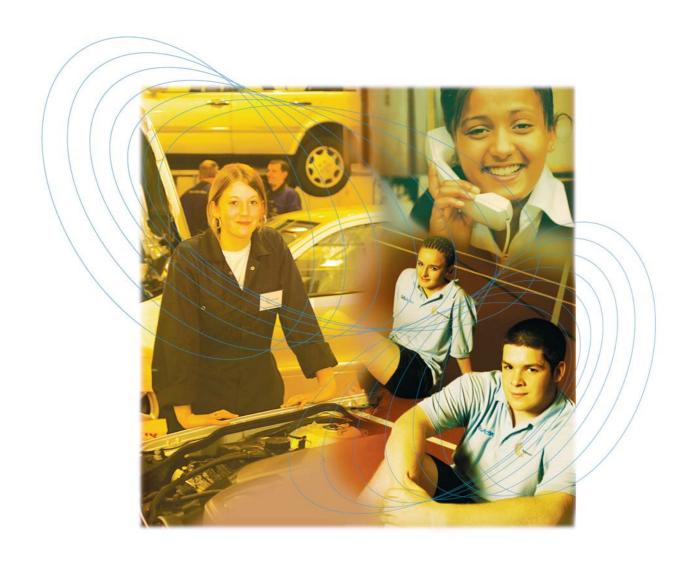# Building on Young Apprenticeships: Equal Opportunities

B Newton, L Miller, R Page, S Tuohy

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Young Apprenticeships: Equal Opportunities
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Building on Young Apprenticeships
Equal Opportunities

Becci Newton
Linda Miller
Rosie Page
Siobhan Tuohy

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The Institute for Employment Studies

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Executive Summary

The Young Apprenticeships and the 14-19 reforms

The Young Apprenticeships sit within a framework of reforms aimed at increasing both choice in, and quality of, provision for young people aged between 14 and 19. The government's commitment to increasing participation in training and learning beyond the age of 16 means that programmes for 14-16 year olds are particularly important. By 2013 young people will be entitled to access Diplomas which will offer a broad range of subjects and qualification levels within the vocational framework alongside the traditional GCSE choices and it is likely that some elements of the Young Apprenticeships, Increased Flexibility and Key Stage 4 Engagement programmes will remain in place for certain target groups.

These programmes suggest some of the actions that will be needed to for the 90 per cent target for post-16 participation to be met. The vision set out in the consultation document *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16* is for an interaction between the right provision, the right support (including information, advice and guidance) and increased employer involvement to prevent disengagement. Underpinning these will be effective partnerships between schools, colleges and training providers to ensure access to seamless provision delivered in these different venues.

The Young Apprenticeship evaluations, as well as those from the other programmes, have provided crucial evidence regarding the barriers to, and promoters of, these three integrated pillars of support. These programmes are also trialling the ways in which effective partnerships can operate between schools, colleges, training providers and employers. It is important that lessons from the programme transfer more widely into 14-16 provision so that it may support the 14-19 entitlement, particularly to the newer Diploma programmes.

Background to the Equal Opportunities research

In September 2004 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)[1] commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to evaluate equal opportunities in the second cohort of its Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme. The evaluation and the recommendations based on those findings were reported in the IES publication *Young Apprenticeships: Equal Opportunities.*

To support its implementation of the recommendations contained in that report, the Department commissioned IES to undertake a further programme of research. This research consisted of three strands: work with Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to develop information about the YAs, careers and training opportunities in three strongly gender-segregated subjects; workshops to share findings about taster events and encourage wider provision of taster sessions; and case study research to provide an update on progress with equality and diversity within the five sites visited as part of the first YA Equal Opportunities project.

Legislative background

In between the first and second stages of the equal opportunities evaluation of the Young Apprenticeships the Equality Bill made its way through Parliament. Enactment of the Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and paved the way for introduction of the Gender Equality Duty (GED) in April 2007[2].

The GED will require public bodies and private/voluntary sector bodies carrying out public functions on behalf of the state actively promote equality rather than to merely avoid discrimination. The GED will therefore render the equal opportunities criteria set out by the Department for YA providers central to provision requirements in the future. The change in law will make the equal opportunities requirements a necessity for mainstream provision also, and therefore makes the good practice guidance contained in the report of value to all providers, not just those involved in delivery of YAs.

Methodology

■ **Case study research**. The five good practice partnerships visited in 2005 were followed up after recruitment for cohort 3 in 2006. This longitudinal element allowed the sites' progression in terms of EO practices to be tracked.

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[1] The section of the DfES that commissioned the evaluation was moved to Department for Children, Schools and Families in June 2007.

[2] Source: Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) '*What is the gender equality duty?*' Available at: http://www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=17686

- **Tasters research and development**. This work built on the 'taster' case studies provided in the first report, and featured *development workshops* to explore taster delivery issues; *regional workshops* to share findings and offer support to partnerships delivering tasters; and development of a *toolkit and illustrative case studies* for the design, delivery and evaluation of tasters.

- **Development of YA information with Sector Skills Councils**. This work was a response to the earlier finding that young people wanted more information about sectors and careers to help them with their decision regarding the YA. The process involved elicitation meetings with key staff in the SSCs to discuss issues including occupational stereotypes in the selected sectors, and the realities of work and areas of growth in the sector. From this, three booklets were designed for use by Partnerships during cohort 4 and subsequent recruitment.

Key findings in the good practice case studies

Targets and monitoring

The setting of recruitment targets is not common practice. In the best example found within the case studies, targets had been set across the programmes offered within a single subject (the subject in which the YA was offered) and the organisation was planning to implement targets for recruitment for each school participating in the next cohort.

While monitoring the profile of pupils from application onwards is common practice, the monitoring of the earlier parts of the recruitment process, such as activities to raise awareness of the YA or to encourage wider choices, requires greater encouragement. One organisation intended to start asking schools to provide more data about referrals to the YA (compared to the group that was potentially eligible for the YA). Arguably this should be replicated elsewhere.

Learning points

- Use information about school populations to set targets for the participation in the YA for young men and young women entering non-traditional subjects, as well as for ethnic minorities, those with SEN or disabilities, and socially disadvantaged pupils.

- Use information about other Key Stage 4 programmes, particularly at level 2, to help understand any distinctive characteristics about the YA groups and benchmark progress.

- Monitor earlier parts of the recruitment process in terms of diversity.

- Make targets explicit and visible. Monitor and develop practice against these, assessing the extent to which EO activities result in a changing profile of entrants to the programme.

Awareness raising, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), recruitment and selection

The recruitment models operated by Partnerships remained largely the same as those found in the previous research and continued to determine how pupils heard about the YA. While these models were felt to impact on the awareness-raising activities that partnerships were able to undertake, there was less concern about the impacts of the school-led model, which placed selection ahead of giving information, on the diversity of the cohort. The need to select candidates of sufficient quality to ensure they would cope with the demands of the YA was instead emphasised, in some cases based on experiences of operating the entry criteria more flexibly in the past. Partnerships were now less certain than before that taking positive action to include atypical entrants whose scores were below the entry criteria had been in pupils' best interests since some had struggled with the YA (and in some cases had left the course).

The main way in which the partnerships worked with schools to ensure diversity was to agree a contract, most frequently verbally, for the inclusion of a representative ethnic mix based on school populations. This appeared to work well and could be extended to meet the requirement to target socially disadvantaged groups. However, it was less effective as a means to encourage greater gender-balance in non-traditional subjects. Here it appeared there was a lack of real policy drive to make schools act on this issue. This also suggests that strengthening the partnership relationship, so that equal opportunities are seen as a shared responsibility, might be beneficial.

There was evidence that further reinforcement of the information given during sessions to introduce young people (and parents) to the YA would be beneficial. Some young people claimed not to have understood, for instance, the extent of work placement that would be involved. Partnerships continued to be concerned about the advice available to pupils, particularly in relation to the value of vocational education compared to traditional GCSE routes. However, some good examples of advice and guidance were found. For example, in one case the partnership assessed each young person's skills and abilities assessed and offered guidance regarding the options that might best suit them.

One aspect of good practice that was seen across the partnerships was the extension of recruitment processes to better enable pupils to demonstrate their skills and motivation for the YA. This had led to a more holistic view of performance prior to selection. The new practices included teacher references (to support selection decisions following interview) and assessment centres, with these often being integrated into interview days or tasters.

Learning points

- Make clear that all national requirements relating to academic criteria and diversity are of equal importance, are a shared responsibility and are part of the contract with schools.

- Make printed materials available to young people and parents to supplement verbal information given about the YA.

- Work more closely with schools to ensure the value of the YA is understood, increase school engagement with the YA and ensure that more pupils within each school are aware that they have the opportunity to apply for the programme.

- Embed pupil IAG within recruitment processes and consider the use of taster sessions as a way of offering a practical approach to the provision of IAG.

- Extend recruitment processes to ensure a holistic view of YA candidates is gained.

Support and delivery

The best support models were those which had been put in place for all Young Apprentices but were sufficiently individualised to meet the needs of atypical entrants. An example of this kind of support was one partnership in which the YA co-ordinator took on a more hands-on role and whose job it was to keep in touch with pupils across learning sites: at college, school and on work placements. Their responsibilities also included conducting individual review sessions with each pupil. These drew on feedback from each of the stakeholders, as well as the young person.

Where a number of partners are involved in providing support to young people, responsibilities need to be clearly set out. In such situations, a co-ordinator with an overview role will help ensure that all individuals are aware of their responsibilities and that adequate support and monitoring of pupil experience takes place.

Some workplaces continue to display inappropriate materials which can be embarrassing not just for minority or atypical groups but for any young person in that environment. However, some partnerships were more confident about talking to employers about this issue than others. One way in which this had been successfully achieved was to include an assessment of suitability during a health-and-safety/risk-assessment site visit. The partnership that took this approach subsequently provided guidance to the employer that was couched in terms of issues that should be considered when having any 14- or 15-year-old at the work site, rather than focusing on gender or race per se. Other support for minority or atypical groups included the provision of a suitable buddy at the placement and the opportunity to network with peers across courses when at college.

It is also important to offer all pupils, but particularly minority ethnic and gender-atypical entrants, the opportunity to discuss their experiences at their placements and to use specific rather than general questioning. The research revealed that one young

person was the subject of 'sly jokes' at their work placement, and another whose peers teased them about their subject choice. Neither was too concerned and had not raised the issue with YA staff. However, this could have formed a significant barrier for less resilient young people.

The needs of pupils with special educational needs may require particular consideration, and partnerships may find that some employers are better placed, in terms of available time or work priorities, to provide placements for more vulnerable young people.

For young people entering large organisations or companies that use shift patterns, displaying posters about the young person can help ensure that staff know why the young person is there and what tasks they are able to do. Another means of support during the work placement is the provision of guided or independent study materials so that young people can use any time available in between specific tasks to work through this resource; this can also be used as a way to catch up on any missed elements of the course.

Learning points

- Ensure there is clarity within the partnership about who will support young people in the different learning environments.

- Ensure reviews incorporate pupils' feedback as well as the views of the professionals and employers they are in contact with.

- Inappropriate and offensive materials displayed within the work environment can make for an uncomfortable experience for any visitor but is likely to be all the more so for young people. One way in which partnerships can encourage employers to think about such issues is to provide guidance which includes suggestions about the message such materials send to all visitors (including potential customers), not just to young people. If an organisation is not prepared to remove such materials then it is unlikely the environment will be suitable for any young people, not just atypical entrants.

- YAs from ethnic minorities may prefer to undertake placements in workplaces where employees from ethnic minorities are also present. Similarly, young women working in male-dominated sectors may also appreciate being placed at a site where there is at least one other female working.

- In large workplaces, it can be helpful if partnerships provide posters explaining the reason for the young people being there and outlining what the YAs are able to do (and conversely, any areas in which they are not allowed to work)in the organisation.

- Where possible link atypical learners with peers from other courses while at college and with an atypical mentor at work placements.

Barriers to, and the encouragement of, wider choices

The barriers to activities to encourage wider choices remain much the same as those that were reported in the earlier study.

School engagement with equality and diversity. The extent to which schools allow activities such as information or taster sessions to take place *prior* to Key Stage 4 option choices is a potential barrier to encouraging wider choices. The views of staff – and particularly those with a role in providing advice to young people – can also be a barrier. While there was some evidence of more success in engaging with schools, partnerships reported little evidence of changed staff attitudes, which in many cases remain unfavourable to vocational options.

Parental stereotypes. Parents too are crucial influences on young people's decisions. While partnerships felt they had improved their communications with parents, they were still concerned that progress was slow. Parental influence was a particular concern for partnerships seeking to increase numbers of pupils from ethnic minority groups. Their concerns largely centred on whether parents would support entry to vocational education, rather than academic routes leading to university. There are particular difficulties in encouraging the participation of young ethnic minority women on the YA.

Funding. The lack of funding for activities to encourage wider choices was felt to be an obstacle. Support from national organisations in this regard was felt to be lacking, although this is not specifically restricted to the Young Apprenticeship. Where funding is available, this is usually for one-off projects rather than longer-term initiatives. There were fears that reduced funding for the YA in the longer term might limit future activities.

A number of strategies to encourage wider choices were reported, including the provision of tasters, industry days and careers events. The use of employer role models in these events was seen as particularly important. Other strategies included maximising opportunities to celebrate success through press coverage. Good practice more generally included an annual audit and update of learning resources to ensure these reflected the YA community, use of nationally-available resources to promote gender and race inclusion, and providing opportunities to discuss cultural and religious beliefs.

Many examples of good and innovative equality and diversity practices were found during the case study visits and these are highlighted in vignettes throughout the report. In addition, these vignettes have been produced as a stand-alone document to maximise accessibility and impact of the good practice findings. This document is available within the appendices to this report and is also available as a download from the LSC Apprenticeship website.

Learning points

- Celebrate success and seek media coverage for YA awards ceremonies or other activities. Include non-traditional learners in press coverage and marketing materials.

- Review teaching resources for bias in terms of gender, race or disability, and for stereotyping within occupations and, if appropriate, make changes to ensure they present a more inclusive picture of the area. This does not necessarily imply investment in the production of new resources – there are nationally-available resources that Partnerships can access for free.

- Involve employers (and, where possible, positive role model employers), in careers and YA information events for young people.

- Provide opportunities to explore issues of gender, race or disability, or stereotyping within occupations. Encourage young people to consider their own attitudes and beliefs and how these might impact on others.

Overcoming barriers

- Work with school teams to promote their active commitment to the YA. Brief all staff about the value of the qualifications. Embed staff training for equality and diversity for all members of the partnership.

- Emphasise the value of the YA qualifications in communications with parents and young people and the options they offer for progression. Use case studies of YAs who have progressed into education or training.

- National consideration should be given to the impacts of the changing funding regime and particularly the concern that activities to encourage widen choices may be constrained by uncertainties in funding.

Using the critical success factors as a framework for equality and diversity

The second round of the research clearly demonstrated the link between good equalities practice and good practice more generally. While equality and diversity practices cannot be separated from the concepts identified as Critical Success Factors (CSFs) by the Department and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), it is also the case that practices introduced because of attention to equality and diversity issues typically result in an improved learning experience for all learners.

The case study areas had made some significant progress towards improving the YA delivery process to ensure that all pupils, including those who are atypical, have the best experience possible. The best-example partnerships were not complacent, instead assessing all aspects of their delivery to enable them to change their practice where necessary. Linking equal opportunities and diversity to the CSFs, and making sure they are central to all quality-improvement activities, is the simplest way to ensure success.

Embedding tasters in Young Apprenticeship recruitment models

Tasters provide an active form of IAG. They allow young people to experiment within a subject and to understand the vocational learning mode, which most have not experienced previously. The partnerships visited during the first phase of the work had successfully challenged occupational and sector stereotypes using taster events. In this strand of the research, partnerships who were new to the idea of taster events (or who wished to gain information on how they could extend their provision) were encouraged to explore equality and diversity issues in tasters and consider how they might design and run new or different taster events. A toolkit was subsequently designed for use by partnerships in developing and delivering tasters. This is included in the appendices to this report and is being disseminated in conjunction with a set of case study vignettes through the LSC's Apprenticeship online repository.

Developing Young Apprenticeship information with Sector Skills Councils

The earlier report recommended the provision of more detailed information about the industrial sectors offering the YAs, and the careers and opportunities within them. The third element of the work therefore sought to address this issue in partnership with the relevant SSCs. Information was identified in meetings with four SSCs offering three YAs (CITB Construction Skills; Automotive Skills; Skills for Care; and Skills for Health), including the sorts of activities and skills involved in the various different occupational areas, the sorts of career options available and the likely pay that an entrant might expect. The information gained from the discussions with the SSCs was then incorporated into a brochure template that had been designed by IES. Each of the three brochures was then illustrated with images showing a diverse, but still realistic, range of views of the sector, apprentices and other workers.

The three brochures produced using the IES template and the information and images obtained were distributed to all Partnerships offering YAs in construction, automotive and health and social care in cohort 4. The template and a toolkit to help other SSCs identify appropriate information to develop brochures for their own sectors are available through the LSC Apprenticeship repository.

The work also revealed that SSCs do not necessarily have appropriate images or other resources available to them, and so may require support in sourcing such materials. For this project, the DfES, LSC and the Equal Opportunities Commission supplied images, as well as the partner SSCs and their YA partnerships[1].

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[1] Only images for which appropriate permissions had been gained were used in the brochures.

Next steps for YAEOs

A key recommendation is that the commitment to sharing good practice is sustained. While evaluation of the programme will devolve to the national inspection and monitoring bodies, there would still be benefits to encouraging partnerships to share their delivery challenges and solutions.

This aim is partly met through the forums provided by the SSCs for each of the subjects. Ensuring that equality and diversity are kept as an ongoing agenda point for meetings will keep this as a high priority. There may also be opportunities to establish networks that operate across subjects and allow for good practice to be transferred across sectors. One possible approach is for regional LSCs to host or facilitate such forums; alternatively, in light of the increasing use of electronic resources within YA delivery partnerships a virtual forum might also provide a way forward. Collaboration at regional and local levels may also help support partnerships to meet the requirements arising from the new national diploma entitlement and other vocational changes expected to be in place by 2013.

As noted by the Department within the cohort 4 documentation, many of the critical success factors are relevant to all 14-16provision, not just the YAs. As suggested above, the CSFs provide the framework through which equality can be addressed, and, since quality and equality go hand in hand, we strongly recommend that partnerships seek explicitly to address the CSFs in their delivery. Through doing so, and through the sharing of good practice, expertise will be gained that can transfer to the wider 14-16vocational education agenda.

1 Building on Young Apprenticeship Equal Opportunities

1.1 Young Apprenticeships and the 14-19 reforms

The Young Apprenticeships sit within a framework of reforms aimed at increasing both choice and quality of provision for young people aged between 14 and 19. The government's commitment to increasing participation in training and learning beyond the age of 16 means that programmes for 14-16 year olds will play a particularly important role in future. The vision is for a suite of academic and vocational qualifications that will serve to reduce disaffection amongst this age group and through this, promote progression into further learning.

By 2013 young people will be entitled to access Diplomas which will offer a broad range of subjects and qualification levels within the vocational framework alongside the traditional GCSE choices. In addition, the Young Apprenticeships, Increased Flexibility and Key Stage 4 Engagement programmes are likely to remain in place for certain target groups.

These programmes suggest some of the actions that will be needed to for the 90 per cent target for post-16 participation to be met. The vision set out in the consultation document *Raising expectations: staying in education and training post-16* is for an interaction between the right provision, the right support (including information, advice and guidance) and increased employer engagement to prevent disengagement. Underpinning these will be effective partnerships between schools, colleges and training providers to ensure access to seamless provision delivered in these different venues.

The Young Apprenticeship evaluations, together with those from the other programmes, have provided crucial evidence regarding the barriers to, and promoters of, these three integrated pillars of support. These programmes are also trialling the ways in which effective partnership can operate between schools, colleges, training providers and employers. It is important that lessons from the programme transfer

more widely into 14-16 provision so that it may support the 14-19entitlement, particularly to the newer Diploma programmes.

Recent evaluation of the IFP by OFSTED (2007[1]) has demonstrated that significant barriers still exist to vocational provision for 14 year olds. These include the lack of esteem for vocational and work-related qualifications, which are often seen as the preserve of under-achievers by parents and staff. The existence of separate vocational and academic pathways in Key Stage 4 was seen as discouraging able students from undertaking courses leading to vocational qualifications (because of the difficulties of combining these with academic courses) and, for those entering vocational routes, there were fewer options available compared to those taking GCSEs. Recommendations arising from the OFSTED evaluation included changing funding so that it encourages collaboration to improve the curriculum; support from local authorities to broker arrangements between partners; and, within schools, the offer of a broad curriculum which makes vocational options available to all learners.

In September 2004 the Department for Education and Skills (DfES)[2] commissioned an evaluation of equal opportunities in the second cohort of its Young Apprenticeship (YA) programme. The YA programme aims to offer a high-quality work-based learning experience to motivated 14-16year olds who are 'solid' achievers[3] academically. The YA route aims to bring a sharper employment and vocational focus than the IFP through its extended work placement and this is perhaps the most distinctive of its features.

1.2 Background to the equal opportunities study

Through it's focus on 'solid achievers' the programme targets a group who might be considered 'non-traditional' within vocational education. Potentially, then, the programme may provide important information about the ways in which providers can engage with this group, in addition to identifying the information and/or support that parents and other stakeholders might need in order to enable more learners from this group to enter vocational routes.

While the first cohort partnerships had successfully introduced the new route and put in place the arrangements for pupils to experience learning in a range of settings, concern surrounded the lack of pupil diversity achieved at that early stage.

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[1]   Ofsted (2007) The Key Stage 4 curriculum: Increased flexibility and work-related options, Ofsted report 070113, London.

[2]   The section of the DfES that commissioned the evaluation was moved to Department for Children, Schools and Families in June 2007.

[3]   The entry criteria for the YA require that young people have Key Stage 2 SATS results at a minimum of Level 4 in Maths, Science and English; and a combined Key Stage 3 Teacher Assessment Score of 14 or higher (that is, a combination of 5, 5, and 4 variously in Maths, Science and English assessments).

Therefore, the Department required all second cohort proposals to make a clear statement and commitment to equality of opportunity for pupils, and in particular required partnerships to support and enable young people to make wider choices and to access opportunities across all frameworks, irrespective of gender, race or disability. The equal opportunities (EO) evaluation was commissioned shortly after to assess the EO practice within those partnerships. That evaluation included telephone interviews with the relevant Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), which at that time were Automotive Skills, Creative and Cultural Skills, Council for Administration, Skills Active, SEMTA, People1st, Skills for Care, Skills for Health, and Skillsfast. A representative of the Trades Union Congress was also interviewed during this phase. In addition, telephone interviews were undertaken with 20 Partnership Leads selected by the Department (one-quarter of all cohort 2 partnerships); and case studies in five partnerships to identify evolving good practice.

That study (Newton et al., 2006)[1] found that, while partnerships were aware of the requirement for equal opportunities, many felt this had to be balanced with their other priorities (such as securing suitable and safe placements). Indeed, where good EO practice was found this was often an extension of an organisation's historical approach to recruiting learners in the particular subject field, rather than being driven by the requirements of the YA. Aspects of good practice identified within the 2006 report included:

■ Opportunities for young people to have a 'taster' experience of the sector and/or the learning environment of vocational routes. Examples were also found of tasters configured to support equal opportunities and broader choices, such as all-female tasters in male-dominated sectors, and a 'lads and dads' taster in a female-dominated sector.

■ Information sessions for parents and guardians, to help overcome any occupational or vocational education stereotypes they might hold.

■ Provision of access to peers at college and in the workplace as a supportive mechanism.

A number of recommendations were made in the 2006 report. These included:

■ Improving the information available about the occupational sectors in which YAs were available to support young people in making their choices. Discussions with young people indicated that they had most frequently received information about the 'mechanics' of the YA but often there was little information about sectors – and little to challenge any already-formed stereotypes about occupations in these sectors.

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[1]   Available from the LSC Apprenticeship Repository (www.apprenticeships.org.uk) or through IES http://www.employment-studies.co.uk.

■ Encourage partnerships to set diversity targets that build on current diversity achievements, and the relevant SSCs' targets for diversity in learning and training in the sectors more generally. When the evaluation was undertaken, partnerships had not set themselves targets (beyond the overall number of pupils entering the route, academic performance, and progression) and were often not aware of any national information that would support them in doing so. Overall, monitoring was more prevalent than the setting of targets, however, starting the monitoring process at the stage at which awareness-raising activities were undertaken and then following through by monitoring application and enrolment patterns would enhance the information available to help partnerships assess the impact of their activities to encourage wider choices.

■ Strengthen national guidance about when to be flexible regarding application of the entry criteria so that partnerships have more confidence in waiving, for example, elements of the academic criteria where attainment is just below the required level but pupil motivation is strong. Overall, the priority amongst partnerships had been to ensure that pupils had the capacity to cope with the rigours of the YA and, as a result, a number of partnerships had noted that application of the entry criteria had negatively affected diversity. However, it should also be noted that, in most of these cases, they felt that the non-traditional entrants had been further from the academic criteria than could be accepted.

■ Encourage partnerships to work with schools on recruitment to overcome any stereotypes of who should be put forward for the YA. The report also noted that initial selection of schools to participate in the partnership had often contributed to the extent of inclusion of ethnic minority pupils or those with special educational needs.

■ Structure the support available for young people participating in the YA during college and work placements. In addition to recognising that atypical entrants may have additional support requirements good practice organisations had taken a more structured approach to eliciting feedback from young people to ensure their needs were fully met and no problems were arising in the placement.

The outcomes of that first phase of research were disseminated at the YA conferences that year and in print through an extended executive summary and the full report. In response to the recommendations made in the report, the Department commissioned further research that would support implementation of these recommendations. This second trânche of work consisted of four strands of activity:

■ Development of a brochure identifying good equal opportunities guidance for Key Stage 4, to be distributed via the regional LSCs.

■ Development of a brochure providing information about the YA, and careers and training opportunities in three YA subjects in which there was significant gender segregation: construction, the motor industry, and health and social care. The

brochures were developed in conjunction with the four SSCs involved in these three YA programmes and they were designed to be used to support recruitment for cohort 4 onwards in these YAs.

■ Facilitation of a series of research-based workshops to share findings about 'tasters' aimed at encouraging more partnerships to further embed these events within the YAs. Included in this phase of the work was the creation of a toolkit to support providers in the design, delivery and evaluation of further taster events. A national evaluation forms the conclusion of this aspect of work.

■ Update on progress within the five case study sites visited for the first YA Equal Opportunities report.

1.3 Legislative background

In between the first and second stages of the equal opportunities evaluation of the Young Apprenticeships the Equality Bill made its way through Parliament. Enactment of the Equality Act 2006 amended the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and paved the way for introduction of the Gender Equality Duty (GED) in April 2007[1].

The GED applies to all organisations in the public sector – such as Local Authorities, colleges and schools – and to those in the private or voluntary sector, where they are carrying out public functions on behalf of the state – such as work-based learning providers and it requires them to actively promote equality, rather than simply avoiding discriminating in their dealings with their workforce and the public.

The introduction of this Act means that education and training providers will need to review the ways in which they currently provide their services. In so doing they will need to consider issues such as whether females – or males – would be likely to be discouraged from attending a course or programme because of an unwelcoming or unsafe environment. The changes arising from duty from passive avoidance of discrimination to active promotion of equality will therefore render the equal opportunities criteria set out by the Department for YA providers central to provision requirements in the future and make the good practice recommendations contained in this report of wider mainstream interest.

1.4 Young people and occupational segregation

The Department is to be commended for instigating the investigation into equal opportunities in its YA programme, which forms one strand of the policy to increase the choice available to pupils at Key Stage 4 and, in particular, to increase the

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[1]   Source: Equal Opportunities Commission (2007) *'What is the gender equality duty?'* Available at: www.eoc.org.uk/default.aspx?page=17686

availability of vocational options. While the original research commissioned by The Department found examples of good practice, there was also some evidence that actions required within proposals to offer cohort 2 YAs had not been implemented by partnerships. While this was often attributed to the late confirmation of the acceptance of YA proposals it also suggested that there is scope for EO work to be strengthened.

Since the initial IES evaluation of equal opportunities, Ofsted has published its own findings about the Young Apprenticeships.[1] Whilst largely supportive of the quality of the experience on the Young Apprenticeships (in almost all of the 24 partnerships sampled, pupils were well motivated and enjoying the experience), the findings indicate that the YAs remain gender-segregated by sector, and the inclusion of ethnic minority pupils is also problematic. None of the case study partnerships visited during the IES equal opportunities research was included in the subsequent Ofsted evaluation; therefore, taken together, the IES and Ofsted findings suggest that the promotion and transfer of existing good practice requires further work.

Evidence from elsewhere shows that the YAs are far from alone in experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining diverse pupil cohorts. The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), having expressed concern that earlier vocationalism can lead to greater segregation in subject choices, commissioned research as part of a General Formal Investigation (GFI) into occupational segregation. An investigation into Modern Apprenticeships undertaken as part of the GFI (Miller et al., 2004) found that intakes largely reflected existing patterns of gender segregation in sector workforces. Subsequent work found little evidence of institutions taking action to address this situation (Miller et al., 2005).

The Ofsted evaluation of the Increased Flexibility Programme[2] (a vocational route aimed at 14-16year olds but those with, generally, lower achievement levels than those required for the YA) showed that the IFP was being taken up by pupils with special educational needs, and those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. However, in common with the pattern seen in apprenticeships, it had achieved little by way of encouraging young women and men to make atypical subject choices.

Research shows that occupational stereotypes are formed at an early stage and rapidly become ingrained (Miller and Budd, 1999). Such findings suggest that early action is required if occupational stereotypes are to be challenged. Furthermore, it is not just stereotypes that are developed early on in life. Miller and Hayward (2006) found that both boys and girls believed the majority of jobs to be gender-segregated, that is, actually performed mainly or just by one sex or the other. They also found that both young women and young men preferred jobs that they saw as mainly performed by their own sex.

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[1]   Ofsted 2006 Evaluation of the Young Apprenticeships Programme, HMI report 2653

[2]   Ofsted (2005) Increased Flexibility Programme at Key Stage 4: the first two years. HMI report 2361. .

However, it does appear that girls' ideas are less fixed than those of boys. The association between job preference and perceived segregation decreased with age amongst girls, while for boys it remained constant. This emphasises the difficulties likely to be faced by YA partnerships in attracting boys to female-dominated subjects and occupations, although equally it suggests that work to extend the choices that girls feel are available to them can potentially increase girls' uptake of subjects in male-dominated sectors.

This early formation and 'fixing' of job stereotypes, and young people's preferences for gender-typical careers, need to be taken into account when considering findings relating to EOs in the YAs. The extent to which just one programme, relatively small in scale[1] and for which only a subset of learners is eligible, can hope to overcome such entrenched barriers, is debateable. This therefore emphasises the need to mainstream equal opportunities within the delivery plans for all existing and new programmes. As our earlier work has shown (Newton and Miller, 2006), the good practice currently existing within the YAs can provide a model for mainstreaming good practice in all routes – and particularly the emerging suite of vocational options – at Key Stage 4.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Case study research

The five partnerships identified and selected by The Department for the original good practice case studies were followed up after the recruitment phase for cohort 3. These partnerships were: Bedfordshire and Luton (Business Administration); Coventry and Warwickshire (Health and Social Care and Motor Industry); Croydon (Hospitality and Catering); STEPS Northumberland (Health and Social Care) and TDR Newcastle (Engineering).

The considerations that influenced their selection for the first round study were:

■ **Gender performance within the subject framework.** A priority was to select case studies that captured best-practice recruitment (taking into account applications as well as enrolment data) where there are strong gender traditions in the workforce and training and therefore greater challenges to recruiting non-traditional entrants to the YAs than for other subjects. The subjects focused on were therefore automotive and engineering (predominantly male), and health and social care (predominantly female). Comparative experience was captured in business and administration and hospitality and catering YAs where gender traditions are less entrenched.

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[1]   In cohort 3 there were 3,500 YA places available nationally expanded to 9,000 in cohort 4.

