

Business and schools: Building the world of work together

Briefing Paper

April 2012

Foreword

There are some simple truths contained within this report. To many in business they will come as no surprise and likewise, I suspect, to many in education. The core truth is that businesses and schools working in partnership produce substantial benefits for everybody involved: most importantly, young people's awareness and experience of the workplace.

However, the fact that businesses continue to identify the barriers and improvements needed, confirms the need for more action to be taken by businesses, schools and organisations working in this area, to remove the barriers and challenges.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is committed to playing our part in implementing the recommendations from this report:

Call to action to policy makers and businesses

The UK Commission will make its findings publicly available and work with partner organisations to disseminate the key messages from this report and the case studies to businesses and policy makers. It is critical for us to work with partner organisations to do this and build on the good practice and work being carried out by these organisations in this area.

The UK Commission's work for 2012/13

There are three key areas for addressing the recommendations – Employer Ownership, Career Opportunities for Young People and Investment.

Employer Ownership

The UK Commission will continue to communicate the value and benefits of Employer Ownership. Businesses have been invited to put forward innovative proposals for co-investment in skills and training that will have a real impact on their employees, business and the sector, as part of a pilot. Work experience, high quality careers advice and strategic links to schools and colleges to support curriculum delivery can be included as part of a package of co-invested activity.

More career opportunities for young people

The UK Commission recognises the challenges for business concerning youth unemployment, the changing labour market for young people and business recruitment practices and will use this research to inform planned work in this area. We are planning to carry out work to better understand the labour market and young people; to make the business case for recruiting young people and improving recruitment practice.

Investment

We are co-investing in business-led solutions that have the potential to raise skill levels to drive enterprise and economic growth, and to create more and better jobs. A number of the current investments include businesses improving the perceptions of young people of careers in specific sectors, and businesses working with schools and colleges to provide work experience opportunities and to provide resources to support the core curriculum.

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Executive Summary

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills has carried out research into the perceptions and experiences of businesses when working with schools to build the world of work into education. We have focussed on how businesses influence the design and delivery of the curriculum, provide work experience and raise awareness of careers.

This report presents the key findings from the research and provides recommended solutions to the identified barriers hindering businesses from engaging with schools.

Awareness and understanding of the world of work is integral to the delivery of education and this is best achieved through business and schools working in partnership

Businesses have identified a number of reasons for working with schools. These include helping to close the gap between their needs and education provision, making sure enough young people are thinking about careers in their sectors, improving recruitment and as part of their commitment to the local communities in which they operate.

We have identified the key areas in which businesses are currently working with schools:

- **enriching and enhancing the delivery of education** and building the world of work in general into education
- planning and providing **work experience** opportunities
- providing **careers information** and raising the profile of careers in a sector

Businesses recognise that they need to work with schools. Good practice shows that successful partnerships between businesses and schools happen at a local level. Many businesses and schools have built up strategic and long term partnerships which have enabled them to work together to mutual benefit. We have highlighted a number of these throughout this report and developed a range of case studies which we will publish alongside this report.

Barriers

We have identified the following main barriers and challenges experienced by businesses when working with schools:

Businesses and schools working together

- difficulties for small businesses to “get a foot in the door” with schools which tend to find it easier to work with larger businesses
- some schools do not recognise the role that businesses can play in working with them to enhance and enrich the education experience for their students
- some schools are focussing on areas that relate to performance tables such as exam results and do not see working with businesses as a priority
- constraints of the time and resource businesses can provide to work with schools

Work experience

- having to turn schools away due to the volume of demand and the timing being too prescriptive for work experience placements – most schools request work experience placements in the summer term
- poor quality placements or placements that do not meet the needs of the student due to poor planning of the work experience

Awareness of and access to guidance and support

- not knowing where to start – lack of access to clear guidance, information and support
- misinformation and misunderstanding by both schools and businesses around the areas of regulation - insurance, health and safety and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks

To strengthen the findings and address these barriers, we make the following recommendation.

Recommendation:

More businesses and schools should build partnerships at a local level to:

- enhance and enrich the delivery of education through a range of activities for example through businesses providing curriculum materials, arranging site visits, carrying out talks in schools
- increase the flexibility of the timing of work experience opportunities so that more quality placements can be arranged throughout the school year and can be integrated throughout education
- provide up to date information about careers in their sectors and raise the profile of careers

To enable this to happen:

More **businesses** should work with schools to make them aware of the relevance of business engagement to enhance and enrich the delivery of education, and put resources into working with schools.

More **schools** should recognise the relevance of engaging with businesses to enhance and enrich the delivery of education, and put resources into working with businesses.

Governments and relevant organisations should play their respective parts in removing the identified barriers around access to simple guidance and support. This includes:

- making businesses and schools aware of the guidance and support that is available
- making the guidance more accessible
- providing simple clear guidance to correct the misunderstandings of the requirements for both businesses and schools regarding areas such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, Health and Safety and risk assessment¹
- incorporating information on progress and destinations in school performance tables.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is committed to playing our part in implementing these recommendations. We will make the findings from this project publicly available and work with partner organisations to disseminate the key messages from this report and the case studies to businesses and policy makers. We will build on and incorporate the evidence into our business plan for 2012-13, in the areas of Employer Ownership, More career opportunities for young people and Investment.

¹ The Health and Safety Executive are in the process of simplifying the information and guidance around health and safety for publication in April 2012. In England, the Department for Education have developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) "myth buster" to begin to dispel some of these misunderstandings

1 Introduction

The rise in youth unemployment we see today began in 2005 before the recent recession. This suggests a structural cause beyond the current economic situation which is due to a number of reasons. This includes the fact that the labour market has been changing in ways that impact negatively on young people. Entry points and progression pathways for young people are diminishing and this is set to continue. The unemployment rate of 16-24 year olds in the UK continues to rise and was at 22 per cent as at November 2011².

