experience units. It involves issues such as the world at work, and health and safety, and as the placement week approaches more specific preparatory work.

*During placement* - this would normally involve 1 or 2 calls to the employer to check progress and that the young person has arrived on day 1. These are ideally divided between the wider group of “volunteer” teachers who have agreed to support the programme. Employers are then expected to contact the school if any difficulties arise, including non-attendance. The placement

support potentially involves visits to the workplace, but in practice the lack of time available makes these uncommon.

*Post placement* – this normally involves a shorter review period within the PSE class or equivalent, where pupils will review the paperwork from the placement such as log books, and the feedback received from employers. Mentoring sessions may also be held with volunteer support teachers. Increasingly some schools are linking this to a recognised qualification such as a world of work module. This requires, however, that all paperwork is prepared and collated. Some schools are pioneering doing this through ICT interactive packages; this is anticipated to increase the number of young people achieving qualifications. But this demands suitable access to IT resources, which tend to be in high demand for a variety of other reasons.

6.46 In some schools, the work experience week is also being used in other parts of the curriculum. Most notably, pupils are writing essays on their placements which are being used in Standard Grade English portfolios.

*Summary of strengths and weaknesses*

6.47 South Lanarkshire has established a robust and commonly understood delivery model based primarily on a standard S4 week long block placement. Processes and respective roles and responsibilities are well understood between the central support unit and schools. Further support to developing a significant number and range of placements is provided by the authority's HR section. The commitment of all the staff to the process is very noticeable, and whilst there are undoubtedly pressure points at key points in the year, a common response from the consultations was that the gains for pupils justified the "pain".

6.48 The process of support pre, during and post placement is well established and provides continuity to the placements – it sets them in context. Linked to this, encouraging developments are now underway to increase the accreditation of work experience through the use of interactive IT mechanisms. The role of wider teaching staff within the schools is also important and positive – not only spreading the workload, but also in embedding the concept of work experience further across the school staff.

6.49 The link of work experience for young people in Special Schools to the 'Work it Out' programme is a further strength of the South Lanarkshire offer. It enables flexible and customised approaches and firmly roots the placements in the context of post school progression. There are opportunities for this approach to be shared across Scotland.

6.50 The main development issue identified by the central co-ordinating team was health and safety assessment. This restricts the offer, and slows down the process - causing frustrations for coordinating staff, employers and pupils. National action in this respect would be welcomed, but a number of issues are identified which could be progressed at local level.

Overall, the resources applied to operating work experience are viewed as tight, and more dedicated time in schools would be welcomed. This undoubtedly impacts on the

overall quality control of the programme, given the numbers of young people seeking placements.

6.51 The use of interactive packages to increase the formal qualifications gained from work experience is encouraging, but it demands access time to IT equipment which is not always available given competing pressures in schools.

### **The local employer experience**

#### *Reasons for being involved*

6.52 The majority of employers appear to be involved in work experience because they want to give something back to the community by helping young people.

#### *Existing links with schools*

6.53 Just over a quarter of the employers had links to particular schools. This was mainly to deliver work experience placements but also sometimes led to other activities like mock interviews or employer visits to the school. Nearly two thirds of the placements are organised through the local area coordinator, although a small number might be directly with the schools or through friends and family links.

#### *Views on concept*

6.54 The South Lanarkshire employers saw that the rationale for work experience is to raise understanding of the workplace and that a week's placement is an effective way of doing this. Under half felt that it could help pupils to make career choices. From the feedback, it appeared that the placements were delivered in a range of ways depending on the individual employers.

6.55 Relatively low proportions reported that they included some of the processes that we might expect such as induction and health and safety briefings (around half), briefing on the company (just over a third), assigning a mentor (40%) or providing regular feedback to pupils on the placement (20%). However, over 80% of the employers said that they provided feedback to the schools. This might be related to the relatively low numbers of employers who received advanced support (30%). Yet, in common with other areas, few of employers who did **not** receive advanced support wanted it.

#### *Views on work experience model in practice*

6.56 Employers were positive about the way that work experience was delivered in South Lanarkshire. Nearly all of the employers felt that the programme was well coordinated and that there were no significant problems. All of the employers perceived that the pupils had been briefed prior to the placement: probably more so than in the other case study areas, they tended to think that the young people were *well briefed* in advance of the placement. However, only around half felt that the young people were ready for the placement, although this appeared to cause no problems. All of the employers said that they always or usually get young people with the right attributes to take part in the work experience and two thirds thought that

the young people have a generally good understanding of the industry they are in. This seems to be a good endorsement of South Lanarkshire's model of preparation of pupils for placement.

### *Suggested changes*

6.57 Given the employers overall satisfaction with coordination and delivery in South Lanarkshire they made few suggestions for changes. Effectiveness and benefits for pupils might be enhanced through the provision of more relevant careers information in schools and also better matching of pupils to placements.

### **Benefits of work experience**

6.58 Within the consultations in South Lanarkshire there was a general sense that the work experience programme was valuable and positive. In order of significance, gains were apparent for pupils, schools and employers. Correctly, the main focus was on how the programme helped the development of young people. A summary of the key gains by stakeholder group are provided below.

### *Pupils*

6.59 The opportunity to

- Gain general insights into the world of work, and the core disciplines required in this setting
- Practically experience of work in a vocational area of interest – with the potential to either confirm this as a vocational option or to gain an early warning signal that this is *not* what they may want to do (both of these were recognised as of equal value)
- Manage punctuality and attendance, and for some to develop independent travel skills
- Gain confidence and maturity by operating and mixing effectively in a different and “adult” setting
- See the appliance of key core skills in a practical setting
- Input a practical element to their CVs or personal statements – which is increasingly important to FE/HE institutions and employers
- 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)
- Mix with other people and further develop social skills – particularly relevant for (but not exclusively) young people with additional support needs

6.60 Finally, it is important to note that in all the consultations with both staff and young people who had undertaken a work experience placement, 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.

### *Schools*

6.61 Both authority staff and teachers cited the main benefit for schools as the indirect beneficiaries of the gains realised by their pupils. In a significant number of cases, staff cited more motivated and mature young people returning after their placement, some of whom had a new or renewed sense of direction.