- **Recruitment of an ethnically diverse cohort**. Case studies were selected where the recruitment of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds was higher than would be expected given the school's catchment population.

- **Recruitment of pupils with SENs**. The early phase of the research identified that this group had received less attention generally.

The case studies were selected on the grounds of the apparent strength of focus on equal opportunities that emerged from interviews with partnerships and their accounts of any actions taken to recruit a more diverse cohort of learners.

The methodology adopted for the current work provides a longitudinal element to the previous research that allows the nature of change and progression in terms of EO practices to be tracked. However, a drawback to this methodology is that it does not allow for the capture of good practice that may be emerging elsewhere amongst new entrants to the third cohort YA partnerships.

As in the initial case studies, in each of the follow-up case studies a range of stakeholders was interviewed. These comprised, in most cases: the partnership lead; staff involved in the recruitment and ongoing support of YA pupils; staff involved in the delivery of the YA in schools, colleges and other institutions; employers; and, in each case study site, young people undertaking the programme. The research team also contacted other partners recommended by the case study contacts whom they felt would add a fuller perspective to their YA delivery model.

There is continuing government interest in the use of subject tasters and where evidence has been found of tasters within the YAs this has been reported. A further study on the design and delivery of YA tasters was also undertaken and is reported in Chapter 4. Evaluation of the impact of tasters is also being undertaken and will be reported separately in a later report.

Reporting the case study data

Throughout this report, the following conventions have been adopted in reporting data obtained during the various phases of the work:

- Where information on good practice from case study interviews is cited, the relevant partnership organisation is identified in the report.

- Where examples of poor practice were identified during case study visits, these are not attributed. Inclusion of examples is important to developing lessons from which stakeholders and partnerships can learn.

- The very small numbers of atypical young apprenticeships in the regions visited would render them particularly prone to identification were the location or the occupational sector to be given. For this reason, descriptions of young apprentices are limited to whether they are a traditional or non-traditional entrant to the sector.

■ The organisations identified in good practice examples were contacted in early 2007, asked to check these descriptions (and modify as necessary) and approve the vignettes of their practice for publication.

1.5.2 The tasters work strand

This strand of work has evolved over time and has built on the 'taster' case studies provided in the first report from this project. It is focused on implementation and the data captured has been used to support further taster implementation; lessons from each stage have fed into the following stage. The stages of activity which have been undertaken are summarised below.

■ Development workshop (Summer 2006). This workshop drew together representatives of three partnerships with experience of delivering tasters, and three who were new to the concept of tasters. Partnerships explored the issues and challenges of delivering tasters, and the ways in which partnerships had overcome these.

■ The themes and issues that emerged during the development workshop, in addition to those arising from the earlier reported case studies, formed the basis of the draft toolkit and case studies, which were designed over Winter 2006–07.

■ Regional roadshow workshops were held in Spring 2007 to share the messages with partnerships and offer support for the delivery of tasters. The toolkit and case studies were refined and can be found in Appendices 3 and 4 of this report.

1.5.3 The SSC YA information work strand

Similarly, this strand of the work was concerned with issues in implementation, although with a slightly different focus from that of the other components of the project. The original study found that young people wanted more information about sectors and careers to help them with their decision regarding the YA, and also in gaining positive parental support for their decision. Using the recommendations already made within the original YAEO report, IES designed a process for working with SSCs to develop sector-specific information brochures for YAs. This phase of the work involved four SSCs who were responsible for three YA courses: motor vehicle, construction, and health and social care.

The process involved meeting with key staff in the SSCs for in-depth discussions about the stereotypes of the sector, the realities of work in these sectors, and areas of growth (in jobs and/or sub-sectors) that could usefully be brought to young people's attention. Following the meeting, IES then used this information to design the brochures aimed at potential YA entrants. This strand of work has culminated in the production of three eight-page booklets for use during cohort 4 and subsequent recruitment. A more detailed account of practice is provided in Chapter 3, and the toolkit designed to support this process is provided at Appendix 6.

1.6 The structure of this report

We focus on the three key aspects of work undertaken for the Building on Young Apprenticeship Equal Opportunities in this report. These are: follow-up work in each of the original case study areas; the work to support the design, delivery and evaluation of tasters; and the strand to design information, in partnership with SSCs, to challenge occupational stereotypes and encourage recruitment to the YAs.

The first chapter provides an update on equality and diversity within the cohort 2 case study partnerships and this is themed in the same way as the original report: monitoring and targeting, recruitment and selection processes, support and delivery, and actions to encourage wider choices. This section of the report concludes with a discussion of the emerging issues and an assessment of the drivers and inhibitors of EOs in the YAs. Recommendations are made throughout for how equal opportunities in the Young Apprenticeships can be enhanced.

Following this, we provide chapters on the tasters (Chapter 3) and the SSC information design strands of the project (Chapter 4). These chapters outline the aims and process undertaken, and the issues that emerged through our work with partnerships and SSC stakeholders. An output of both strands has been a toolkit, each of which is provided in the appendices of the report.

Throughout the report there is a focus on exemplifying good practice to inform the embedding of equal opportunities in the YAs and, in some cases, contrasting this with examples of where practice could be improved. Feedback received during the case study visits for this research indicated that partnerships would like simple and accessible EO learning points that they may readily apply to their practice. This chapter delivers these at the outset of each section and then draws these 'lessons' together and discusses critical success factors for equal opportunities.

A key aim of this research was to support the transfer of good practice across the YAs. However, good practice principles that serve to challenge gender, racial and ability stereotypes extend beyond the YA to choices across the Key Stage 4 curriculum. It is important that the principles and practices deriving from the YA are adopted to encourage a wider range of choices for this age group. The proposal documentation for cohort 4 acknowledges that the YA is informing many aspects of the 14-19Education Reform implementation and it is therefore hoped that this report will further enable this process.

2 Equal Opportunities in the Case Study YA Partnerships

All the partnerships that were visited for these case studies operated a policy relating to equality and diversity, although it might be argued that no less would be expected from education and training providers. The previous research revealed that, beyond any general equal opportunity policy, equal opportunities practices were often governed by the Lead Partner's historical approach to these issues and were acted upon in the context of the range of programmes that was being delivered prior to introduction of the YA programme.

There were many examples of changes since the case study visits in the first round of research. In general, partnerships had extended, or were proposing to extend, the number of subjects in which the YA was offered. In addition, the number of places within the subjects originally delivered had increased in some areas.

2.1 Views of the equality and diversity issues

Since cohort 3, the national guidance about equalities had been strengthened, as evidenced in the cohort 4 proposal document (Figure 2.1). This shows the increasing impetus to embed good equalities practice and counter the issues raised by the earlier YAEO report and that of Ofsted.

Figure 2.1: Equal opportunities in the YA: Specification in cohort 4 documentation

For cohort 4, partnerships are asked to develop strategies that:

- Target groups who are socially disadvantaged.

- Counter gender stereotyping and particularly encourage boys and girls to follow courses of study that depart from traditional patterns. Partnerships should identify positive actions to encourage participation that counter barriers to non-gender-stereotypical choices.

- Target ethnic minorities and pupils with disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs (SEN) by using suitable role models and removing barriers to entry.

■ Consider the use of tasters to encourage non-stereotypical choices by young people.

Source: LSC/DfES

These requirements are much clearer than those for the second cohort and they embed the concept that partnerships will actively include, within their YA recruitment schemes, actions and activities to encourage a more diverse cohort of learners.

It should be noted that the concern for inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups has arisen from the other national evaluations of the Young Apprenticeship rather than from the study into equal opportunities. It is valuable that the different strands of evaluation have fed into development of the specifications for subsequent cohorts, as this will lead to more partnerships taking action and thus ensure that EO activity becomes increasingly mainstreamed rather than being seen as a separate issue.

At the case study partnerships there was some divergence in terms of the understanding of equal opportunities that related to the subject(s) being delivered. For senior managers in the partnerships, equal opportunities policy and practice for the Young Apprenticeships could not be dissociated from practices that applied across the range of programmes offered by the lead organisation.

> *'Equality and diversity issues are 'very important' and we consider them in all of our provision.'*

However, partnership staff were more likely to report that EOs had to be seen in the overall context of the range of priorities for YA partnerships, which included the quality of applicant. No partnership mentioned the strengthening of the specification for EOs in the invitation to tender for cohort 4 sent out by The Department, nor mentioned any requirements set out by other national stakeholders such as the LSC or SSCs.

All partnerships had an awareness of the segregation evidenced in, for example, engineering, motor industry or health and social care, whether or not they were delivering YAs in these subjects. However, in subjects such as business administration or hospitality and catering, where segregation patterns are less clear, partnerships tended to perceive the agenda for EOs as relating more to other sectors than to their own.

> *'There isn't really an atypical group in [this sector] or occupational segregation … well not that you might see in construction … '*

> *'I think we really need to think about it in terms of the stereotypical areas where there are gender and/or racial divisions. So construction and engineering are two clear areas.'*

More of the partnerships in the second round of research reported having recruited pupils with special educational needs, although not all of these pupils had statements and none was supported by a specialist worker.

The ethnic diversity of YA cohorts can only reflect the populations of the schools in which they are offered. In the earlier study, we noted that in one partnership, schools with highly diverse populations had been targeted for the YA. The follow-up study revealed that this partnership's actions continued to lead to a diverse YA cohort.

2.2 Monitoring and targets

Learning points

Partnerships

- Use information about school populations to set targets for the participation in the YA for young men and young women entering non-traditional subjects, as well as for ethnic minorities, those with SEN or disabilities, and socially disadvantaged pupils.

- Use information about other Key Stage 4 programmes, particularly at level 2, to help understand any distinctive characteristics about the YA groups (Partnerships).

- Monitor earlier parts of the recruitment process in terms of diversity (Partnerships).

- Benchmark progress towards equality targets against progress in other programmes offered to the 14-16age cohort.

- Make targets explicit and visible. Monitor and develop practice against these, assessing the extent to which activities designed to increase diversity result in a changing profile of entrants to the programme.

National stakeholders

- Strengthen requirements for data collation, reporting and monitoring, including pre-application data.

The previous study found that stronger national guidance to partnerships on the expectations of The Department for equality and diversity would help to prioritise this issue. In addition, guidance from the LSC and SSC could support the setting of appropriate diversity targets for cohort groups. Associated with this, partnerships should be encouraged to build on their achievements in terms of equality and diversity to ensure they review their activities for effectiveness. It was also found that most monitoring practices focused on enrolments, retention and progression rather than on the earlier parts of the YA recruitment process. Therefore, there was a lack of data regarding the success of school events in attracting a range of young people to information events, or indeed on the way in which young people were encouraged – or otherwise – to consider the various options available to them or to apply for atypical qualifications.

2.2.1 Targets

The earlier report found little evidence of partnerships using equality and diversity targets. The main focus for partnerships in this respect tended to be on progression, for which there was a national target. The follow-up work revealed that this largely remained the case and any targets for the YA beyond this one criterion were reported by just one partnership; however, even here, this was in a wider context than the YA (Box 1).

Box 1: Targets for schools programmes in engineering at TDR

TDR monitors the range of its programmes using the LSC Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS). It has three departments for its provision: schools (for 14-16year olds), apprenticeships and training (16-25 year olds); and work-based learning eg Train To Gain (adults from age 25). Its schools provision includes Young Apprenticeships, Student Engineering Apprenticeships, Tomorrow's Engineer Programme and Engineering for Tomorrow.

The target it has set is to increase to five per cent the number of young women entering engineering programmes across the board. It monitors progress towards this target by each school and each programme. In future, TDR is looking to increase the sensitivity of these targets by setting targets to increase on current achievement at the level of each school and programme.

Amongst those partnerships offering the YA in less-segregated subject areas, targets were felt to be unnecessary. In the more strongly segregated areas the use of targets varied. Where targets were not used, one partnership suggested that the recruitment model inhibited their use. Young people opted for the subject first, and only this sub-set was offered the chance to join the YA. In this context, the partnership felt that 'targets are a bit of a dream'.

There were further examples of schools being targeted for participation in the YA because of their pupil population. This model, of considering school populations within the catchment area and then specifically partnering with them for the YA, could usefully be applied to the target for social disadvantage in cohort 4 partnerships and those involved beyond this.

2.2.2 Monitoring

At the local level, partnerships tended to monitor the YA in a similar way to how they monitored other their programmes, and typically guided by the demands made upon them nationally[1]. In practice, this means data is collected about enrolment, retention and progression by gender, race, disability/SENs and disadvantage measures.

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[1]   By the LSC, relevant SSC or programme evaluators including Ofsted.

These data are normally reported for each course offered by a provider, and therefore amongst the case studies ranged from data reported for a suite of single-subject courses through to that relating to all 14-19programmes. Good practice included benchmarking trends in the YA programme against other Key Stage 4 programmes; this is described in Box 2.

Box 2: Monitoring the YA cohort at Croydon

Information about recruitment and selection is collected for the YA and entered onto a spreadsheet that captures data across all courses aimed at Key Stage 4, including the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) 14-16programme and European Social Fund (ESF) funded courses. The YA Lead reviews this data across the range of Key Stage 4 programmes. By collating the data in this way it can be meaningfully analysed by gender, ethnicity and school to understand any emerging patterns. The information gathered on YA has been used to prepare a presentation for the Council's Education department at a meeting to review and share practice.

Partnerships felt that the small numbers in the YA did not allow for a meaningful analysis and that, until more young people had moved through the programme, there would be insufficient data to provide a base for analysis at the local level. That said, there may be information within a partnership that is not being drawn upon. Comparing progress in the YA against the range of Key Stage 4 programmes should allow anything distinctive that was happening to be identified. However, it is important for different partners to contribute to the discussion about recruitment trends so that a holistic understanding is gained. In one case study area, a college tutor reported that the YA group was distinctive in some regards, an issue not identified by the partnership Lead.

> *'With the YA we get more girls doing the YA than we would on our normal programmes. The other programmes tend to be all Asian males … particularly at level 2 it tends to be all lads.'*

Concern continued to be expressed that the different evaluations for the YA required different data. Partnerships found the demands for different data from each evaluation difficult and some expressed a preference for a national template for data collection.

The Department intends that for responsibility for monitoring the YA programme will shift from external evaluators to partnerships and standard national mechanisms. To maintain the focus on equality and diversity, it is suggested that national guidance be issued to encourage monitoring of the range of activities undertaken by partnerships, including those to encourage wider choices as well as the activities that comprise the recruitment processes. A minimum reporting requirement for these early parts of the recruitment process, using the umbrella term of pre-application data, would be useful accompanied by encouragement for more sensitive monitoring of the different parts of the recruitment process at the local level.

2.2.3 Using monitoring data

The collection of data throughout the recruitment process can help partnerships to determine whether further action is required and if so, at what stage. While the extent to which monitoring data was used for this purpose varied within partnerships, Box 3 demonstrates how the monitoring of data can underpin self-managed quality improvement. In this example, self-assessment activities led to a quality improvement plan that is now contributing to equality and diversity across the range of schools programmes.

Box 3: Improving quality, equality and diversity through monitoring at TDR

A self-assessment process has been undertaken which was led by the Equality and Diversity Manager. This involved a staff 'away-day' to discuss the range of provision within the 'schools teams'. This included Young Apprenticeships, Student Engineering Apprenticeships, Tomorrow's Engineer Programme and Engineering for Tomorrow. During the away-day weaknesses in provision were identified using the monitoring data together with a review of the qualitative data received from YAs, and reports from the YA Co-ordinators. A number of Equal Opportunities actions have been set in place as a result and are now embedded within the Quality Improvement Plan.

These include activities in schools to attract more females into engineering and work is underway with schools to agree the actions that will take this forward. Activities are likely to include activities during Year 9 to lead into Key Stage 4 choices and an all-female taster. Targets for diversity have also been set.

The actions identified for Quality Improvement are displayed on a flipchart in the schools team office as a reminder of what is being worked towards and how. Progress towards the actions is also being recorded on the flipchart.

2.3 Awareness-raising and recruitment processes

Learning points

- Make explicit the fact that *all* the national requirements (diversity as well as academic criteria) are of equal importance, are a shared responsibility throughout the partnership, and part of the contract of schools with the partnership.

- Work more closely with schools to ensure the value of the YA is understood, increase school engagement with the YA and ensure that more pupils within each school are aware that they have the opportunity to apply for the programme.

- Make available materials to supplement verbal information given about the YA (Partnerships and SSCs).

- Embed pupil IAG within the recruitment process, and consider the use of tasters as a way of offering a practical approach to IAG.

The research in cohort 2 had revealed that schools decided which pupils would hear about the YA opportunity. In some cases, schools included the YA information in events for all members of Year 9; in others, just a selected few were told about the programme. Both types of approach have benefits and drawbacks, and influenced the extent to which partnerships felt able to raise awareness of the YA. While the more inclusive approach provides the opportunity to present positive images of the occupation (and potentially challenge stereotypes) and therefore increase interest, this approach may also raise the aspirations of individuals who do not meet the YA entry criteria. However, if only those pupils deemed by teachers to be 'appropriate' candidates (either in terms of ability or interest) are given information about the YAs, this may mean that other eligible pupils are excluded.

In general, Year 9 option events (and other careers sessions) present an opportunity to make information available. The cohort 2 research indicated that young people would prefer this to be more comprehensive. Young people felt that information tended to focus on either the application process or the delivery mechanisms of the YA (eg college- and work placement), although in many cases the young people interviewed felt that even this information had not really given the level of detail they would have liked. As a result one recommendation was that the information provided to young people should include more detail about the sector and careers; details of what the programme will demand (in terms of both modes of study and the placement); and the entry criteria for the programme (in order to address partnership concerns about raising the aspirations of ineligible pupils).

The first round research identified a need for increased national guidance in regard to the option of waiving certain of the entry criteria 'in exceptional circumstances'. There was evidence that some atypical entrants had been excluded because they did not meet the academic criteria. While ability is important to the YA, pupils who fell just below the academic criteria but demonstrate strong motivation are entitled to be considered for enrolment. In the earlier research, it became clear that many of the partnerships had not realised that this option was available. Amongst these partnerships, it was felt that increased specification of what 'exceptional' might mean in practice would facilitate greater use of this opportunity and thereby promote greater diversity in the YA.

2.3.1 Awareness raising and IAG

In the second visits to the case study partnerships, the recruitment model operated within the schools continued to determine how the pupils heard about the YA and could circumscribe the activities that partnerships were able to undertake to raise awareness. The common models were that the YA opportunity either was made available to all (typically in option booklets and/or at assemblies, options sessions or at parent evenings); or the information about the YA was provided only to those pupils who had already expressed an interest in the subject in which it was offered. In some cases, a combined selection process operated during which the YA was

advertised to only those pupils predicted to achieve the academic standard *and* who had 'opted' for the subject area.

In some partnerships, difficulties in filling the quota of places meant that, in practice, no pupil who met the academic criteria and who wanted a place was excluded from joining the YA. However, in partnerships where a selection process was required because the YA was over-subscribed there was concern that the school-led model, in which certain pupils were selected and provided with information, affected the subsequent diversity of applicants. Overall, providers were more concerned with the need to ensure that capable pupils were recruited than with the potential impact on diversity. There was consequently less certainty that taking positive actions aimed at including atypical entrants who were more than just a little below the academic criteria was in the best interests of pupils:

> *'In terms of gender it's quite hard work … in cohort 3 we did have two [atypical candidates] but one dropped out because the YA was too taxing … five [atypical candidates] applied but three didn't meet the academic criteria … I think there is something to be struck about that balance [between positive action and the fulfilment of the academic criteria], the YA is challenging.'*

Where concern was expressed about the awareness-raising process in schools, it instead tended to focus on ensuring the right pupils heard about the YA and were given better advice about its value.

> *'The way students heard about the YA depended on the school they were at. In some, I spoke at assemblies and options evenings, whereas in other instances it was just included as an option in the options booklet the Year 9 students were given. In some cases the schools only mentioned it to those who they felt would benefit. Next time I want to be able to go into every school and speak to as many students and parents as possible to increase awareness of the YA and make the point it isn't lower value than doing lots of GCSEs.'*

Two issues were associated with this point:

- **The engagement of the school with the YA**. Different schools engage with the YA differently and this informs the extent to which lead partners can be actively involved in awareness-raising. Their level of engagement may depend on the number of places on the YA that are made available to pupils at each school and senior management commitment within the school to the YA route. Furthermore, where the school allows the partnership lead to be actively involved in promoting the YA to pupils, there is a greater chance of the information and advice given to pupils being accurate. It is also less likely in such situations that teachers will discourage young people from the YA because of the teachers' own prejudices regarding vocational routes, which was believed by partnerships to have happened in several cases.

- **The number of schools involved in the partnership**. The number of schools (and number of pupils from each school) engaged in the partnership can impact on

awareness-raising activities. Where schools have only one or a small number of pupils on the route this may result in only marginal support for the YA route and a less welcoming attitude to the partnership lead in raising awareness any further for the option. For the lead partner, this may also constrain the effort they can invest in awareness-raising at each school. In such cases it might be more cost-effective to offer open events to which pupils and teachers from several schools can be invited.

In the best examples found in this round of research, the requirement for Equal Opportunities was viewed as a shared commitment between school and Lead Partner. When schools are themselves actively engaged with equal opportunities and understand the range of priorities for the YA, the school culture tends to be more open to activities aimed at encouraging wider choices. Their support also tends to be stronger when there is a range of qualification options in the subject for which there is also the YA option.

Partnerships had adopted various different approaches in their attempts to increase school engagement with diversity, with a range of results. One partnership makes a fairly informal request for equal opportunities as part of its contact with schools, although there was no mention of monitoring to ensure that this happened.

> *'We talk to key people in the schools, say we would like a good mix. If there are girls, or ethnic minorities, we would try to make sure they hear about the options. It's indirect but possibly the best way forward.'*

> *'We were asked to try and produce a balanced ethnic mix and in terms of reflecting [our school's] ethnic mix, we more or less have.'*

However, in another area where the shared approach to equal opportunities (via the written contract with schools) had been attempted, the Lead Partner felt that the schools had nonetheless disregarded their responsibility:

> *'We have a formal written partnership with schools which we get them to sign each time we submit a cohort – it's their application for a YA group. Although they sign it, they seem to think they can pick which bits of it they comply with … We wrote to all of our partner schools and asked if we could run some lunchtime drop-ins. We would run them, provide food as that might encourage [atypical entrants], and we'd have some role models there … but the bottom line was that [the schools] just couldn't be bothered, it wasn't important to them ... nobody is asking them about gender balances.'*

The engagement of schools with the diversity agenda – or rather, their lack of engagement – is a key barrier to encouraging wider choices and an issue that is returned to later in this chapter. However, in the broader policy context, the introduction of more vocational options in Key Stage 4 may constitute a further drive to schools to consider inequality issues. Further guidance from national stakeholders, framed in terms of the requirements for implementing the 14-19 reforms as a whole, would almost certainly help with this.

In most cases, as part of awareness-raising activities, the Partnership had arranged an information session for young people who had expressed an interest in the YA (and this was usually open to their parents/guardians too). These tended to be group information-giving sessions with opportunities for questions and answers and informal discussions. However, despite their efforts there were still young people who claimed not to understand the requirements of the programme.

> *'The number of days [at the placement] – they didn't say it would be 50 days, and it's all at one place.'*

> *'We weren't told everything … we weren't told that we had loads of extra course work to do. But once you get used to the idea it is quite enjoyable.'*

It is likely that partnerships told young people about these things, but these examples indicate the need for reinforcement of these issues throughout awareness-raising and recruitment. The provision of a factsheet at the end of information sessions would provide a reference for young people and their parents following events, and partnerships might also revisit the issues during interviews and other discussions of the YA.

Amongst the YAs we spoke to, there was a concern about the lack of advice and guidance on their skills and abilities in relation to their Key Stage 4 choices and some indication that professionals might have to be more direct in helping them.

> *'I looked through the careers books in the Connexions office but didn't speak to anyone. The teachers didn't really say much about it. My parents said it would be good for me and I should go for it.'*

Where young people did receive advice from teachers and other staff the Lead Partners were not always convinced this had been beneficial, in one case noting that capable young people had been advised that the YA was not an appropriate choice. However, in one school where engagement with the YA was high, pupils were given advice on the basis of their skills and abilities to encourage them to take the YA. This advice was felt to have led to greater numbers of young women entering a male-dominated subject, although it should also be noted that the compulsory technology option in Key Stage 4 contributed to this.

> *'It really comes down to the strong directional guidance we offer them during their Key Stage 4 option process. Because a technology subject is compulsory we can tell them where we think they will best achieve … We explain why we think they would be good at [subject] in relation to their achievements at schools. We are better equipped to give them this advice than parents and others who have never seen them in the classroom so don't really know their skills and abilities at school.'*

In one area, the Connexions interview was used to determine the match between pupil aspirations and the YA, with the Connexions PA providing initial IAG to pupils.

'The Connexions interview was a means of offering them advice and guidance about where the YA would lead … so Connexions will ask them what they want to do [options and careers] and check whether that is consistent with this course [the YA]. They will advise young people what it might lead to but again, just laying out all the scenarios and letting them make an informed choice – that's what we're into here.'

The case studies revealed no instances of advice *not* to enter a YA subject on the basis of a young person's gender. However, in recruitment models which rely on subject choice as a first selection, many atypical entrants will not hear about the YA since they have not opted for the subject. This is an issue that may require some consideration in the short-term: amongst the young people spoken to for this research a small number reported that they had chosen the YA to benefit from the work experience as the subject was only tangentially related to their intended future career. However, in the longer term, the situation is likely to change for young people in this position when the broad range of Diplomas becomes part of the Key Stage 4 entitlement.

2.3.2 Recruitment and selection

The recruitment process for cohort 3 largely replicated that for cohort 2 in the re-visited case study partnerships. This involved the schools undertaking an initial sifting based on academic criteria. Following this, or as part of awareness-raising, information sessions were held. In all instances an interview formed part of the process usually undertaken by the organisation that would be providing the YA training in some cases joined by employers.

The recruitment of atypical entrants in the strongly-segregated subjects remained a struggle. Where an increase in the diversity of the cohort had been achieved, there was not necessarily a clear idea why:

'If we can promote it we will. Also our literature shows a balance of females [and males] and ethnic minority students ... The numbers of ethnic minorities in the group are higher this year, and I don't know why, and I've no idea why there are no girls in this years' group.'

The need to recruit the right pupils in terms of ability tended to override concerns for equal opportunities. While partnerships were more aware in general that the academic criteria could be flexed or waived in exceptional circumstances, they tended to be cautious about doing so. Asked whether there is a need for flexibility in the application of the academic criteria when an atypical entrant demonstrated strong motivation for the YA subject, one Lead Partner responded:

'Yes, but with reservations. It's about their capacity to achieve a level 2, if they cannot then they should not be on the programme and you are doing them a disservice. You can be flexible for the right and wrong reasons.'

In an engineering YA, the Lead reported that, while it was possible to make an exception on the basis of the English or Science scores, in reality the importance of Mathematics performance was too great to allow any flexibility.

There appears to be a developing awareness of the importance of a holistic recruitment process, with recruitment increasingly being based on a number of criteria and activities. Partnerships were concerned to establish the motivation and maturity of pupils to ensure they will fit in and cope with the different learning environments they will encounter. For these reasons new elements had been integrated into the recruitment practice and these were felt to produce a more rounded picture of each pupil's abilities. The two that were most prevalent were:

- **Teacher references**. In two areas these had been introduced as it was felt that interview performance might only indicate the candidate's ability to communicate in this situation. The teacher reference would, for instance, provide further information if interview performance was weak; it would also provide a more general picture of behaviour and motivation. In one case, however, there was concern that was yet to be resolved about whether pupils should see and give permission for the reference to be shared with the Lead Partner.

- **Assessment centres**. In the first EO evaluation, the use of assessment centres was most common in the engineering and automotive sectors. The second round visits revealed that their use had expanded into other subject areas and in some cases this was blended with a taster experience. In the best practice instances, pupils were aware that they were being assessed and aware of the criteria that were being used. They were also given feedback on their performance. Box 4 provides an illustration of this.

Box 4: The health and social care assessment centre at STEPS

Due to a member of staff changing jobs, a new YA Co-ordinator was recruited from another part of the STEPS team during the second cohort. Her experience of picking up the group was that she learned a great deal about their skills and abilities from observing the pupils during workshop activities. STEPS decided to build on this by embedding an assessment centre into recruitment for cohort 3, whereby all the young people who were interested in the YA were requested to attend a one-day event.

Five criteria were identified as success factors for the health and social care YA. These included communication, respect for others, ability to undertake tasks outside the comfort zone as well as team working skills. A carousel of activities was designed that would allow pupils to demonstrate their skills and abilities. The criteria against which they were being assessed for each activity were displayed on the walls of the workshop space. The assessors for each activity included the YA team as well as some of the current YAs.

Around 50 pupils attended the event on the basis of the schools having sifted for the academic criteria by their schools. From these, 30 young people were selected for the YA. The assessment centre was felt to have provided a clearer picture of how young people would cope in the work

environments. For instance, the assessment centre identified that some pupils were too quiet and shy to be able to cope at the work placement. Following the selection process, young people were given feedback about their performance at the assessment centre and the reasons for the selection decision.

The pupils who were interviewed during the evaluation were positive about the assessment day (perhaps partly because they had got through). 'It was nerve-wracking at first … we did group activities like how to communicate with different people and we had people watching us. It was very different, I've never done anything like it before – but I think it was good because we knew the things they were looking for.'

The issue of whether any selection process is used is directly linked to the number of pupils who are referred to the YA by schools. In turn, the number of referrals appears to be related to the value placed by schools on the YA. In some case study areas, recruiting to the available places is a struggle. While holistic approaches to recruitment are still offered, these are seen to assist with confirming pupil choices rather than informing partnership's recruitment decisions.[1] In areas where the YA is over-subscribed the different parts of the recruitment process fully inform selection decisions.

Most partnerships would prefer to be in the position of selecting from a wealth of qualified candidates. To enable this to happen, some strengthening of the relationship with the schools in the partnership is required to ensure that more of the right pupils hear about the opportunity and are actively encouraged through the advice they receive to pursue the YA.

2.4 Support and delivery

Learning points

■ Ensure there is clarity within the partnership about who will support young people in the different learning environments.

■ Ensure reviews incorporate pupils' feedback as well as the views of the professionals and employers they are in contact with.

■ Inappropriate and offensive materials displayed within the work environment can make for an uncomfortable experience for any visitor but is likely to be all the more so for young people. One way in which partnerships can encourage employers to think about such issues is to provide guidance which includes suggestions about the message such materials send to all visitors (including potential customers), not just to young people. If an organisation is not prepared to remove such materials then it is unlikely the environment will be suitable for any young people, not just atypical entrants.

[1]   Partnerships in these cases may still not recruit all available pupils.

- YAs from ethnic minorities may prefer to undertake placements in workplaces where employees from ethnic minorities are also present. Similarly, young women working in male-dominated sectors may also appreciate being placed at a site where there is at least one other female working.

- In large workplaces, if can be helpful if partnerships provide posters explaining the reason for the young people being there and outlining what the YAs are able to do (and conversely, any areas in which they are not allowed to work)in the organisation.

- Where possible link atypical learners with peers from other courses while at college and with an atypical mentor at work placements.

The first report found that there is a need to ensure that young people have sufficient opportunity to give feedback about their experience, and are helped to identify any support needs. Using regular, structured questioning, including asking whether specific types of support might be appreciated, was considered more likely to identify support needs, rather than observation or asking general questions such as 'how is it going?'

There is a parallel need to consider the experience of pupils during placements and to structure support around that. Ways in which case study sites had done this included ensuring that the learner had a clear role and tasks to perform, and making sure there was someone available to answer any queries the young person may have. Where possible, support from a role model within the placement organisation was felt to be beneficial, and there appear to be some benefits to sending atypical learners, particularly young women in male dominated sectors, to their placement in pairs or small groups. Awareness-raising amongst staff, and training about the support needs of atypical entrants, was also recommended.