This project was set up to build on the Youth Inquiry and Employability research produced by the UK Commission³ and conduct small scale, focused research to understand businesses' perceptions and experiences of the following areas:

- the skills, experience and attributes businesses look for when recruiting young people
- the respective roles of education and businesses in preparing young people for work
- partnerships between businesses and schools
- ways in which businesses engage with schools to build the world of work into education.

Its purpose was to:

- develop an understanding of businesses' perceptions towards youth recruitment and their experiences of working with education to prepare young people for work
- identify case studies of good practice to encourage more businesses to work with schools
- enable Commissioners to influence policy makers by making them aware of the role businesses have in supporting schools
- provide a response to relevant government consultations⁴

The research has not focused on school perceptions of working with business. This is out of scope of this report but it may be useful to follow up the research.

Methodology

We undertook a review of existing research⁵ and carried out qualitative research with 100 businesses through a combination of one to one telephone interviews and face to face focus groups.

Businesses were selected on the basis of:

- a mixture of those who do and those who do not recruit young people aged 16-18
- a range of those who do and do not engage with schools
- a range of large, medium and small businesses across England, Scotland and Wales.

To set the scene in the interviews and in preparation for the focus groups, we established which businesses have recruited young people aged 16-18 in the last two years.

Approximately 80% of the businesses who took part in this research already recruit young people. This is mainly through Apprenticeships, with a smaller number of businesses recruiting young people directly into jobs. For the majority of the businesses, the number of young people they have recruited over the past two years has decreased in line with the general reduction of numbers of staff recruited. Many of the large and medium sized businesses involved in our research have well established and respected Apprenticeship programmes with annual recruitment. Smaller

² Figures for September to November 2011 from the Labour Market Statistics: January 2012

³ The Employability Challenge - February 2009, Employability: Incentivising Improvement - June 2010 and The Youth Inquiry - March 2011– UK Commission for Employment and Skills

⁴ As part of the project, the UK Commission provided a response to DfE's (England) consultations on Removing the statutory duty to deliver work related learning at Key Stage 4 and Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds

⁵ The UK Commission published this in "Employers and the recruitment of young people 16-18 year olds: An evidence review August 2011".

businesses tend to recruit individual or small numbers of young people including apprentices, as the business need arises. Other businesses, when they recruit, do so to ensure they reflect the profile of their local community or for example to recruit more females into engineering.

Further details regarding methodology for the research and a copy of the questionnaire are included in Appendix 1.

2 Business engagement with schools

Businesses engage with schools at a number of levels. In general, businesses can be regarded as:

- **consumers** when they hire young people who leave school or college
- **stakeholders** when they provide leadership through their involvement in the design, development, management, delivery and assessment of learning
- **strategic partners** when there is sustained interaction between businesses and education institutions

Engagement between schools and businesses takes different forms and with different structures: one to one relationships between a business and a local school are common as are one-to-many relationships between multiple businesses and a single school or vice versa. Use of local networks is also common. We investigated each of these types of relationships.

Partnership between an individual business and an individual school or several local schools

These types of partnership are often based on a formalised relationship between a business and a single or multiple schools, with a named point of contact from the business and a named Head Teacher or teacher at each school. Through this relationship, roles and responsibilities of each party are clearly outlined and a planned cycle or timetable of activity is agreed. This enables both the businesses and the schools to build in the time and resource fully to ensure that all activity adds value for the student, the business and the school. The level of activity is dependent on the time and resources all parties have to offer the partnership.

Some businesses highlighted that partnerships often started through an informal request from a local school to carry out a careers talk or provide a work experience placement. This then developed into small scale activity on a regular basis and has led to a more formalised relationship between the two.⁶

Partnership between several businesses and several local schools

This occurs through wider partnerships being developed at a local or regional level. Businesses have identified good practice through several businesses and local schools forming a network where different businesses can either support different schools or working together, individual businesses can each support specific activities/subject areas which will share the “burden” and enable schools to benefit with links from different businesses.

One example of this is through the Local Advisory Board approach which supports Career Academies set up between businesses and schools. A Local Advisory Board facilitates partnerships between the Career Academy and local businesses. It serves as an advocate

⁶ One example of this is the partnership between Signature Leather and Yale College. The business and the college worked together on the A level Business students Signature Leather "Japanese Project" which was packed full of useful research information for the company and is a good example of how a business like Signature Leather can work across a number of diverse subjects and faculties, and build a relationship in one educational institution given their diverse course offering. Further information on this case study can be found in Appendix 2.

leveraging corporate and community support, raising awareness and building relationships. Members also help develop Partner in Business volunteers, workplace visits and assist in securing paid internships for Career Academy students.⁷

Brokerage role of intermediary organisations

Businesses which use them have identified the brokerage role of organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and business and education partnerships, as being helpful and supportive in enabling businesses and schools to work together. These organisations provide a service to make links between local schools and businesses for a variety of activities such as work experience placements, enterprise and careers talks, and mock interview sessions. Some businesses indicated that they found the role of these organisations crucial in brokering relationships with schools and arranging activities.

One example of this is Careers Wales who broker and arrange a variety of activities for businesses to work with schools and colleges. Activities include 'Dragons Den' events where students work on a project to start up a business, work in teams and present to the Dragons (businesses); and Interview Days where the students apply for jobs and produce personal statements; dress for interview and the businesses carry out the interviews.