6.62 They further recognised that work experience also contributes to aspects of the school curriculum through PSE and other related classes, and as indicated is establishing ways to link to mainstream subjects such as English. In practical terms, the block week of work experience also provides the schools with a week each year when the vast majority of S4 young people are absent. This offers an invaluable period of development time by reducing class contact time for teachers significantly. Over the years many schools have begun to programme development activities based on the space provided.

6.63 Finally, work experience has the potential to further strengthen the links between the schools and employers – adding value to the wider Determined to Succeed offer. It forces further contact on the “real time” local labour market, and involves guidance and other volunteer staff in direct contact with employers. In practice, the extent to which these gains are realised, however, should not be overstated. There is potential in South Lanarkshire - as elsewhere - to make them more of a reality.

### *Employers*

6.64 The reasons why employers appear to get involved in work experience, and the reasons other stakeholders *think* they get involved, vary. Normally it is one or a combination of the following:

- Corporate social responsibility/“goodwill” – giving young people a work experience chance is simply a “good thing” to do, and strengthens the local community within which the employer operates
- It provides employers access to potential future employees – this appears to be of only minor significance in South Lanarkshire. There is very limited sense that employers use the programme in any sense as part of recruitment processes. This contrasts with, for example, Aberdeenshire where future recruitment is more commonly cited as a motivation due to local labour market circumstances
- Employers are often parents and see the value of providing work experience opportunities as a result – and sometimes directly in the self found access routes

- Having young people in the workplace can be refreshing, good fun, and raise staff morale
- It enables some ongoing insight to the world of education, how it is changing, and what this may mean for the future of their business

## **Development priorities**

6.65 Based on the fieldwork undertaken, the key development priorities for work experience in South Lanarkshire are suggested as:

6.66 *Addressing potential health and safety barriers:* at local level there are 3 key developmental challenges linked to health and safety: (a) the need to consider whether resources would be better utilised by creating a dedicated health and safety officer within the central work experience unit to bring greater control of the process, reduce delays, and potentially save money, (b) the need to consider whether there is scope to revisit the interpretation or nature of local byelaws to open up some new opportunities for young people, and (c) the need to consider whether improved co-operation between neighbouring areas can reduce the need for duplicate checks where pupils from different authorities access opportunities with the same employer.

6.67 *Further developing the offer for young people in S4 missing out on a mainstream work experience placement:* whilst efforts should continue to increase the percentage uptake of places within the universal offer, these should be augmented by actions which recognise some young people are never likely to “fit” with the standard block week model, and that an alternative and differentiated approach is required for this group. These young people require some exposure to work experience as a priority, but this needs to be more varied in nature and integrated into a wider flexible curriculum package. This should include further use of extended work experience placements, especially for Christmas leavers.

6.68 *Continued development of centrally accessed opportunities through the central “Work It” database:* these are required in recognition that self found placements, whilst of critical importance, cannot by themselves deliver the offer to all young people. Database opportunities are particularly important to young people in circumstances where they are less likely to find placements through networks of families or friends. Specifically, the development of further placements targeted at boys in traditional sectors would be helpful. To support this, consideration is required as to whether resources can be allocated to enable more proactive development work on centrally sourced opportunities.

6.69 *Maintain scrutiny of self found placements:* self found placements are a key and increasingly important element of work experience delivery – a universal offer would be impossible to deliver without them. But there is a danger at present that the main (and sometimes sole) criteria applied in approving these is health and safety clearance. Some placements, especially where young people are working directly with a parent, may fail to achieve a number of other key objectives of work experience.



6.70 *Further development of qualifications linked to work experience* – in a number of schools work is underway to link work experience to a recognised qualification. This is positive and ensures further integration of the placement week with preparatory and review activities. Paperwork requirements – from the young people and employers – can restrict the number of qualifications attained. New interactive IT systems appear to have potential to lessen the barriers, but these require that suitable access is given to IT facilities within schools.

6.71 *Increase links between work experience and wider school-business links* - opportunities exist to integrate and build further links between work experience and other links schools have with businesses. At present, whilst these exist to some degree – they are not clearly articulated. For example, opportunities exist to connect work experience to other Determined to Succeed-related activities such as the “Excellence in Education through Business Links” (EEBL) programme.

6.72 *Monitor the changes to provision for young people with additional support needs and the ongoing connections with the ‘Work it Out’ programme* – from 2009, South Lanarkshire plans to reconfigure the overall education offer to young people with additional support needs – in both mainstream and Special Schools. This will involve closing stand alone establishments, and integrating the future provision within units attached to mainstream secondary schools. Managing this process has much wider implications than the work experience programme, but ensuring that the very productive relationships this has with the ‘Work it Out’ programme are maintained will be important.

6.73 *Consider an overall evaluation framework for the local work experience programme* - there is no detailed evaluation framework in place for the programme at present, and review of progress tends to be conducted on an ongoing basis rather than through any more formal process. In terms of performance, the key indicator is the number of placements successfully completed. Other indicators available are the: range and number of places available via the central database; linked qualifications attained; and feedback from young people and employers. However, these do not tend to be collated at present in any formal reports and the central co-ordinating team recognise that there may be value in gathering such information to inform future developments.

## **Final reflections**

6.74 The various consultations undertaken in South Lanarkshire suggest the work experience programme is well developed and understood by key stakeholders. Despite recognition that it presents significant operational challenges, there is a general sense of enthusiasm to continue with broadly the same model. Staff involved are convinced it is providing very significant benefits, most notably for pupils, but also for schools and employers. The former benefits were largely confirmed in the discussions with young people who commonly reported that the experience was positive – improving their confidence, and giving them a chance to think more about the world of work and what they may wish to do in future.

6.75 Maintaining the programme, given the pressures of a universal offer, remains a key developmental challenge, and overall there is a sense that the resources to do

this are stretched. Some of the developmental issues detailed above could not be delivered without additional time being allocated to supporting the programme – most notably the quality control issues around self found placements.

6.76 A small but significant number of young people do not access the work experience programme each year. A core of this group is unlikely to ever connect to the standard model, and, within this context, the authority recognises the limitations of the current approach and the need to explore and develop alternative approaches as part of the wider educational offer.

### GLOBAL REVIEW

#### Background and Methodology

1. In terms of the overall aim of the work experience review, the specification for tender issued by the Scottish Government indicated that the scoping study should highlight examples of good practice in relation to work experience in a global context. As such, desk research was undertaken into the provision of work experience as delivered within the school systems in other countries.