2.4.1 Supporting Young Apprentices

The best support models found during the second-round visits were those which had been put in place for all Young Apprentices but were sufficiently individualised to meet the needs of atypical entrants. An example of this kind of support was the provision of a hands-on YA co-ordinator who had responsibility for keeping up-to-date with the pupils' experience at college, school and at work placements. This involves the co-ordinator visiting all the learning settings, being in close contact with the training providers, schools and employers, and conducting individualised review and feedback sessions with pupils on a regular basis (Box 5).

Box 5: Review process for the Young Apprenticeships at TDR

The formal review process operates every six weeks. This involves co-ordinators in gathering information from employers, the colleges and the schools about how young people are getting on in the different environments. Colleges and schools are asked to provide a brief written assessment of progress. This is facilitated through the use of a standardised tool with 'tick box' and 'score' formats. Space on the form is also provided for a short, qualitative assessment from these professionals. The employers are most usually contacted by telephone and engaged in a discussion of progress and experience. The Young Apprentices are also asked to provide feedback, and to score their work placement and college experiences.

The co-ordinators gather together the information and hold one-to-one interviews with the pupils they are responsible for. The review covers pastoral issues as well as learning experiences and young people are encouraged to actively feedback in the sessions. If the young person is not feeding into the discussion, the co-ordinators make the questioning more structured to ensure that they do become aware of each young person's experience. A short report from each review is written and sent to young people and their parents, the school, college and employer.

While this model is felt to be effective, it is also recognised that it creates a considerable amount of work for the professionals involved. Consideration is being given to theming the reviews, for instance, going back over the issues raised at induction week after the first six weeks. However, pastoral issues and the opportunity for young people to feed in about their experiences will be covered each time.

This model operates alongside ongoing support provided by school and college professionals where pupils can raise issues as they arise. Employers (and professionals) access ongoing support through co-ordinators so that if there is an attendance or behavioural concern, this can be addressed at an early stage.

In one partnership, this model had been embedded by making a change to the work placement system. Instead of changing the placement each half-term, the partnership now placed young people for a full term. This released a considerable amount of the time that the co-ordinator spent in arranging placements, which was then used for undertaking one-to-one, rather than group, review sessions. This model was felt to have led to greater coaching for young people to help them to maximise their experience (Box 6).

Box 6: Blending coaching with reviews at STEPS

'In addition to ensuring that they are happy in their placement, what the reviews have turned into really is coaching sessions. So the co-ordinator visits pupils after a couple of weeks to ask them how they are getting on and what they have been doing. She can then suggest how the young person can use this evidence in their portfolio and it helps them to put their learning into the context. On the basis of the reviews, she can also contact the employers to ask that the placement is tailored to the needs of each young person. So, if a young person has said that they are finding it difficult to engage with the residents, she can say to the employer, "can you think of anything you could give him to do that would help him do that."'

Where a number of partners provide the support to young people, there needs to be a clear strategy for who is responsible for each element of support. In one case study area this had not been the case. Co-ordinating and teaching staff believed that the Placement Officer monitored placements; the Placement Officer believed this was the schools' responsibility. Since the training provider had organised the placements, the school felt it would be inappropriate for its staff to visit these. While this gap was subsequently addressed by the provider following concerns raised by the school as a result of complaints by the pupils, this situation could have been avoided from the outset if responsibilities had been clearly agreed and set out in writing.

In two of the areas, a number of partners offered support, but there were clear lines of responsibility to avoid any confusion and the YA co-ordinator took a strategic overview. Support included the provision of workplace mentors and the learners could also talk to the tutors involved in delivery at college. These staff would provide regular feedback to the Partnership Lead who, in turn, would also lead a weekly hour of tutorial time with the group of YA, the primary purpose of which was to allow young people to work independently on their YA coursework, but which also provided the opportunity for the YAs to raise any concerns and get feedback.

An issue for young women (and some religious and cultural groups[1]) entering male-dominated subjects is the nature of male-dominated workplaces. 'Girlie' calendars and other materials may be present which make the environment uncomfortable. Two approaches to this were found within the partnerships. The first was to take the view that, while such things can be off-putting, young women who want to work in the sectors would have to accept these realities and learn to cope.

The second approach was to find a way of making employers aware of the impact of such items. However, the discussion with the employer would be framed in the context of all YA candidates and work placements, not just young women or ethnic minority groups. An example is given in Box 7, and arguably presents a more proactive and supportive response. It also had the additional benefit of having led the employer to become more aware of the impression these items gave – to all visitors, not just atypical learners – and to a change in policy about their display in the work environment.

Box 7: Challenging inappropriate material in male-dominated workplaces in TDR

'Before accepting an employer for the Young Apprenticeship we go out on a site visit. Ostensibly this is for health and safety and to carry out a risk assessment prior to young people working there. However, we also look at equality and diversity issues, for instance, whether they have a policy in place. We check whether they understand the implications of what they do with regard

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[1]   Although it may argued – as indeed the provider did – that these things are inappropriate for *all* young people of the YA age group

to equality and diversity, and they don't always, so it helps to have someone going out to talk to them.

In one company, there were girlie calendars and pictures up on the wall and we got them taken down. We can't say to an employee 'you have to take those down'. What we have to do is explain the problem to the employer. The tack that we take is to ask them, if your son or your daughter who was 13 or 14 came in here, would you like them to see these things? When this company realised what was going on, the personnel department made a requirement for the materials to be taken down. You don't want young people going in and seeing these things, it's bad for the rest of their lives, really, because it says this is the norm and that's okay, and it isn't.'

Young people who enter large workplaces or workplaces that operate shift patterns can find their placement a confusing and potentially uncomfortable experience, particularly if the appointed supervisor is not available. If the young person lacks clarity about what they should be doing they will need guidance from staff, and if their nominated supervisor is unavailable (either because they are elsewhere or on a different shift) then this can cause anxiety. In addition, confusion can arise if the rostered duty manager has not been fully briefed about the placement and tasks. This problem had been identified by one partnership and had led to a range of new strategies being introduced (Box 8).

Box 8: New strategies to support pupils during placements at STEPS

- **Posters**. These were displayed in common areas and showed a photograph of the YA and their name; a brief description of the work placement; and a short summary of the tasks that YAs can do – and those that they must not do.

- **Named t-shirts**. The young people had requested t-shirts with their name printed on the back so that staff at the placement would call them by name. A common colour and design was introduced so that employees would get used to the Young Apprentices being in this uniform.

- **Placement work-book**. The work-book is based on the qualification units and builds towards their portfolio of evidence. The work-book can be used for independent study at placement or at home, but also can be shown to colleagues and supervisors who express interest in what the young person is doing.

- **Witness statements**. Statements given by workplace supervisors or colleagues can contribute towards the portfolio of evidence for the qualification and allow staff at the employer placement to be included in the process, by either verifying that an activity has been undertaken or by noting the skills and abilities young people have brought to tasks.

It is interesting to note that young women in a male-dominated sector raised the issue of uniform. In this example, the young woman referred to the blue overall that was worn at college and at placement which was felt to lead to a greater sense of inclusion.

'Everyone's got their overalls on and you don't feel stupid or left out when you've got your overalls on because everyone's wearing the same.'

There were indications elsewhere that pupils from minority ethnic groups often prefer work placements where there is an existing mix of races in the workforce. The employment of a diverse mix of workers might indicate to the young person that the workforce is generally more receptive to ethnic minorities, but in addition it is possible that the young person might value the presence of a workplace role model.

> 'The people there [at the work placement] are mainly white … which is alright but you do get sly jokes though you ignore them. A balance [of ethnicities] would have been nice.'

This young person was largely unconcerned about this situation and had not raised it with the professionals involved in the YA. However, for a less resilient young person, the outcomes could have been different. Partnerships might consider gathering relevant information about companies, such as the size and diversity of the workforce, prior to arranging placements. This could be done on a fairly informal basis, with a more general assessment of the work environment perhaps being made during site visits for other purposes, such as health and safety and risk assessment, This information can then be used to inform placement decisions.

This approach may be a useful way forward for some partnerships who sometimes are not comfortable directly raising the issue of race or gender in their discussions with employers. Some in fact believe that to do so would be discriminatory. Where providers have no option other than to place a young person in a placement in which there are no colleagues of their own gender or race then it become necessary to raise the issue of support needs with the employer. In such cases it may be easier for partnerships to frame the discussion in terms of the support needs of young people in general, perhaps making the observation that some are just naturally less confident than others, irrespective of gender or race. The YAs are a younger group than many employers will be used to. Having a work supervisor who is aware that they may need some additional information and support is likely to be beneficial to all young apprentices' work experience, not just the atypical individuals. As one employer put it:

> 'You do need to talk to them throughout their time with you because they are younger – don't assume that they know things. If you are providing a placement, it comes with responsibility. You have to explain the purpose of an activity and what the young people will be doing. You need to be there for them. You get back what you give.'

Ensuring good support in the workplace is particularly important for pupils with Special Educational Needs (SENs). Many partnerships had reported an increase in the number of pupils with SENs recruited to the YA in cohort 3, although they also reported that their needs were relatively mild. In one partnership, careful consideration was given to the selection of a placement for a pupil with SEN. The selected employer had previously been a college lecturer and was sensitive to the needs of more vulnerable young people due to the environment he worked in:

> 'I feel it helps young people to learn about [the sector] and properly decide if it is for them. I became involved in offering placements to pupils with learning disabilities or who have

social problems because it is an opportunity to offer my services and experience in the trade to help individuals having slight difficulties because of where we are [the organisation[1]]. It is slightly less intense here than at other organisations so I can put the time in.'

A further good practice recommendation made in the previous report and relevant when arranging work placements for pupils from ethnic minorities and gender-atypical learners, was access to a workplace role model or mentor, where possible. If a role model is not present within the immediate team or occupational group, then an employee from a different part of the organisation might perhaps take on this role. In addition, partnerships should consider whether it is possible to link gender-atypical young people into a network to create a sense of critical mass (Box 9). This could be achieved either by putting them in touch with young people on other courses (or on other years of the same course) or by arranging special events at which all the YAs in an area can come together.

Box 9: Creating critical mass and buddies in Coventry and Warwickshire

If there is only one girl on the YA we will put her in touch with a buddy from another course, such as Entry to Employment (E2E). It is helpful for them to make links into another group where other young women are doing the subject — it makes them feel less isolated.

We also have the two cohorts in the training centre on the same day, although obviously with different tutors. This is helpful for the same reasons that a network of contacts can be created. However, it also shows the third-cohort young apprentices to see where their hard work will lead.

In this round of research, there were examples of atypical YAs who would have appreciated having this type of support. Both of these comments also echo the resilience of character noted earlier.

'People at school "take the mick" a bit because I am the only boy doing it but I just ignore them. If there were other boys doing it, it might be more enjoyable, but with all the women [in the sector] it's a bit more daunting.'

'It could be more difficult for someone who is more conscious of it because they would always feel worried. I don't think you ever get discriminated against with this course, but it's just whether you personally feel OK with being the only male there.'

The sorts of young people who enter a YA programme in an atypical area may be particularly strongly motivated in their attitudes to their future careers and therefore perhaps more able to cope in such situations. However, good practice partnerships placed importance on getting the message across from the outset regarding equality and diversity and support atypical learners. In the best examples, inductions into the YA included setting out the Partnership's expectations regarding the cohort's treatment towards all of the group and encouraging discussion of equality and

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[1] A service department in a health sector organisation

diversity and of the need to treat others with respect. The aim was to build the confidence of young people so that they felt able to raise any concerns that they had, but also to ensure that they were aware of the impacts on other people of their own attitudes and behaviour.

An issue relating to the support of all YAs is the provision of resources for independent study. Individuals on the YA programme may miss some time at school, college or at their placement and therefore providing access to catch-up resources can help to ensure that they do not miss out. However, as one partnership noted, resources should be provided in a variety of formats since it cannot be assumed that all pupils have access to a computer at home, particularly those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The way in which partnerships provided such support varied, with one partnership providing workbooks (Box 8) that YAs could work through at home or on placement, and another making use of the college's virtual learning environment (VLE) to support the YAs (Box 10).

Box 10: Using the VLE to support YAs in Bedfordshire and Luton

'Our WebCT system has proved quite useful, particularly with the year 10s, and we have used it quite a lot with them. Whenever we have a lesson, I put the resources and the assignment up. They can access that through school and home. If they have missed a lesson they know they can go there and catch up so they haven't missed out as much. And the schools can see exactly what they have done. So I can send them an email to say what the pupil has missed and they can go through the resources with that pupil so they can catch up much quicker.'

2.5 Encouraging wider choices

Learning points

■ Celebrate success and seek media coverage for YA awards ceremonies or other activities. Include non-traditional learners in press coverage and marketing materials.

■ Review teaching resources for bias in terms of gender, race or disability, and for stereotyping within occupations and, if appropriate, make changes to ensure they present a more inclusive picture of the area. This does not necessarily imply investment in the production of new resources – there are nationally-available resources that Partnerships can access for free.

■ Involve employers (and, where possible, positive role model employers), in careers and YA information events for young people.

■ Provide opportunities to explore issues of gender, race or disability, or stereotyping within occupations. Encourage young people to consider their own attitudes and beliefs and how these might impact on others.

Overcoming barriers

- Work with school teams to promote their active commitment to the YA. Brief all staff about the value of the qualifications. Embed staff training for equality and diversity for all members of the partnership.

- Emphasise the value of the YA qualifications in communications with parents and young people and the options they offer for progression. Use case studies of YAs who have progressed into education or training.

- National consideration should be given to the impacts of the changing funding regime and particularly the concern that activities to encourage widen choices may be constrained by uncertainties in funding.

The earlier research found that subject tasters played a useful role in encouraging young people to consider atypical options. Tasters varied considerably in their structure and intent but were useful for a number of reasons: ensuring motivation, knowledge of a broader range of subjects, and helping to break down stereotyped choices. Chapter 4 of this report provides further information on tasters and so this topic is not described in any detail in this section.

Another issue identified as a barrier to wider choices was the fact that, often, parents' concepts of sectors and occupations can be outdated. Partnerships also believed that parents often had negative views of vocational qualifications. In some cases, partnerships believed that the views of teachers and PAs could be much the same as those of parents. Finally, the earlier study noted the value of using employers in the recruitment process to ensure that young people received a realistic impression of sectors and occupations.

In the following section the good practice to encourage wider choices and ensure inclusive programmes that had been embedded in the YA and other parts of the Key Stage 4 curriculum by the case study partnerships is discussed. The section concludes with a review of other barriers to the participation in the YA of atypical and minority young people.

2.5.1 Good practice in the case study areas

Ensuring that non-traditional entrants are aware that the subject is as open to them as it is for the typical or majority group is central to influencing choices. A simple way to get this message across is to include atypical members of current cohorts -from the YA and elsewhere -in press coverage and marketing materials. One partnership was particularly successful at this (Box 11).

Box 11: Celebrating success at Coventry and Warwickshire

We have a strong focus on getting the message out there and our marketing department are instrumental in this. They will tend to co-ordinate the press coming in to cover for instance, the

girls taking the motor vehicle YA. A deal was recently done with a wreck-recovery service to access vehicles for use in the workshop. We used this as a press opportunity for the YA. This was an ideal opportunity to get coverage for the young women – and ethnic minority pupils – studying on the course. We also invite the press to our Young Apprentice awards ceremony in an effort to ensure a wide range of people hear about their achievements.

It would be useful if the LSC could help on these types of marketing opportunity. Greater recognition from the Inspectorates on our efforts would also help keep the momentum going. Our own marketing department ensures that our prospectus reflects our diverse student base to make sure atypical young people can see the opportunities here are for them.

In Bedfordshire and Luton an approach to ensuring that teaching content was as inclusive as possible was through an annual 'resource audit'. By assessing the profile of pupils coming through to the YA and other courses, teaching resources would be updated to reflect different trends in the cohorts (Box 12). A different development in teaching and learning was found at STEPS. Here resources available through the Gender Equality and Race Inclusion (GERI) project had been integrated into the YA scheme.

Box 12: Resource audit in Bedfordshire and Luton

Bedford is very culturally diverse and the college represents that in its staff and in its student profile and that of the Young Apprenticeship. Each year, a resources audit is undertaken to ensure that learning resources reflect the profile of pupils in the cohort. As the subject of the YA is Business and Administration there is an emphasis on the use of case studies in delivery. These are analysed for things such as the names of business owners and employees, and the types of businesses that are presented. 'If we've got a large Asian group in the cohort, we will adapt the case studies that reflect their culture, so we might include more small businesses and family-run businesses.' This ensures that the learning resources are culturally diverse and that pupils can recognise their own experiences within them.

Training providers in two of the partnerships had been particularly successful at involving their employers beyond the provision of placements. They already had well-established networks with employers before becoming involved in the YA programme. In both cases, there has been the opportunity to build on the employers' involvement in work placements and in the YA more specifically (Boxes 13 and 14).

Box 13: Involving employers in Industry Days at TDR

TDR offers the opportunity for schools to have an Industry Day for their pupils. This is available to each school in the partnership, and although not all had taken it up in the third cohort recruitment, the numbers doing so had expanded.

At each of the Industry Days, the YA Lead made a presentation about engineering and then introduced employers to the pupils. The employers gave a presentation about work placements in their organisation. They also answered any questions the young people had.

Following this, there were in-school activities such as building a crash barrier or wind tunnel and lots of related practical activities. Employers helped out with the practical activities, which had the added benefit that they got to know the young people who might come to them on placement.

In one of the employer-led activities, a chemical engineer asked the pupils to draw a picture of her organisation. All of the pupils drew a picture with smoke billowing out from a factory. The employer was then able to say it was not like they thought – in fact her company made no atmospheric emissions. This led into a discussion about the kinds of assumptions people make about different jobs and work environment.

Box 14: Careers conference at STEPS

STEPS received funding via Northumberland Strategic Health authority (and last year from Durham SHA) to offer one-day careers conferences in each of the counties. The target audience is young people aged between 15 and 16, and the aim is to help inform their post-compulsory choices. However, schools within the Young Apprenticeship are also invited to take up places.

A range of health-and-social-care employers are involved in the event, including a range of staff from NHS organisations as well as, for instance, residential service staff in the private sector. The employers who attend are reasonably gender balanced, so provide role models to young men. Young people can select from seminars over three sessions during the day. The staff and employers offer a realistic view of the sectors and the occupations within them, and young people appreciate the opportunity to be able to ask questions and gain information.

While these examples show how employers can be involved, partnerships also need to be aware that employers may well need guidance about what is required from them and also how they can present an inclusive view of the sector. There is also the issue of whether employers are sufficiently engaged with the activity to see through the commitment they have made. In the STEPS example (Box 14), a co-ordinator noted that some employers would drop out at the last minute, so having contingency plans to manage the reduced number of seminars was essential. The taster case studies in the appendices to this report contain further details about involving employers and designing activities to challenge stereotypes.

One mechanism that encourages young people to feel able to address any difficulties they might experience in the various learning venues encountered on the YA is to provide opportunities to discuss diversity and different cultures. An excellent model of this taking place during YA induction was reported in the previous study, and the organisation had not just maintained the model but was updating the apprenticeship induction to find new ways of addressing these issues.

A different approach is taken at Croydon, where regular 'enrichment' sessions form part of the learning offer, with the main focus being on ensuring that young people develop their understanding of themselves as well as respect for others (Box 15).

> **Box 15: Enrichment in the curriculum at Croydon**
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> Equality and diversity are very important here because of the population in this area. Each week, students have an enrichment session which is about race and cultural and religious awareness. It is a good opportunity for them to discuss their experiences and to explore how their own attitudes can affect others. Current news items or the people and issues experienced at placements are used as a starting point. Pupils are encouraged to think about different religious and minority groups and what their perspective might be. If a work placement example is being used, pupils are also encouraged to think about how their beliefs and/or attitudes might affect the situation.

2.5.2 Barriers to encouraging wider choices

The barriers to encouraging wider choices unsurprisingly remain much the same as those found in the earlier research. These include the extent to which schools allow widening choice activities to take place prior to Key Stage 4 option process, and the views of staff who offer advice to young people. While there was evidence of some success with school engagement, such as the expansion of the number of schools using the TDR Industry Days, there was less evidence of changes in staff attitudes.

While one or two of the partnerships had delivered staff development to their direct employees on equalities, this had not extended to all staff within the partnership. Overall however their main concern had shifted from equalities to the lack of esteem for vocational qualifications and a lack of understanding of the value of the qualifications undertaken by Young Apprentices. This suggests the need for improved communication within partnerships to ensure the value of the qualifications is fully understood. It is also likely that more guidance to staff from national stakeholders about the value of vocational qualifications is required, not just for the YA, but to support the aims of the 14-19 reforms more widely.

Beyond the views of professionals, parents were seen as crucial influencers of young people's decisions. While partnerships felt they had improved their communications with parents, they were still concerned that progress was slow.

> *'We have the open day and lots of students come in with their parents but what we've tried to do here is make sure that we're actually talking to the student rather than the parent. Because the parent will often talk for the student, and if you ask the student what they really want to do and what they really like, it's often different to what mum's saying they should do.'*

> *'It's the stereotypes that the parents have; they affect the types of subject pupils take up. It is changing – but very slowly.'*

There was also particular concern as partnerships sought to increase the number of YA pupils from ethnic minority groups. The issue centred on whether there was sufficient parental support for vocational education in place of academic routes. Concern was also expressed at cultural norms that limit the participation of young

ethnic minority women. For some communities, it is not considered appropriate for young women to travel unaccompanied and for this reason, parents may advise against the YA.

> *'The thing about ethnic minorities is that parents do not see an apprenticeship as a good route. You either go into the business or you go to university. If we can get to the parents and say there is another route for students…. But there is just this kudos of, I think, going to university and I don't think that everyone realises the other opportunities.'*

In discussing how to change parental attitudes, partnerships felt that this would be achieved through the quality of the route being demonstrated. In one case, this was already felt to have started happening:

> *'I think the word is out … when you do it well [delivery of the YA], it's word of mouth.'*

The final consideration is how activities to encourage wider choices can be funded. Partnerships felt there was a lack of support from national organisations, although this is not specifically directed at the Young Apprenticeship. Where funding is available, it is usually for one-off projects rather than longer term initiatives. In addition, there was concern that the reduced funding available for cohort 4, and the shift of funding generally from LEAs to schools, might limit future EO activities since schools might not give them priority in budgets:

> *'As part of the Government's drive, a lot of money that used to go to LEAs now goes directly to schools for them to manage and decide themselves. But schools choose, generally speaking, to think that they should get all that experience but they don't want to pay for anything. So the difficulty is that in theory we could levy money in from employers but in our sectors it is unlikely that they will pay so in the future it's [broad spectrum activity to encourage wider choices] not going to happen.'*

2.6 Critical success factors for equal opportunities in the YAs

What clearly emerged in this second round of the research is the link between good equalities practice and good practice more generally. While equality and diversity practices cannot be separated from the concepts identified as Critical Success Factors (CSFs) by the Department/LSC in the documentation for cohort 4 proposals, it is also the case that practices introduced because of attention to equality and diversity issues typically result in an improved learning experience for the whole cohort.

In this section, the most relevant of the CSFs have been selected for discussion, and examples are given of ways in which case study partnerships had approached these factors. The focus of this section is on the identification of ways in which partnerships could operate to achieve good equalities practice.

Joint strategic and operational planning; shared vision, mission and ethos; two-way collaboration between partners

In a strong partnership, equal opportunities in the YA are viewed as a shared mission and responsibility. In the best examples, schools are engaged with this agenda. In one example, the lead organisation specified that the school group for the YA should be gender balanced and ethnically mixed and the school had responded to this target. However, not all partner schools are equally engaged with the YA, and often the partnership finds a different reception awaits it in each of the schools it work with.

The culture of schools plays a part in the extent to which equal opportunities is promoted or resisted. Some schools welcome the partnership into assemblies and to run Taster or Industry Days. However, in other schools partnerships reported a lack of interest in these activities even where they do not require any particular resource from schools.

One factor that may impact on this is the number of pupils a school sends to the YA. Where a school sends a larger number of pupils, engagement with the YA generally tends to be higher than when just one or two pupils attend. For instance, where the YA is available to a greater number of pupils it appears to receive greater priority amongst partner schools. Partnerships have found it easier to lead widening choices activities where engagement with the YA is stronger.

One step taken to address the issue of engagement was to ask schools to sign up to a written contract setting out the expectations of all parties, which included the responsibility for equal opportunities. Admittedly, this had led to mixed results, with partnerships feeling that schools could 'pick and choose' which parts of the contract they adhered to. However, supporting the contractual undertakings through ongoing briefings and reinforcement of the key messages may help to facilitate greater equalities action.

Target setting, tracking and monitoring

Targets appeared underused within the good practice case studies and further encouragement to target may be required. Where targets are used, these tended to relate to the national target for 50-per-cent progression into work-based learning or other vocational programmes at the age of 16. In the best example found within the case studies, equalities targets had been set across the programmes offered by the lead organisation (all within a single subject, which was the subject in which the YA was offered); further, this organisation was planning shortly to implement targets for cohort-4 recruitment at the school level, and these would include the YA. This may be a useful approach to target-setting that other YA partnerships might wish to consider.

Monitoring the profile of pupils from application through enrolment is common practice within partnerships. Pupils' progress is monitored and, in most cases, destination following completion of the YA. However, the earlier parts of the

recruitment process, such as activities to raise awareness or to encourage wider choices, can be overlooked. To be able to demonstrate their progress in this regard, partnerships will need to embed further monitoring within their systems to collect data regarding their recruitment and selection processes. Where schools lead on the initial sifting of candidates for the academic criteria, there may be benefit to requesting statistical data to show not just flow through the process but also the baseline profile of eligible pupils. This will allow the identification of opportunities for strategic work to encourage greater diversity in their cohorts. Consideration should also be given to the setting of realistic targets, based on the data, for gender, ethnicity, disability and disadvantage; and making these visible so that progress can be clearly measured and understood within partnerships. National stakeholders should also consider whether there would be benefit to collecting pre-application data from YA partnerships within standard monitoring, to build an analysis of national trends as well as identify where progress is being made.

Guidance issued to partnerships on the issue of targets has recently been strengthened and this is likely to promote greater action. Specifically, the national guidance for cohort 4 requires that partnerships develop strategies to: target groups who are socially disadvantaged; counter gender stereotyping (and particularly encourage boys and girls to follow courses of study that depart from traditional patterns); and target ethnic minorities and pupils with disabilities and/or Special Educational Needs (SEN) by using suitable role models and removing barriers to entry. At this stage, there is no requirement to set targets for the numbers of these pupils entering the YA.

Timely and impartial information, advice and guidance

The extent of IAG available for pupils still varies and many would appreciate more guidance on their skills and abilities prior to making their Key Stage 4 choices. Although opportunities for further IAG may exist pupils may not necessarily request it. In one example a pupil had used the Connexions library, but not asked the Personal Advisor for guidance. While pupils should be encouraged to use resources independently there is also a case for checking if they have found what they wanted and if they would like any help.

Practice in one of the schools visited for the research focused on providing 'strongly directional' guidance about the choices available in the various technology subjects one of which would be compulsory at Key Stage 4. The guidance focused on the match between the skills required for the different qualifications and vocational options that were offered.

More generally however, Partnership Leads were concerned that pupils were not receiving fully impartial advice and guidance. There was a view that teachers (and other professionals) still consider vocational routes (including the YA) to be a second-rate option. This issue was felt to affect all learners, not just those who were atypical.

The result was that not all eligible pupils would have the opportunity to hear about the YA from the Partnership Lead and make their own choice.

This point links to one of the CSFs, that recommends professional development for staff involved in partnerships. Professional development can help the various different partners and professional groups to understand the needs that atypical and minority pupils may have, and enable them to be better supported during their time on the YA. Professional development can also serve to promote collaboration and facilitate the provision of more impartial advice about vocational routes.

Selecting the right pupils is vital, and where KS3 results are considered a risk, additional forms of assessment should be provided to inform selection decisions

Selecting the right pupils for the YA was critical for partnerships. The YA is felt to be a demanding qualification: in some schools it is taken in addition to the standard core and option Key Stage 4 choices and may mean that catch-up sessions are required for other subjects, including the core curriculum. While there were examples of atypical entrants with slightly lower scores than required having been accepted onto the YA (and who were reported to be performing well), partnerships felt strongly that in most cases, the academic criteria should be met.

Selection procedures had been extended to include additional forms of assessment. These included teacher references and the use of assessment centres. Incorporating a form of assessment exercise as part of a taster sessions was one way of gaining additional information about capability and motivation.[1] There was recognition, however, that atypical candidates may need the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in different ways.

In one good practice example, an all-day assessment centre was held. Young people were aware of the criteria on which assessment would be based and moved around a carousel of activities designed to allow them to demonstrate their skills in relation to the selection criteria. This had proved to be a valuable introduction to the YA programme for them, and the assessors felt that they had gained improved information about different pupils' abilities.

Effective communication within partnerships, with pupils and guardians. Clear boundaries of responsibilities and tasks that each partner commits to undertake

Effective communication will help ensure that each partner is aware of their responsibilities, and this will promote the strategic, shared responsibility for equality of opportunity. Beyond the early phases of awareness-raising and recruitment, effective communication ensures that each partner knows and understands how the

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[1]   This was an issue that partnerships attending the regional workshops were interested in, and is reported on in Chapter 4.

pupil experience is being supported, monitored and reviewed and how they interact with this process.

One example revealed a lack of clarity amongst the various professionals involved in the YA programme regarding who was responsible for monitoring the placements. This meant that, in fact, no-one was undertaking this activity. While not specifically an equalities concern, such lack of monitoring during placements might leave an atypical candidate in a particularly vulnerable situation, as well as leading to a lack of support more generally.

There is also a need for partnerships to ensure that young people do relate their experiences to them. In one case a young ethnic minority pupil being made the subject of jokes in the workplace. While this pupil was largely unconcerned, a less confident young person's experience could be different. Staff within the partnership were unaware of this situation because the young person had not raised it with them. Some structured questioning about pupils' relationships with colleagues in the workplace might have meant this issue had emerged (and if necessary, the partnership could have taken action).

Dedicated co-ordinators who oversee the delivery of the programme across all aspects of delivery; learner support and appropriate and timely review

A dedicated co-ordinator who works across all aspects of the YA delivery can help avoid 'gaps' in support and provide consistency of support to learners, as well as ensuring all partners are aware of the progress of individuals. While partners such as college tutors who work with pupils each week have an ongoing role in support, a co-ordinator has the overview of pupils' experiences at their different learning situations. In a good practice example, the partnership had made changes to the delivery model to enable co-ordinators to spend more time with young people. This resulted in more individualised learning (the co-ordinator would contact employers to ensure pupils had the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their skills) and coaching about how work placement experiences contributed to the achievement of their qualifications.

If it is not possible for a partnership to put in place dedicated co-ordinators to work in the ways described, then an individual could be assigned responsibility for overview of support rather than necessarily being in direct contact with pupils. However, with such arrangements it is imperative that each professional involved in the delivery and support of the YA understands their role and collects and feeds back relevant information to the co-ordinator.

Examples of this approach working effectively were found in some of the case studies. In the best examples, regular review processes allowed different partners to feed-in to the review, and included pupil feedback. Regular reports about pupil progress are given to parents and guardians as well as professional partners. Where this model operated, it was felt to be sufficiently individualised to support the needs of any pupil, including atypical candidates and those in a minority (by gender, race or disability).

Involvement of employers from the outset; the provision of high-quality and demanding work experience; work experience clearly linked to the sector and qualification(s) being studied

The provision of a high-quality work experience is crucial to delivery of the young apprenticeships and many believe it to be the central benefit that learners gain from the programme. To ensure that minority or atypical groups have a positive experience it may be necessary to provide guidance for employers, but some partnerships were more confident in doing so than others. It is understandable that partners might not wish to overtly raise issues of gender or race, but some partnerships had found ways of doing so that did not offend employers and, at the same time, ensured that appropriate work environments were provided for their young people. One way in which this had been done was to include an assessment of suitability while a health and safety/risk assessment site visit was conducted. The guidance was given to the employer couched in terms relating to issues that should be considered when having any 14 or 15 year old at the work site, rather than focusing on gender or race per se.