All of these methods of engagement offer businesses some level of influence within the school. More significant levels of engagement involve situations in which businesses contribute to the learning process in schools and colleges in regard to:

- enrichment and enhancement of the delivery of education and enabling awareness and understanding of the world of work
- providing quality work experience opportunities
- providing careers information to raise the profile of careers in a sector

The depth of business engagement with the schools community depends on **business perceptions** of the value they can bring to the schools and young people, as well as the recruitment benefit they gain from a work-prepared cohort of young people.

⁷ Career Academies UK <http://www.careeracademies.org.uk/> leads and supports a movement of over 1000 employers and over 120 schools and colleges, working together to raise the aspirations of 16 to 19-year-olds. Partners in Business are volunteers who mentor a young person on a one to one basis through a range of activities. An example of this in practice is the partnership between Mears Group and Lambeth College's Career Academy which resulted from Mears' involvement in the Local Advisory Board. Further information on this case study can be found in Annex 2.

3 Business perceptions

Our research investigated business perceptions across a number of areas but specifically looked at business aspirations, experiences and ‘wants’ regarding recruitment of young people:

Business Aspirations

We asked businesses which skills, experience and attributes they look for when recruiting young people. We have summarised these into five broad areas:

Employability Skills	Softer skills such as problem solving, team working and interpersonal skills ⁸
Attributes and qualities	Young people should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a basic understanding of what it means to work and know the basic etiquette • know how to present themselves at work, how to prepare and present themselves for interviews, know to turn up on time • have enthusiasm and drive
Work experience	Some form of work experience. This could include work experience while at school or college, part-time work, voluntary work including membership of groups.
Knowledge base/qualifications	Young people should have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and Maths qualifications as a minimum.⁹ In the Engineering sector, businesses also stated that Science qualifications were also essential. • the applied skills from these areas not just the theoretical knowledge; the delivery of the subjects should bring them “to life” and show how what is learnt in the classroom, for example Maths and English, applies in a variety of work contexts.
Careers information	Young people should have a good realistic understanding of the career options and opportunities open to them. This includes enabling young people to be aware of the opportunities available to them, including Apprenticeships, and have access to up to date information on careers; enabling teachers to gain up to date knowledge and experience of the world of work through teacher placements or CPD opportunities.

⁸ The Employability Challenge (UK Commission for Employment and Skills February 2009) recognises that employability skills are the skills almost everyone needs to do almost any job. They are the skills that must be present to enable an individual to use the more specific knowledge and technical skills that their particular workplaces will require.

⁹ GCSEs in England and Wales; National Qualifications in Scotland

There was a variation in the order of importance that businesses placed on these areas. For some businesses, the knowledge base/qualifications area was the most important. All of the businesses who took part in the research highlighted the importance of attributes and qualities and employability skills. Some businesses even highlighted that these two areas were as or more important than academic qualifications. All the businesses highlighted the importance of experience of work or at the very least, an awareness and basic understanding of work. They recognise the value of work experience whether this is through part time work or through voluntary work.¹⁰ This supports the analysis of findings from other recent UK Commission research.¹¹

Business Experience

Businesses identified their different experiences of the quality of the young people they have recruited at ages 16-18. Some have positive experiences and are happy with the young people they have recruited. Others (mainly large and medium sized businesses) have ensured that they recruit the best young people through a rigorous selection process and are therefore happy with the quality of the young people they have recruited. A small number of businesses, both large and small, highlighted that they have experienced difficulties when recruiting young people with the skills they were looking for. In general terms, businesses identified that they were not always happy with the quality of the **pool** of young people for recruitment but are happy with the quality of the young people they **ultimately recruit** following the selection process.

Most of the businesses stated that the areas where they find young people are poorly prepared relates to a **lack of “experience”**. They also commonly cite **attitude and motivation**.

This concurs with the evidence from the recent UK Employer Skills Survey (ESS 2011)¹² which finds that almost three in five businesses in England, Northern Ireland and Wales recruiting 16 year old school leavers find them well prepared (59%), rising to 64% of those recruiting 17-18 year olds from school and 72% of those recruiting from Further Education. Where businesses find their young recruits poorly prepared, only a small minority cite issues with literacy or numeracy (4% of those taking on 16 year old school leavers) or a poor education (3% of those taking on 16 year old school leavers). Instead their concerns are around experience of work and life more generally (23% of those taking on 16 year old school leavers).

The one area of difference through the research for this project is that about 60% of the businesses identified that they are not confident in the standards of **communication and numeracy** of young people in relation to their expectations of the level of these skills when recruiting. Businesses highlighted that this is most commonly identified during the application process for posts. A high proportion of the businesses, across all sizes, stated that they are often shocked at the poor quality of applications in relation to spelling and grammar and the ability to structure proper sentences and paragraphs. They also said that they expect young people to be able to perform basic tasks using these skills such as communicating with other employees and customers, and producing written communication with accurate spelling and grammar. Other businesses said that they find that they need to support some of their young employees to develop their basic skills in these areas and feel that these should already have been addressed in education. Other research identified through the project also supports these perceptions.¹³

We believe this contrast is due to the fact that in this project research, we asked businesses about their perceptions at the point of recruitment, rather than after the young people have been recruited. There may also be factors such as the range of businesses involved in this research.

¹⁰ The number of full-time learners at 16-17 who combine work with their learning has been declining steadily from 40% in the late 1990s to around 20% now - LFS

¹¹ The Employability Challenge - February 2009, Employability: Incentivising Improvement - June 2010 and The Youth Inquiry - March 2011– UK Commission for Employment and Skills

¹² UK Employer Skills Survey (ESS 2011: UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a UK wide survey asking employers about recruitment problems, skills gaps, training practices and expenditure. The survey asks employers if they recruit 16 year old school leavers, 17 and 18 year old school or college leavers of leavers from HE, and then asks them how well prepared they feel they are for work.