2. Documents relating to work experience in schools, both in Great Britain and in other countries. This was primarily to identify examples of good practice, and to highlight any potential key learning. Initially, this focused on provision delivered in a broadly similar manner to that in Scotland, ie, where schools offered all S4 pupils (or pupils at a comparable learning stage) a week's placement with an employer. The research secondly then examined work experience delivered in different formats within the wider context of secondary level vocational education. Comparator countries were selected on the basis that they: (a) operated a similar system to the Scottish offer, and (b) that they operated a vocational education system which incorporated a strong element of work experience.

#### Work experience in Scotland

3. Work experience in schools in Scotland is described in detail in the full report, but in brief, it is characterised by the following elements:

- It is a universal offer – available to all pupils in S4 in mainstream schools
- It generally comprises a one week placement with an employer, either arranged by the school, or by the pupil themselves
- It is a stand-alone element of the S4 curriculum and is rarely closely connected to the wider curriculum or indeed to other vocationally oriented education within schools

4. Other than in England and Wales, the research process (via the internet scan, document review and further examination of selected countries) did not identify any other country where work experience is provided in this format. This in itself is an interesting and perhaps revealing observation. The major difference in how work experience is incorporated into the secondary education offer in other countries is one of context. Whilst in Scotland, although the theoretical context behind work experience is to provide all pupils with some experience and understanding of the workplace, the practical context of it within the whole school offer is very limited in terms of how it connects to any wider or longer term vocational pathway. In other countries identified within the research, work experience more commonly forms part of an integrated offer of vocational education, often spanning school and beyond.

5. The recent OECD report on Scotland's education system<sup>11</sup> notes that the approach to vocational education in Scotland is more "compartmentalised", with limited integration and involvement between schools and colleges. It suggests that if Scotland were "to follow the lead of some of its comparator nations, it would structure vocational options into programmes to span compulsory and post compulsory years. Its schools would offer structured pathways (which may link college programmes) instead of unconnected courses or units..."

6. Whilst no two countries are the same in terms of their secondary level education sector, there are similarities in some of the approaches to vocational education. One of the major differences with Scotland is in relation to the structure of schooling – with many other countries operating a system which divides the academic and vocational pathways offered to pupils in a more defined and structured way than in Scotland. In some countries, work placements within vocational education and training (VET) are more significantly established in the "upper secondary" levels of the school education system, usually from the age of 15 onwards (this varies across different countries), and generally once a vocational pathway has been identified as the most appropriate route for a pupil to follow.

### **Work experience in England**

7. The situation in England is interesting from a Scottish perspective. There, much of the curricular reform is focused on the recent raising of the participation age to eighteen from 2015. Hitherto, work experience in England has operated much as it has in Scotland, with the exception that it usually consists of a *two week* placement, normally in June. However, from September 2008 a new generation of qualifications, Diplomas, will be introduced which will have work experience as an integral component.

8. The Department for Children Families and Schools (DCFS) will initially pilot five Diplomas across England<sup>12</sup>. Each will include a compulsory 10 days work experience which can be taken in a block or on a modular basis – with one or a number of employers. The placements will be directly related to the young person's vocational area, and they will be expected to achieve set learning goals whilst on placement. 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 – is the portfolio a requirement of the Diploma?

9. This does not mean that pupils undertaking non-diploma courses will miss out on work experience. The current system will remain in place, although the introduction of Diplomas has generated a discussion about the possible need to prioritise access to work placements. A key determinant is likely to be the young person's proximity to the labour market.

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<sup>11</sup> Quality and Equity in Schooling in Scotland, OECD 2007

<sup>12</sup> These will relate to Engineering, Construction, IT, Media and Health

## **Comparisons with other countries**

10. As highlighted above, in the early stages of the research process it became apparent that the work experience offer in Scotland (and the rest of Great Britain) is markedly different to the approach taken in other countries. This directed the second phase of the desk research to looking at how work experience is incorporated into the overall approach to vocational education in other countries.

11. To enable the closest comparisons to the Scottish system, the global research focused on work experience within the context of “initial vocational education and training” (IVET) in the “lower secondary” stage of schooling – which generally caters for pupils between the ages of 12-15 years (although again there are variations around these ages from country to country).

12. How, when and why work experience placements for school pupils are part of the secondary education system, is very much linked to the different structures of schooling in different countries. It is not the purpose of this report to describe in detail these various (and sometimes complicated) systems, but to look particularly at the work experience offer within the overall approaches.

13. Bearing in mind that direct comparisons are difficult, the study identified a number of examples of how work experience is incorporated into school systems in other countries:

### **Ireland**

#### *Work experience within the education system*

14. Work experience is a key element within the “Transition Year” programme in Irish schools. The Transition Year is offered to pupils between the Junior Cycle (aged 12 to 15) and the Senior Cycle (age 15-18). These roughly equate to lower and secondary education years. It provides an opportunity for pupils to experience a wide range of educational inputs, develop life skills and prepare for work. It aims to encourage independent, self directed learning amongst pupils; to develop general, technical and academic skills, and to mature and develop without the pressure of exams. The Transition Year is offered in around 75% of all Irish schools, and can be attended by pupils on a compulsory or optional basis depending on the school or area.

#### *Purpose and structure of work experience*

15. Part of the Transition Year (TY) involves giving pupils an orientation to the world of work, and this includes a component of work experience. TY is seen as the first proper opportunity to develop links with the world of work, and schools are encouraged to build and develop links with employers and other work providing agencies in the community. The work experience placements themselves may be similar to those in Scotland in that the placement is usually of one or two weeks duration, although this varies. In general, students spend an average of fifteen days on work experience, with all schools offering a minimum of five days (or one working week's) experience.

16. There<sup>13</sup> is also variation in the nature of the work experience placements. Some students use the placement for 'career sampling', trying out jobs that they may be interested in pursuing after leaving school. However, in other cases work placements may resemble part-time jobs with students obtaining work experience from their usual part-time job or even choosing placements in which they were likely to be 'kept on' as paid part-time workers. The work experience element of the Transition Year is very much embedded in the whole approach to work related learning within the programme, and is one of a number of related areas of learning, including mini-companies, enterprise education, career guidance, and visits to employers. Students following the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) study three mandatory 'link modules' on enterprise education, preparation for work, and work experience.