The needs of pupils with SEN may require particular consideration, and partnerships may find that some employers are better placed to provide placements for more vulnerable young people. In some work environments the employer or the other employees may be better placed to take time to support and guide young people through their tasks. In one case, for example, supporting pupils with SEN was of particular interest to the employer. This indicates the importance of working closely with employers from the outset and finding out what it is that drives their involvement in the YA. The research undertaken for this project indicated that many employers have altruistic reasons for getting involved in the YA, and partnerships should seek to understand employers' motivations and, where appropriate, build on them.

Celebrating success and learner achievement

Celebration of success and achievement is felt to positively affect pupil motivation and can inspire them to work hard, and to consider progression into work-based learning or vocational programmes at the age of 16. In terms of equality and diversity, celebrating and making a feature of the success of atypical and minority pupils can help encourage other atypical and minority young people to consider the route. If role models or ambassadors from previous cohorts can be represented in photographs or case studies in the YA literature, this will also help.

Typically, the good practice case study partnerships hold awards ceremonies at the end of the YA to celebrate the achievement of all their learners. However, in the best examples, the press are invited to report the event. The partnerships also look for opportunities to publish photographs of atypical and minority young people in their prospectuses and literature.

Conclusions and recommendations

Linking activities to the CSFs offers a strong model to ensure good equalities practice. Through this approach, equal opportunities and diversity activities can be configured around the established good practice that DfES/LSC has demanded that partnerships consider in their proposals.

In most case study areas, some significant progress has been made towards improving the YA delivery process to ensure that all pupils, including those who are atypical, have the best experience possible. However, in the best examples, partnerships are not complacent, instead seeking information about all aspects of their delivery to enable them to assess what they do and change practice where necessary. Linking equal opportunities and diversity to the CSFs, and making sure they are central to all quality-improvement activities is the simplest way to ensure good EO practice.

3 Design and Delivery of Tasters

An issue explored in the previous report was the role of tasters in promoting equality of opportunity and as a source of information, advice and guidance. This was felt to be an area of emerging good practice and the Department and the LSC were interested to support the implementation of tasters more widely within the Young Apprenticeship programme. Therefore IES was asked to disseminate their earlier findings more widely and provide support to partnerships to develop and implement tasters.

The earlier study (Newton et al., 2006) had explored tasters within and beyond the YA and found that tasters help to encourage young people to consider wider options. The taster examples found varied a great deal in their structure and intent, but in general were seen as useful for several reasons: giving young people knowledge of a broader range of subjects; helping to break down stereotyped concepts; and ensuring the motivation of young people by ensuring they had more information available ahead of making their decisions. Some tasters also addressed the needs of other stakeholders in young people's decisions, such as parents.

Tasters provide an active form of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). They allow young people to experiment within a subject and to understand the vocational mode of learning, which most will not have experienced prior to Key Stage 4. All these issues are of course particularly relevant to the Young Apprenticeship programme.

3.1 Aims and purpose

The aims of this strand of the research were to provide partnerships with the information they would need to:

■ Design tasters, and, within this to:

□ consider equality and diversity issues in the design

□ build equality and diversity activities within tasters design to encourage learners to try atypical areas

□ build IAG within taster design.

■ Plan logistical issues such as:

  □ whom to involve and in what ways

  □ timing and, in particular, interaction with core timetables

  □ location and travel arrangements.

■ Evaluate taster provision:

  □ at local level

  □ nationally.

With this information, it was hoped that partnerships would feel confident to plan and deliver a YA taster; would understand how tasters can contribute to both IAG and to equality and diversity agendas; and would gain an understanding of the planned national evaluation and how this might interact with local evaluations of tasters.

The practical outcome for this strand was the development of a toolkit that all partnerships would be able to use to guide the development and delivery of tasters as part of their recruitment and selection practice for the Young Apprenticeships.

3.2 The process

The tasters work strand was initiated in Spring 2006, when IES was invited to make a presentation to the national conferences for the YA in Leeds and London. The conferences provided a forum to share the information emerging from the different strands of the evaluation and were an opportunity for partnerships to review practice as well as network with each other and stakeholders. They were attended by large audiences and included a range of stakeholders: partnerships (mainly cohort 2 and 3), SSCs and evaluators, as well as policymakers such as the Department, LSC and others.

The forums therefore provided an opportunity to share findings about good equalities practice in general within the YA, how tasters were being and could be used to promote and support equality and diversity, and how partnerships were able to get involved in the project. The IES presentation focused on a range of issues, including practical concerns and creative ideas in design and delivery and outlined the perceived benefits and outcomes of tasters. At the end of each presentation an invitation was issued to partnerships to participate in the new round of taster research, with the invitation being extended to those who already had experience of running tasters as well as to partnerships who wished to take advantage of the support offered in organising a taster event for the first time. The invitation also gave IES the opportunity to gain further information about the current extent of taster

activities within and outside the YAs, and to network with organisations that had experience organising and running tasters.

These invitations yielded around 12 partnerships, ranging from those with extensive experience of delivering tasters, including sessions for other groups such as post-16s, and partnerships for whom tasters were a new undertaking. These partnerships were subsequently invited to a development workshop (held in May 2006), designed to bring both type of partnership together to identify the drivers for, and benefits of, providing tasters, as well as identifying any concerns, issues or barriers the newer partnerships have.

In practice, six of the partnerships attended this development workshop (one of whom had been a case study for the earlier report). The themes and issues identified by them during the workshop are set out in the later sections of this chapter. Following an overview of the project and the key emerging themes, each of the three partnerships that had already delivered taster sessions gave a presentation about their activities, and answered questions from the other partnerships.

In the second session, the discussion centred on the types of issues that those new to tasters might wish to consider. IES gave an overview on the research findings relating to information, advice and guidance within tasters, as well as summarising some of the approaches to equality and diversity that could be adopted within tasters both overall and in the practical activities. Following this, each of the partnerships that were new to tasters outlined the issues and challenges they faced, and then the group worked on some ideas about how these might be addressed. The partnerships new to tasters felt there was a clear benefit to the day, as it had given them the opportunity to tap into the expertise of those with experience of tasters. In addition, the experienced partnerships commented that it had also given them the opportunity to review practice and consider whether practice elsewhere could be transferred to their own provision.

One important point raised during discussions about the feasibility of organising tasters at that point in the year was the short timescale in which to implement the tasters for the third cohort of the YA. In the event, follow-up calls to the newer partnerships to assess progress in working towards setting up a taster event showed that the timescale had proved an insuperable hurdle, and none had found that it was possible to organise a taster session in the current school year.

The Department therefore agreed that this part of the research programme should be rescheduled to a point in the year where potentially it could have greater influence in the fourth cohort recruitment. In readiness for this next stage of the work a toolkit was drafted based on the themes that emerged from the initial workshop and, in the Autumn term of 2006, all partnerships delivering cohort 3 YAs were contacted and asked if they would be interested in participating in the tasters project. This group was selected as it was anticipated that most would respond to any call for proposals to deliver fourth-cohort Young Apprenticeships.

There was an enthusiastic response to the invitation, far greater than originally anticipated, and to meet this demand a series of four regional workshops was held to maximise the opportunity for all partnerships that had expressed an interest to attend[1]. Workshops were held in February 2007, soon after the announcement of cohort 4[2] and a total of 24 professionals from 16 partnerships attended.

The workshops used a participative format, commencing by asking workshop participants what their objectives were in attending the session and whether there were any local issues that they felt tasters might help them to resolve. After this IES gave an overview of the previous taster research findings, followed by discussion with the group based on the topics identified within the draft toolkit and action planning by the participants. At the end of each workshop the researchers introduced the draft toolkit and the national evaluation. Participants were also asked for their feedback on the day's session and to give feedback if they used the toolkit in the future.

The reasons given by participants for attending the workshops proved to be broadly similar across the 16 partnerships. Gender segregation was a major concern for many, which they felt taster sessions might help them to address. Many simply wanted to hear about the different types of approach that could be used in designing tasters. The feedback gained at the end of each session indicated that all participants felt that they had gained useful information, food for thought, and, in one case, a delegate reported that the workshop had been 'enlightening and inspirational'. Many of the participants intended to make immediate changes to events other than tasters planned in the short term, based on ideas that had been generated during the discussions; for example, one teacher planned to change the structure of an information evening for parents based on the discussion.

3.3 Taster evaluation

The taster toolkit has now been published and is available through the LSC Apprenticeship repository[3]; the final version was made available on completion of the evaluation in Autumn 2007. Cohort 3 partnerships were contacted and invited to participate in the national evaluation. The original plan for evaluation comprised:

■ questionnaire to be completed by the design and organising team

■ questionnaire to be completed by pupils.

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[1] The original plan agreed with DfES had been for IES researchers to visit participating sites

[2] The fourth YA cohort proposal documentation requested that partnerships consider embedding Tasters within selection procedures to build on the good practice identified by the YAEO report.

[3] www.apprenticeships.org.uk

The questionnaires are shown in Appendix 5 as part of the Taster toolkit. Partnerships have also been asked to send copies of their 'taster plan' and findings from their local evaluations to the research team. This information will be used to supplement the data obtained during the national evaluation.

While many partnerships responded positively to this request, in practice three participated in the evaluation and two of these collected pupil survey data. No staff evaluations were received.

3.4 Taster design and delivery issues

A range of issues need to be considered prior to design and delivery of a taster event or session. Some of these apply to the use of tasters across-the-board, while others are specific to the YA. Partnerships had a range of reasons for coming to the workshops, which ranged from simply finding out about tasters and gaining advice about what works through to exploring ways of dealing with the challenges of occupational segregation and the low esteem of vocational qualifications. The workshops also allowed an opportunity to share practice and many participants commented that they had valued the opportunity to network and gather ideas to build on and refresh their current practice.

In the following sections, the issues that emerged during the development and regional workshops are discussed in the context of the original IES research findings, and case study vignettes (or signposts to these in the Toolkit case studies) are provided to illustrate the solutions that have been reached in the partnerships and elsewhere.

What is a taster?

A broad definition has been used in this study that reflects the earlier findings regarding the extent to which tasters vary in structure and intent. In this definition, tasters can be said to have some shared characteristics, and these are:

- **Short duration**. Typically, young people attend just a single session or day, although in some cases tasters may be spread over a longer period (one to two weeks although occasionally longer than this). These extended tasters tend to be used across choices for Key Stage 4 rather than solely for the YA.

- **Practical focus**. The sessions are typically built around practical activities so that young people are actively engaged and gain hands-on experience.

- **Non-accredited**. Tasters are usually aimed at young people without any prior qualification, and often without significant experience in the subject. Tasters are generally non-accredited and therefore present an opportunity to 'try before you buy'.

Beyond the shared characteristics, a range of purposes can be served by tasters, most of direct relevance to the YA. These include:

■ experience of new learning environments such as college and/or employer sites

■ assessment centre for skills and aptitudes, using 'off the shelf' diagnostic packages, or activities designed to allow these to be demonstrated (see Toolkit case study 6.11)

■ industry focus activities and information sessions, focusing on careers and training and progression pathways; employers are most often involved in these types of sessions (see Toolkit case studies 3.6, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.5)

■ equality and diversity focus and/or the activities focus on challenging occupational stereotypes (see Toolkit case studies 6.7 and 6.8).

What does a taster look like?

There are many structures and designs for tasters and no reason to suggest what type of approach will work best in a particular setting. Choice of approach will depend on the particular group(s) that partnerships wish to focus on, the access they have to young people and the resources they have available to them. However, partnerships with some experience suggested that the most cost-effective approach is to fit the taster session within the current recruitment and selection processes for the YA, such as interview days and information sessions. Those new to tasters also saw this as being the most practical solution as well. To be maximally effective, however, tasters should be one part of an overall information-giving strategy, which might include presentations at school assemblies, open evenings for parents and young people, and interviews and/or separate assessment centres.

From the recruitment process as a whole, the taster should help young people understand what the YA entails, including the different sites of learning, the work placement and the qualifications. It should also help them understand the kinds of skills and attributes the YA requires and where it can lead. Input from providers and other stakeholders about careers in the sector is valued by young people. Tasters can extend this understanding by allowing young people to experiment with practical activities associated with the subject and possibly the mode of assessment. Ideally, the practical IAG element will lead young people to better understand their abilities in the subject. Precisely what any taster will contain will depend on how it is built in to the recruitment process. Many of the partnerships were either considering or had already embedded tasters into selection days and information events.

An example of current events within which partnerships felt that tasters could be readily embedded were employer conferences. These involved a number of employers being available to give information and answer questions. In two or three

cases these were already established, and the structure was felt to lend itself to a taster, either as part of a carousel arrangement[1] or a whole-group session.

Consideration was also being given to two-tier taster/IAG models. Suggestions included a half-day practical experience prior to application, followed by a half-day assessment centre with practical activities to support selection. Another two-tier idea was to hold a taster carousel event during which the young people have the chance to move through activity sessions in a range of YA subjects, and, following choice of the preferred YA/subject, for a second taster session to be held in a relevant workplace.

What is a taster activity?

A taster is simply the chance to try out and experience something. For this reason, a practical activity related to the subject of the YA is normally the focus (Table 3.1). While partnerships found it easy to find activities in areas such as automotive industry, often they struggled to identify short practical activities in areas such as business or health and social care. Television programmes were often used as the basis for activities.

Table 3.1: Examples of some practical activities used or planned in tasters

Subject	Activity
Administration	Exercise to show how far administration underpins business, education etc, eg how many administrators in this building extrapolated to this town/country/world
Automotive	Change a wheel
Business/Retail	Dragon's den simulation – market a product to potential investors
Catering	Ready, steady, cook teams
Engineering	Design a wind tunnel
Health and social care	Care for virtual baby; monitor own temperature or blood pressure; role play patient and carer

Source: Taster development and regional workshops

The focus for the taster could be informed by analysis of recruitment in previous cohorts (if the partnership is an existing YA provider) or by recruitment challenges faced by other courses in the same subject or mode. This information will help partnerships decide if there are particular groups who need priority in the recruitment drive and hence the taster session.

Alternatively, if partnerships feel that it is the vocational mode or college environment to which pupils require greater introduction then practical activities might focus on the skills and attributes required for learning in these environments or

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[1]   An arrangement in which the young person moves around between activities or sessions.

in work placements. The toolkit suggests some questions that partnerships can ask themselves when thinking about the purpose of their taster (Toolkit, section 1).

Timing issues

The timing of tasters was a key concern, and this can dictate their purpose. Some partnerships were using tasters prior to or during the application process for the YA, while others used them following application and as part of selection, or after a YA place was confirmed, to ensure that pupils felt they had made the right choice. Both types are equally valid, but it should be noted that those used to inform choices have the greatest potential to address equality and diversity. An associated issue raised by partnerships was the difficulty of having direct influence within some schools and in the Key Stage 4 choice process. In those cases where partnerships had limited access then this inhibited their ability to offer taster activities to address inequalities.

A further timing issue is the time of day at which the taster is offered, and the day of the week. Tasters were most commonly held during the school day, although tasters as part of open evenings were felt to be practical in some areas. Less common were examples of tasters in school holidays or at weekends. There are clearly benefits and drawbacks to each of these, and consideration of who to involve in taster events will tend to drive this decision. If parents are involved, either in practical activities or information sessions built into the taster, then holding the taster (or the relevant part of it) after the school day would enable more to attend (Toolkit section 2).

How tasters can help reach out

Partnerships were certainly interested in the role of tasters in helping to encourage wider choices.[1] However, they were also aware of the 'high-investment, low-impact' ratio that appeared to accompany some EO activities, an issue that mirrors the experiences of the case study partnerships. Tasters alone were not felt to be sufficient to bring about large-scale change, although they were seen as usefully forming part of a longer-term IAG and equalities strategy.

One partnership mentioned that, while they had successfully attracted young women to a taster in a male-dominated YA subject, this had not led to their recruitment to the YA. This is certainly an issue for partnerships to monitor, and is a reason why feedback should be obtained from taster attendees so that practice can evolve over time to better fit the needs of atypical pupils (see Toolkit Evaluation section). That said, it could also be argued that these young women were able to reject the YA/subject on the basis of improved information and had at least experimented with the subject before rejecting it.

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[1]   Tasters had been highlighted in the Equal Opportunities section of the cohort 4 proposal documentation issued by the DfES.

An issue specific to the YA, in terms of reaching out to a wider potential cohort of learners, is the question of who to invite to taster sessions. With limited YA places available, partnerships felt it was unfair to raise the aspirations of young people who did not meet the academic entry criteria for the programme. However, this issue may be addressed in the near future as vocational options in Key Stage 4 widen with the entitlement to Diplomas in 2013. If tasters are designed for a subject (rather than a specific programme) then this may well become less of a concern as the options available expand to meet the range of pupil abilities at this level.

There are two main ways in which equality and diversity can be addressed in tasters: through mechanisms such as single-sex sessions, or through activities that aim to challenge stereotypes. Such activities might include positive role models, an idea that appealed to a number of partnerships. Employer or training-provider positive role models had been used in a number of examples we found. Whatever approach is taken to the invitation of atypical pupils to, and their integration into, taster events, it is imperative to ensure that the way in which the event is organised serves to reinforce and build their confidence in their ability to undertake the practical activities that are delivered. If not, tasters could actually serve to confirm the misgivings of atypical entrants about their skills and abilities in gender-segregated subjects.

Boxes 16 and 17 are reproduced from the Toolkit case studies, and focus on EO mechanisms and activities.

Box 16: Activities to challenge occupational stereotypes (Toolkit case study 7.7)

Example one: Two taster providers used role models such as female engineers and male nurses, in order to show young people real examples of the opportunities and progression routes which they may not have considered.

Example two: An employer-led activity in a different taster challenged young people's stereotypes of the sector. The employer was a chemical engineer and asked young people to draw a picture of where she worked. All of the pupils drew a picture with smoke billowing out from a factory. The employer was then able to say it was not like they thought – in fact her company made no atmospheric emissions. This led into a discussion about the kinds of assumptions people make about different jobs and work environment.

Example three: This idea, from an E2E provider interviewed as part of the GFI and reported on the Equal Opportunities Commission' website,[1] aims to challenge occupational stereotypes:

'An E2E programme in Birmingham and Solihull, called 3Es, includes a regular tutorial session on equal opportunities. As part of this, the young people take part in an exercise called "What's my job?" in which they match pictures of individuals to various occupations: model, doctor, nurse, cleaner, chief executive, and so on. The tutor then uses this as a basis for exploring issues of stereotyping and challenging the young people's ideas about who can do certain jobs.'

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[1]   EOC: Action for Change: How training providers can break down gender segregation in vocational education and training. http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/action_for_change_occ_seg_training.pdf).

Box 17: Single-sex sessions in gender-segregated sectors (Toolkit case study 6.8)

Partnerships had included all-female and all-male groups in their tasters to allow experimentation with subjects that are strongly gender-stereotyped. In one example, the 'construction' teachers noticed that girls tended to work in a different way from the boys. They often worked in concentrated silence and together, whereas the boys were more rowdy and reminiscent of a building site and, given their larger numbers, this was felt to be intimidating. The girls-only taster meant that girls could work in a comfortable environment and a focus was put on careers in construction beyond the building site, eg quantity surveying, computer-aided design etc.

Training providers may be concerned that it is discriminatory to offer tasters just to one sex, however the taster can be offered to both and then provided as single-sex sessions. Alternatively, in another example taken from the EOC[1], a provider offered different tasters to boys and girls:

'Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Training in 2003 ran an activities event for 500 school pupils. Girls participated in three activities from a choice of nine traditionally male-dominated activities, including bricklaying, tetrahedron building (construction), computing, fire-fighting and motor-vehicle maintenance. Similarly, boys chose three out of nine traditionally female activities including childcare, hairdressing, floristry, dental nursing, dance and fashion. The event was a huge success, with bricklaying proving to be the most popular workshop among the girls. 200 participants completed evaluations of the day, with over 40 young people indicating that they were interested in pursuing non-traditional careers. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the event had a significant impact on many of the young people involved.'

In many cases, partnerships also faced the challenge of overcoming negative stereotypes about vocational qualifications (VQs). Linked to this, there can be confusion about the value of VQs in terms of levels and GCSE points. A taster can build in information sessions on these issues for parents and young people. It may also be worth building-in such information in other (non-taster) YA events. Addressing negative perceptions of VQs amongst other staff involved in young people's choices is also a key concern for partnerships, while not strictly speaking an objective for YA tasters[2].

Ensuring the right students are recruited

Using tasters as a form of assessment centre interested many partnerships new to tasters, and amongst experienced partnerships, embedding an assessment within taster sessions was relatively common. There was general consensus about the importance of selecting the best-quality candidates, since the YA programme is demanding and requires some maturity (ie at college and during employer

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[1]   EOC: Action for Change: How training providers can break down gender segregation in vocational education and training. http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/action_for_change_occ_seg_training.pdf.

[2]   Newton et al (2006) also reported that a college running 'industry days' for teachers, tutors and Connexions staff which included hands-on, taster-type sessions.

placements). In good practice examples, young people received feedback about their performance in the various assessment activities.

The assessment centres (in current and planned activities) typically:

■ Were **activity-based**. Two approaches were found: *formal assessment* of activities so that pupils knew they were being assessed and, in some cases, knew the assessment criteria being used; *less formal assessment* based on providers' unstructured observation of motivation, capability and suitability for the vocational learning mode.

■ Used **skill or attribute diagnostics**. Typically these used an 'off-the-shelf' package. In some cases, basic skills were assessed (to provide earlier information for Individual Learning Plans); less frequently cited examples included the Connexions Kudos careers diagnostic.

Where feedback exists, this contributes to the information available to pupils regarding their own capability, and the case studies confirm that pupils value receiving external information regarding their skills and abilities. Partnerships suggested that the feedback need not necessarily form part of the taster but, rather, can be embedded into the general feedback given to successful and unsuccessful applicants.

Involving employers in tasters

There had been mixed experience of involving employers. Typically, employers involved in tasters had been engaged via their involvement in work placements. One partnership that had included a range of retail employers in its taster found that, overall, their involvement was useful. However, using more than one employer can make the organisation and logistics of the activities more difficult. Some had found that employers dropped out of the event at the last minute if something more pressing came up. To try to incentivise employer participation in future tasters, one Partnership was considering how the taster could be designed as a free training and certified continuing professional development opportunity for employers/employees.

Employers do require some guidance about their role at the taster. Partnerships agreed that it is useful to be specific and, for instance, to ask them to talk about the work placement they offer and the kinds of tasks that learners do. It is also important to ensure employers are aware of the need to present an inclusive view at the taster. Involving employers in delivery of practical activities was less commonly reported, but where it did occur, it worked well, provided employers were given the right briefing.

It is also worth considering whether any placement employers or staff can be positive role models for the subject, as role models are felt to work particularly well. The message is most powerful when it is given by someone who has done it.

3.4.1 Plans for YA tasters in cohort 4

The majority of partnerships left the workshops with practical intentions. In many cases these related to embedding a taster activity session in their recruitment and selection processes. In a small number of instances, partnerships had intentions to amend other aspects of their process, such as information evenings for parents. While some of these outcomes were unintended, they were a result of the issues and ideas discussed during the workshops.

Examples of the next steps they hoped to achieve included:

- a coaching taster, part-facilitated by YA ambassadors (Sports YA)

- a group format for YA information sessions offered on an hourly basis at parents' evenings at school to enable more parents to hear details of the route

- extending the current tasters model into a taster specific to YA applicants

- consideration of tasters in broader context across college provision

- an assessment-focused day at local college

- a one-day taster session held at the training provider's premises for pupils expressing an interest in YA. The day will include the YA interview with staff and employer(s), tour of environment, and basic engineering skills assessment.

- a one-day taster with employers, possible carousel format – tour, activities and interviews.

3.5 Findings from the evaluation of tasters

The evaluation aimed to find out what young people seek from a taster experience as well as their perceptions of what is currently being provided. A key purpose of this research was to gain information that would help providers to understand how taster events can be better focused to meet young people's needs.

Providers were invited to participate in the national evaluation and those who did so asked the young people who attended taster sessions to complete an evaluation questionnaire. In the time period leading up to publication of this report, two institutions had responded to this part of the evaluation and these had offered YA taster events in four subject areas. A total of 66 pupil response forms were received.

Method

The evaluation form is published in Appendix 6 of this report. In essence, young people attended the taster session that had been organised for them and at the end of the session completed the survey. The evaluation form was deliberately short to minimise any impact on the schedule of the day and hence on the experience of young

people. In addition a short form was felt to be best in terms of optimising the response rate received. For this reason it was heavily structured with multiple response options to facilitate rapid completion, but also included opportunities for young people to add other relevant information where they wished to do so. Providers were asked to provide the researchers with details of the taster event to enable a richer understanding of the activities the young people were reporting on.

The respondents

The respondent group comprised 45 boys and 18 girls. The large majority of young people were White with just four noting BME backgrounds. Three young people did not report their gender, race or the subject of their taster. Table 3.2 shows the characteristics of the respondent group by the subject of the taster they attended.

Table 3.2: Respondent group by subject

	N Young People attending	N Female	N Male	N BME
Engineering	23	1	22	1
Motor industry/vehicle	24	0	22	2
Health and social care	16	15	1	1
Missing	3	-	-	-
Total	63	16	45	4

Source: IES 2007

One of the institutions offered tasters in three subjects on the same day, from which a total of 53 survey forms were received. Although the other did offer taster sessions in a range of subjects, survey data were collected from only one of these (engineering and motor vehicle) which 13 young people who had applied for the motor vehicle programme attended. Both institutions were based in the West Midlands region of England.

It is important to note at the outset that the numbers participating in the survey are very small and the responses therefore are unlikely to capture the range of opinions of the Key Stage 4 or even of the potential Young Apprenticeship population as a whole. That said, the young people have made some valuable suggestions for ways in which taster delivery might be improved, which is likely to help providers and policymakers better configure tasters in future to meet their needs.

The study has also provided a piloting opportunity for the survey format. Some amendments have subsequently been made which should enable clearer results if providers would like to use the questionnaire to gain feedback on, and inform development of, their own taster events, or indeed if the DCFS or LSC wish to take the evaluation further.

What information young people want from a taster

The first section of the questionnaire asked young people about the information they had hoped to gain from attending and whether they felt this information had been forthcoming. Table 3.3 shows the results of this analysis for the whole group.

Table 3.3: Information available at the Taster (in per cent)

	Wanted to know this	Got this information
How I will be assessed on the YA	64	49
What my choices are when I finish the YA	49	59
What the college/training provider is like	47	65
What jobs the YA might lead to	47	68
What these jobs are like for someone like me	47	62
What the YA involves – where and what I will study, placements, etc.	46	73

Multi-response

Source: IES 2007

There are a few points to note regarding the first column in Table 3.3, which indicates the types of information young people want from a taster. Nearly half were interested in the choices that would be available to them following the YA, with slightly fewer wanting information about the college/provider environment, the kinds of jobs the YA might lead to and what those jobs would be like.

The topic about which the largest proportion of young people had hoped to gain some information was assessment; two-thirds of the young people had wanted information on this. Given that the YA constitutes quite a radical departure from what the young people had experienced up to that point it is understandable that getting more information about how they will be assessed is important to them; in addition, for some the need to try to achieve a balance between the number of courses assessed through examinations in Year 11 and those that are more coursework-based may be an important consideration.

Young people were able to specify any other areas on which they wanted information. Only three responded in this regard and the additional information they identified was:

■ basic jobs on a car

■ how many GCSEs, and

■ how much work is involved

The first of these can be considered as relating to the practical aspects of the Young Apprenticeship and it would be hoped that, if not covered by the taster, the YA in

Motor Vehicle itself would cover this. The second two factors relate more to what will be achieved as a result of the YA (how many GCSEs it is equivalent to) and what is involved in undertaking the programme (and this probably relates to the earlier point regarding the extent and nature of assessment involved as well).

The second column in Table 3.3 relates to the information that young people reported having received at their Taster. What is immediately obvious is that their reports of the information they received is in virtually the reverse order of young people's priorities for information (ie column one). In other words, providers were more likely to provide information about which fewer of the young people were interested. This is not necessarily a bad thing, of course. Around half of the young people had indeed wanted this information and their needs had been met. In addition, it is more than likely that some at least of the remaining pupils found the information provided to be of some use – we did not collect information on this specific point, and this is something that providers might wish to include if evaluating their own provision in future. In sum, providers had largely given information that covered most of the information categories the young people had required.

The notable exception to this was the issue of how the YA is assessed; this was the topic on which the majority of pupils had reported wanting information, but a minority – less than half – reported having received. While these are small numbers, nonetheless the pattern seems fairly clear-cut: providers could usefully increase the amount of information they provide on assessment as this is a key area of interest (and possibly concern) to a majority of the young people.

Further analysis revealed there existed a fairly sizeable group (18 per cent) of young people who had came to the taster with little idea of their expectations: they identified none of the factors listed in Table 3.3 as areas on which they would like to gain information. Nonetheless even for this group there still appear to be some benefits to be gained from attending tasters. Table 3.4 compares the proportions of young people within this sub-group who felt their information needs had been met compared to those who had identified one or more issues of interest.

Inspection of the data in Table 3.4 reveals that, in fact, considerably higher proportions of the young people without expectations reported that they had gained information through the Taster. While on the one hand this might indicate that they were relatively easily pleased since they did not know what it was they wanted in the first place, it might also indicate that the Taster had shaped their thinking about the YA in a very positive way. This issue could certainly be explored further by providers in their own evaluations or nationally by the DCFS or LSC.

Table 3.4: Information available through the Taster for the group with no expectations (%)

	Some expectation group Got this information	No expectation Group Got this information
What my choices are when I finish the YA	52	92
What the college/training provider is like	59	92
What jobs the YA might lead to	63	92
What these jobs are like for someone like me	56	92
How I will be assessed on the YA	41	83
What the YA involves – where and what I will study, placements, etc.	70	83
Received other information in addition to the above	15	17

Multi-response

Source: IES 2007

What young people experienced at the taster – and what they thought of it

Table 4 below shows what the young people said they received as part of their taster. A large majority (86 per cent) noted that presentations were involved; slightly fewer said that practical activities were involved (82 per cent). Similar numbers reported question and answer sessions or a tour of college or provider premises. Fewer reported all-male or all-female group sessions (which can be one mechanism for helping atypical pupils to get involved in stereotyped subjects). However, since the sessions evaluated had all included one representative of the minority sex, the only way in which the young people who gave feedback could have experienced single-sex sessions in the tasters was if they were a member of a sub-group formed of the dominant sex (see Table 1 earlier). Because of this, the ratings given to single-sex sessions are not discussed in the following section.

The aspects of the tasters that the pupils reported enjoying the most were the practical activities: 77 per cent of the sample rating these as very good; and the presentations (58 per cent of young people rated these as very good). None of the young people rated either of these as poor.

Similar numbers reported that a question and answer session was involved or that a college tour had taken place (70 and 69 per cent respectively). Young people's ratings of these activities were more mixed: while overall more reported them as very good than did not, around one-third did not express much of an opinion about them, and a small number of young people had felt these to be very poor.

Table 3.5: What was involved in the Taster and how young people rated the activities (%)

	Did this	Rating		
		Very good	Neither poor nor good	Very poor
Presentations from teachers, employers or someone else	86	58	42	0
Practical activities eg made something, used equipment	82	77	23	0
You could ask questions to people who made presentations	70	61	33	7
Tour of college premises	69	57	36	7
All female or all male groups	42	36	61	4
Some other activity was delivered in the Taster	18	75	25	0

Source: IES 2007

Eleven young people noted that other activities were involved in the Tasters they had attended. These included a listening skills session and a session using Computer-Aided Design software, both of which might be assessed as practical activities. Lunch was noted by a few of the young people and was free in some cases. Interestingly, one young person mentioned that the Taster had provided an opportunity to make friends which suggests that the Taster offers an opportunity to bond with other potential members of the YA route. Young people were largely positive about these other activities.