¹³ The Employability Skills Challenge: Research from the Financial Services and Education Sectors – June 2010 – Financial Services Skills Council and Scottish Investment Operations and the key findings supported by a cross sector group of employers and membership organisations in Scotland

A range of businesses have put their own measures in place where particular aptitudes are critical for employment success. As an example, BAE systems, one of the large engineering businesses we spoke to, use five GCSEs at A-C as the benchmark for the first sift for recruitment. However due to their previous experience of the application process for their Apprenticeships and the poor levels of communication and numeracy shown by some candidates, they do not **solely** rely on GCSEs as the acceptance of young people having the levels of literacy and numeracy that they would expect. They have a further stage in their recruitment process where they ask the applicants to take aptitude tests in a variety of areas including communication and numeracy, to assess the skills of young people in a real context.

In summary, the three areas highlighted by the businesses involved in this research as the ones in which young people are poorly prepared for work are:

- lack of experience
- attitude and motivation
- communication and numeracy

There is definitely room for improvement in all three of these areas. The first two areas can be improved through engagement between business and schools to build the world of work into the delivery of education and through work experience opportunities. The standards of communication and numeracy skills of young people are the subject of current or recent reviews in the different nations of Great Britain.

Business Requirements

Businesses feel that schools should provide young people with a basic foundation to enable them to move into employment. This foundation should include:

- Relevant qualifications¹⁴ in English and Maths as a minimum
- Basic understanding of the world of work – interview skills, personal presentation, team working, problem solving
- Quality work experience opportunities
- Realistic careers information to reflect the opportunities that are available and identifying employment as a viable option alongside further education

Businesses recognise their responsibility to contribute to building this basic foundation and we have summarised our findings of the responsibility split between schools and businesses in the following table.

Schools	Business
provide a basic foundation which includes the following areas:	partnership role to work with schools to enable them to deliver the basic foundation:
English and Maths - young people need to be able to apply these skills	Bringing these subjects to life through involvement in lessons, talks to students, site visits to businesses, providing materials to support the curriculum
A basic understanding of the world of work – interview skills, how to present oneself for work, team working, problem solving	Working with schools to support the development of these skills through, for example, mock interview sessions, enterprise

¹⁴ GCSEs in England and Wales; National Qualifications in Scotland

	sessions and working with students on projects
Accessing quality work experience opportunities	Providing quality work experience opportunities which benefit the students and suit their interests
Access to careers information, opportunities and options - employment as a viable option alongside further education	Providing careers information and raising the profiles of careers through for example, careers talks and careers fairs
Releasing teachers for CPD	Offering teacher placements, teacher sessions and CPD opportunities

4 Benefits for Businesses and Schools

Where businesses and schools do work together we found many benefits depending on the level of engagement. Businesses identified the reasons and benefits of their engagement with schools. A summary of the key areas is provided below:

Young People and education

- ensuring a flow of young people into an industry or sector: making sure enough young people are thinking of careers in particular companies or industries/sectors
- recognising that young people can bring flexibility and new ideas to a company
- help **close the gap** between businesses' needs and provision, by influencing the curriculum, helping set standards and ensuring that young people are better prepared for employment

Business

- improved recruitment, greater productivity, lower turnover, reduced training and supervision cost as the result of better matches between recruits and the needs of businesses
- **involvement of existing employees** in the mentoring and supervision of work placements or going into schools, improves staff morale and encourages their own development and learning. It is rewarding for staff to be involved in the development of young people and helps improve their confidence and management skills (employee development and engagement)
- **community engagement**: raising the community profile of a business with schools can demonstrate that the business is socially responsible
- **social mobility**: engaging young people from a range of different backgrounds who may not have considered a job in their sector before; engaging disadvantaged young people
- **diversity and inclusion**: targeting local schools in order to change the demographics of the workforce to reflect local communities. This can be to encourage more girls to think about engineering or encouraging more young people from ethnic minorities to consider careers in construction; also important for a company's staff profile to mirror that of their local community and their customer base
- **winning public contracts**: when it comes to winning public contracts, business engagement in local communities is viewed favourably by potential clients; engaging with work experience helps to build stronger relationships with suppliers, customers and clients, and thereby opens up new business opportunities.
- **raising awareness and building reputation**: raising the profile of their organisation is an important reason for offering work experience placements; raising the profile of a specific sector or profession was an equally common motive.

For schools also the benefits are wide ranging:

1 Improvement in school performance

Businesses highlighted the role of business engagement in improving school performance through academic achievement, attainment and engagement of young people. They identified examples of individual young people who had been "switched on" to learning through various activities with businesses. This included young people who had realised the relevance of what they were learning in the classroom through working with businesses on projects, and regular work experience providing the routine that young people needed to engage them with learning.

This supports the evidence from an independent evaluation of the Business Class¹⁵ programme run by Business in the Community, which, according to the participating schools, highlights a 38% improvement in academic achievement for students and a 25% improvement in the leadership and governance in participating schools. According to the businesses and schools involved in the programme, confidence has significantly increased regarding the sustainability of school and business partnerships, especially among schools. Business confidence had increased by 32%, with schools showing a 57% increase.

One example through this programme is the partnership between Wates Construction and Ernesford Grange School in Coventry. Evidence clearly shows that the interventions Wates has put in place with the school have impacted positively on exam results through motivation, attendance initiatives and mentoring.

2 Employment prospects of students

Engagement with businesses improves the prospects of young people when seeking employment. Businesses highlighted that they would look more favourably at recruiting a young person who they knew through direct engagement as they saw them as having already shown an interest and enthusiasm in their company and the industry. Some businesses identified employees who had previously engaged with them through for example work experience placements.