### *Key learning*

17. It is not clear from our research process how successful/valuable the work experience component of the Transition Year programme has been, and if there are any potentially transferrable elements or points of learning. However a study undertaken in 2003<sup>14</sup> did indicate that more generally, participation in Transition Year appears to increase both informal as well as formal linkages with the labour market. It also made the point that in addition to the work experience placements, a considerable proportion of pupils also were in paid part-time employment, which may have a detrimental effect on subsequent educational success for some students.

## **Germany**

### *Work experience within the education system*

18. In lower secondary education in Germany, initial vocational education includes a subject area focusing on preparation for working life (Arbeitslehre) which incorporates a period of work experience. The nature of Arbeitslehre varies according to the type of secondary school attended. The school system in Germany is subdivided at a number of levels<sup>15</sup>, starting when pupils move from primary to secondary school (varying between the ages of 10-12) – with pupils going to either secondary general, intermediate and grammar schools. In addition to these, there are a more limited number of comprehensive schools such as comprehensive schools offer several educational programmes. Arbeitslehre is taught as a compulsory subject at “Hauptschule” (lower secondary school providing a basic education) and either as a subject in its own right, or integrated into other subjects at other lower secondary level schools such as “Realschule” (which provide pupils with more extensive general education and the opportunity to go on to courses at upper secondary level that lead to vocational or higher education entrance qualifications), and the more academically focused “Gymnasiums” (offering more in depth general education aimed at the general higher education entrance qualifications). Arbeitslehre is less often taught in

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<sup>13</sup> The Transition Year Programme: Innovation within Upper Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland: The Economic & Social Research Institute, Dublin, September 2003

<sup>14</sup> The Transition Year Programme: Innovation within Upper Secondary Education in the Republic of Ireland: The Economic & Social Research Institute, Dublin, September 2003

<sup>15</sup> Eurybase: The Education System in Germany 2006/07 [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org)

the Gymnasium, though may be included in subjects like economics or social sciences.

19. Whilst education programmes in lower secondary education focus on general education, upper secondary level focuses on achieving the qualifications required to enter higher educational institutions (in the grammar schools), or achieving vocational qualifications, enabling pupils to enter employment as a skilled worker, or working in an occupation as an assistant. When lower secondary schooling is complete, pupils will either go on to the upper level of grammar school, or will enter vocational training within the framework of the “dual system”, or attend full-time vocational schools, to train for specific occupations at different levels of qualification. The dual system (also operated in Austria, Denmark, Switzerland and Norway) is characterised by the provision of learning in both the classroom and in company workplaces.

#### *Purpose and structure of work experience*

20. Arbeitslehre aims to provide a basic knowledge of industry and the world of work, and incorporates information visits to commercial and industrial enterprises and two periods of work experience lasting several weeks. It is seen as providing the first significant experience of working life, and is also regarded as an opportunity to develop a pupil’s ability to select an occupation or career path. Arbeitslehre is generally studied in the last 2 years of full time compulsory education (age 15-16) but in some cases might start earlier, and tends to vary across the 16 Lander.

21. In addition to, and closely linked to the work experience element of Arbeitslehre, a range of other activities have been developed by the 16 Lander in efforts to embed a basic knowledge and understanding of the world of industry, business and commerce<sup>16</sup>. These include setting up model businesses, as well as projects which integrate the schools with employers, including twinning arrangements between schools and particular companies. These links are supported by a network of school-business partnerships (Arbeitskreis Schule-Wirtschaft) across the country, based on local initiatives which vary from Lander to Lander. This network supports amongst other initiatives the work-experience programmes.

22. Encouraging innovation in developing such school-industry links has been the focus of a programme funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). In conjunction with a number of other similarly driven initiatives, this aimed to address employers’ concerns about some school-leavers’ lack of ‘trainability’, as well as concerns about the number of trainees who change or drop out of apprenticeships.

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<sup>16</sup> OECD Review of Career Guidance Policies: Germany Country note, October 2002  
[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/35/1939079.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/35/1939079.pdf)

### *Key learning*

23. In terms of the work experience element of *Arbeitslehre*, the research has not uncovered any reviews or evaluative studies which highlight particular best practice. Indeed an OECD review in 2002 suggested the need to “broaden the base of *Arbeitslehre* within schools, to devote more attention to self-awareness and to decision-making and career-management skills”.

24. The review highlighted in particular, the need to strengthen the links with working life in the more academically focused grammar schools. It did however recognise the strong partnerships between education institutions and the world of work as a strength of the German system, along with the extensive access to high-quality information, including labour-market information, and the strong formally-defined partnerships between the Federal Employment Service and educational institutions.

25. Along with other countries which operate similar systems, Germany is characterised by a strong VET system which places significant emphasis on the non-academic vocational training pathway as an alternative to higher education. “Many countries have acknowledged the need to develop and modernise VET and are seeking experience and support. In this context, Germany is in demand at international level as a cooperation and advisory partner. Some 500 training co-operation projects in progress world-wide are showing a high level of interest in the German model of dual/co-operative vocational education and training”<sup>17</sup>

26. An OECD report in 2006<sup>18</sup> noted that the dual systems “have proven quite successful in giving young people a good start in the labour market”. It highlights the fact that Austria, Germany, Denmark and Switzerland are amongst countries with low youth unemployment rates and the lowest share of youth experiencing repeated unemployment spells.

27. Whilst this type of vocational provision is much wider than our consideration of the work experience placement, it is nevertheless worthwhile to bear in mind the context within which work experience in *Arbeitslehre* is provided in Germany, and within that, how the work experience element connects, both to wider linkages with the world of work during that period of study, and in the longer term, to a vocational pathway via the dual system or in full time vocational school. This is highlighted in the guidelines drawn up for schools and companies which aim to ...“contribute to fully embedding professional orientation and preparation of occupational choices in the schools’ daily routine”<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> Vocational education and training in Germany, Ute Hippach-Schneider, Martina Krause, Christian Woll, 2007 Cedefop Panorama series; 138

<sup>18</sup> Starting Well or Losing their Way? The Position of Youth in the Labour Market in OECD countries, OECD 2006

<sup>19</sup> Eurybase Information Database on the Education System in Germany  
[www.eurydice.org/ressources/Eurydice/eurybase](http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/Eurydice/eurybase)



## Australia

### *Work experience within the education system*

28. Although not directly comparable to work experience placements as traditionally operated in S4 in Scotland's schools, Australia is highlighted here 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 undertaken by pupils in the upper level of secondary education and are part of the "senior secondary certificate" which credit towards a nationally recognised VET qualification. The aim of these programmes is to enable pupils to<sup>20</sup>:

- Develop industry specific links
- Gain nationally recognised VET qualifications and units of competency while still completing their senior secondary school qualification
- Develop employability skills and an understanding of the world of work; and
- Gain an understanding of the world of work which is valuable experience to assist with planning and pursuing their career pathways

29. In addition to the VET in Schools programmes, Australia also operates school-based apprenticeships and traineeships, which allow secondary pupils to undertake a training qualification and work with an employer (as a paid employee) while studying for their senior certificate.