In Table 3.6 we explore how the ratings of the group with no expectations of the Taster compare with those of the group who had some expectations. For this analysis we have simply looked at the proportion in each sub-group rating each factor as very good. For each of these items except the tour, a higher proportion of the 'no expectations' group gave 'very good' scores; this was particularly the case for the presentations. While these results should be interpreted with some caution given the small numbers involved, nonetheless the findings suggest there is real value to be gained from participation in Taster events even for those who have little initial idea of what to expect from it.

Table 3.6: How young people rated the activities – some and no expectations groups (%)

	YP with some expectations Score for Very Good	YP with no expectations Score for Very Good
Presentations from teachers, employers or someone else	56	70
Practical activities eg made something, used equipment	77	78
You could ask questions to people who made presentations	60	64
Tour of college premises	58	55

Source: IES 2007

How useful it is to have other people at Tasters?

We were interested in young people's opinions about different people (stakeholders) attending the taster. We offered three categories here and asked young people to indicate if they were aware of whether any employers, current YAs or parents/guardians had attended, and if so, how useful it was to have them at the taster event. However young people did not fill out the survey as we intended and some reported on usefulness of these stakeholders whether or not they had attended the taster event. The results are shown in Table 3.7, with the first column showing the proportion of young people reporting that each stakeholder was present, the second column shows the proportion amongst the sample who thought their presence was useful. The third and fourth columns show how useful each stakeholders' presence was by whether they had attended or not. We might consider the fourth column an indicator of whether young people would value the stakeholder being present.

Table 3.7: Who attended the Taster and whether their presence was useful (%)

	They were there	This was useful	Usefulness if YP reported stakeholder present	Usefulness if YP reported stakeholder not present
Employers	54	52	79	13
Current YA students	44	25	52	6
Parents/guardians could come	16	15	44	9

Source: IES 2007

Just over half of the young people noted that employers were in attendance (54 per cent), fewer (44 per cent) noted that current YAs students had attended and just 16 per cent said that parents had attended.

The utility of having these different stakeholders involved varied somewhat. Overall only slightly fewer of those who had said employers were involved said having them there was useful. Looking firstly at the young people who had been in taster sessions that employers had attended, the employers' input was thought useful by around four-fifths of the young people. Where employers did not attend the taster, 13 per cent of the sample indicated that they think it would be useful to have them there.

Less than half of the young people reported that student ambassadors had been present at their taster session. Although few of those who had not had ambassadors present thought that this might be useful, when the ratings of the young people who had been in sessions with the YA ambassadors are examined, more than half of them reported that the Ambassadors' presence had been useful.

For parents being present at the session, though, there was less enthusiasm. Few reported parents actually being present at the session, just 16 per cent; of these, only 44 per cent said that having them present was useful and only one-in-ten of those who

had been at sessions in which parents had not been present said that it might be useful if they were.

The key messages arising from this part of the analysis are that young people value employers' presence at tasters. Whether that is to talk about work in the sector or perhaps to discuss typical placement experiences is not known; in fact, both are likely to be of interest to the young people. Since the work placement is a key attraction of the YA all providers should consider involving employers in their YA tasters.

Where YA ambassadors attended tasters, their presence was valued by young people. Arranging for YA ambassadors to participate in taster sessions is therefore likely to be a benefit. While there does appear to be some role for parents at tasters, the rather limited support for this idea from the pupils suggests that their involvement should perhaps be restricted to just certain parts of the taster sessions, possibly just the presentation part of the day.

As we have indicated above, we do not have any further data with which to explore these issues further, but it may be something that providers wish to consider investigating in their own taster evaluations.

Clarity about future career

We asked young people whether they had reached a decision about their future career before the taster and how they felt about this issue following the taster. Unfortunately the question was not well understood and a number of young people gave multi-coded rather than single responses either before or after the taster or at both points (Table 3.8). One possibility for this might be that the question that asked if they had some ideas about the jobs they might do could be seen as a supplement to the first and the third questions: 'I know the job I want to do (but if I don't get my ideal job I have some ideas about other jobs I might do)' or 'I have not made any decision about the jobs I might do, (but I do have some ideas about this)'. Based on this outcome we have revised the evaluation questionnaire and the final version incorporates these changes.

Table 3.8: Young people's orientation towards their future career before and after the taster (%)

	Before	After
I know what job I want to do	67	30
I have some ideas about the jobs I might do	51	35
I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do	26	7

Multi-coded responses
Source: IES 2007

Of the whole group, two-thirds said that they knew what job they wanted to pursue following the taster while half had some idea about jobs they might do. Just over a quarter said they had not made any decision about the job that they might do.

The good news is that fewer said that they had not made any decision after the taster – just seven percent, or around a quarter of the number that had been undecided beforehand. In other words, it would appear that a sizeable proportion of the undecided group had been helped to reach some sort of decision. These figures repay some closer analysis. Table 3.9 shows the movement of young people between the 'before' and 'after' questions that asked if they knew what job the wanted to do:

Table 3.9: Responses to the statement 'I know what job I want to do' before and after tasters (%)

	I knew what job I wanted after the taster	I did not know what job I wanted after the taster	Total
II knew what job I wanted before the taster (N = 42)	29	71	67
I did not know what job I wanted before the taster (N = 21)	33	67	33
Total	30	70	100

Source: IES 2007

Inspection of Table 6 reveals that, of the 42 young people who said they had known what job they wanted before the taster, some two-thirds had shifted their opinion following the taster event. A majority of those who had previously known what job they wanted now said they did not know. This in and of itself is not necessarily a bad thing – it may mean that more information has made the young person realise that their initial choice was not a good one. However, more research would be needed to confirm this point. A similar picture is seen for those who did not know what job they wanted before the taster. Although a third of this group now felt that they did know what job they wanted, two-thirds still did not.

The responses of young people to the question about whether they had any ideas about the jobs they might do before and after the taster show a similar pattern. Table 3.10 provides the breakdown of responses to these questions.

Table 3.10: Responses to the statement 'I have some ideas about the jobs I might do' before and after tasters (%)

	I had ideas about jobs after the taster	I did not have any ideas about jobs after the taster	Total
I had ideas about jobs before the taster (N = 32)	25	75	50
I did not have any ideas about jobs before the taster (N = 31)	45	55	50
Total	35	65	100

Source: IES 2007

Before attending the taster session around half of the young people had ideas about the jobs they might do and around half did not. Following the taster session 65 per cent said they no longer had any idea and just 35 per cent said that they did. The largest shift is seen amongst those who previously had an idea about jobs – after the

taster session just 25 per cent still said this compared to 75 per cent who said they no longer had any ideas about jobs.

Last in this section pupils were asked to say whether or not they had made any decision about the jobs that they might do. Again, they were asked whether this was the case before and after they attended the taster session. Table 3.11 shows the data for this question.

Table 3.11: Responses to the statement 'I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do' before and after tasters (%)

	(Following the taster) I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do	(Following the taster) I have made a decision about jobs I might do	Total
(Prior to the taster) I had not yet made any decision about jobs I might do (N = 16)	6	94	100
(Prior to the taster) I had made a decision about jobs I might do (N = 43)	7	93	100
Total	7	93	100

Source: IES 2007

The results from this last question are more reassuring than the previous. Although a quarter of pupils said that, prior to the taster event they had not made a decision about jobs, following the taster event just 7 per cent of pupils (4 individuals) said that they had not made a decision. What we do not know, of course, is the nature of that decision. Again, to gain more information on the way in which taster events are informing pupils' job decisions, more research would be required.

What and who influences career and learning decisions

A key concern arising from the equal opportunities evaluation of the YA was the influence of other stakeholders (for instance teachers, parents, guidance staff) on the careers decisions young people reach. Therefore, the evaluation questionnaire also asked young people about who, or what, had helped them make their career and learning decisions. Table 3.12 reports the responses to this question from those young people who attended the taster events.

Table 3.12: What and who informs career and learning decisions

Source of information	%	Source of information	%
Taster day	84	Career leaflets	49
Parents/guardians	80	Internet	48
Friends	60	Connexions	39
Talking to someone who does the type of work	53	Television characters who do this work	38
Teachers	50	Other sources	16

Multi-coded responses

Source: IES 2007

The Taster day therefore can be seen as having had a significant influence on the career thinking of these young people and, it is hoped, on their learning and training decisions as they proceed towards their future career. As noted by providers in the young apprenticeship equal opportunities evaluation, parents are the strongest of the people who influence young people. Peers also appear to have a fairly strong influence young people's decisions, although to a much lesser extent than parents.

Talking to someone in their chosen career or sector was cited as an influence by more of the young people than was seeing characters on the television undertaking this work (53 per cent compared to 38 per cent). Teachers, careers leaflets and the internet were each cited by similar proportions and are influential for around half of the sample. Slightly fewer than four in ten young people noted the influence of Connexions in their careers decision, although this may merely mean that few of the group had had any interaction yet with this service.

Sixteen per cent of the sample noted that other sources had some influence over their careers thinking. Of those who said that other sources of information had been influential for them, three young people reported that their family had been an influence and two noted the influence of hobbies. One felt s/he had not been influenced by anything but had reached the decision independently. The other two responses were not clear.

Benefits of the tasters

In the questionnaire we suggested some of the possible benefits that might result from participation in the tasters. There was also an opportunity for young people to list other benefits they had gained as a result of attendance. Table 3.13 shows the outcomes from this set of questions.

Table 3.13: Other benefits of taster events (in per cent)

	Definitely	Maybe	Not really
I am more likely to go on the YA	83	13	3
I am more confident about my year 10 choices	80	16	3
I have a clearer idea of career options	77	18	5

multi-coded responses

Source: IES 2007

Most notable is the extent to which each benefit was endorsed, with close to four-fifths of young people agreeing with each of the three items. The biggest benefit according to the sample group was that they felt they were definitely more likely to pursue the Young Apprenticeship. Only slightly fewer noted that they were definitely more confident about their Year 10 choices. Again, only slightly fewer (and still more than three-quarters) noted that they were definitely clearer about careers options).

Four young people felt they had gained something else as a result of the Taster however only one said what this was. They indicated that it had helped them to decide whether or not they would enjoy the Young Apprenticeship.

Overall satisfaction with the taster

A space was provided on the survey form for young people to add comments about anything else to do with the taster. Eighty-two per cent of the sample provided a comment and these were overwhelmingly positive. In only four instances was any criticism expressed although at the same time these young people also said how good the event had been.

The range of positive responses related to:

Information

'Good, gave me more information and a clearer view on what the course includes'

'I though it was very helpful, and it cleared up a few of the worries that I had'

'It was good and helped me decide what I wanted to do and gave good information'

Meeting people and working in groups

'I thought it was fun and the things I did improved my group work and my ideas of my job.'

'I thought it was great especially making friends and working in groups'

Impacts on learning and career decisions

'I thought it was very good and useful and has now made me want to do this course even more.'

'Very good, had lots of fun and learnt a lot. I'm more happy to join the course now.'

The practical experience

'It was very good as shown what would do and got hands on experience.'

'It was really good, we got to do some things that we will be doing on the actual course.'

The small number of criticisms largely related to the length of time spent in the practical activities (in one case too much time in the practical and in two others, too little). The remaining criticism was that 'The taster was very enjoyable but I didn't learn much about the actual course'.

Conclusions and recommendations

A key message from this small study is the extent to which young people enjoyed the taster experience and the way in which it positively influenced their thinking towards the Young Apprenticeship and their future learning and careers options. Tasters are valued by young people both for the practical activities and the opportunity to gain information about the course. Attending the taster was felt by young people to increase their likelihood of joining the YA.

Their responses to the survey suggest that there are some issues for providers to consider:

- **Providers are generally giving the right sorts of information**. Young people may want various different things from a taster day but the survey revealed that providers are, in the main, providing the right sorts of information. Students appreciate receiving information about the YA and gaining some practical experience of what is involved in it. Tours of college or provider environments and opportunities to ask questions are also valued.

- **Some other areas need to be included in the overall package of information given to young people.** Young people may want different things from a taster day but the most important two issues (or at least the two that the greatest numbers of pupils are interested in) appear to be information about assessment and about their options once they have completed the YA. Around half of the students are also interested in finding out about what the college/training provider is like, what jobs the YA might lead to, what the jobs are like and what the YA involves. Generally speaking, though, while providers appear to be giving sufficient information on these last four points, they were doing less well on the two former ones. The findings suggest that if providers were to add some information on assessment and potential learning paths, learners would appreciate this. This does not necessarily mean that this additional information has to be fitted into what was, in many cases, an already tightly-packed day. Such information might be given in the form of handouts, with flow charts or other diagrams to show the key information.

- **Ensure a balance of practical activities and information sessions.** Practical activities are most positively received by young people, closely followed by information sessions. Both elements are valued; however, providers need to ensure that they are *carefully balanced* to ensure that neither dominates the day.

- **Involve employers and student ambassadors** as the presence of these stakeholders was clearly valued by young people. Both employers and ambassadors may require some briefing and development prior to the taster to ensure they are confident to interact with young people and to ensure they have clear ideas on the issues they might cover during the taster.

- The tasters was felt to have had a **strong influence on young people's careers decisions**, although as providers have predicted the young people said that their

parents have a strong influence on them as well. What is unknown is whether tasters sessions can help break down any negative views (whether of vocational learning or of jobs in particular sectors) that the young people have acquired due to parental influence. A further interesting question is the extent to which taster sessions have any impact on the views of the parents who attended. Both of these points would benefit from further exploration.

3.6 Assessing value and impact

In the tasters strand of the work the research team worked with 22 partnerships over ten months. Many had not previously offered a taster for the YA, and many had no previous experience of organising taster sessions for any other types of course either. The way in which participants engaged with the workshops, and their positive feedback, suggested that the workshops provided a valuable opportunity to discuss practice, equal opportunities and information, advice and guidance issues. Following the workshops, confirmation has been received that many of the partnerships intend to deliver tasters as part of cohort 4 recruitment. This indicates the value of these events and some evidence of the impact of this strand.

An unintended additional benefit of the workshops was the opportunity to share practice across different curriculum areas. Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) offer national and regional networks in their subject. However, while many YA partnerships have expanded to include multiple sectors, and thus are able to access a number of SSC-facilitated forums, the outcomes of the workshops suggest that there may still be benefit for cross-curriculum YA networks to be established, perhaps at the level of the regional LSC.

Although relatively small numbers of providers and learners participated in the evaluation of tasters, nonetheless this provided a valuable insight into young people's perceptions of tasters and the ways in which they find them useful. It has also provided qualitative evidence from the perspectives of providers and young people that can feed into the design and evaluation of future taster events. The evaluation tools are included in the toolkit provided at Appendix 5 in the taster toolkit which is also published through the LSC's apprenticeship repository[1].

The longer-term issue that will, in part, determine the extent to which tasters are delivered, is whether or not any positive outcomes are visible to the taster providers themselves. From an equalities perspective, given the relatively small size of the YA cohort in any partnership, trends may be difficult to detect at a local level. If this is the case then tasters organised purely to address inequalities may tend to lapse over time where their value in terms of minority group progression onto the YA is not evident. However, if partnerships focus on the role of tasters in increasing provision of IAG

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[1]   www.apprenticeships.org.uk

and their value in terms of having a better prepared, more motivated group of young people on the YA (which the evaluation has shown is a major benefit arising from their implementation), as well as their role in equal opportunities, then this is more likely to provide a clear demonstration of the added value of these activities, and therefore increase the likelihood of their continuance.

With an expanded vocational offer at Key Stage 4, the opportunity to offer tasters for a wider range of pupils may become available or, indeed, essential. Expanding the range of vocational options available is likely to reduce concerns from partnerships about raising the aspirations of too many pupils towards the YA where there is limited capacity. The YA tasters provide a model from which other types of taster event can be built into Key Stage 4. In addition, the expanding numbers of young people being involved in equality and diversity activities will mean that data gathered in from monitoring and evaluation initiatives will become more robust and more meaningful with time.

4 Developing Sector-Based Information to Encourage Wider Choices

Following on from the Young Apprenticeship Equal Opportunities evaluation (Newton et al. 2006), DfES commissioned a strand of work to develop information about YAs designed to challenge occupational stereotypes and encourage wider choices. Funding was provided to work in three YA delivery subjects and with the relevant Sector Skills Councils (SSC) for these. The subjects selected were strongly gender segregated, although for each there was concern about other issues of diversity too. The subjects were:

■ Construction supported by CITB Construction Skills

■ Health and Social Care supported by Skills for Care and Skills for Health

■ Motor Vehicle supported by Automotive Skills.

4.1 Aims and purpose

The aim of this strand of the project was to build on the YAEO research findings that there was a need for SSCs to provide more comprehensive information to young people and their parents/guardians about the YAs to encourage wider choices and uptake. Specifically, the earlier study had found that most of the information available from national-level stakeholders to support the YA was generic (ie, about Young Apprenticeships in general) and, while this type of information had a clear and useful role, many different stakeholders, and particularly pupils, felt that more information was required. In addition, while the documentation available at that time was of high quality and included attractive photographs, some of the images conveyed stereotypical messages about the nature of some of the occupations and the sorts of people who undertake them.

What was needed was more detailed information about the industrial sector of the YA and the careers and opportunities within it. In response to this need, IES worked with the four SSCs to produce new publicity brochures for the three YA programmes. In

addition to the brochures, IES also produced guidance, based on the production process, for any other SSCs to follow in producing publicity materials for other YA subjects.

4.2 The process

IES briefed the YA Advisory Group meeting in September 2006. As noted, Automotive Skills, CITB Construction Skills, Skills for Health and Skills for Care had been selected for this project. However, representatives from Skillsmart and CfA also asked to be involved in the process and so attempts were made to include them within the workshop sessions too. While funding would not be provided they were invited to join a workshops with one of the other SSCs so that they could gain an idea of how the process operated.

The method used to develop the brochures consisted of:

■ elicitation workshops with SSC representatives to gain information about the sector

■ drafting of a standard format for presenting the relevant information

■ composition of text for each sector on the basis of the information they had provided and following the standard format

■ agreement of text with the relevant SSC(s)

■ identification of appropriate images to illustrate the document, sourced from the SSCs, Partnerships, the LSC and the EOC

■ work with a designer to produce the final brochures for each SSC

Elicitation meetings

IES developed a discussion guide for use in working with the participating SSCs to elicit relevant information. The meetings with SSCs took place in October and November 2006. Skillsmart attended the meeting with CITB Construction Skills. Although CfA had hoped to attend one of the other two meetings, in the event, their representatives were unavailable on the dates selected.

During each meeting, the researchers explored issues within the sector with the SSC delegates, and collected relevant information to include in the brochure. The discussion guide structure used for these sessions was designed to explore issues, including identifying any myths or stereotypes held about sectors and jobs, and what facts about the sectors contradicted these assumptions. The discussion also explored areas of growth and declining trends in sub-sectors and occupations, the sustainability of work, career progression and development opportunities and skills requirements. On this last point, the range of skills applied in different occupations was explored to ensure that soft skills such as communication and information processing would be highlighted alongside the technical requirements of work roles.

Information was also sought about the options available following the YA as well as other routes into the sector apart from the YA; sources of further information about careers and training such as helplines and websites, including those of the SSCs themselves were also identified. This additional information was considered important: since places for the YA are limited, not all pupils who express an interest in it will gain a place and this group may therefore want information about other educational routes into the sector. Similarly, pupils who decide against the YA might nonetheless still be interested in a career in the sector. In such cases, the intention was to support this interest, irrespective of their decision regarding the YA option itself.

At the end of the elicitation meetings, IES explored whether the SSCs had images that could be used in the booklet design, and whether any case studies were available of different occupations, which might be used within the brochure.

Design phase

Following on from the meetings, IES drafted the text for use in each of the brochures, incorporated the text within the outline format and sent the draft to the respective SSCs for approval. Significant work went into sourcing a suitable range of images to ensure the booklets presented an inclusive feel. Skills for Health provided images from the NHS Image Library and CITB Construction Skills allowed access to its online image library. Automotive Skills sent a selection of photographs from its image resource. In addition, Automotive Skills and CITB Construction Skills arranged for photographs of current YAs to be taken by partnerships (and for the relevant permissions to be provided) for use in the brochures. The key national stakeholders for this project also helped in providing resources: the Department gave permission for its library of YA photographs to be used; the LSC gave permission to use the Apprenticeship Image Library, and the EOC identified suitable images from its library and helped to source others.

IES worked with a design consultant to create a design template that ensured a consistent 'style' across the brochures was achieved, with a separate identity for each SSC realised through the use of different colour-ways. IES then worked with the consultant to produce print-ready brochures, using the agreed text and then selecting and positioning the final images. This part of the process requires careful management; in ensuring that inclusive and diverse images are included, the reality of work in the sectors should not be misrepresented. Draft designs were then forwarded to the relevant SSCs and the Department for review.

In March 2007 the brochures were produced. In addition to the 300 copies of each funded by DfES, the SSCs funded a further 5,700 copies in total. The brochures were distributed to partnerships offering YAs by the SSCs in time to support recruitment for cohort 4 and subsequent recruitment waves. Early feedback suggests they have been well received.

PDF copies of the brochures and toolkit will be available for view and/or download from the IES and LSC Apprenticeships websites from Summer 2007 to coincide with the publication of this report[1]. The design files have been preserved to enable reprints as required and amendments and updates can also be arranged.

4.2.1 Production of brochures by other sectors

An intended outcome of this project was a toolkit for use by any other SSCs that wished to produce a YA brochure. The discussion guide used to elicit relevant information from the SSCs in essence formed the basis for the toolkit. The toolkit is presented in Appendix 5. Sector Skill Councils will find that if they work through these questions they will generate the relevant information that can then be inserted into the text design template for the YA brochures. The text design template itself is shown in text form at the end of the SSC toolkit.

Should any other SSC wish to produce an information booklet for its YA, it has been agreed that IES will allow use of its design template and will also put SSCs in touch with its consultant designer. Any SSC wishing to do so should contact Becci Newton at IES.[2]

Many of the issues covered by the toolkit extend beyond the YA and are important to young people more generally. For this reason, it is hoped that the guidance may be taken up by SSCs which do not deliver YAs to support the implementation of the 14-19 reforms and particularly the entitlement to Diplomas and other vocational options at Key Stage 4.

Why use the toolkit?

It cannot be assumed that because two sectors show similar gender divisions the challenges they face are precisely the same. The SSCs had good knowledge of the challenges they faced either through their general work or, more specifically, from the work towards Sector Skills Agreements. In addition, most sectors were able to offer very detailed information about trends and growth in sub-sector areas.

Other SSCs are therefore likely to be able to identify appropriate information for their sectors if they work through the questions in the toolkit. While the SSCs with whom the researchers worked were aware of the equality and diversity challenges they faced, they were less experienced in designing information specifically to address this, or for this age group. It is for this reason that the toolkit is likely to be of help to SSCs as it presents a model from which to work.

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[1]   LSC Apprenticeship Repository (www.apprenticeships.org.uk)

[2]   The Institute for Employment Studies 01273 686751 www.employment-studies.co.uk.

Similarly, while the availability of image resources varied by SSC, and was quite often linked to their maturity (mature SSC s were more likely to have such resources), image libraries were not necessarily key-worded and searchable by the various facets of diversity (gender, ethnicity, age, etc). SSCs might consider improving the usability of their often quite substantial and high-quality resources (and this is a lesson to transfer to any SSC developing such a resource) as this would enable them to make far greater use of existing images to provide, positive role models drawn from the atypical gender and/or from ethnic minority backgrounds.

4.3 Assessing value and impact

This strand of work created three information booklets to support the recruitment and selection in cohort 4 YAs and subsequent rounds of recruitment. We anticipated that these would have value and impact where previously information did not exist, but it would be useful to evaluate their effect with key stakeholders: young people (and parents/guardians) who read and use the booklets; and SSCs who use the toolkit and template.

On the issue of impact, the first print-run of the YA brochures was timed to make them available for use during cohort 4 recruitment. IES and the relevant SSCs have promoted the booklet to partnerships, and the SSCs have also funded additional copies to ensure the reach of the booklets. While brochures alone are unlikely to be sufficient to make young people reconsider established stereotypes, it is hoped that if they are used as part of a package of activities to challenge stereotypes and encourage wider choices they may have some impact. Ideally, SSCs will encourage their partnerships to feed back their perceptions of the usefulness of the booklets so that any future editions can be moulded to a 'best fit' solution to support recruitment. It is also hoped that feedback of this kind will help each SSC to shape future information for its provision within 14-16programmes, as well as those for post-16s and adults.

The second issue is whether the toolkit and examples brochures from these three sectors form a useful way to help SSCs develop their own information brochures. This may largely depend upon the available resource in any SSC to run the process with knowledgeable staff, draft information in response to the issues the process identifies, obtain images and, possibly, to commission and work with an in-house or external designer. These issues aside, should further SSCs wish to undertake this kind of work, the toolkit and design outlines are available for them to draw upon.

As indicated, IES will make the design template available to any SSC who wishes to use it. While some design and production costs would still be incurred by the SSC, these costs will be much reduced compared to the costs of the initial three.

Should any SSC use either the toolkit or the design template, it would be useful if they would pass their feedback on usability to the Department and the LSC. The toolkit can then be refined in light of experiences. In addition, IES is interested to receive feedback about the impact of the brochures and the usability of the toolkit and design template.

5 Next Steps for Young Apprenticeship Equal Opportunities

A key recommendation to ensure the YAs have continuing success is that the sharing of good practice is sustained. While evaluation of the programme will devolve to the national inspection and monitoring bodies, there would still be benefits to encouraging partnerships to share their delivery challenges and solutions with each other.

At present, this agenda is partly met through the forums provided by the SSCs for each of the YA subjects. The nature of these forums varies by the size of YA sector cohorts and the spread of delivery partnerships and therefore the extent of support available to the members. It is important that equality and diversity are kept as an ongoing agenda point to keep these as a high priority within provision.

There may also be an opportunity to establish networks that operate across subjects, and this would allow for good practice from one YA sector to transfer and be moulded for another. The conferences held for the YA in preparation for the third cohort, as well as the taster workshops which brought together mixed groups of YA subjects, provide the basis for this recommendation. Partnerships valued the opportunity to discuss the challenges they were facing, but also to share with others the good practice they had established. One possible approach might be for regional LSCs to host or facilitate such forums; alternatively, in light of the increasing use of electronic resources with delivery partnerships, a virtual forum might provide a way forward.

Consideration should also be given to how the good equalities practice that has been developed in the YA can be transferred more widely within the 14-16 system. It is likely that YA partnerships, if not already doing so, will work more closely with Local Authority 14-19 partnerships and these may represent good opportunities for best practice forums both within and across subjects. In particular, collaboration at regional and local levels may also help support partnerships to meet the requirements arising out of the new national diploma entitlement and other vocational changes expected to be in place by 2013.

As noted by the Department and the LSC in the cohort 4 documentation, many of the critical success factors are relevant to all 14-16provision, not just the Young Apprenticeships. It has also been argued in this report that the CSFs provide the framework through which equality can be addressed, since quality and equality often go hand in hand. A strong recommendation to partnerships is that they seek to explicitly address the CSFs in their delivery. Through doing so, and through the sharing of good practice, expertise will be gained that can transfer to the wider 14-16vocational education agenda.

Action points for national stakeholders

- Maintain focus on sharing good EO practice with subjects (regular agenda point at SSC-led forums) and across subjects (regional or local LSC or LA-led forums).

- Embed CSFs in all 14-16 provision, transfer good equalities and diversity practice

- Consider entitlement to vocational tasters in year 9

6 References

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7 Appendices

List of appendices

Appendix 1: Critical Success Factors

CSFs as defined in cohort 4 proposal documentation

Those already involved in the first three cohorts will know that the programme has been subject to extensive evaluation. There is evidence that some partnerships are clearly delivering a high-quality experience to their pupils, and feedback from pupils, partners and evaluators is very positive. Some partnerships have, however, struggled with some aspects. This offer is not intended to suit every pupil or every provider and is highly dependent on good collaborative arrangements. Evaluation of previous cohorts suggest that some critical success factors are emerging from the programme and many of these programme factors are also reflected in successful 14-19Area Inspections:

- **Planning**. Partnerships are stronger where there is joint strategic and operational planning and a **shared vision**, mission and ethos, with effective two-way collaboration between all partners, including schools, training providers and employers.

- **Involvement of employers from the outset**. Employers should contribute to the course design/learner selection.

- **Work experience should be clearly** linked to the sector and qualifications being studied.

- **Work experience is *the* most attractive feature of the programme to pupils – programme requirements of 50 days should be met, and work experience should be of high quality and demanding**. Developing competence and skills can get pupils work-ready to a point, but only exposure to the real workplace can test the learner – dealing with customers, the whole business/product cycle, being part of a work force, and meeting deadlines that impact on others.

- **Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) is timely and impartial**. Schools should make arrangements for all partners to have a role in advising potential participants in aspects of the programme, and involve parents and guardians as soon as possible.

- **Selecting the right pupils is vital**. Pupils must have the prior attainment scores identified, and where indicative scores at KS3 are considered a risk, additional forms of assessment should be applied to inform the selection process. Selection should also be *collaborative* – all partners and employers should play their part.

- Pupils benefit most where they can achieve **whole qualifications that maximise their post-16 opportunities**.

- **Effective communication**. Partners should communicate frequently, effectively and openly with each other, with pupils and guardians. It is essential that there are clear boundaries of responsibilities and tasks, setting out which partner does what, and by when.

- **Dedicated programme staff or co-ordinators** who are able to oversee the successful delivery of the programme across all aspects of its delivery. Involving those with enthusiasm and the right skills mix will benefit the quality of teaching and learning.

- **Learner support**. This can cover a multitude of issues: learning styles and pace, timetable, provision to keep up with core subjects if necessary, mentors, transport, e-learning, portfolio assistance, and an understanding of wider issues that may affect the learner. Information sharing on pupil needs is paramount if pupils are to succeed.

- **Target setting, tracking and monitoring**. It is particularly important for school pupils off-site to be tracked against their targets and for them and their school to receive feedback on their off-site experience.

- **Celebrating success and learner achievement**. Recognition of success can positively affect motivation and inspire.

- **Professional development**. This can promote collaboration and give a greater understanding of each partner's perspective and stake in the young person and the programme.

- **Review. Appropriate and timely** review of all aspects should be a foundation of the planning process and be jointly owned.

- **Progression post-16**. Discussions with pupils on post-16 progression should be built into the process at the selection stage and be reviewed with targets on a regular basis.

- **SSC/LSC involvement**. Partnerships have clearly benefited where there has been direct involvement, advice and guidance.

Source: National and Regional Requirements for Participation in the Young Apprenticeships programme for 14 to 16 year olds and Proposal Handling, for Cohort 4: September 2007. Produced by DfES/Learning and Skills Council

Appendix 2: Good EO Practice Case study Examples

These case study vignettes have been taken from the two reports that review equal opportunities in the Young Apprenticeships. They are provided to offer partnerships some very accessible information about how good practice can be embedded in YA delivery. Further vignettes relating to the provision of YA tasters, are located in the taster case studies (Appendix 4).

Targets and monitoring

Box 1: Targets for schools programmes in engineering at TDR

TDR monitors the range of its programmes, using the LSC Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS). It has three departments for its provision: schools (for 14-16year olds), apprenticeships and training (16-25 year olds); and work-based learning eg Train To Gain (adults from age 25). Its schools provision includes Young Apprenticeships, Student Engineering Apprenticeships, Tomorrow's Engineer Programme and Engineering for Tomorrow.

The target it has set is to increase to five per cent the number of young women entering engineering programmes across the board. It monitors progress towards this target by each school and each programme. In future, TDR is looking to increase the sensitivity of these targets by setting targets to increase on current achievement at the level of each school and programme.

Box 2: Monitoring the YA cohort at Croydon

Information about recruitment and selection is collected for the YA, and entered onto a spreadsheet that captures data across all courses aimed at Key Stage 4, including the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) 14-16programme, and European Social Fund (ESF) funded courses. The YA lead reviews this data across the range of Key Stage 4 programmes. By collating the data in this way it can be meaningfully analysed by gender, ethnicity and school to understand any emerging patterns. The information gathered on YA has been used to prepare a presentation for the Council Education department at a meeting to review and share practice.