This is supported by other recent research. Schools and businesses involved in the evaluation of the Business Class programme thought that the programme had improved students' employability by over 40%.¹⁶

Research by the Education and Employers' Taskforce shows that contact with businesses while at school has a significant impact on the employment prospects of young adults. 26.1% of young people who could recall no contact with businesses whilst at school went on to become NEET. This reduced significantly to 4.3% for those who had taken part in four or more activities involving businesses.¹⁷

3 Enrichment and enhancement of the delivery of education

School curriculum delivery is enriched by business engagement in a number of ways. This includes:

- bringing learning to life by talking to classes to show students how for example Maths is used in a variety of different industry contexts
- providing materials for teachers to support the curriculum
- working with students to develop their work skills such as preparation for interviews, mock interview sessions, enterprise days

Most often, businesses are involved in a "package" of these activities working with local schools through their partnerships. Some businesses will carry out discrete activities.

Some businesses are becoming involved in designing the curriculum, for example through their involvement with the developing University Technical Colleges (UTCs). UTCs are seen by the businesses who are involved in their development and operation, to be good examples of direct business involvement in the design and delivery of the curriculum. As an example at the JCB Academy, students work with businesses such as Toyota and Rolls Royce on five, eight week long

¹⁵ Business Class is a programme run by Business in the Community (BITC) which provides a simple framework for developing strategic, long-term and positive partnerships between employers and schools.

¹⁶ Business Class Evaluation: A Summary Cass Business School, City of London November 2010

¹⁷ It's who you meet: why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults – Education and Employers Taskforce February 2012

projects designed by the businesses to solve an engineering problem. The businesses use the engineering context to make learning more relevant for the academic subjects the students are also studying.

4 Providing quality work experience opportunities

The majority of businesses involved in the research were involved in providing work experience placements and opportunities for young people. In the main, this was to support local schools in offering work experience placements for young people at ages 14-16 and 16-18.

Businesses say that work experience is important as it helps young people to start to make some informed “next step” career choices. Some businesses inform us, that it is only through undertaking work experience that some young people have learned that job opportunities and apprenticeships are on offer in that sector and that apprenticeships are a valuable and viable choice for their future.

Businesses believe that substantive experience of the workplace is a key element of education for all young people. They are working with schools to make this happen in a meaningful quality way which adds value for the student, the business and the school.

The importance of quality in work experience

We asked businesses what they thought were the essential elements of successful work experience.¹⁸ Businesses stated that a quality work experience should encompass the following essential elements:

Essential element	Description
Structured and planned	The business and school should plan a structured programme with agreed outcomes that meet the individual young person’s needs
Career opportunities	It should show the young person what it is like to work, as well as showing them the different career opportunities a company can offer
Same expectations	All parties (young person, school, business) should have the same expectations (roles and responsibilities, shared understanding of the plan of activities and outcomes)
Tangible outcome	There should be a tangible outcome eg the solution to a business issue identified through a project; confirmation from the student that they do want to follow a career in the industry
Mentoring	Employees should be prepared and willing to support the young person during their time in the workplace
Evaluation	The experience should be evaluated by all parties (young person, school, business) to ensure that the outcomes have been met

¹⁸ We have developed a number of case studies that highlight the different approaches to work experience. Please reference appendix 3 for a list of these.

5 Providing careers information and raising the profile of careers in a sector

The majority of the businesses involved in the research commented on issues regarding the lack of up to date careers information available to students and the negative perception of young people of careers in sectors including retail, construction, tourism and hospitality. Businesses stressed that up to date and relevant careers information needs to be made accessible to young people so that they are aware of the different careers that are available and the opportunities that are available to them.

Businesses recognise that they have a key role to play in this. A number of businesses carry out a range of activity with schools to raise the profile of a particular sector or industry, as well as raise the profile of their own businesses. They want to raise the profile of their industries as valid career choices, as well as encouraging young people to work for their individual companies.

Many businesses are involved in activities to help address this.¹⁹ Some are involved in general awareness raising activity through for example taking part in Careers Fairs and Careers Days for their industries or at local schools. Some go into local schools to do careers talks and raise awareness of the opportunities available to young people such as Apprenticeships. This provides them with the opportunity to talk to students about roles in depth and let them know what it is really like to work in their industries. Others invite students to visit their offices or sites to see what goes on and learn about the range of careers within a business. Some have also offered work taster days to young people to provide them with an insight into the different departments and careers within their organisations.

Recent research shows that young people often gain access to new and trustworthy information and useful contacts through business engagement. A high number of relatively brief business engagements play a significant role in helping young people to explore, clarify and confirm career choices.²⁰

6 Teacher placements

Businesses have identified that teachers recognise the need for good quality careers information²¹ and the need to keep their work knowledge and experience up to date. A small number of the businesses and national organisations have been working with schools to offer teacher placements or Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities to enable this to happen. Teachers are often unaware that this is available.

This supports previous UK Commission research through the Youth Inquiry which recommended that teachers need an awareness of up to date industry practice.²²

¹⁹ We have developed a number of case studies that highlight the different approaches to work experience. Please reference Appendix 3 for a list of these.

²⁰ It's who you meet: why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults – Education and Employers Taskforce February 2012

²¹ In England, the Education Act 2011 places schools under a duty to secure access to independent careers guidance for their pupils in school years 9-11. This must be impartial and include information on the full range of post 16 education or training including Apprenticeships. In Wales, all 14-19 learners are entitled to specialist careers advice and guidance provided by qualified Careers Wales Advisors through careers education and guidance. This is delivered to schools and colleges as part of the Learning Pathways 14-19. In Scotland, the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993 lays out the statutory duty to ensure provision of careers services for school and college students. The Scottish Government fulfil this statutory duty through Skills Development Scotland's delivery in schools and across the FE sector.