### *Key learning*

30. Research undertaken by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research<sup>21</sup>, via a survey of young people taking part in school based apprenticeships/traineeships and other VET programmes yielded the following findings in relation specifically to work experience:

- "Work experience performed a useful function in opening the respondents eyes to career possibilities
- Work experience was of value to respondents, particularly in the group not participating in school based apprenticeships, in both selecting and rejecting career options, despite the fact that work experience was also criticised by many for its brevity and the nature of the experiences
- Qualitative data showed that the more time respondents spent in workplaces during school, the more influence this had on their subsequent choices, particularly on first leaving school"

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20 Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations: Vocational Education in Schools :

[www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career\\_development/policy\\_issues\\_reviews](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/policy_issues_reviews)

21 NCVER Research: How Workplace experiences while still at school affect career pathways

31. A Governmental Inquiry into vocational education in schools<sup>22</sup> 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 “fighting” amongst schools for placements.

32. Of more significance to this study, the same Standing Committee Inquiry pointed out that the demand for work placements at upper secondary levels of school may be having a detrimental effect on career education and generic work experience programs that might have taken place during middle high school years due to the limited number of placements available.

33. Australia is continuing to strengthen its system of vocational education and training and recently announced a new “School to Work Industry Pathways Programme” which will match students with local industries in areas of key skills demand, focusing on defence and mining, health and community services, and advanced manufacturing. This will be developed hand-in-hand with business through industry skills boards, key employer groups and training providers.

### **Other countries**

34. The research encountered other cited examples of good practice in relation to workplace learning within vocational education, but like Australia, much of this was in the context of upper secondary (generally post-compulsory) level education. A recent DFES Study<sup>23</sup> which undertook an international comparison of further education highlighted Sweden and Finland for example as countries which exemplified ... “the importance of building well-articulated and flexible progression routes from initial VET to higher education. These systems have a strong commitment to lifelong learning, and a longer-term view of both system development and the future professional development of each individual. As such, the systems provide interlinked pathways at various stages of people’s educational and working lives.”

35. In Sweden, all students who complete compulsory school with the required grades in Swedish, English and mathematics can attend an upper secondary programme. As almost all 16-19 year-olds in Sweden participate in upper secondary education, the vocational programmes at this institution represent initial VET. They involve a period of work-based learning (Arbetsplatsförlagd utbildning or APU) which accounts for some 15% of the time.

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

23 International Comparisons in Further Education, Tom Leney and Tom May, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority; Geoff Hayward and Stephanie Wilde, Oxford University Department of Educational Studies DFES Research Report RR832, 2007

36. After the upper phase of compulsory schooling in Finland, young people progress to an academic pathway (lukio) or an ammattikoulu programme which is practical and vocationally focused. Work experience has become a more prominent element of the Finnish system of initial VET in recent years. The system is generally a school rather than work-based or apprenticeship route, encompassing learning which has been linked to skills developed in a school or college simulated workshop. Work experience was introduced as an innovation, and 20-weeks of on the job training is now built into vocational programme specifications.

### **Conclusions/observations**

37. That there is very little to directly compare in terms of work experience in the context of how it is delivered in Scotland and its delivery in other countries is an interesting observation. Most countries would appear to firmly embed work experience placements within their wider approach to vocational education, and further link these placements to a range of complementary learning around the world of work.

38. Aside from the stand-alone nature of the Scottish based work placements, the other main point of difference – and possible strength of the system in Scotland and the UK - is that the work placement offer to pupils in S4 is universal, whereas in other countries it might be either optional or specifically available to pupils following a vocational pathway.

39. Whilst there is widely available information and literature on vocational education in a global context, there does not appear to be evidence which points to a particular system as being better than all others. Rather, there are elements which seem to be commonly highlighted as constituting good practice. From this, it might be reasonable to suggest that work experience/work placements will be most valuable to pupils when they are integrated within a longer term approach to developing career pathways, and where the school is joined in this approach with partner agencies and organisations – including employers, FE and Higher Education institutions.



## **WORK EXPERIENCE CO-ORDINATOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

The Scottish Government has commissioned scoping research on work experience in schools across the country. The main focus of the study is the statutory entitlement to work experience generally undertaken by most pupils in S4 and the findings will feed into the national review of work experience linked to *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy*. Your views are particularly important to this exercise and we would be grateful if you would complete this questionnaire and return it Lynne MacDougal at Glasgow University. ([L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk](mailto:L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk)) The closing date for return is **Friday 13th June**.

### **1: Background details**

Your Name:

Local authority area:

### **2: Overview of work experience**

a) Please rank the following aims of work experience in order of importance in your view. Please rank 1-5 with 1 being the highest.

Raises pupils' understanding of the workplace  
and the needs of employers  
Improves employability skills through  
engagement in a workplace  
Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills  
relating to their future careers  
Helps young people to make career choices  
Other (please specify)

b) What would you identify as the top 3 strengths of your area in relation to work experience placements?

c) What 3 development priorities would you identify that would improve the work experience process in your area?

d) What other interventions/programmes are used in your area's schools to prepare young people for work?

e) How do these interventions/programmes compare to work experience in preparing young people for work?

Intervention/programme	Better than work experience	The same as work experience	Not as valuable as work experience
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### **3: Work experience participation in your area**

a) How many schools participate in the work experience placement programme in your local authority area?

b) Are there secondary schools which do not participate?