Box 3: Improving quality, equality and diversity through monitoring at TDR

A self-assessment process has been undertaken which was led by the Equality and Diversity Manager. This involved a staff 'away-day' to discuss the range of provision within the 'schools teams'. This included Young Apprenticeships, Student Engineering Apprenticeships, Tomorrow's Engineer Programme and Engineering for Tomorrow. During the away-day, weaknesses in provision were identified using the monitoring data together with a review of the qualitative data received from YAs, and reports from the YA co-ordinators. A number of Equal Opportunities actions have been set in place as a result and are now embedded within the Quality Improvement Plan.

These include activities in schools to attract more females into engineering, and work is underway with schools to agree the actions that will take this forward. Activities are likely to include activities during Year 9 to lead into Key Stage 4 choices and an all-female taster. Targets for diversity have also been set.

The actions identified for Quality Improvement are displayed on a flipchart in the school's team office as a reminder of what is being worked towards and how. Progress towards the actions is also being recorded on the flipchart.

Recruitment and selection

Box 4: Coventry and Warwickshire Co-ordinator for Arthur Rank Training: Awareness-raising and recruitment strategy

'We sent a letter to schools that had accompanying brochures (from the DfES that had a set of questions and answers that parents and pupils might want to know), then I visited the schools to meet and tell them what we were offering. Then details were sent out to the parents by the schools. Once they had identified who wanted to attend here, we had a parents' evening to meet the mums and dads and answer any questions. We met them face-to-face rather than relying on printed information. Just saying "Come in, meet the tutors", having an informal atmosphere helps. They were very keen to meet the tutors.

I then visited schools to talk to individual learners. I designed a set of questions to be asked to all applicants, to ensure there was a fair selection process, with all applicants being asked the same set of questions. Then the young people were asked to come in for an evaluation day [ie taster day] during which they spent time in the workshop with the tutors, trying out simple activities and being assessed, and they sat tests of literacy and numeracy. At the end of the day the young people had to fill out an evaluation form that asked them if they were still interested, what had gone well about the day and what had not.'

Box 5: STEPS, Northumberland, Health and Social Care YAs

'We have a positive action policy for boys. If a boy demonstrates strong commitment, but is scraping the academic criteria, we would accept him on the programme. This year all of boys who applied were taken on ...'

Box 6: The Health and Social Care Assessment Centre at STEPS

Due to a member of staff changing jobs, a new YA Co-ordinator was recruited from another part of the STEPS team during the second cohort. Her experience of picking up the group was that she learned a great deal about their skills and abilities from observing the pupils during workshop activities. STEPS decided to build on this by embedding an assessment centre into recruitment for cohort 3 whereby all the young people who were interested in the YA were requested to attend a one-day event.

Five criteria were identified as success factors for the health and social care YA. These included communication, respect for others, ability to undertake tasks outside the comfort zone as well as team working skills. A carousel of activities was designed that would allow pupils to demonstrate their skills and abilities. The criteria against which they were being assessed for each activity were displayed on the walls of the workshop space. The assessors for each activity included the YA team as well as some of the current YAs.

Around 50 pupils attended the event on the basis of the schools having sifted for the academic criteria by their schools. From these 30 young people were selected for the YA. The assessment centre was felt to have provided a clearer picture of how young people would cope in the work environments. For instance, the assessment centre identified that some pupils were too quiet and shy to be able to cope at the work placement. Following the selection process, young people were given feedback about their performance at the assessment centre and the reasons for the selection decision.

The pupils who were interviewed during the evaluation were positive about the assessment day (perhaps partly because they had got through). *'It was nerve-wracking at first … we did group activities like how to communicate with different people and we had people watching us. It was very different, I've never done anything like it before – but I think it was good because we knew the things they were looking for.'*

Support and delivery

Box 7: Support in the TDR YA engineering (2006)

TDR has an established equality and diversity policy and is involved in out-reach to encourage female entrants into engineering and the YA. The TDR schools teams (YA co-ordinators) work with schools throughout the duration of the YA programme eg awareness-raising activities, recruitment and selection, and during YA delivery. They also work with schools more generally to promote engineering. Each of the schools teams has been configured to consist of a male and female co-ordinator, one drawn from industry, and the other from a relevant teaching background. Discussing her support needs, a female young apprentice said of the co-ordinator with whom she most identified *'He just helps, if we've got problems we go and talk to him and he works it out … He's always been helpful about things like jobs or just general advice. He comes into the college quite often.'*

In addition to the co-ordinator support, at the outset of the programme, YAs attend an induction which encompasses a half-day on equality and diversity in the context of the workplace and in education. The session uses a video and work-pack produced by the LSC entitled 'Working

Together'. This resource is not specific to engineering but covers a range of issues relating to the workplace, such as power relationships, racism, dyslexia/SENs, behaviour standards. The approach is to explore the scenarios presented in the video through discussion and trying to see the situations from both points of view, which allows TDR to raise the issue of their expectations of the young apprentices' behaviour. An example of the impact of the equality and diversity training was given by one of the employers offering placements. One of the young women had challenged another worker's use of language about migrant workers during an open meeting.

College delivery partners varied their methods to ensure atypical YAs had opportunities to work both in gender matched and mixed groupings, identifying benefits of mixed gender groups during sessions. 'It's positive to mix genders during the work – to get something positive out of the gender mix – something interactive. They will be working in teams of men in their placement.'

For the duration of their YA, TDR has established a six-weekly pupil review process to ensure that timely support and guidance is available to all pupils. *'Part of the purpose is to help overcome any barriers students are experiencing – it's very individualised'*. The college, employer and school provide contributions to the review, and the findings are discussed with each YA individually and also sent home to parents/guardians. The review covers pastoral issues as well as learning experiences and young people are encouraged to actively feedback in the sessions. If the young person is not feeding into the discussion, the co-ordinators make the questioning more structured to ensure that they do become aware of each young person's experience.

Box 8: Blending coaching with reviews at STEPS

'In addition to ensuring that they are happy in their placement, what the reviews have turned into really is coaching sessions. So the co-ordinator visits pupils after a couple of weeks to ask them how they are getting on and what they have been doing. She can then suggest how the young person can use this evidence in their portfolio and it helps them to put their learning into the context. On the basis of the reviews, she can also contact the employers to ask that the placement is tailored to the needs of each young person. So if a young person has said that they are finding it difficult to engage with the residents, she can say to the employer, "can you think of anything you could give him to do that would help him do that."' Partnership Lead

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Box 9: Challenging inappropriate material in male-dominated workplaces in TDR

'Before accepting an employer for the Young Apprenticeship we go out on a site visit. Ostensibly this is for health and safety and to carry out a risk assessment prior to young people working there. However, we also look at equality and diversity issues, for instance, whether they have a policy in place. We check whether they understand the implications of what they do with regard to equality and diversity, and they don't always, so it helps to have someone going out to talk to them.

In one company, there were girlie calendars and pictures up on the wall and we got them taken down. We can't say to an employee "you have to take those down". What we have to do is explain

the problem to the employer. The tack that we take is to ask them, if your son or your daughter who was 13 or 14 came in here, would you like them to see these things? When this company realised what was going on, the personnel department made a requirement for the materials to be taken down. You don't want young people going in and seeing these things. It's bad for the rest of their lives, really, because it says this is the norm and that's okay, and it isn't.'

Box 10: New strategies to support pupils during placements at STEPS

■ **Posters**. These were displayed in common areas and showed a photograph of the YA and their name, a brief description of the work placement, and a short summary of the tasks that YAs can do – and those that they must not do.

■ **Named t-shirts**. The young people had requested t-shirts with their name printed on the back so that staff at the placement would call them by name. A common colour and design was introduced so that employees would get used to the Young Apprentices being in this uniform.

■ **Placement work-book**. The work-book is based on the qualification units, and builds towards their portfolio of evidence. The work-book can be used for independent study at placement or at home, but also can be shown to colleagues and supervisors who express interest in what the young person is doing.

■ **Witness statements** given by workplace supervisors or colleagues can contribute towards the portfolio of evidence for the qualification, and allow staff at the employer placement to be included in the process, by either verifying that an activity has been undertaken or by noting the skills and abilities young people have brought to tasks.

Box 11: Creating critical mass and buddies in Coventry and Warwickshire

If there is only one girl on the YA we will put her in touch with a buddy from another course, such as Entry to Employment (E2E). It is helpful for them to make links into another group where other young women are doing the subject – it makes them feel less isolated.

We also have the two cohorts in the training centre on the same day, although obviously with different tutors. This is helpful for the same reasons that a network of contacts can be created. And it also shows the third cohort young apprentices to see were their hard work will lead.

Box 12: Using the VLE to support YAs in Bedfordshire and Luton

'Our WebCT system has proved quite useful, particularly with the year 10s, and we have used it quite a lot with them. Whenever we have a lesson, I put the resources and the assignment up. They can access that through school and home. If they have missed a lesson they know they can go there and catch up so they haven't missed out as much. And the schools can see exactly what they have done. So I can send them an email to say what the pupil has missed and they can go through the resources with that pupil so they can catch up much quicker'.

Encouraging wider choices

Box 13: Tasters in Sunderland

'There is £1.3m sub-regional partnership spend on taster activities, as we identified the need to work at this level as part of our 14-19response. There is confidence in the academic provision available and they [young people] know about that side of thing. The progression routes there are well-trodden and obvious.'

'Vocational routes need development, and subject tasters have an important role in this. In Sunderland the entitlement (through Connexions) is that every young person between 14 and 15 can do three vocational taster subjects. They don't have to take up all three tasters, so if they find one they like they can do another taster in it. It's a best-practice model [ie tasters] – for a young person you can assess whether you like it, gauge your aptitudes, and for professionals wrap up in that model'

Box 14: Ernesford Grange School

'We have a careers convention and are one of the few schools that invite the colleges in and have a wide range of activities that [the pupils] can participate in, plus we provide a synopsis of what each speaker will be talking about. What we try to do through Connexions is make a link with [a Group Training provider] and Connexions will take a group out so they can have a look at a workplace. In Year 9 we have an equal opportunities morning. We make a conscious effort to bring in, for example, a female police chief, a male nurse, female engineer, and do a sort of 'What's My Line' with them. The pupils have to ask them questions and work out what their job is.'

Box 15: Celebrating success at Coventry and Warwickshire

We have a strong focus on getting the message out there and our marketing department are instrumental in this. They will tend to co-ordinate the press coming in to cover for instance, the girls taking the motor vehicle YA. A deal was recently done with a wreck-recovery service to access vehicles for use in the workshop. We used this as a press opportunity for the YA. This was an ideal opportunity to get coverage for the young women – and ethnic minority pupils – studying on the course. We also invite the press to our Young Apprentice awards ceremony in an effort to ensure a wide range of people hear about their achievements.

It would be useful if the LSC could help on these types of marketing opportunity. Greater recognition from the Inspectorates on our efforts would also help keep the momentum going. Our own marketing department ensures that our prospectus reflects our diverse student base to make sure atypical young people can see the opportunities here are for them.

Box 16: Resource audit in Bedfordshire and Luton

Bedford is very culturally diverse and the college represents that in its staff and in its student profile and that of the Young Apprenticeship. Each year, a resources audit is undertaken to ensure that teaching resources reflect the profile of pupils in the cohort. As the subject of the YA is Business and Administration there is an emphasis on the use of case studies in delivery. These are analysed for things such as the names of business owners and employees, and the types of businesses that are presented. 'If we've got a large Asian group in the cohort, we will adapt the case studies that reflect their culture, so we might include more small businesses and family-run businesses.' This ensures that the resources are culturally diverse and that pupils can recognise their own experiences in the materials.

Box 17: Involving employers in Industry Days at TDR

TDR offers the opportunity for schools to have an Industry Day for their pupils. This is available to each school in the partnerships and although not all had taken it up in the third-cohort recruitment, the numbers doing so had expanded.

At each of the Industry Days, the YA Lead made a presentation about engineering and then introduced employers to the pupils. The employers gave a presentation about work placements in their organisation. They also answered the questions young people had.

Following this, there were in-school activities, such as building a crash barrier or wind tunnel, and lots of related practical activities. Employers helped out with the practical activities, which had the added benefit that they got to know the young people who might come to them on placement.

In one of the employer-led activities a chemical engineer asked the pupils to draw a picture of her organisation. All of the pupils drew a picture with smoke billowing out from a factory. The employer was then able to say it was not like they thought – in fact her company made no atmospheric emissions. This led into a discussion about the kinds of assumptions people make about different jobs and work environment.

Box 18: Careers conference at STEPS

STEPS received funding via Northumberland Strategic Health authority (and last year from Durham SHA) to offer one-day careers conferences in each of the counties. The target audience is young people aged between 15 and 16, and the aim is to help inform their post-compulsory choices. However, schools within the Young Apprenticeship are also invited to take up places.

A range of health-and-social-care employers are involved in the event including a range of staff from NHS organisations as well as, for instance, residential service staff in the private sector. The employers who attend are reasonably gender balanced, so provide role models to young men for instance. Young people can select from seminars over three sessions during the day. The staff and employers offer a realistic view of the sectors and the occupations within them, and young people appreciate the opportunity to be able to ask questions and gain information.

Box 19: Enrichment in the curriculum at Croydon

Equality and diversity are very important here because of the population in this area. Each week, students have an enrichment session which is about race and cultural and religious awareness. It is a good opportunity for them to discuss their experiences and to explore how their own attitudes can affect others. Current news items or the people and issues experienced at placements are used as a starting point. Pupils are encouraged to think about different religious and minority groups and what their perspective might be. If a work placement example is being used, pupils are also encouraged to think about how their beliefs and/or attitudes might affect the situation.

Appendix 3: Developing Sector-based YA Information Toolkit

Designing sector information for the YA to encourage wider choices and challenge stereotypes

Toolkit v1 March 2007

Developed by Becci Newton and Linda Miller, Institute for Employment Studies

Becci Newton
The Institute for Employment Studies
Mantell Building
University of Sussex Campus
BN1 9RF
Tel: 01273 873692
Email: becci.newton@employment-studies.co.uk

Information for Young Apprenticeships

Designing sector information to encourage wider choices and challenge occupational stereotypes

This toolkit is designed to enable Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) to provide information that encourages wider choices and challenges occupational stereotypes for the Young Apprenticeship programme. The toolkit has been developed on the basis of the findings from the original evaluation of Equal Opportunities in the Young Apprenticeships,[1] and pilot work with four SSCs covering three YA subjects – Automotive Skills, CITB Construction Skills and Skills for Care and Skills for Health.

The toolkit uses a similar format to the Young Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Toolkit,[2] produced for YA partnerships by the Department to support good practice more generally. It asks a series of questions aimed at making you think about the sort of information and issues that may be of relevance when designing publicity and information materials. It is broadly focused and it is not expected that all of the issues raised will be relevant to all sectors; the intention is for SSCs to use the document selectively as a reference source. Nonetheless, the questions may provide food for further thought.

Structure of the toolkit

The toolkit consists of a series of questions designed to help you and other members of your SSC to:

- identify the recruitment and skill challenges your sector faces, which the YA may help you to address

- consider what myths and stereotypes exist about jobs in the sector you need to challenge

- identify the sources of information you can adapt for use within the material produced and/or use as a pointer for young people who want to find out more.

Format and design

This section presents the outline that was used by the researchers to identify relevant information and materials that needed to be used in producing brochures for the health and social care, automotive and construction sectors during the pilot project. In the pilot work, the researchers held short workshops with representatives of the

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[1]   Report available in the Young Apprenticeship Repository on the LSC Apprenticeship website, Partners area or at www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=428

[2]   Also available from the Young Apprenticeship Repository on the LSC Apprenticeship website.

sectors in which they explored a series of issues relating to each sector. This toolkit sets out the questions used, under five broad headings:

1. What are the segregation issues and priorities in your sector?

2. Why are people attracted to your sector?

3. What do young people know about your sector?

4. How can young people find out more about working in your sector?

5. What should be included in the information leaflets/brochures?

By working through these questions, you will be able to identify the kinds of information that young people want to know about your sector, and how you can present this information to give a more inclusive feel to your documents.

A working agenda is attached at the end of the toolkit to facilitate this kind of meeting.

SSC Information for atypical entrants design toolkit

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?
1	**What are the segregation issues and priorities in your sector?**			
1.1	What is the profile of the sector workforce? What is the profile of young people entering the sector? Have targets or priorities been set to increase the entry of particular groups?			
1.2	What issues might the YA help you to address?			
■	Skill shortages – attracting a wider pool of applicants?			
■	Ability gaps – attracting higher-ability young people?			
■	Ageing workforce – attracting young people?			
■	Gender segregation – attracting more atypical entrants?			
■	Ethnic segregation – attracting more diverse entrants?			
1.3	Do you have any priorities to increase recruitment and training towards any specific occupations?			
1.4	Do you have any priorities to increase diversity in specific occupations?			

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?
2	**Why are people attracted to your sector?**			
2.1	What attracts young people (and their parents) to the sector currently (eg career opportunities and stability, pay, flexibility, particular occupations etc.)?			
2.2	Are their ideas regarding the sector accurate?			
2.3	If their ideas are *not* accurate, what picture of the sector would you want to promote to them?			
2.4	If their ideas *are* accurate, is there anything else that would give them a fuller perception of the sector?			
2.5	If you are seeking to attract groups who are currently under-represented, do the issues you have identified apply to them? If not, what is it about the sector that might appeal to them?			
3	**What do young people know about the sector?**			
3.1	What myths and stereotypes about the sector need to be overcome in the information?			
3.2	What is the range of jobs that you want young people to know exist?			
3.3	Are parts of the sector (or occupations) growth areas? How well aware are young people and their parents of these?			
3.4	What are the skills employers in the sector value? Do they value just technical skills or do they want soft skills too?			
3.5	How does pay compare in the sector? What are the other benefits of working in the sector?			
3.6	What opportunities for progression following the YA are available in the sector?			
3.7	Beyond the YA, what are the opportunities for career development in the sector?			
3.8	Are there opportunities to specialise within the sector or move between technical and management roles? Would these appeal to atypical entrants?			
4	**How can young people find out more about working in your sector?**			
4.1	Do you have a careers area on your website?			
4.2	Do you have a telephone helpline young people can contact?			

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?
4.3	Do you offer any resources in print or multi-media format available on request – or located with training providers/Connexions etc.?			
5	**What should be included in the information leaflets/brochures?**			
5.1	Job and occupation ideas – perhaps something they won't have previously considered.			
5.2	Information about the value of the YA – what GCSEs value does it have; what do you do when on it; what are the benefits?			
5.3	Use the myths/stereotypes and provide counter arguments/information.			
5.4	Include information about progression and careers pathways – and the development opportunities.			
5.5	Include information about pay and how this compares to other sectors as well as non-pay benefits.			
5.6	Case studies of occupations you have identified. Do you have existing case studies you can adapt?			
5.7	Include what young people can do after the YA – and what other routes exist into the sector.			
5.8	How to find out more – your own careers, web pages, CD Roms, helplines. Also national sources of IAG, eg learndirect, Connexions.			

Some ideas for designing the information

Here are some ideas of how to use and present the issues the toolkit has helped you to identify in designing your own booklet.

Work in the sector may not be what you think …

Briefly describe the activities of two or three occupations that readers may not have considered – aim to identify some of the hard and soft skills required and highlight any aspects of the work they may not have considered. Identify the occupation.

Myth busters

Provide a question that sums up a myth or stereotype about the sector. Counter this in your answer to the question and provide an example to the contrary. You will need to consider whether the myth represents some aspects of the sector but not others. If this is the case, then you will need to acknowledge this (you don't want to

promote false ideas about the sector, after all) but you should also identify examples where it is not the case.

Real case studies

You may already have some case studies you can use or adapt for the booklet. However, if you do not it might be worth commissioning a small number for use in your booklet. Remember, you may be able to make wider use of these too: on your website, in other printed materials you produce, in posters for careers events etc.). Some ideas for you to consider in locating and reporting potential case studies:

■ Consider looking for case studies that feature atypical workers in the sector.

■ Try to find case studies that feature jobs that young people may not have heard of eg non-technical work in the sector – maybe entrepreneurial opportunities, sales and accounting or management and leadership.

■ If possible, try to obtain photographs of the person or people in your case study to accompany the description. Remember that you do need to make sure relevant permissions for publication are in place.

■ Consider the information that will be most important to any groups that you would particularly like to attract to your sector. A case study that focuses on a benefit such as flexibility for working parents is likely to be less of a priority to younger people –it may well be a concern later on, though, so is worth including in brochures aimed at older people. Your first priority for young people may well be the activities, skills and attributes required by occupations or on career progression routes.

■ Include what people say they enjoy and find rewarding about their work.

■ Keep it real: there will be some aspects of their work that people do not like so much, but people will often tell you why it is worth putting up with these – this can be a valuable aspect of the information you provide.

Message from a current or recent Young Apprentice

One of your partnership leads may be able to ask current students about their experiences on the YA and why they would recommend it to others – or you may already have this information. Ideally, include a picture of the YA to accompany the message making sure you get permission from their parents/guardian for publication.

What's it worth?

You may spend all your time dealing with the development of qualifications for your sectors. For young people and, importantly, their parents, your brochure may be

their first introduction to the idea of a Young Apprenticeship. They may have no real idea of what a level 2 vocational qualification means. It's worth mentioning what the YA is equivalent to in academic terms so that parents can get a feel for the value of the award for their child's progression – and this is information that the young person themselves will probably want to know.

What will the YA involve?

Young people lead busy lives. Their teacher or Connexions PA might well tell them what doing the YA will involve, but the young person may easily forget this! It's worth mentioning the number of days they will spend on work placement during the YA and the type of arrangements in place for the work placement – is it a placement with one employer for the duration of the YA (in which case, this may lead to very realistic options for employment at the end of the YA) or a series of placements with different employers (which will give the YA a very broad range of experience across the sector by the end of the YA). Again, this is information that parents, as well as young people, are likely to value.

Progression from the YA

Following the YA, what options do young people have? It's a good idea to provide some information about progression routes into apprenticeships/advanced apprenticeships and other pathways such as college/university. This way, you are more likely to keep the interest of those who plan to progress onto vocational or academic pathways.

Other study and training options

It is also a good idea to give the young person information about other study routes – relevant diplomas or degree programmes – just in case, after looking at the information you provide, they decide that the Young Apprenticeship is not for them, they can see that there other ways to enter the sector.

How to find out more

The YA is available to only a small group of pupils nationally, and local places are limited. While it is worth providing signposts to information about the YA it is just as important that the young people who read your leaflet can readily find information about careers in the sector and the different training pathways that exist to support entry. In addition to your own careers website or helpline consider including:

- Apprenticeship website and helpline (LSC)
- Connexions website and helpline
- learndirect website and helpline

Images

The use of high-quality, professional images will help you to sell your sector; if images are inclusive this will promote your sector to a more diverse range of students. Here are some good equalities practice ideas:

■ Use 'inclusive' images – both genders, different ethnicities, people with disabilities.

■ Don't just focus on one type of worker (eg a mechanic/technician in blue overalls), use images of different types of worker – eg both technical (eg blue overall) and non-technical workers – those in the salesroom or office, for example.

■ Group images can be useful to promote the idea of team work in the sector and gives the message that 'it's for me as well as them'. Again, try to make sure any images used include both genders and different ethnicities.

■ Single-person images are particularly useful to accompany quotations or case studies. They are even better if the individuals shown are involved in work activities.

■ Use action shots rather than studio portraits. These have the added bonus of portraying work in the sector and showing features of the workplace.

■ Make sure the right permissions are in place. Child and data protection legislation requires that to publish pictures of pupils the prior consent of parents must be gained[1].

■ Copyright must also be considered..

As you are designing a booklet for the YA you will mainly want to include pictures of young people. However, it is all right to include some older role models as well, to illustrate people who have progressed in the sector. This gives young people the message that 'this could be you in the future too'.

If you do not have your own image resource as an SSC, other organisations may be able to help you, such as DfES (www.dfes.gov.uk), EOC (www.eoc.org.uk) and the LSC (www.lsc.gov.uk).

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[1]   For further information, see The Information Commission website at www.dataprotection.gov.uk

Designing YA sector-based information

Meeting agenda

Trends in your sector and the role of the YA

> Make sure you have information about the trends to hand as this will indicate some of the things that need to be stressed in the information about your sector. You may have this information already aggregated within your SSA or other documentation.

- What are the main segregation issues and priorities in your sector?

  □ What is the profile of your sector in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability?

  □ Are there any trends associated with social class?

  □ Are any sub-sectors or occupations very different from the general trends?

- What issues do you think that the YAs might help you address?

  □ Skill shortages – do you need to attract a *wider* pool of applicants?

  □ Ability gaps – do you need to attract *higher ability* young people?

  □ Declining applicants/entrants – do you need to attract more *applicants across the board*?

- Do any occupations or sub-sectors require an *increasing number* of entrants to support economic growth?

- Are there any occupations or sub-sectors for which you do not want to raise aspirations due to saturation or decline?

The realities and myths about your sector

> Information about what attracts young people to your sector – as well as what their misconceptions are – can help you focus information more closely to their needs. You may already know and understand these issues, but if not, why not talk to new entrants in the sector about their perceptions of young people's views and experiences, or, if this is not possible, then consider speaking to employers and/or training providers.

- What *attracts* young people to your sector?

  □ Thinking about the types of young people who are currently attracted to your sector, *what is it that attracts them* (and their parents)?

  □ Do you think their ideas regarding the sector are accurate? If not, *what picture of your sector* would you want to promote to them?

□ If their views are accurate, is there nonetheless *anything that's missing* that should be included to give a fuller perception of the sector?

■ Are there any *stereotypes* that need correcting – what information do young people and their parents need about your sector?

□ What are the myths and stereotypes that need to be overcome?

□ What is the range of jobs you would like them to know exist?

□ What are the opportunities in the sector or sub-sectors (eg growth areas?) Do people generally know it is a growth area?

□ Are jobs well paid? What are the other benefits of working in the sector?

□ What could they do after the YA (further study, job options)?

□ What opportunities exist for progression (career structure)?

□ What training is available to support progression? Is training and development common in the sector?

■ As a result of thinking about these issues, can you identify:

□ The key attractions of your area/sector?

□ Parts or aspects of the sector that may potentially be 'routes in'? For example, in automotive, 'design' and/or 'environment and sustainability' may be aspects that attract young people who might otherwise not see the automotive sector as being of interest to them as a work option.

□ The range of skills involved in work in the sector? Again, in the example of automotive, the job is not just about engineering but also about customer and social skills.

Specifics of the YA and guidance resources

The aim of the brochure is to support YA recruitment, so you will need to include some standard information about the structure and benefits of the programme. Your YA partnerships are likely to cover these issues in depth, so the brochure can simply outline them.

■ What will young people achieve as a result of taking the YA?

■ How are work placements organised? Will young people see a range of employers or work with one throughout the YA?

■ Where can the reader get additional sectoral careers and training information from? (Website? Helpline Phone number? Named contact?)

■ If a young person is attracted to your sector, but decides the YA is not for them, what are their other options – and how do they get information on these?

■ Have you got, or can you get from your YA partnerships, any statements from current YAs about:

  □ What they enjoyed about the YA.

  □ What they are getting out of it.

  □ Where they see their future career.

■ Is it possible to get a portrait of a YA to accompany their quote? If so, have you also got parental permission for publication?

Design and resources

An attractive brochure is more likely to communicate the message that the YA is a high-quality route – you should try to reflect this when you have the brochure designed. Ideally, images will be professionally shot to ensure a good composition. You also need think about what resources you already have to support development such as images, career and training case studies.

■ How will you illustrate the brochure?

  □ Do you have a library or archive of photos you could use? Do these include a diverse range of workers and trainees (gender, race, disability)?

  □ Is it possible to obtain some photos of the sector from employers or providers? Similarly, would it be possible to ask partnerships to take photos of current YAs?

  □ Is there anything in the Department's library of photos you like? Can the EOC or LSC supply you with any images?

■ Do you have the resources to commission some photos? If so, before planning the photo session, consider the following:

  □ Representation of gender, ethnicity, disability.

  □ Range of settings to illustrate range of potential jobs and different work environments in the sector.

  □ Level of job, role, power (and all of these by race and gender).

  □ Group shots – white and minority ethnic people; males and females.

  □ Action shots – people undertaking work in the sector – also helps 'sell' the work environment.

- Have you got any existing career and training case studies?

  □ Can you edit these for use in the brochure?

  □ Do they cover the kinds of career you identified in the earlier parts of the meeting?

  □ Who else has material you can draw on? Consider approaching Connexions, the LSC etc.

- Do you have an in-house design facility, or will you need to commission the brochure from an external design consultant?

Action points

- What action points arose from the discussion?

- Who will take each action forward?

- By when?

Brochure text design template

This basic design template can form the basis of the SSC information booklet. Some of the text is standard and provided, while other parts will draw on the conclusions reached during the meeting or as a result of using the toolkit. The basic template shows how case studies, current YA ambassador quotes and sector myths can be used and presented. The SSC information toolkit offers guidance on what to consider when selecting or commissioning case studies and images.

Page 1 — Front cover:

Would you like a job where you …

  □ describe job one and the skills required

  □ describe job two and the skills required

  □ describe job three and the skills required

Then think about becoming …

  □ name job one

  □ name job two

  □ name job three

Careers in the [insert sector] offer more than you think!

Page 2

A Young Apprenticeship in the [sector] could be your first step towards some great job opportunities. A Young Apprenticeship is an exciting programme that you do while you are at school – it gives you:

■ **practical work experience**: spend 50 days on a work placement with an employer

■ **a level two vocational qualification**: equivalent of up to five GCSEs

Young Apprenticeships are a great way to get a head start in the [insert sector]. If you decide this is the sector for you, the Young Apprenticeship could be the first step in your career!

[insert quote from a current YA about why the YA is a good course to be on]

Page 3

[Insert myth one as title]

Describe why this is not always the case. For instance, describe the range of jobs available in the sector.

The next few pages give you an idea of the kind of work you could be doing once you have left education – and remember, this is only a flavour of what is available! The back page of this booklet shows you how to find out more.

[use image and occupational case study or quote from YA]

Page 4

[Insert myth two as title]

Describe why this is not always the case.

[*use image and occupational case study including the skills required and what is enjoyable about work*]

Page 5

[Insert myth three as title]

Describe why this is not always the case.

[use image and occupational case study including the skills required and what is enjoyable about work]

Page 6

So what's the pay like ...?

This will depend on the work you decide to do in the sector [*insert other factors affecting pay*]. For instance, [*insert average pay for one or two occupations after training*]. [*insert, if you wish, pay in management or associated occupations*].

[insert a trend about the workforce that denotes why young people would have a secure future in the sector]

[insert case study and image – a focus might be on career progression]

Page 7

Where will the Young Apprenticeship lead?

The Young Apprenticeship will give you a rounded experience of the [*sector*]. You are likely to do a wide variety of work on your placement[s] with an employer which will help you to decide if a career in the sector is for you, and if so, what jobs most interest you.

The Young Apprenticeship may give you the head start needed for a post-16 apprenticeship in [*sector*]. You can also go on to college and, later on, to university – and not necessarily in subjects related to the [*sector*]. Some people worry that doing a vocational qualification will reduce their options, but the opposite is true – you will have even more options open to you at the end.

If I don't want the Young Apprenticeship what other routes into the [sector] are there?

The Young Apprenticeship is not for everyone, and there are other ways to build a career in the [sector]. Over the page you can find sources of information that will help you find out about the options and pathways available to you.

Page 8 – back cover

I want more information about careers in the [sector] and the qualifications and skills you need to get on. Where do I go?