²² The Youth Inquiry March 2011 (UK Commission of Employment and Skills)

Some businesses have provided work placements for teachers from local schools to support them to get up to date with industry. Others have organised visits to their offices or sites for teachers to see work in practice.²³

Some businesses also highlighted the role that intermediary organisations play in brokering this activity. One example is Heads Teachers and Industry (HTI) who run the 'Stretch' programme to support the CPD of senior teachers.²⁴ The programme enables senior teachers to take on interim assignments within a business in the UK or overseas which facilitate a deeper understanding of how different organisations work and how this can be transferred to the classroom.

²³ We have developed a number of case studies that highlight the different approaches to work experience. Please reference Appendix 3 for a list of these.

5 What are the barriers and challenges?

Businesses highlighted a number of barriers and challenges that they have experienced when working with schools. These are the main areas:

- Business and schools working together
- Work experience
- Awareness of and access to guidance and support

Business and schools working together

Businesses can find it difficult to “get a foot in the door” with schools who find it easier to work with larger businesses; also some of the businesses we have spoken to have given up on certain schools, as despite several attempts to engage, the schools do not see the relevance of engaging with them. Some schools seem to focus on areas that relate to performance tables such as exam results and do not see working with businesses as a priority.

Businesses have also identified that they are constrained by time and resource so are involved to their best capacity. We recognise that it is difficult, particularly for small businesses, to have the time and resources to develop partnerships with schools. All the businesses we spoke to informed us that when approached by a school, they will do their best to accommodate the request, even at short notice and have worked with the schools to identify further ways in which they could offer support to the schools in a longer term relationship. Some of the medium and large businesses highlighted that they cannot always accommodate all the requests they receive. Some of them for example focus on schools with which they have a longer term relationship and some of them focus on particular subject areas within schools, to enable them to play their part in a positive way.

One example of support for businesses who are not able to provide a lot of time for activity in this area, is Inspiring the Future, a programme run through the Education and Employers Task Force (EETF) which encourages business from all sectors and professions to give short “career insight” talks in secondary schools and FE colleges in England.²⁵

Work experience

Due to the volume of students wanting work experience placements and the timing being too prescriptive, this can result in either poor quality placements (last minute) or placements that do not meet the needs of the student. Some businesses have also had to turn schools away. Where work experience is planned and “timetabled” for the student, school and business, the placement is more likely to offer a high quality experience for the student tailored to meet their needs.

Awareness of and access to guidance and support

²⁵ Through *Inspiring the Future*, employers and their staff can volunteer to do an hour’s careers talk in local schools and colleges at no cost. Volunteers and schools are connected and communicate with each other through the website www.inspiringthefuture.org

Some businesses identified that they didn't know where to start or who to approach once they had decided to engage with schools. Others wanted guidance, information and support to help them make this decision.

There are a number of **resources and guides** to help businesses work with schools and colleges. These include the Employers and Young People website²⁶ which has been set up as a one-stop shop to encourage the engagement of businesses in supporting young people to understand and engage with the world of work in Scotland and the Education and Employers Task Force (EETF's) guide which has been designed to help businesses of all types and sizes to work more closely with schools and colleges.²⁷

Another challenge is **misinformation and misunderstanding** by both schools and businesses around the **areas of regulation**. This covers areas including insurance, health and safety and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. There are many 'myths' which surround the responsibility of business and schools in these areas and this presents a huge barrier to individual companies and schools to try to navigate their way through this.

²⁶ For the Employers and Young People website visit www.employersandyoungpeople.org

²⁷ For the EETF Employers Guide, visit <http://www.employers-guide.org/> There is also a guide for schools

Conclusion

This research reinforces the findings of previous research into this area. The report identifies the good practice of businesses and schools working in partnership and highlights the different types of activities which businesses and schools are doing to build the world of work into education. Businesses and schools are working together to provide young people with a greater awareness and understanding of the world of work, including the opportunities to access the work experience that businesses are looking for when recruiting.

However there is no room for complacency. Our research highlights that the barriers and challenges faced by businesses in building partnerships and working together with schools are still current. These barriers and challenges need to be removed.

Many businesses are actively working with schools. All say that they could do more and that more businesses need to get involved. More schools need to recognise the importance of business engagement in education.

To strengthen the findings and address these barriers, we make the following recommendation.

Recommendation:

More businesses and schools should build partnerships at a local level to:

- enhance and enrich the delivery of education through a range of activities for example through businesses providing curriculum materials, arranging site visits, carrying out talks in schools
- increase the flexibility of the timing of work experience opportunities so that more quality placements can be arranged throughout the school year and can be integrated throughout education
- provide up to date information about careers in their sectors and raise the profile of careers

To enable this to happen:

More **businesses** should work with schools to make them aware of the relevance of business engagement to enhance and enrich the delivery of education, and put resources into working with schools.

More **schools** should recognise the relevance of engaging with businesses to enhance and enrich the delivery of education, and put resources into working with businesses.