Yes  
No

c) If yes how many and why not?

d) Do any non mainstream schools (e.g. Special Schools, Day Units etc) participate in the work experience placement programme? If so please provide details

e) Do local FE colleges play any role in the work experience placement programme?

Yes  
No

f) If so what role do they play?

g) Do private and/or voluntary sector service providers play any part in the work experience placement programme?

Yes

No

h) If so what role do they play?

#### **4: Work Experience opportunities in your area**

a) How many employers are on your local database?

b) Which statement do you most agree with ? (tick only one)

(i) It is easier to find employers to offer work experience than it used to be

(ii) Engaging employers to participate is just as easy as it used to be

(iii) It is getting harder to find employers to participate in work experience

c) If the answer is (iii) please provide a reason for your answer

d) What percentage of your participating employers are

Private sector	%
Public sector	%
Voluntary sector	%

e) What percentage of your participating employers are

Large (>250 employees)	%
Medium (25-250 employees)	%
Small (<25 employees)	%

f) What is the spread of participating employers by sector (number of places)

Agriculture and fishing	Manufacturing and engineering
Biotechnology, Medical and Chemical	Mining and quarrying
Business Services (e.g. printing, copying, etc)	Personal services (e.g. health and beauty,

Construction and Building Services	hairdressing etc)
Creative and Media, Education	Professional services (legal, accounting etc)
Electricity, water and gas supply	Property and real estate
Energy	Public administration and defence
Financial Services	Publishing, printing and packaging
Health, care and Social Work	Retail and wholesale
Hospitality and Leisure	Transport, storage and distribution
IT and telecoms	Travel, Tourism and leisure
	Other (specify)

g) Does the employer profile reflect the opportunities in the local labour market?

Yes  
No

h) If not, where are the gaps or surpluses?

i) How well does the employer profile reflect the demand from pupils?

Very good fit  
Quite good fit  
Poor fit

j) If a bad or poor fit, where are the gaps and surpluses?

k. Can you think of alternative arrangements that might help fill any of the gaps?



### **5: The Work Experience offer**

a) How many work placements were organised during the current academic year?

b) What proportion of these (approximately) were arranged by pupils, including through parents, friends or other family members?

%

c) Which agency currently co-ordinates the work experience programme?

Local Education Authority  
Careers Scotland/Skills Development Scotland  
Chamber of Commerce  
Other (specify)

d) Which agency will manage the programme in 2008/09

Local Education Authority  
Careers Scotland/Skills Development Scotland  
Chamber of Commerce  
Other (specify)

e) How is the work experience programme co-ordinated? (please tick one)

Centrally by the above named agency  
Locally by individual schools

e) How is the work experience programme structured locally? (please tick one)

Most pupils go out for one particular week in  
the school year  
Work experience placements are phased  
throughout the school year  
Individual schools decide when the work  
experience placements take place  
Other – specify

f) Why is work experience structured this way in your area?

g) If it is organised on one particular week please when is this – and what is the reason for having it then?

h) How are pupils matched to employers (when the placement is not self-found)? Please tick one)

Pupils are offered a choice of employers and they select the placement  
School staff select the work placements for the pupils  
Another method - please specify

i) If pupils choose their own work placement through the central/school co-ordinated database, what proportion get their first choice?

%

j) Does the selection process take account of pupils' own experience of work (e.g. part time and weekend jobs)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

k) If yes please describe how this is done

l) Does the work experience placement link into pupils' particular vocational interest – e.g. vocational programme being pursued?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

m) If yes please describe how this is done

n) Does the work experience placement take into account any volunteering young people are involved in?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

o) If yes, how is this done?

p) In 2007/08 what proportion of pupils in the following year groups participated in a work placement experience?

S4	%
S5	%
S6	%

q) What are the reasons for non-participating pupils not accessing a work-placement (please order 1-7 with 1 being highest)

Behavioural problems  
Low levels of literacy and numeracy  
English is a second language  
Additional support needs  
Shortage of work placements  
Access issues – transport problems  
Other (please specify)

r) Is there any alternative provision for young people who miss out on work placements?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

s) If yes, please provide details

t) Some groups of young people (including from workless households, ethnic minorities, with learning disabilities or who are cared for and looked after) often face barriers to accessing work experience? Are there groups in your area who experience access difficulties?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

u) If yes, what are the barriers?

v) Are these young people targeted for particular support in your area?

Yes

No

Don't know

w) If yes, what form does this support take?

x) Have you any suggestions about what more can be done to provide opportunities for young people who miss out on work placements?

y) In terms of pupils' preparation for work experience placements, which of the statements below best describes your authority's approach? (tick one)

The authority has an agreed model of preparation which is applied by all schools

Schools apply their own model to prepare pupils in advance

Other (specify)

z) Which of the following methods are commonly used to prepare pupils in advance of the placement? (tick all that apply)

Class-based work on what to expect in a work environment

Pupils given an induction pack which includes key contacts, 'Do's and Don't' list, health and safety guidelines and other information

Pupils visit the employer placement prior to their work experience

Individual support from guidance staff in preparation for the placement

Other (please specify)

aa) Is there a formal written agreement clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the employer, the school and the young person?

Yes

No

Don't know

**If yes, please forward a copy of this to [L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk](mailto:L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk).**

ab) During the work placement, how is the pupil usually supported (tick all that apply):

Personal visit from school staff member  
or other support agency  
Telephone call (or text) to check on  
progress  
Designated support person in the  
workplace  
Other (please specify)

ac) Does the young person keep a record of their work placement experience?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

ad) If so can we see a copy of the template?

Yes  
No

If yes please e-mail to [L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk](mailto:L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk)

ae) On completion of the placement, how are pupils helped to draw the learning points from the experience ? (tick all that apply)

One to one debriefing with member of  
school staff  
Three way meeting with pupil, employer  
representative and school staff member  
Group feedback and discussion in class  
Completion of a log-book  
Other (please specify)

af) On completion of work experience, do pupils have a chance to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of their placement?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

(ag) If yes, describe how feedback is shared with employers to improve relevance and quality of future placements

ah) Are any mechanisms in place to communicate with parents about work experience placements (i.e. its purpose, format)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

ai) If yes, please provide details of these mechanisms

aj) Can you suggest ways in which parents could be more effectively involved?