[insert SSC helpline and careers web pages]

[insert any other resources that are available eg CD Rom]

Work-based learning: for more details about apprenticeship options, including the Young Apprenticeship, visit: www.apprenticeships.org.uk or contact this helpline: 0800 015 0600

Careers and learning advice: Connexions Direct can advise you about your career choices. You can also access a database of over 800 careers. www.connexions-direct.com

For more advice about courses and careers visit the **learndirect** website. www.learndirect-advice.co.uk

Appendix 4: YA Taster Design and Evaluation Toolkit

Designing and evaluating tasters to encourage wider choices

Toolkit v2 August 2007

Developed by Becci Newton, Linda Miller and Rosie Page, Institute for Employment Studies

Becci Newton
The Institute for Employment Studies
Mantell Building
University of Sussex Campus
BN1 9RF
Tel: 01273 873692
Email: becci.newton@employment-studies.co.uk

Tasters in Young Apprenticeships

Ensuring equal opportunities and encouraging wider choices

This toolkit has been created to enable partnerships to design, deliver and review the tasters they offer as part of the Young Apprenticeship Programme. Tasters can be a good way to help ensure equality of opportunities across learner groups and to encourage wider choices.

The toolkit has been developed on the basis of the original evaluation of Equal Opportunities in the Young Apprenticeships,[1] which included case studies into taster provision, and a series of discussion events between Summer 2006 and Spring 2007, which sought guidance from those currently delivering tasters as well as identifying the issues that those new to tasters often need information about.

The toolkit is intended for partnerships to use within their own quality assurance and monitoring systems. It uses a similar format to the Young Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Toolkit produced by the Department to support good practice within YA partnerships more generally.[2] As with the Good Practice Self-Assessment Toolkit, you can revisit the Taster-Design Toolkit to further develop the design, delivery and evaluation of tasters over time, and to help you learn from your experiences.

The toolkit aims to help Partnerships to:

- Provide a resource that partnerships can use to help them to design tasters to meet the particular needs of their sectors and localities.

- Compare good practice locally and more widely.

- Evaluate tasters locally, and contribute to a national evaluation of the early signs of the impact of tasters on young people's choices.

It covers issues such as:

- The aims and purposes that tasters may serve.

- How they can be configured to support these aims.

- How they can be reviewed and evaluated to ensure they provide the most informative experience for young people.

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[1]   Report available in the Young Apprenticeship Repository on the LSC Apprenticeship website, Partners area or at www.employment-studies.co.uk/pubs/report.php?id=428

[2]   Available in the Young Apprenticeship Repository on the LSC Apprenticeship website.

The tasters case study document (Appendix 5 in the Building on Young Apprenticeships report[1]) provides mini case-studies, where relevant, to help partnerships understand the issues under the themes identified by the toolkit questions. The toolkit may be used in conjunction with the case studies or as a stand-alone document.

The toolkit is set out in sections that help to identify the various issues you might wish to address through the tasters you offer and how you will take this forward. However, this is only to assist you in finding the various issues, so you will probably want to keep the earlier points in mind as you move through the remainder of the toolkit.

*At the end of the toolkit we have included **a quick reference guide to planning your taster** – this will help you move rapidly through the issues your taster could address.*

The toolkit has been written to cover schools, colleges and training providers. Not all the questions will be directly relevant to your circumstances, and you may not need to answer them all, but they may provide food for thought.

In the final section of the toolkit the revised survey forms used in the National Evaluation of Tasters are published. While the IES-led part of the evaluation has now closed, providers may wish to use the surveys to help them evaluate their own Tasters. The results of the survey are published in the case studies and providers may compare their own results with the national findings.

Taster-Design Toolkit

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
1	**What purpose will the taster serve?**				
1.1	In your view, what issues can tasters help you to address with regard to recruitment to the Young Apprenticeship you offer? eg increasing diversity; increasing information, advice and guidance; reducing drop-out and increasing retention; increasing enrolment; outlining expectations of the YA/college or training provider/employers; assessing aptitude				cs 1.1
1.2	In what areas do young people seem least well prepared when they join the YA (eg the subject(s); the delivery format; delivery environments; practical nature of YA etc.)?				

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[1]   Newton B, Miller L, Page R and Tuohy S (2007) *Building on Young Apprenticeships Equal Opportunities*, Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies.

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
1.3	What information do young people need to ensure they can best benefit from the YA in your sector? eg career routes and progression, the subject and sector, delivery format etc.				cs 1.3
1.4	If you cannot answer the questions above, how can you gain information to allow you to do so?				
2	**Whom will you seek to influence through tasters?**				
2.1	Are any groups of pupils less well prepared for the YA than others?				
2.2	What (if any) equality and diversity challenges do you face in the YA and the sector(s) you deliver it in?				cs 2.2
2.3	Does the sector in which you deliver the YA face any ability challenges? What are these?				cs 2.3
2.4	How far do parents influence young people's decision to take the YA in the sector(s) you deliver? How accurate is their knowledge?				cs 2.4
2.5	How far do teachers and guidance counsellors in your area influence young people's decision to take the YA in the sector(s) you deliver? How accurate is their knowledge about the YA(s) and/or sector(s)?				
3	**Whom will you involve in taster delivery?**				
3.1	Who has the best knowledge of and information about the issues you will address through tasters? What can the stakeholders listed below offer to your taster? What would you like them to do at the taster? How will you communicate what you would like from any you involve in your taster?				
3.2	College/Training/Other provider delivery staff? What are the resource implications?				
3.3	School or guidance staff? What are the resource implications?				
3.4	YA Co-ordinators and Placement Advisors? Staff involved in selection? What are the resource implications?				
3.5	Current or previous YAs as ambassadors? What are the implications of their involvement for them, their education providers or employers? How can you facilitate their involvement?				cs 3.5
3.6	Employers? How can you facilitate their involvement?				cs 3.6

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
4	**How will you select and involve employers?**				
4.1	Are your links with any placement employers particularly strong? Are any of them willing to become more involved in the YA? Do any of the employers or their staff appear interested in reaching out into schools and the community (formally eg through policy or informally eg they have indicated this in conversation with you)?				cs 4.1
4.2	Are any of the employees who supervise YAs atypical for your YA sector(s) or your region (eg female in engineering, male in social care, BME etc.)? Could they provide a positive role model for young people at the taster? How and with whom would you arrange their participation?				
4.3	What are the issues that an employer could cover better than teaching and other staff (eg the range of skills an employee in the sector requires, the types of career available, their expectations of YAs about commitment, time management etc)?				
4.4	What activities can an employer lead (if involved) eg presentation and/or Q&A; practical activity? Will you develop a brief for what they will cover?				cs 4.4
4.5	Will the employer(s) you are considering present an inclusive view of the YA sector? Will you provide guidelines or a brief for their session?				cs 4.5
5	**What are the practical issues to consider when planning the taster?**				
5.1	How many pupils will attend the taster? Which year group will they be from? How will they be selected or will it be open to all?				cs 5.1
5.2	(For college/training providers) How many schools will send pupils to the taster or will you offer a taster to each school?				cs 5.2
5.3	How long will the taster session(s) be (eg two hours; half-day; full-day etc.)?				cs 5.3
5.4	Where will you run the taster? Does this venue have the rooms and technologies you need for the activities you are planning?				
5.5	When will you run the taster (eg during school term, school hours, after school hours, outside school hours, outside of school term)? If pupils are removed from lessons to attend tasters, how will they catch up on what they miss? Whose responsibility will it be that this is communicated? Who will brief their teachers?				
5.6	Will you provide a blend of activities and information-giving or focus on a practical activity? How many rooms will you need to accommodate this?				

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
5.7	Will the taster be for a single subject or for multiple subjects? If multiple, what are the implications for venue, time and staff support?				
5.8	What time of year will the taster be offered? How will this feed into the timetable for pupils' choices? Will the taster contribute to their decision to apply for the YA or act as a check that it is the right choice?				
5.9	Will you need school staff to support young people at the college/training provider environment? What are the resource implications?				cs 5.9
5.10	Do you want to involve parents, and if so, what are the implications for the venue and timing of the tasters?				cs 5.10
5.11	Will pupils need to travel to the taster venue? How will they get there? Who will resource this?				
5.12	Will attendance at the tasters be optional or will you require all pupils interested in/who have applied to the YA to attend?				cs 5.12
5.13	What are the resource implications of your 'practical' decisions? How will you manage these?				cs 5.13
6	**What should you consider when designing tasters?**				
6.1	What is the key aim your taster(s) will address (eg subject(s), vocational learning, college/training provider environment, careers and skills in the sector etc)?				
6.2	What are the secondary aims you would like to address?				
6.3	What learning outcomes will you set for the taster sessions? How will you ensure these are met?				cs 6.3
6.4	Have you identified practical activities that will be fun and engaging as well as informative? How will these contribute to your aims/themes? Do you need to ensure a balance of practical and theoretical activities to reflect the realities of the YA? Have you ensured that the programme will build the confidence of the young people who participate? How will you ensure that young people are helped to recognise the match between their skills and abilities and the subject?				cs 6.4
6.5	If you offer a question and answer session, will you need to provide some 'plant' questions with staff and other helpers to get the ball rolling?				
6.6	Will pupils all do the same thing(s) at the same time, have a choice of activities or rotate around activities in small groups? If rotating, have you checked whether different activities take the same time as each other?				

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
6.7	Will the taster challenge stereotypes of, eg, the sector(s), vocational education, sector workplaces? In what way will this be achieved?				cs 6.7
6.8	Will you provide any single-sex sessions (eg in sectors where occupations are gender stereotyped) or make the taster compulsory for atypical entrants? How will you ensure both sexes have a chance to experience the taster? How will you organise this?				cs 6.8
6.9	How will you make sure that pupils know what to expect and how to get the most from the sessions? If pupils miss classes to attend the taster how will you ensure they know about how they will catch up on these?				cs 6.9
6.10	Will you produce or provide any information for pupils to take away following the taster? Have you checked whether your SSC or LSC has any relevant information booklets you can distribute?				
6.11	Are you embedding any form of assessment during the taster (eg for aptitude in the subject, soft skills etc.)? How will the activities allow for this assessment to take place? Will you provide a format for staff to use to collect assessment information?				cs 6.11

Taster evaluation toolkit

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
1	How will you collect information and feedback?				
1.1	Will you develop a feedback/evaluation form for young people to complete at the end of the taster?				see later sections
1.2	Will you/taster delivery team talk to young people during taster activities to find out what they think of them? How will you capture this information?				
1.3	Will you/taster delivery team observe how well they engage with the different activities and sessions? How will you capture this information?				
1.4	Will you collect feedback from the people involved in the design and delivery of tasters? How will you capture this information?				
1.5	Have you designed feedback mechanisms that capture data about how well the taster(s) met the primary and secondary aims you identified for it?				

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
1.6	On your feedback forms, will you provide tick box questions or open response questions or a mixture of both?				
1.7	Have you briefed staff about the types of information you are seeking from pupils? Have you provided some standard questions for them to ask?				
1.8	Will you collect information from young people that will enable you to analyse the data on E&D characteristics (eg gender, ethnicity)?				
1.9	How will you analyse the information you collect from the feedback mechanisms? Who will do this? Have you agreed the questions the analysis should address? Where will this information be reported? What mechanisms exist to act on the outcomes of feedback?				
1.10	For pupils attending the taster, will you collect information from schools about Key Stage 3 and predicted Key Stage 4 results (if calibre is an issue for the taster)?				
1.11	Have you kept a record of those attending the taster so you can monitor the profile of pupils at this stage?				
2	**What information should you collect from young people?**				
2.1	What did pupils hope to get out of attending the taster?		List some ideas, offer tick boxes – one open option		
2.2	Did the event supply the information pupils were hoping for?		Repeat list of options, offer tick boxes – one open option		
2.3	What aspects of the taster did pupils find most helpful/least helpful?		List activity and offer rating categories (eg very helpful, helpful, neither, not very helpful, not at all helpful)		
2.4	What did the pupils most enjoy about the taster? What did they least enjoy?		List activities and offer ratings (most enjoyed, least enjoyed)		
2.5	What did they learn as a result of attending the taster?		List learning aims and objectives and offer tick boxes – add an open option		

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
2.6	What would they have liked more of, or less of, to be different?				
2.7	Were single-sex sessions helpful (if offered)?				
2.8	Was the employer/training provider/ college presentation and Q&A useful?				
2.9	As a result of attending the taster, do pupils think it is more or less likely that they would consider taking the YA in the sector(s)? If they are not interested in the YA, are they considering the sector as a potential area for study/work?		More likely, less likely, much the same tick boxes		
2.10	What more would help pupils with their decisions about their study and career options?		See National Evaluation Feedback Form		
2.11	Have you included demographic questions: gender, ethnicity?				
3	**Did tasters work well from the perspective of those involved in delivering them?**				
3.1	How well do you think the taster met its main aim?		Set out the key aim and offer tick boxes (well, not well, neither)		
3.2	How well do you think the taster met its other aims?		Set out the other aims and offer tick boxes		
3.3	How well did the activities work (from your perspective) in terms of: engaging pupils giving them information about the YA, sector promoting equality and diversity etc.				
3.4	What did the qualitative feedback from young people during the taster suggest? Are any changes required?				
3.5	What changes would you make if this session were offered next year? Why?				
3.6	What were the views of employers or other external personnel involved in the taster session? What are the implications of this for next time?				
4	**Next steps (review and development)**				
4.1	What are the implications of the feedback you have received about the tasters for when you deliver them again? Does anything need to be done immediately to set this in train? What is the timetable for making any changes/contacting individuals/ensuring availability of resources or people?				

		Response	Development needs/action	Who/ when?	Case study source
4.2	What implications does the feedback you have received have for where you deliver them next time?				
4.3	Does your analysis show any differences in experience by demographic characteristics? Did any groups find any particular aspect more or less helpful, enjoyable, or informative than others? What does this imply in terms of your aims?				
4.4	What will you keep the same next time you offer this taster?				
4.5	What will you change the next time you offer this taster?				
4.6	Have you reviewed the entry into the YA and whether (if at all) it differs from the profile of those at the taster? What are the reasons for any differences? eg medium term, drop-out and retention in early stages of YA; long-term, post-16 stay-on rate/pathway choices.				
4.7	If your taster has been successful in meeting its primary and/or secondary aims, how can you share this good practice within: your partnership; your LEA/LSC; all YA delivery partnerships? What lessons do others need to know to be able to replicate your success?				

Planning your taster — quick reference

- What are the particular challenges that your school, college or company is facing in recruiting to the YA(s)?

- Do you have a priority group? Who are they – girls, ethnic minorities, underachieving groups, high-achieving groups?

- Is it possible to do something specifically targeted at this/these groups? If so, how will you target them? What about the 'non-targeted' groups – will you provide some other session for them, or is there no perceived need to focus resources on those individuals?

- What is the taster for? Is your aim to:

  □ target a particular subject or topic (eg engineering or health and social care)?

  □ attract a more diverse group of young people to the subject?

  □ introduce young people to a range of subjects they may not have encountered before?

☐ introduce the learners to vocational options in general?

☐ give some experience of what studying in FE or at a training provider will be like?

■ Depending on the above, who do you want to involve? Employers, college tutors, training provider staff, voluntary organisations, employers, Sector Skills Councils, special support groups such as Women in Science and Engineering?

■ If you would like to involve employers in your taster session in some way, how will you do this? What role will they play? Where? Is it possible to use their premises for the taster session, or will they visit you? Can they provide one or more positive role models – eg female engineers, male care assistants?

■ If you are involving a college or training provider in your taster activity, or you are a college or training provider who is planning a taster session, could they/you provider a student from an earlier cohort to be a role model and give a first-hand perspective on what the YA involves?

■ What will the taster session consist of? Talks? Hands-on activities? Discussions? Tours? Will it be used in any way for selection onto the YA?

■ Will the taster be voluntary or compulsory? Open access for all in a certain year (eg all Year 9 pupils) or for one or more specific targeted cohorts or groups?

■ How long does your taster event require? Two hours? Half a day? A full day? More than a day?

■ Who do you want to attend the sessions? Learners only, or their parents/carers also?

■ When will it take place? On a school day, an evening, one or more days at the weekend? These all have different advantages and disadvantages, depending on who you plan to attract.

■ If the taster takes place within a school day, will those pupils who attend have to miss timetabled school sessions, or will lessons be cancelled for this group? If attending the taster means missing a school session, what plans are there to help them to catch up?

■ What type of taster event will it be – one-off event focused on one specific YA, multi-subject-options or carousel?

■ Transport – if the event takes place at an employer's premises, or in a local college or training provider's premises, how will the learners get there and back?

■ Will the taster event be linked to any kind of learning outcome? What type of outcomes would be feasible for your taster activities?

■ Is there any information about jobs and careers in the sector(s) that could be made available – either in talks or literature – during the taster?

National YA Taster Evaluation

This section outlines the process for the national evaluation of Tasters which was conducted in Summer 2007. **The evaluation is now closed** however we have provided the information relating to it, and the survey tools, to enable partnerships to replicate the evaluation model and compare findings with those collected nationally. The national findings are reported in the document, Tasters Case Studies and Illustrative Examples.

About the evaluation

There are two forms attached for you to use for the national evaluation of the taster session(s) you deliver: one for the organiser to complete and a simpler pupil survey form. The pupils' data will be aggregated then merged onto the organiser data so that we can relate their responses more closely to the aims and delivery mechanisms of the tasters. The National evaluation cannot provide detailed feedback about your event as we have had to design a format that will work across the board. We do hope you will collect pupils' feedback independently of the national evaluation for your own use.

We will be analysing information nationally, ie across the partners involved in this project, rather than comparing results between the partnerships involved. Our aim is to provide some information and advice that can be used by other delivery partnerships interested in designing and delivering taster events. We may contact some of you to find out more. For example, if you tried something to challenge occupational stereotypes, we would like to know what you did and the results of that. We would feed this qualitative information into the evaluation and will only name your partnership should you agree to this.

Both forms should be completed soon after the event. It will probably be easiest if the pupils complete theirs at the end of the taster itself. We have suggested that you provide a box for pupils to post their completed form into. We do not ask for pupils' names to ensure confidentiality and for reasons of data protection. You may photocopy the pupil survey forms, if you wish to analyse them at the local level to make a comparison with national results.

Tailoring the evaluation

Some of the tick boxes and options on the pupil form will not be relevant to your taster, and so you may want to strike them through on the hard copy, or remove them from the electronic version before printing. This will also reduce the time pupils need to spend reading the options on the form. *When tailoring the form, please do not change the wording of any part of the pupil evaluation nor question numbers.*

About each of the surveys

Organiser evaluation form

The first form is designed to gather information about the event, and should be filled in by you and your organising team. This will help us to understand how you configured the event, what resources you had to consider and what you aimed to achieve through the taster. It also allows you to tell us about anything novel you tried as part of the event and gives you a chance to reflect on the experience and think about what went well and what you might change if you were to run a similar event in the future.

If you would be willing to share your taster programme or lesson plan with other partnerships, or indeed your analysis of the feedback you collected for yourself at the taster, please enclose it with your survey return.

Pupil evaluation

The second form is designed for use with pupils who attend your event. The aim of this is to find out what young people hoped to gain from the event and what they feel they got out of attending.

The pupil feedback form also asks about the sources that young people use to inform their study and career decisions, as this may help to identify further opportunities to challenge stereotypes using sources with which pupils are familiar.

Please ask young people to complete this form at the end of the event, or as soon as possible after the event. The forms for young people do not require any information that will identify them, although we have asked for information regarding some characteristics (gender, ethnicity, year group) since this will help us identify whether certain groups require specific or different information.

National Evaluation of Tasters

Event-team Questionnaire

This questionnaire will capture some standard information about the taster event you offered. This questionnaire will feed into the national analysis of the purposes which tasters can serve and how they are organised. Information from the survey will be reported anonymously. No individuals will be identified, and organisations will only be identified if prior permission has been gained to do so.

1.   Your YA Partnership's name:

....

2.   Sector(s) of the YA you offered tasters for:

- ❑ Art and Design
- ❑ Business Administration
- ❑ Construction
- ❑ Electricity Industry
- ❑ Engineering
- ❑ Food and Drink Manufacturing
- ❑ Hairdressing
- ❑ Health and Social Care

- ❑ Hospitality
- ❑ Motor Industry
- ❑ Performing Arts
- ❑ Retail
- ❑ Science
- ❑ Sports Management, Leadership & Coaching
- ❑ Textiles

3.   Which organisation developed and led the taster (if not partnership lead)

....

4.   Which other organisations contributed to the delivery of the taster?

- ❑ School
- ❑ Training provider
- ❑ College

- ❑ Employer
- ❑ Current or recent Young Apprentices
- ❑ Other (please give details)

……………………………………………………………………..

5.   How long was the taster?

- ❑ One or two hours
- ❑ Half-day
- ❑ Full-day

- ❑ Extended taster (please give details)

……………………………………………………………………..

6.   How many times did you offer this taster?:

....

7.   Where was the taster event held?

❑ School   ❑ Employer premises
❑ College   ❑ Other (please give details)
❑ Training provider   ……………………………………………………………………..

8.   Number of young people involved:

	Gender		Ethnicity						Disability		
Total	Male	Female	White	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese or Chinese British	Mixed	Other	No disability	Learning disability	Physical disability

9.   Which pupils attended?

❑ All of Year 9   ❑ Pupils who had applied for the YA
❑ Pupils who had already chosen the subject   ❑ Pupils who had been accepted on the YA
❑ Pupils who were interested in the YA   ❑ Other (please detail)
                                                   …………………………………………………………………………..

10.   Number of schools/colleges from which pupils were drawn:

     ....

11.   What were the primary and the secondary aims of the taster?

	Primary aim (please tick only one)	Secondary aims (tick all that apply)
Introduce the YA sector/subject	❑	❑
Introduce the YA mode of study and assessment	❑	❑
Involve pupils in a formal/informal assessment	❑	❑
Reduce drop-out and swapping in the early part of Year 10	❑	❑
Increase motivation and pupils' belief in their abilities	❑	❑
Offer an experience of the college environment	❑	❑
Offer an experience of the employer environment	❑	❑
Insight into progression route(s)	❑	❑
Improve retention in post-16 routes	❑	❑
Challenge occupational/subject-area stereotypes	❑	❑
Raise awareness of careers and development in the YA sector	❑	❑
Something else (Please give details)	❑	❑

…………………………………………………………………………………..

12. Did you/the team try any of the following as part of the taster event? If you did, please rate how successful this was (5 very successful … 1 not at all successful):

	Tried this	Success rating 5 = High … 1 = Low
Single-sex/ethnic sessions	❑	……
Making attendance at event(s) mandatory	❑	……
Making attendance in gender/ethnic-stereotyped subjects mandatory for relevant groups	❑	……
Involving parents in the event	❑	……
Involving employers in the event	❑	……
Involving pupils already studying on the YA	❑	……
Something else (please give details)	❑	……

……………………………………………………………………….

13. What did pupils typically experience at the taster (tick all that apply)? Please give a rating of how successful this was (5 very successful…1 not at all successful)?

	This was offered	Success rating 5 = High … 1 = Low
An activity:		
about the practical skills YAs will develop	❑	……
about how the YA is taught and assessed	❑	……
about what work is like in the sector	❑	……
about employers' expectations for work-placements	❑	……
challenging stereotypes of the sector(s)	❑	……
where current YAs were involved	❑	……
A Presentation:		
about what the YA entails	❑	……
about work in the sector	❑	……
about work placements	❑	……
challenging sector(s) stereotypes	❑	……
given by a current YA student	❑	……
given by an employer	❑	……
A question and answer session		
with employer	❑	……
with staff	❑	……
with a current YA student	❑	……
Tour of:		
training provider/college facilities	❑	……
employer premises	❑	……

14.   If assessment was part of the taster, please tick all of the following that apply.

❑ Pupils knew we were assessing their skills, abilities and attributes during activities

❑ We were observing their skills, abilities and attributes, pupils were not aware of this

❑ An off-the-shelf assessment tool was used (eg Careers diagnostic, Key Skills Diagnostic etc)

❑ Activities designed to allow pupils to demonstrate their skills, attributes and motivations

15.   Based on the feedback you have received from the delivery team and the pupils, which of the following do you think your taster event achieved?

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of YA modes of delivery

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of YA assessment

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of work in the sector(s)

❑ Broader, more diverse view of the sector amongst pupils

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of the college/training-provider environment

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of employers' expectations of their YA placements

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of careers in the sector

❑ Improved awareness amongst pupils of learning and training pathways and progression routes

❑ Improved knowledge amongst delivery staff of pupils' skills, abilities and attributes

❑ Something else (Please give details)

....

16.   What were the types of costs and resources that you had to consider to run the taster?

❑ Staff time

❑ Room availability at college/training provider/school

❑ Venue costs for events not held on college/training-provider/school premises

❑ Materials for use by young people during activities

❑ Transport

❑ Something else (please give details)

....

17.   What is the likelihood that you will run a taster event for future YA recruitment?

❑ Very likely   ❑ Likely   ❑ Not likely or unlikely   ❑ Unlikely   ❑ Very unlikely

Thank you for completing this survey.

If you would like to add any further comments about your taster please do so here.

....

....

....

National Evaluation of YA Tasters

This form asks you for your views about the taster you recently attended. Please fill it out as honestly as you can. You will not be identified.

Are you: Male   or   Female

Are you: Asian/Asian British   Black/Black British   Chinese/Chinese British
                Mixed race   White   Other

Which subject(s) did you attend a taster for?

....

When you heard about this taster event, what did you hope you would find out about as a result of attending? Do you think you got this information at the taster? Please circle 'yes' or 'no' in the two columns as appropriate.

	Wanted to know this	Got this information
What the YA involves – where and what I will study, placements, etc.	YES NO	YES NO
How I will be assessed on the YA	YES NO	YES NO
What the college/training provider is like	YES NO	YES NO
What my choices are when I finish the YA	YES NO	YES NO
What jobs the YA might lead to	YES NO	YES NO
What these jobs are like	YES NO	YES NO
Something else – what?	YES NO	YES NO

....

Which of the following did you do at the taster? How did you rate these? Give each activity that you did a score, where 1 is very poor, 2 is poor, 3 is neither poor or good, 4 is good and 5 is very good.

	Did you do this ?	Your rating
Practical activities eg made something, used equipment	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5
Presentations from teachers, employers or someone else	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5
You could ask questions to people who made presentations	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5
Tour of college or employer premises	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5
All female or all male groups	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5
Something else – what?	YES NO	1 2 3 4 5

....

Were any of the following people at the taster? Was this useful?

	Were they there?	Was this useful?
Employers	YES NO	not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑
Current YA students	YES NO	not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑
Parents/guardians could come	YES NO	not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑

Which of the following best describes your thinking about your future career before and after you attended the taster? Circle 'yes' or 'no' to indicate how you felt **before** the taster session and now **after** you have attended the taster session.

	Before	After
I know what job I want to do	YES NO	YES NO
I have some ideas about the jobs I might do but have not yet made a decision	YES NO	YES NO
I need more information before making any decision about the jobs I might do	YES NO	YES NO

Overall, **how useful** do you think that this taster event has been to you in helping you make decisions about:

a young apprenticeship in this subject?   not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑

studying this subject area in general?   not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑

getting a job in this area of work?   not at all ❑ a bit ❑ quite useful ❑ very ❑

As a result of the taster do you think that you:

have a clearer idea of career options?	Yes definitely ❑	Slightly ❑	Not really ❑
are more confident about your year 10 choices?	Yes definitely ❑	Slightly ❑	Not really ❑
are more likely to go on the YA ?	Yes definitely ❑	Slightly ❑	Not really ❑
Something else – what?	Yes definitely ❑	Slightly ❑	Not really ❑

………………………………………………………………

Overall, what did you think of the taster:

………

………

………

………

………

Thank you. Now please return this form to the person who handed it out.

Appendix 5: Taster Case Studies and Illustrative Examples

Designing and evaluating tasters to encourage wider choices

Case studies v2 August 2007

Developed by Becci Newton and Rosie Page, Institute for Employment Studies

Becci Newton
The Institute for Employment Studies
Mantell Building
University of Sussex Campus
BN1 9RF
Tel: 01273 873692
Email: becci.newton@employment-studies.co.uk

Tasters in Young Apprenticeships

Case studies and illustrative examples

This document contains mini cases-studies and vignettes to illustrate some of the issues raised in the design and evaluation toolkit. They draw on material reported in the Young Apprenticeships Equal Opportunities study (Newton et al, 2006) as well as material available from the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and Learning and Skills Network (LSN).

Each case study number identifies the question it relates to in the toolkit. These case studies can be used in conjunction with the toolkit or as a stand-alone document of interesting practice.

Case study 1.1: The aim for the taster

Taster sessions can be offered for a range of reasons. This case study explores just two.

Increasing understanding via IAG

Pupils are generally used to classroom-based teaching and the content of traditional subjects which are offered as part of their Year 9 options. They therefore have an understanding of the nature of the course, their previous levels of achievement and interest in the subject, and the progression routes.

In contrast to this one YA partnership found that pupils reported having very little understanding of the progression routes vocational courses offer. Therefore, explaining these and increasing pupils' understanding of the vocational option more broadly was an important aim for the taster session.

'We get positive feedback from the students about the tasters – they enjoy it, they get an insight into the courses, where they might go, the skills they can develop and what the courses involve.'

Reducing drop-out

Retention in learning is a key policy issue. Research has highlighted that inadequate advice and guidance, poor course choice, and lack of understanding about the course, are associated with non-completion (Martinez 2001).[1] Recent research among early leavers from FE and work-based learning highlighted that 43 per cent left for reasons that could have been addressed by IAG[2]. Tasters can be a tool to provide a valuable insight into subjects, with the aim of reducing withdrawal from programmes by raising career awareness and confirming or challenging choices. A partnership in Cumbria felt that tasters decreased drop-out: *'The taster sessions have a clear impact in that there*

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[1]   Martinez P (2001), *Improving Student Retention and achievement: what do we know and what do we need to find out*? London: LSDA.

[2]   Simm C, Page R, Miller, L (2007) *Reasons for Early Leaving from Further Education and Work-based Learning Courses*. DfES Research Report RR849, Sheffield: DfES

is very little swapping of courses and options in September. The tasters appear to help the pupils make the right choices.'

Case study 1.3: The information young people need

During the case study work on the Equal Opportunities report, many young people felt they had received insufficient information.

'I went to the open day. It wasn't very informative. They just said about the subjects we would be doing, told us to write it down, the times we would be there, when the breaks would be …'

What they really wanted was more detailed information about the subject as well as, or rather than, the mechanics of the YA programme. They also need reassurance that the Young Apprenticeship will be valued when they progress into further and higher education. One particularly strong theme to emerge was that young people appreciated being told more about the range of job options available within the industry:

'We were shown how [the YA] could help us in the future. They gave us a leaflet showing us all the different types of job that learning about catering and health and safety could lead onto.'

'We learned about all the different types of job you would not have thought about.'

Case study 2.2: Examples of the equality and diversity challenges faced by sectors and YAs

Currently, women comprise just under one-fifth of the workforce under **SEMTA's** remit (the Sector Skills Council for engineering) and their representation tends to be in occupations demanding level two and three skills. Within the YAs, however, female representation is between five and six per cent nationally and this is higher than their representation in post-16 apprenticeship routes.

'The major thing is to get young people out to employers to see what the sector is really like – by changing their assumptions you are more likely to attract a more diverse group of entrants.'

Historically, the **Creative and Cultural Skills** sector has lacked diversity: there are few people in the workforce with special educational needs and physical disabilities, and people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are under-represented. The proportion of workers from ethnic minority backgrounds generally is low, and this is a particular concern in the cultural heritage industry.

There are differences in the gender distribution seen in lower- and higher-level roles in the **Business and Administration** sector. Occupations drawing on qualifications at level four and above are heavily weighted towards men.

If you are unsure of the equality and diversity issues in work and training in the sector(s) of the YA you deliver, try contacting the relevant SSC or your local LSC.

Case study 2.3: Overcoming misconceptions about the skills needed in sectors

The motor industry sector is largely perceived as attracting low achievers. **Automotive Skills** (a Sector Skills Council) sees the YA as an opportunity to promote the sector to a different calibre of young person due to the emphasis on recruitment of solid achievers. The sector requires people with higher level abilities in both technical and management roles. This message needs to go out to young people.