Governments and relevant organisations should play their respective parts in removing the identified barriers around access to simple guidance and support. This includes:

- making businesses and schools aware of the guidance and support that is available
- making the guidance more accessible
- providing simple clear guidance to correct the misunderstandings of the requirements for both businesses and schools regarding areas such as Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, Health and Safety and risk assessment²⁸

²⁸ The Health and Safety Executive are in the process of simplifying the information and guidance around health and safety for publication in April 2012. In England, the Department for Education have developed a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) "myth buster" to begin to dispel some of these misunderstandings

- incorporating information on progress and destinations in school performance tables.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is committed to playing our part in implementing these recommendations. We will make the findings from this project publicly available and work with partner organisations to disseminate the key messages from this report and the case studies to businesses and policy makers. We will build on and incorporate the evidence into our business plan for 2012-13, in the areas of Employer Ownership, More career opportunities for young people and Investment.

Appendix 1

Methodology

This project was set up to build on the Youth Inquiry and Employability research produced by the UK Commission²⁹ and conduct small scale, focused research to understand businesses' perceptions and experiences of the following areas:

- the skills, experience and attributes businesses look for when recruiting young people
- the respective roles of education and businesses in preparing young people for work
- partnerships between businesses and schools
- ways in which businesses engage with schools to build the world of work into education.

Its purpose was to:

- develop an understanding of businesses' perceptions towards youth recruitment and their experiences of working with education to prepare young people for work
- identify case studies of good practice to encourage more businesses to work with schools
- enable Commissioners to influence policy makers by making them aware of the role businesses have in supporting schools
- provide a response to relevant government consultations³⁰

The evidence for this project was collected in two stages between August and December 2011.

1 Evidence Review

A review of existing research from across the UK was carried out in August and September 2011 and an evidence review report was produced.

The evidence review collated and assessed recent evidence on businesses' attitudes and recruitment practices in regard to young people across the UK. Specifically, the review examined evidence relating to:

- the recruitment of young people (with a focus wherever possible on 16–18 year olds)
- what businesses are looking for from young recruits and the extent to which young people meet those requirements
- the extent to which businesses feel well served by the current education and training system and are engaged with it, for instance through involvement in the design and provision of education and training, offers of work experience, entry to work training or other support to young people and young recruits.

The evidence review is available as a separate report "Employers and the recruitment of young people 16-18 year olds: An evidence review August 2011".

2 Qualitative research

This was supplemented by carrying out direct research with approximately 100 businesses through a combination of individual telephone interviews and focus groups between August and December 2011.

We carried out telephone interviews with businesses from across England and Wales, some who operate UK wide. These businesses ranged across medium and large businesses across diverse sectors including Engineering, Construction, Travel and Manufacturing. We also interviewed a

²⁹ The Employability Challenge - February 2009, Employability: Incentivising Improvement - June 2010 and The Youth Inquiry - March 2011– UK Commission for Employment and Skills

³⁰ As part of the project, the UK Commission provided a response to DfE's (England) consultations on Removing the statutory duty to deliver work related learning at Key Stage 4 and Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds

small number of small businesses.

Businesses were selected on the basis of:

- a mixture of those who do and those who do not recruit young people aged 16-18
- a range of those who do and do not engage with schools
- a range of large, medium and small businesses across England and Wales.

We also held or attended four focus groups – the People 1st Employer Chain Group which is made up of large businesses from the hospitality and travel sectors (November 2011), two workshops with CIPD (range of small, medium and large businesses across diverse sectors) (September and November 2011) and a workshop with the Leeds Chamber of Commerce (range of small, medium and large businesses across diverse sectors) (December 2011) to gather business views on the areas highlighted as relevant to this project.

Organisations in Scotland³¹ who regularly engage with businesses, provided us with relevant information regarding businesses' perceptions on the project areas. They explained that a lot of research has already been carried out with businesses across diverse sectors in Scotland and also provided us with relevant reports which we have reviewed as part of the project and include these findings in this report.

It is useful to note that there were no noticeable national or regional differences in relation to businesses' perceptions of the project areas.

It should be noted that although the businesses were asked questions about schools and colleges, the majority of the responses related to schools. Unless otherwise identified, most of the research in the report relates to businesses working with schools.

³¹ These have included Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland (including Industry Managers), Scottish Qualifications Authority, People 1st and Financial Skills Partnership.

Copy of the questionnaire used for the telephone interviews and focus groups

Recruitment of young people and business and education working together project – questions to be sent in advance of a business interview

Background

Public policy has a role to play in facilitating the entry of young people into employment and their progression within work. It is a priority for the UK Commission to work with businesses to help align education and training with business needs and to help prepare young people for employment and career progression. Policy must be informed by an appreciation of businesses' recruitment practices regarding young people and the role that skills and qualifications play in that recruitment process.

Aims

The aim of this discussion is to explore businesses' attitudes and practices in regard to the recruitment of young people (with a focus wherever possible on 16–18 year olds) to include the following topics:

- what businesses are looking for from young recruits;
- the extent to which young people meet those needs;
- the extent to which businesses feel well served by the current education and training system and are engaged with it;
- business involvement in the design and provision of education and training; and
- business engagement with work placement/experience.

Recruitment of young people/ work readiness of young people

1. Have you recruited young people (16 – 18 year olds) in the last two years?
2. If yes, how many do you recruit? How often? Into what types of roles?
3. What recruitment methods do you use?
4. What skills/experience/attributes do you look for when recruiting young people?
5. What positive/less positive experiences have you had when recruiting young people?
6. Do you feel that schools/colleges prepare young people for work? What are schools/colleges' and businesses' respective roles in preparing young people for work?
7. If you do not recruit young people, why not? What do you think are the barriers? Are these real or perceived barriers?

Links between business and education/work experience and the design / delivery of education and training

1. Does your company carry out any work with schools or colleges? If yes, give examples.
2. What are the reasons and benefits for your company from doing this?
3. Are there any barriers/challenges?
4. If you offer work experience and/or internships, what are your views on your current provision? Does this meet your needs? How could this be improved?
5. What are the essential elements for quality work experience from your perspective?
6. How, if at all, has the economic downturn altered your views on work experience, placement and internships?
7. If your company does not carry out any work with schools and colleges, what would encourage you to do so?