## **6: The Employer Experience**

a) Do employers have any involvement in the selection process of work placement pupils?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

b) If yes, what form does this take? (tick all that apply)

Employer provides a specification  
Employer interviews/meets pupil in advance  
Employer receives pupil information in advance and can request replacement  
Other (specify)

c) What 3 attitudes do employers want most from pupils on work experience placements (e.g. punctuality, willingness to learn etc)?

d) Are employers specifying core/basic skills required (literacy, numeracy, ICT, teamworking etc)?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

e) How are employers usually supported in advance of the work experience placement? (tick all that apply)

Visit from school staff or other support agency in advance of the placement  
Letter and information pack sent to the employer  
Induction session organised for

participating employers  
Other (specify)

f) How are employers supported during the work placement experience? (tick all that apply)

Visit from school staff or other support  
agency during the placement  
Telephone/e-mail contact from school  
Given named person to contact in the  
event of a problem  
Other (specify)

g) What form does this support take? (tick all that apply)

General guidance on working with  
young people  
Advice on health and safety, child  
protection legislation etc  
Consideration of placement pupil's  
strengths and weaknesses  
Other (specify)

h) Is there evidence that insurance costs, child protection and rising health and safety issues  
are deterring employers from offering placements?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

i) If yes, please provide details

j) Has your authority taken steps to tackle these issues?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

k) If yes to the last question please describe the steps

l) How do you measure employers' satisfaction levels in relation to the work placement  
programme? (tick as many as apply)

Feedback questionnaire  
De-briefing interview with school  
staff/support agency

Other (specify)  
No measurement of employer  
satisfaction undertaken

m) Do you recognise – either formally or informally – employers' commitment to hosting work experience placements?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

n) If yes, how do you do this?

## **7: Benefits from the work experience placement programme**

a) Does your area assess the effectiveness of your work experience placement programme?

Yes  
No  
Don't know

b) If yes, which of the following methods does your authority use? (tick all that apply)

External evaluation which includes the  
views of key stakeholders (pupils,  
employers, school staff etc)  
Internally conducted review which  
includes the views of key stakeholders  
Other (specify)

c) If there are evaluation reports, can these be made available to our study team?

Yes  
No

If yes please e-mail to [L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk](mailto:L.Macdougall@lbss.gla.ac.uk)

d) What, in your view are the top 3 benefits from work experience placements for pupils, schools and employers (or tick no benefit)



## Young people

## Schools

## Employers

No benefit

e) On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about work experience in your area?

Raises pupils' understanding of the workplace  
and the needs of employers  
Improves employability skills through  
engagement in a workplace  
Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills  
relating to their future careers  
Helps young people to make career choices  
Other (please specify)

### 8: Making things work better

a) What improvements are necessary to make the work experience programme of more benefit to young people?

b) What barriers are there to making these improvements?

c) How could the work experience programme be improved to make it easier for employers to get involved?

d) Are there any barriers to making these improvements?

e) Please respond to the following statements (one response to each)

Strongly disagree   disagree   Not sure   agree   Strongly agree

The current work experience model is outdated. There are better ways of equipping pupils with skills for work and life.

At present, the pupils who would most

benefit from a work experience  
placement are least likely to get one  
There is a good fit between the work  
experience programme and vocational  
learning delivery in school

f) Finally, have you any other comments?

Thank you participating in this study. Your input is appreciated and we will notify you once  
our final report has been completed.

Eddy Adams

Study Team Manager

May 2008

## EMPLOYER QUESTIONNAIRE

The Scottish Government has commissioned scoping research on work experience in schools across the country. The main focus of the study is the statutory entitlement to work experience generally undertaken by most pupils in S4 and the findings will feed into the national review of work experience linked to *Curriculum for Excellence* and *Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy*.

Employers have a key role to play in providing work experience opportunities. It is therefore important that their views are reflected in this work. Your contact details have been passed to us by your local work experience co-ordinator and we would be grateful if you could participate in this short telephone survey.

All responses will be confidential and comments non-attributable.

### **1. Background details**

1.1) Please provide the following details

Company name			
Status (tick one)	Private	public	Vol org
Number of employees	<25	25-250	>250
Industry sector			

1.2) Does your organisation have close links with a particular local school (either in relation to work experience or wider vocational goals)?

Yes (go to 1.3)

No (go to 1.4)

1.3) What form do these links take? **(Read out and tick any that apply)**

- Work experience placements
- Mock interviews
- School visits to the employer
- Employer visits to school
- Mentoring support to students
- Joint materials development with staff
- Recruitment fairs and events
- Other

1.4) Does your organisation provide placements for skills development programmes for young people, **(tick any that apply)**

- Get Ready for Work
- Skillseekers
- Others – please specify

## **2. Work Experience concept and model**

2.1) What in your view is the aim of work experience for school pupils? (**don't read the options out – record all mentioned and check for most important**)

Raises pupils' understanding of the workplace and the needs of employers  
Improves employability skills through engagement in a workplace  
Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills relating to their future careers  
Helps young people to make career choices  
Other (please specify)

2.2) Most work experience placements consist of a one week experience with an employer. In your view, how effective is this model in meeting the agreed aims?

Very effective  
Quite effective  
Not effective

2.3) Why do you say this?

2.4) Would alternative options to the one week duration be better? For example... (**Read out and tick all that apply**)

Day release arrangements  
Longer placements (e.g. two weeks)  
Other suggestions

2.4) In your view, how well do school pupils understand the range of career opportunities (including those of a generic nature) available in your industry sector?

Very well  
Quite well  
Not well

2.5) Can you suggest any changes to the current work experience model that would provide pupils with a better understanding of the range of available opportunities - this should be from the perspective of both yourself and schools?

2.6) Can you suggest any changes to the current model that would provide pupils with a more effective experience- this should be from the perspective of both yourself and schools

## **3. Work Experience in practice**

3.1) Does your organisation currently provide work experience placements?

Yes (go to Q 3.2)  
No (go to Q )

3.2) Which of the following aims describes your reasons for being involved? **(Read out and tick as many as apply)**

Establish links with potential future employees  
Give something back to the community  
Good public relations  
Better education/business links – with local schools  
Opportunities for staff to act as mentors  
Access to new thinking and ideas  
Access to cheap/free labour  
Other

3.3) How many placements have you offered in the past school year?

3.4) How have these been organised **(read the options and tick all that apply)**

Through a local area co-ordinator  
Directly with schools  
Independently (i.e. through pupils' family contacts)  
At the request of individual employees  
Other (specify)

3.5) How well co-ordinated are local work placement activities?

Very well co-ordinated	Go to Q 3.6
Well-coordinated	Go to Q 3.8
Not well co-ordinated	Go to Q 3.6

3.6) If not well coordinated what kind of problems have you encountered ? **(Read out and tick all that apply)**

Competing placement requests from different organisations  
Mismatch between requests and number of places  
Poor programme management by schools  
Other (please specify)

3.7) From your point of view, what could be done to address these weaknesses **(either by schools or employers)**?

3.8) What three attitudes are most important from students on work experience?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3

3.9) Are you looking for specific skills from young people? If so what are they? **(Don't read - tick all that apply)**

Literacy  
 Numeracy  
 ICT  
 Other  
 Not looking for any specific skills

3.10) How often do you get young people with the right combination of attributes for the placements you offer ?

Always  
 Usually  
 Seldom  
 Never

3.11) Are you involved in the selecting the young people who come to you?

Yes                      Go to Q 3.13  
 No                        Go to Q 3.12

3.12) If not, would you like to be?

Yes  
 No

3.13) Which of these statements best describes the students' preparation for the placement?  
**(Read out and tick one)**

Most pupils are well-briefed and arrive prepared for the workplace  
 Most pupils have been briefed but are not fully prepared for the workplace  
 Most pupils have been poorly briefed and are not ready for the workplace

3.14) What support is offered to you in advance of the placement? **(Read out and tick all that apply)**

Advance visit from the pupil and/or member of staff  
 Information about the pupil is sent in advance  
 Information about the work placement programme sent in advance  
 Attend an advance information session  
 Other (please specify)

3.15) How useful is this advance support?

Very useful  
 Quite useful  
 Not useful

3.16) Can you suggest any ways in which advance support can be improved?

3.17) Which of the following processes are included in the work experience placement?  
**(Read out and tick all that apply)**

- Completion of application form
- Interview
- Goal/objective setting
- Induction including on Health & Safety
- Briefing on company
- Assignment of mentor
- Personal time management
- Regular feedback on student performance
- Teacher visit during placement to see progress
- Leaving/exit interview
- Feedback to schools

3.18) Which of the following activities are included in the work experience placement? **(Read out and tick all that apply)**

- Gaining an overview of what the company does and the range of career opportunities it offers
- Taking part in in-house training and development sessions
- Working with computers
- Attending meetings
- Working with numbers (e.g. counting money, using spreadsheets)
- Attending presentations
- Dealing with customers
- Letter writing
- Delivering presentations
- Observing and noting different employees' roles, responsibilities and behaviours
- Developing a specific piece of work or project
- Other (please specify)

3.19) Are you likely to continue to providing placements in the future?

- Yes
- No

3.20) Please give reasons for your answer

#### **4. Benefits of work experience**

4.1) Which of the following benefits does your organisation gain from its involvement in work placements? (**Read out and tick as many as apply**)

- Informing recruitment practices
- Understanding young people better
- Developing recruitment (access to future prospective employees)
- Promoting interest among students in relevant careers/sectors
- Increasing your organisation's local reputation/profile
- Developing and motivating existing staff (e.g. coaching skills)
- Improving the quality of future employees
- Other (please specify)

4.2) On a scale of 1-5 where 1 is strongly agree and 5 is strongly disagree, to what extent do you agree with the following statements about work experience in your area?

- Raises pupils' understanding of the workplace and the needs of employers
- Improves employability skills through engagement in a workplace
- Helps young people understand how some of their subjects, eg maths, ICT, are applied in work situations
- Offers pupils an opportunity to acquire skills relating to their future careers
- Helps young people to make career choices

#### **GO TO SECTION 5**

4.3) Please explain the reasons why you no longer participate in the work experience programme?

4.4) Have you found other ways to replace any benefits you used to get from being involved?

- |                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Yes                          | Go to Q 4.5 |
| No                           | Go to Q 4.6 |
| Not applicable – no benefits |             |

4.5) What are these?

4.6) What changes to the work placement programme might encourage you to participate again in future



## **5. Suggestions for improvement**

5.1) What improvements are necessary to make the work experience programme in your area of more benefit to young people?

5.2) What barriers are there to making these improvements?

5.3) Is there anything that could be done to make it easier for employers to get involved?

5.4) Are there any barriers to making these improvements?

5.5) Any other suggested changes?

Many thanks for taking part in this survey.

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**PARTICIPATING LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

Aberdeen City Council  
Aberdeenshire Council  
Angus Council  
Argyll and Bute Council  
Clackmannanshire Council  
Dumfries and Galloway Council  
Dundee City Council  
East Ayrshire Council  
East Dunbartonshire Council  
East Lothian District Council  
East Renfrewshire Council  
Edinburgh City Council  
Falkirk Council  
Fife Council  
Glasgow City Council  
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Midlothian Council  
Moray Council  
North Ayrshire Council  
Perth and Kinross Council  
Renfrewshire Council  
Scottish Borders Council  
Shetland Islands Council  
South Ayrshire Council  
South Lanarkshire Council  
West Dunbartonshire Council  
West Lothian Council  
Western Isles Council

**PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

<b>Aberdeenshire</b>	Portlethen Academy Alford Academy Meldrum Academy
<b>Dumfries and Galloway</b>	Kirkubright High School Elmbank High School Douglas Ewart High School
<b>Dundee</b>	St John's High School Morgan Academy Craigie High School
<b>Falkirk</b>	Grangemouth High School Braes High School Carrongrange School
<b>Glasgow</b>	Abercorn School St Andrews High School Newhills School
<b>South Lanarkshire</b>	Hamilton Grammar School Stonelaw High School Lanark High School

**PARTICIPATING VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS**

Apex Scotland

Barnardos

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Fairbridge

Impact Arts

Includem

Kibble Works

Princes Trust

Street League

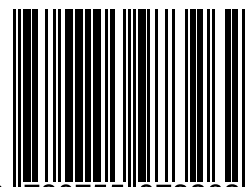
Tullochan Trust

ISSN 0950 2254  
ISBN 978 0 7559 7326 2  
(Web only publication)

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

RR Donnelley B58581 11/08

ISBN 978-0-7559-7326-2



9 780755 973262