Case studies – Would you be willing to work with us to provide a case study

Would you be happy for us to contact you further for more information for this project?

Contacts - Can you suggest other businesses for us to contact in relation to this project?

Appendix 2

Case Study 1: Signature Leather and the Yale Glove project

Signature Leather Ltd is a small company manufacturing a range of fashion and sporting gloves in England with near 100% of their production exported world-wide. Based in North Wales they have been working with Yale College in Wrexham to build the world of work into the delivery of education.

Activity

In the autumn of 2010, Timothy Penn was invited by Menter a Busnes to address the Business A Level students at Yale College and this resulted in a project being developed for the Business students who were tasked with looking at the issues associated with Signature Leather entering the Japanese marketplace which was a live and current area of research at Signature Leather.

As this Japanese project proved very successful, Tim decided to approach the Faculty Head responsible for Fashion & Design at Yale in order to enquire if there were grounds for a Project that would have some resonance with the course of study being undertaken by the Yale College Fashion & Design Cohort. This is an example of a pro-active approach from the business to the college. The Faculty head was very interested in developing a project and subsequently introduced Tim to the Fashion & Design lecturers who then worked together on the design of a course of study fully supported in its implementation by Menter a Busnes.

Within the project, the Fashion and Textiles students were responsible for the glove designs and technical packages. The Art & Graphic students were responsible for the illustrative work and all photographic work was done by the photography students. It was fundamental that each of the subject areas formed new links to work efficiently with each other to ensure uniformity and consistency throughout the project. The Fashion and Textile students numbered 9 and each student was invited to create and submit new glove designs which resulted in 30 plus designs for Signature Leathers consideration. The lecturer involved in leading this part of the project insisted that the students produce a technical spec pack with each glove design replicating the way new product designs are presented to manufacturers in the real world of fashion which the lecturer had previous been involved with.

In turn, Tim's commitment to these students was that one pair of their glove designs would be manufactured for each to add to their portfolio of study. One of the key elements for students studying fashion design was that Signature Leather manufactures with tools and techniques from the time of British Victorian glove manufacturing and one of the sessions undertaken at college was a presentation of the tools used (which Tim brought into College) which of course was the subject of great interest and at the same time enhanced their understanding of the heritage of traditional British manufacturing techniques.

Benefit to the students and the business

This was very well received by the students who all mentioned that having had the opportunity to work with a "real live" company as part of their course of study helped them for example in their subsequent University entrance interviews.

Tim was very impressed with the high standard of work and enthusiasm of the students and was delighted to return to Yale with a collection of 9 pairs of gloves which were formally presented to the students with an invited audience including the College Principal and local press. The collection is to be promoted by Signature Leather as The Signature Yale Collection: Designed in North Wales.

The Photography and Graphic design students had the opportunity to work on a new version of an extremely important business tool for Signature Leather that of the glove style "Line Sheet" as well as undertaking several outside photo shoots and the company will be publishing some of their work on a new update to the web site planned at this time. At the same time the Graphic Design Cohort worked on the design of glove packaging and trade stand presentation both real live issues for Signature Leather.

From Signature Leather's perspective the opportunity to have large groups of young imaginative minds focusing in on what Signature Leather are doing (in real live markets) generated some terrific design ideas and ways of looking at the marketplace from many pairs of fresh eyes. It is also very unlikely that the Yale designs that will be going into production would ever have been thought at Signature Leather so the project produced tremendous additional stimulation for the company.

Case Study 2: Career Academies UK and Mears

Mears Group plc works in partnership with their social housing clients across the UK, to maintain, repair and upgrade homes. Their care teams also provide support to around 20,000 people across the UK. They are committed to supporting local skills development and education for employment and are working in partnership with Lambeth College's Career Academy to provide mentoring and work experience to local young people.

Activity

Nadine Dyer is a Mears Customer and Community Manager and has been a Partner in Business for the past two years. She has recently supported her first Mentee by meeting a couple of times each term to discuss the student's progress and helping him with advice and support, for example, preparing a personal statement for his UCAS application. She also arranged for Mears to conduct mock interviews with students helping them to practice and understand the interview process.

Nadine sits on the Lambeth College Career Academy Local Advisory Board and is raising the profile of Career Academies to a wider audience within Mears.

Benefits to Mears

- Career Academies are a great community project for Mears, helping them to deliver on their promises for employment and opportunity for all.
- They are a huge benefit to local youngsters with no cost to the branches.
- All volunteers are supported by the Career Academy from the outset and 1:1 mentoring is very rewarding.

Appendix 3

Case studies produced separately to accompany the report

Business	Topic
BAE systems	Apprenticeships
Dow Corning	Working with schools and colleges – education centre
Lovell Partnerships Ltd	Structured work experience offered en bloc
Magnox	Work experience/working with schools
McDonald's	Work experience programme/school materials/presentations
Rolls Royce	Apprenticeships and working with schools
Tata Steel	Working with schools and colleges
SEC Recruitment	Recruitment of young people through Apprenticeships to solve a business need
Seddon Construction	Work experience
Siemens	"Girls into engineering" scheme in Lincoln
Signature Leather	Working with an individual college across a range of subject areas
TUI Travel	Recruitment of young people and work experience
UPM Shotton Paper	Work experience/working with schools
Wates Construction	Work experience/ working with schools

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is a social partnership, led by Commissioners from large and small employers, trade unions and the voluntary sector. Our mission is to raise skill levels to help drive enterprise, create more and better jobs and economic growth.

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