Case study 2.4: The extent to which parents influence young people's choices

Parental involvement was seen as a key factor in recruitment by delivery partnerships. There was an awareness of the need to engage with parents beyond gaining their written support for YA candidates. The key issue for parents is the parity of esteem of vocational qualifications:

'We have had kids who were really keen to take the BTEC but parents have put them onto the maths GCSE. We do our best to support the kids and encourage them to tell their parents what they really want – and to tell staff so that they can support those choices when in discussion with parents.'

Occupation segregation is less of an issue for parents who tend to support their child's choices as long as they are assured that health and safety issues, as well as travel, are properly addressed. However, a parent of an atypical entrant to the YA demonstrates some misconceptions:

'We let her reach her own decisions [to take the YA in male-dominated subject]. To be honest I was against her choosing [the subject] because it is a tough world out there and being a girl meant she would have to be exceptional to get anywhere.'

Case study 3.5: Involving current YAs in delivery

The best advocate for the YA programme may be a young person who has participated. One partnership who offered a YA in Sports Management was considering whether to involve current students in the delivery of taster activities. More specifically, their plan was to use the current YA students to lead a taster activity about sports coaching for the potential new recruits. It was hoped that this would facilitate conversations about the course between potential and current students and also to demonstrate to potential students some of the learning outcomes from the course. An additional benefit was felt to be the opportunity for the current students to use some of the coaching skills they had developed as a result of the YA.

Case study 3.6: Involving employers in taster sessions

There has been mixed experience of involving employers. Typically, employers involved in tasters seem to have been engaged via existing relationships with the college or provider, although there may be scope to approach additional employers through, for example, a Sector Skills Council.

One taster, which involved a range of retail employers, found that overall employer involvement was good. However, using more than one employer made organising the activities difficult. The partnership also found that employers dropped out of the event if something more pressing came up. To try to incentivise employer participation in future tasters, the organisation is considering designing taster involvement as a free training opportunity for employers/employees, which could be certificated.

In another example, the YA partnership lead organisation held a Year 9 industry day in a number of schools. At each, the YA Lead made a presentation about engineering and brought employers to the events. There were in-school activities, such as building a crash barrier or wind–tunnel, and lots of related practical activities. The employers who provide placements went to the event and gave a presentation about the work in the sector. They also answered the questions young people had. Employers helped out with the practical activities, which had the benefit that they got to know the young people who might come to them on placement.

Case study 4.1: Selecting employers to involve in tasters

Amongst your placement employers there may be some (or someone on their staff) who are particularly keen to be involved in reaching out – perhaps due to their own experiences at this age:

'I know that was missing when I left school, the actual guidance on various types of jobs and the ins and outs of them and what they entail. We got very, very little information and so you made a decision based on not a great deal of thought. That's why I am keen to be involved now.'
(Employer – Placement Supervisor)

When involving employers it is important to provide them with guidance about what they should cover. Many do not know what it is young people want to hear about or, if they do, they may not have considered providing this kind of input before. You might ask employers to speak to young people about the range of occupations in their company, what each does and how they interact. You might ask them to talk about the kinds of skills they value in their employees.

It is also a good idea to consider whether the employers you are hoping to work with are comfortable making presentations. Young people are more likely to find the session engaging if they are.

Case study 4.4: Employer-led activities

Once engaged, employers can fulfil a number of roles:

Practical activities: In one partnership the majority of taster activities were provided by the teaching staff. However, they brought in a painter and decorator, as they did not have this expertise within the school. The employer then ran a practical activity.

In another example, a small group of employers who had agreed to provide YA placements were invited to the taster to explain what the placement would be like in their organisation. They covered issues such as what young people would be likely to do and what they would learn as a result, but also covered the expectations employers had of things such as behaviour and time management.

Source of practical IAG and role models: Other partnerships have involved employers as a source of information, advice and guidance and as role models. One college ran a two-day programme called '*Women in Science and Engineering'* where female pupils had the opportunity to meet female engineers and to visit employers in the sector.

Case study 4.5: Ensuring employers present an inclusive view

From an equalities perspective, it is important to ensure that employers are aware that equal opportunities are on the agenda and that hidden messages in their language may give the wrong impression, for instance, if nurses are always referred to as 'she' or engineers as 'he'.

You will already know from your discussions with them that some of your employers have a more traditional view of the sector, whereas others are more interested in attracting atypical entrants. Those who are already thinking in terms of diversity are likely to present a more inclusive view.

Case study 5.1: Selecting pupils for the tasters

The resources available and where the taster is held influence whether or not places for taster sessions are limited and thus whether selection is necessary. In one example from a school where a Year 10 vocational option was compulsory, there was no selection for taster participation, although there was some selection to ensure each pupil's abilities were matched to the demands of specific options.

In another example, and in light of the limited number of places available on the YA, only pupils who met the entry criteria for the YA were able to attend the taster. Another partnership held tasters only for pupils who had expressed an interest, in or had applied for, the YA. In a further case, the YA taster was offered only to those who had already opted for the relevant subject.

Case study 5.2: The number of schools participating

Partnerships in Cumbria and Otley have run tasters for several schools at the same time. In the partnership in Cumbria, 12 schools were involved over a four-week period. One benefit of delivering tasters to pupils from several schools at a time was that it enabled pupils to mix with students from other schools, as they would during the YA. You may also want to consider running the same taster programme on more than one occasion, particularly where there is limited capacity for certain activities.

Case study 5.3: Duration of tasters

A **one-day taster** had a specific focus on the skills required by the retail sector. It involved a blend of whole-group and break-out/team activities. The day started with an introduction to careers in the sector and this was followed by a team activity to identify the skills required by retail and to present these on a t-shirt. Representatives of each team then presented back to the whole group. The teams were then challenged to come up with an idea for a product, and to design a business plan and marketing strategy. Some role-play was involved as they were asked to present their business plan to the 'bank manager'. At the end of the day each team presented their product and strategy to the whole group. A facilitator finished with a plenary of the skills they had used. (CRAC, Retail Interactive)

This large-scale taster implemented aims to help pupils decide upon a range of vocational options for Year 10. The regular timetable is suspended while the pupils take part in the tasters. Each pupil experiences eight subjects over the course of a week, with each taster session lasting around two hours. Subject tasters involve a presentation either from staff or an employer as well as practical activities in the subject. (Derby).

This large-scale **extended tasters** implementation works across a range of vocational options at Year 10: the YA, IFP and vocational GCSEs. Each school is offered a block of time at the college for their pupils. Each pupil will attend tasters in three subjects. The tasters in each subject last for one hour and involve a relevant practical activity led by college delivery staff. In the automotive sector, this might be changing a car tyre, in food and drink they might prepare a dish. Care was taken to ensure that activities could be completed by students within the allocated time. (Cumbria)

While the previous study did not find specific examples of **shorter-duration** tasters, the examples above give some ideas of what a one- or two-hour session would contain. A primary focus of tasters is on practical activities with which information-giving can be integrated.

Case study 5.9: School staff attending the tasters

One partnership ran tasters attended by several schools. School staff also attended and were responsible for the young people whilst on the college site. It was also useful to have the teachers involved as this:

'…[teachers] provided consistency for young people should they have any concerns or issues. Similarly, if there are any behavioural issues in the college environment, teachers are likely to be better equipped to deal with them as they know the young people.' (Cumbria)

Case study 5.10: Involving parents in tasters

The involvement and support of parents was seen as critical to the success not just of tasters, but also pupils' achievement and retention in their options. A variety of methods of communication and involvement were tried: In some cases parent could join in taster activities, in others they were involved in information sessions about the YA – either at tasters or at separate events.

'We do Lads and Dads days in the catering department. These take place on Saturdays in October and are advertised through the schools. They normally get a good take-up. They are aimed at kids from seven and eight up to kids who are 14 or 15 and, of course, their dads. We offer them because we have found that at the younger age boys may not consider getting involved in catering as it is seen as a girls subject. We invite their dads as a support to them, but so that they get a feel for what the subject is like too – that it's not just for girls.' (Croydon)

'We ran the taster for food and drink on a Wednesday with 23 pupils. Activities included sausage making and fudge preparation. At 3pm the parents were invited so they could see what the YA would involve and ask us questions about it. We chose this time as we felt more parents were likely to be available rather than at an earlier part of the day.' (Otley)

Case study 5.12: Attendance of pupils at the tasters

In many instances places on taster provision were limited and therefore decisions were made about which pupils could attend the taster. This was usually based on pupil performance, or interest in the subject.

However, in a school in Derby there was no selection process for participation in tasters (although there was an intensive selection process to ensure that pupils were of the right level of ability to take up any chosen option). This model allowed all pupils to try all options, and therefore girls had to try non-traditional subject areas, such as construction, and boys had to try subject areas such as health and social care.

Case study 5.13: Resourcing tasters

In most cases the schools, colleges or training providers funded the tasters themselves. Some had received specific funding to develop vocational taster work perhaps from the local LSC, although in others, funds associated with the IFP or YA were directed into resourcing the tasters. In one example, ESF funding had been mobilised.

The relative expense of the tasters depended on location. If the taster was held in the school venue costs were not an issue. However, if the taster was at the training provider or college, transport costs had to be considered. In some of the extended taster implementations, while colleges charged schools for participating in the tasters, others viewed the tasters as a form of marketing and absorbed these costs. If a taster was run as part of a summer school, one college reported that parents were used to paying for the time their children spent in the summer school.

Case study 6.3: Setting learning outcomes

CRAC designed a full-day taster in the retail sector which it ran in four schools. The learning outcomes were configured around the employment in retail and the skills that are valued. As a result of attending the taster, the pupils would:

■ Know the skills that are important for the world of work generally, and specifically for retail.

■ Understand the importance of developing these skills and have a chance to use these skills.

Case study 6.4: What activities to include in the taster

The taster activities reported in the YA Equal Opportunities study were typically designed to reflect the types of activity a pupil might expect if they select the YA (or vocational option) in that subject. For example, in 'motor vehicle' pupils might take part in changing a tyre, in food and catering a dish might be prepared, and in performing arts pupils might perform in front of an audience – in the style of the 'X-Factor'.

Care was taken to ensure the activities were realistic to the subject and mode. Where written work formed part of assessment of the YA or subject, this was made clear to pupils, and an example of this was included in the taster.

Case study 6.7: Activities to challenge occupational stereotypes

Two taster providers used role models such as female engineers and male nurses, in order to show young people real examples of the opportunities and progression routes which they may not have considered.

An employer-led activity in a different taster challenged young people's stereotypes of the sector. The employer was a chemical engineer and asked young people to draw a picture of where she worked. All of the pupils drew a picture with smoke billowing out from a factory. The employer was then able to say it was not like they thought – in fact her company made no atmospheric emissions. This led into a discussion about the kinds of assumptions people make about different jobs and work environment.

This idea from the **Equal Opportunities Commission** aims to challenge occupational stereotypes:

'An E2E programme in Birmingham and Solihull, called 3Es, includes a regular tutorial session on equal opportunities. As part of this, the young people take part in an exercise called 'What's my job?' in which they match pictures of individuals to various occupations: model, doctor, nurse, cleaner, chief executive, and so on. The tutor then uses this as a basis for exploring issues of stereotyping and challenging the young people's ideas about who can do certain jobs. One young man on the course was taking an NVQ level 1 unit in childcare. He intended to continue onto the Apprenticeship when he had completed the course.'

(EOC: Action for Change: How training providers can break down gender segregation in vocational education and training. www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/action_for_change_occ_seg_training.pdf)

The **GERI project (Gender Equality and Race Inclusion)** has developed interactive learning materials, as well as activities and resources for learning providers, *designed to promote gender and race equality*. More information about this project and the resources available can be found at www.geriproject.org/

Case study 6.8: Single-sex sessions in gender-segregated sectors

Partnerships had included all-female and all-male groups in their tasters to allow experimentation with subjects that are strongly gender-stereotyped. In one example, the 'construction' teachers noticed that girls tended to work in a different way from the boys. They often worked in concentrated silence and together, whereas the boys were more rowdy and reminiscent of a building site and, given their larger numbers, this was felt to be intimidating. The girls only taster meant girls could work in a comfortable environment; a focus was put on careers in construction beyond the building site, eg quantity surveying, computer-aided design as well as better known about careers in the sector.

Training providers may be concerned that it is discriminatory to offer tasters only to boys or girls, however you can offer the taster to both and then provide single-gender sessions within it. Alternatively, in an example taken from the EOC, a provider provided different tasters to boys and girls:

'Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Training in 2003 ran an activities event for 500 school pupils. Girls participated in three activities from a choice of nine traditionally male-dominated activities, including bricklaying, tetrahedron building (construction), computing, fire fighting and motor vehicle maintenance. Similarly, boys chose three out of nine traditionally female activities, including childcare, hairdressing, floristry, dental nursing, dance and fashion. The event was a huge success, with bricklaying proving to be the most popular workshop among the girls. Over 40 of the 200 young participants who completed evaluations of the day, indicated that they were interested in pursuing non-traditional careers. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that the event had a significant impact on many of the young people involved.'

(EOC: Action for Change: How training providers can break down gender segregation in vocational education and training.www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/action_for_change_occ_seg_training.pdf)

Case study 6.9: Briefing pupils prior to the taster

In one school where taster sessions were compulsory for all pupils, assemblies were used as a forum to brief pupils about the purpose of the taster session.

'We have to make sure that the students are in the right frame of mind. We have a run of assemblies prior to the tasters to show that the courses are for their benefit. The assemblies help to prepare them for the sessions, so they know what to expect, their purpose and what we hope they can gain from them.' (Derby)

Where a more limited number of pupils are attending the taster an assembly might be inappropriate. A taster run by CRAC started with a fifteen minute welcome and introduction to the taster, which involved an introduction to the programme and a briefing about the importance of transferable skills.

Case study 6.11: Assessing young people during the taster

Tasters provide the opportunity to assess the suitability of young people to the subject area and level of the course, either to inform the selection process or to inform, tailor and pitch, planning and delivery.

One partnership that delivered a taster in performing arts had a session where pupils would perform in front of the group. While they did this the provider assessed the suitability and aptitude of the young person. Other tasters included formal assessments, such as written tests, to inform the planning and delivery for the cohort, and to assess likely support needs.

A partnership in Cumbria included an 'online' literacy and numeracy test and the Connexions online 'kudos' test within their tasters. The tests were implemented so that the college received detailed information about the young people joining their vocational programmes. This enabled better and quicker configuration of pupil support.

More commonly, partnerships used more informal methods of assessment, for instance, observing how skilled pupils were in practical activities or their interest in the subject, as demonstrated by their engagement with the taster.

'While pupils take part in taster sessions, members of the selection panel will observe them to get a sense of their motivation and attitude towards the YA option and their aptitude for the subject more generally. Following the taster, pupils will be invited to an interview where they will complete a formal assessment too.'

Case studies from the evaluation of tasters (2006-07)

Tasters in Derby (2006)

A school in Derby is the lead school in the partnership of five secondary schools. There are also training providers, a further education college and two specialist secondary schools in the partnership. The 'cluster' is designed to support each other – either by offering tasters or helping each other to develop provision.

At the lead school every pupil undertakes a vocational course in Years 10 and 11. The tasters offered in Year 9 relate to the vocational areas of the curriculum they offer. There is a greater input into the options process to explain to pupils what these courses and subjects are about, the sort of things pupils would be expected to do and what would be expected in terms of levels of achievement.

The tasters are compulsory for all Year 9 pupils, and the regular timetable is suspended while pupils take part in the taster work. This year the taster experience will consist of a carousel, where all pupils take part in tasters for eight subject areas, with a two-hour session in each subject area. A ninth subject area, beauty therapy, is to be offered at the local college, which is part of the partnership, later in the year. There is a week of assemblies leading up the taster session to prepare pupils for the sessions, so that they will know what to expect, the purpose of the tasters and what it is hoped they will gain from them.

For the taster sessions the school brings in one person, a painter and decorator, but all the other courses are now run by people who are part of the school staff. For example, travel and tourism is taught by geography teachers, and performing arts is delivered by music, drama and dance staff.

This year the school ran a 'Girls into Construction and Engineering' taster because in both these subject areas girls are under-represented. The girls-only taster focused on progression through the industry and the types of courses the areas that could lead onto, eg quantity surveying.

Within two to three weeks of the taster sessions the pupils make their initial option choices. However, there is a longer process after that, with more assemblies, an options evening, and form-tutor involvement when options can be re-selected or refined.

The deputy and assistant head, alongside the vocational course tutors, manage and organise the taster sessions. The head teacher oversees the process and heads the partnership with the other schools in the area. A large amount of time and effort is needed to plan and manage the tasters.

The Learning and Skills Council has funded some of the school's taster work to help with the set-up costs, for example developing a construction and an electrical facility. The taster and the vocational courses themselves are expensive to run, and the school has operated the rest of it through the school budget. Funding associated with the YAs helps fund the tasters in the area of health and social care. They are a specialist vocational school and have £90,000 a year for four years and this also helps towards the costs.

Tasters in Cumbrian (2006)

A college in Cumbria leads a partnership of 12 secondary schools, and provides taster sessions in vocational courses for their Year 9 pupils. The tasters include art and design, hairdressing, beauty therapy, motor vehicle, and construction. The college also offers tasters for subject areas offered by other training providers by inviting them into the college to work with pupils. This enables pupils to sample and gain information about the range of options available to them in the local area.

The tasters provide the basis for pupils likely to take vocational GCSEs, NVQ1 and YAs to choose their options. Each school sends a different number of pupils to the college taster days, but usually between 30 and 50, depending on the size of the school. Schools select pupils for the tasters based on academic ability and the results of a selection test. They choose pupils who are likely to get D-G grade GCSEs as they feel these pupils are most likely to benefit from undertaking vocational GCSEs and NVQ level 1 courses and that it will not negatively affect their position in the league tables of the percentage of pupils gaining at least five GCSEs grade A*-C. However, if other pupils request to take part in the tasters then they are allowed.

In recent years, tests have been implemented which pupils undertake before the tasters. The college found there was a need to have more detailed information about the young people joining its vocational programmes in order to enable better and quicker configuration of support. The tests help to identify any literacy, numeracy or other support needs before pupils join their vocational route. The initial assessment has been 'seed' funded by the local Learning and Skills Council under the Pathfinder scheme to enable it to be incorporated this year. In future, the college will resource it.

There is a taster booklet for pupils which explains the options in depth, the qualifications that will be awarded and the typical 'routes of progression'. It also details contacts at the college, should pupils want to discuss the tasters or vocational areas in more depth.

The college offers each school blocks of time for their participation in the taster event (normally two half-days across two weeks). Taster sessions are run on the college site, by college lecturers and last for one hour. Pupils miss timetabled lessons in order to take part in the sessions.

Each school has a co-ordinator who attends the tasters, and they are responsible for the young people while at college. It is useful to have the teachers involved, as this provides consistency for young people (should they have any concerns/issues, there is a familiar face); similarly, if there are any behavioural issues in the college environment, teachers are better equipped to deal with this since they are familiar with the young people.

The tasters are run in May and then the pupils choose their options in June, to start courses the

following September. It was felt that the tasters might help to meet their aims better if they were run earlier in the academic year so that the tasters can help pupils with their decisions before the Year 9 option process.

While out on tasters, pupils miss out on the content of their everyday lessons and this can create tensions. Therefore, it was reported to be vital to communicate to the pupils that they must make up for any work that they miss, and get the support of teachers before the start of the process. In one school, teachers reported to the staff member responsible for organising the tasters if pupils participating in the tasters had failed to catch up with work missed during taster sessions.

In one school the tasters were initially 100 per cent funded by the school. Now there is some funding via the increased flexibility programme, but this is a small amount. The schools have signed a contract with the college and have targets for the number of pupils who will undertake a vocational GCSE, and the number that will undertake a YA.

Tasters in Norwich (2006)

The partnership, led by a college and involving a number of local secondary schools, began delivery of a YA programme last year, with the introduction of YA in performing arts. This is the first year the partnership has run the taster events, and hence this case study illustrates the initial set-up stages of planning, resourcing and managing taster sessions, early implementation issues and design principles.

The partnership has developed taster sessions to help make pupils more aware of the opportunities and options that are open to them, including progression and work demands, and to help assist with selection for the YA programme. At the time of writing, these events were in an advanced stage of planning for three occupational areas: performing arts, construction and health and social care, and the tasters are solely for those pupils who have expressed an interest in undertaking a YA. An express purpose of the taster sessions is to challenge gender-stereotypes in the subject areas.

The taster sessions are being designed to try to accurately simulate what the course would be like in order to avoid giving pupils false perceptions. At the end of the sessions the application process will be explained. Pupils will miss lessons for one day in March to attend the taster event. Parental permission will be sought for pupils to make their own way to the college, and if that is not forthcoming, or if there are a large number of pupils, then the schools will consider arranging a coach, although this will have cost implications.

The tasters for each YA area will be run on the same day. It has not yet, however, been confirmed whether they will run in sequence, giving pupils a more in-depth experience, or parallel to each other, allowing pupils to experience just one of the three options.

A sample of employers who are likely to provide placements for the YAs will also attend the taster sessions so they can input into the taster and explain what the work-based side of the process will be like. Employers have been engaged with the programme via word of mouth from pupils and parents, and via the college's brokerage team, which has a good employer network.

Pupils are not selected for the tasters; rather the YAs are marketed to all pupils. However, there are ability criteria for the YAs, and pupils must meet these to be able to take part in the tasters.

College and school liaison has been fairly informal so far, but there are plans to increase the number of YAs available, and thus the number of tasters will also expand. This may mean that relationships have to become more formalised in order to effectively manage the process.

The funding for the taster session has so far been accommodated within funding for existing provision at the college. However, as taster provision expands, then it is anticipated that a more formal approach to resourcing will be needed.

Taster Day at Telford College of Art and Technology (2007)

The 14 – 16 offer and tasters

Telford College of Art and Technology (TCAT) has offered Young Apprenticeships (YA) for four years in Engineering and, from 2007, is offering the YA in Sports Science. In addition, TCAT has been involved in the Increasing Flexibility Programme (IFP) for considerable time and offers Entry level, level one and two courses in a range of subjects for 14 – 16 year olds.

The College has been running taster days since 2001 when tasters were initially implemented for the IFP. In 2007, the tasters available included the YA in Engineering, and IFP courses in Engineering, Childcare, Health and Social Care, Sport Science, Public services, Motor Vehicle, Hair & Beauty, uniformed services and the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Who are the tasters for?

Pupils hear about the opportunity to study on the courses and attend the tasters through a booklet produced by TCAT and distributed through schools in the early part year 9. TCAT staff attend Year 9 assemblies, option talks, and parent evenings for its partner schools to ensure both pupils and parents have the opportunity to gain the information they need about the range of courses. During these school events, the opportunity to attend 'informing choice' tasters is raised and these are offered throughout Year 9.

The opportunity to participate in a taster session was offered to all pupils who had applied to the relevant courses. In this sense the role of the taster was to confirm choice rather than support decision-making. In addition, some selection processes were included as part of the tasters, such as interviews and 'Target Skills' assessment. At the 2007 event around 270 pupils attended the 'confirming choice' tasters from a range of schools.

What are the aims of the tasters?

The tasters have two key aims: to allow the young people to see and experience the College and course environments but also to allow staff some early information about their next cohort.

'It is a two-way process, it's for the young person to get a feel for the scheme and for the college to get a feel for the student'

Beyond this, ensuring the right match between pupils and courses is key since it reduces drop-out and changes in the early part of the academic year. The opportunity to ensure that pupils have a realistic idea of the work involved in the courses is also important, as is the opportunity to market the college and its benefits.

How are tasters resourced?

The college receives no additional resource for running the tasters. 'We just fit it in, it is done through goodwill'. However, the benefits offered in terms of pupils' improved understanding of the courses and the greater confidence amongst staff that the right recruitment decisions have been made, have led to a positive perception of tasters amongst college managers and tasters receive high level support. The college provides the facilities and equipment for each of the taster sessions, with staff fitting their contributions to the tasters into their existing work patterns. Pupils either make their own way to the taster or their school arranges transportation.

The remaining sections of this report focus on the 'confirming choice' taster visited for the evaluation.

Structure of the taster day

While there is a shared introduction to the day, pupils are quickly streamed into their subject areas for their taster. Pupils arrive from 8.30, to be registered. Following registration pupils were sent to the refectory to informally meet up with the Lead tutors in their subjects and courses before the formal start at 9.45am. Their subject tasters commence at 10am and end at 2.30pm with a short mid-morning break and longer lunch period.

As part of the registration process pupils were given an arm band to wear, colour-coded to the subject and taster they would be attending. This had been newly introduced in 2006-07 and was an effective method of managing a large group, enabling staff to keep a better track of individuals and ensure that they were attending the right taster.

The welcome and introduction, led by the 14-16 Coordinator, focused on the benefits of study at the college as well as setting the expectations of behaviour while on the taster. Pupils were directed to the relevant lead tutors and led into their subject area activities. During the time in their subject tasters all pupils were taken out so that they could complete the Target Skills assessment which is used as to assess their suitability and to establish a baseline measure from which to measure achievement once on the course. Target Skills assesses pupils' literacy and numeracy skill levels.

The Engineering taster

Due to an unavoidable clash with the teaching timetable for motor vehicle, pupils interested in this subject attended the engineering taster session so that the final group for the engineering taster was around 100 pupils. This number included the 29 applicants for the 25 available YA places. The taster was delivered in the manufacturing and engineering Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE).

The taster borrowed from a television format, using a 'scrapheap challenge' activity. Pupils were grouped into teams of six to design, build and test an egg-transporting device ready for a competition in the final session. They were supported by nine staff and five student ambassadors

from the ICT programme and nine from the final year of the Young Apprenticeships, two of whom were girls. The student ambassadors were assigned to facilitate and mentor the various groups throughout the design and build process.

The Scrapheap challenge was broken into three sessions with breaks and lunch built in. During each session, which lasted around 90 minutes, pupils were also interviewed, completed their Target Skills assessment and were taken on a brief college tour.

What worked?

The use of the arm bands, colour coded to subjects was an effective way of keeping track of pupils given the size of the group and the number of tasters being offered. This idea could also work for a carousel-style taster where different groups move around a smaller number of tasters before making subject choices.

The activity itself was highly effective. Pupils understood the format and so were able to move reasonably quickly into the design and build process. The use of raw eggs for the competition at the end of the taster absolutely illustrated whether the machines that had been built were up to the challenge!

Tips for other partnerships

■   Try to keep to a strict timetable if this type of carousel format (between interviews, tours and taster activities) is offered. Agreeing the interviewing sequence and timetable, and giving all pupils an individual timetable with the times for their attendance at interview, assessment and the tour can help with this.

■   Try to ensure a balance between practical activities and opportunities for the applicants to obtain in-depth information about the course and the institution. A group question-and-answer session with existing students would be a good way of doing this. The TCAT model of visiting various events at schools prior to the taster is a useful way of providing some IAG ahead of the taster. However there is a need to reinforce IAG and therefore throughout the taster, staff and any student ambassadors involved should be encouraged to approach individuals and groups to talk about the courses and answer any questions.

■   Student ambassadors are positive role models for applicants and can be a good source of informal IAG about the college and course experience. Briefing ambassadors about how to manage groups and how to identify individuals who may appreciate some additional help would be a good idea.

■   Where it is likely that some pupils will not be admitted to courses because of oversubscription it is important to make sure that information about other relevant courses is made available. However, if this idea is used, it is important that all attendees receive the information to avoid individual students feeling stigmatised.

Report by IES in partnership with TCAT

Young Apprentice Construction Taster at Cornwall College, St Austell (2007)

The Taster Day was held over two days, the 1st and 2nd of May, due to the large number of students interested in the course. The reasons for the Taster days were two-fold: firstly, to provide prospective students with information about the course and practical workshop experience; and secondly, to assess the students' suitability for the course. This was the second year that a Taster session had been held for this Young Apprenticeship.

The Taster day was attended by a total of 36 Year 9 students drawn from six secondary schools over the two days. This included one girl on the first Taster Day. The majority of students were transported by school minibus. Parents were also invited and some attended on both days. Staff from the partner schools also attended and helped with the delivery of the activities. This included a teaching assistant who worked with two students who required support in the practical sessions.

The programme

9:00   Arrive, presentation about the Young Apprentice Scheme and outline of the day's activities

9:15   Initial Assessments

10:30   Reconvene in the Construction department. Split students into two groups to "have a go" at some practical activities. Students will be removed from the practical activity for an individual interview with the programme manager.

12:30   Lunch (students will need to bring a packed lunch or money to purchase a light snack)

1:00   Students will continue with a practical activity and interviews

2:15   Students to reconvene in PB005 for debrief and time for questions

2:30   Students return to school.

Students were told they would be engaged in light practical activity and so were advised to dress appropriately, in old clothes and sensible footwear. Parents were welcome to attend for all or part of the day.

Cornwall College staff involved in the day included Learning Support, a liaison officer from Cornwall College Business, the Young Apprentice construction course manager, a 14-16 Curriculum manager and lecturers delivering the current Young Apprentice Scheme.

Staff involved in the Taster days welcomed the students. The course manager then outlined the structure of the day and explained that the students would be assessed throughout the day regarding their suitability for starting the Young Apprentice Scheme in September. A brief Power Point presentation was shown to the students featuring photos showing work completed by the current Young Apprentices and an overview of the course.

The students then completed Initial Assessments for literacy and numeracy supervised by the Learning Support staff. The students then split into two groups to allow all students to experience both the practical sessions in carpentry and brickwork across the morning and afternoon sessions. The practical sessions were led by college lecturers and were designed with an emphasis on the

students gaining experience in using hand tools. After the initial instructions had been given the students were monitored by the lecturers for evidence of practical skills and the ability to work independently. During the brickwork sessions students were interviewed individually by the Young Apprenticeship Scheme course manager, a curriculum manager and the liaison course manager.

As this was a selection process as well as a Taster day, college staff made brief notes highlighting positive aspects about individual students and also any concerns. Information was shared at the lunch break and at the end of the day this information fed into the decisions made by the Course Manager.

Feedback from the students on the day was very positive, especially with respect to the practical sessions. We collected students' responses using a questionnaire and many of the students stated how much they had enjoyed the chance to have a go at the brickwork activity. We also received positive comments from one of the schools saying how much their students had enjoyed the day.

Our own view was that the two days were very successful giving us a chance to select students based on their initial assessment score, practical skills, interview and general attitude and behaviour at the Taster day. In addition, students also wrote a short personal statement explaining why they should be allocated a place on the scheme and this was also useful in deciding who should be offered a place.

Report by Richard Brumwell, Lecturer in Construction at Cornwall College

Findings from the National Evaluation of Tasters

The evaluation aimed to find out what young people seek from a taster experience as well as their perceptions of what is currently being provided. A key purpose of this research was to gain information that would help providers to understand how taster events can be better focused to meet young people's needs.

Providers were invited to participate in the national evaluation and those who did so asked the young people who attended taster sessions to complete an evaluation questionnaire. In the time period leading up to publication of this report, two institutions had responded to this part of the evaluation and these had offered YA taster events in four subject areas. A total of 66 pupil response forms were received.

Method

The evaluation form is published in Appendix 6 of this report. In essence, young people attended the taster session that had been organised for them and at the end of the session completed the survey. The evaluation form was deliberately short to minimise any impact on the schedule of the day and hence on the experience of young people. In addition a short form was felt to be best in terms of optimising the response rate received. For this reason it was heavily structured with multiple response options to facilitate rapid completion, but also included opportunities for young people to add other relevant information where they wished to do so. Providers were asked to provide the researchers with details of the taster event to enable a richer understanding of the activities the young people were reporting on.

The respondents

The respondent group comprised 45 boys and 18 girls. The large majority of young people were White with just four noting BME backgrounds. Three young people did not report their gender, race or the subject of their taster. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondent group by the subject of the taster they attended.

Table 0.1: Respondent group by subject

	N Young People attending	N Female	N Male	N BME
Engineering	**23**	1	22	1
Motor industry/vehicle	**24**	0	22	2
Health and social care	**16**	15	1	1
Missing	**3**	-	-	-
Total	**63**	16	45	4

Source: IES 2007

One of the institutions offered tasters in three subjects on the same day, from which a total of 53 survey forms were received. Although the other did offer taster sessions in a range of subjects, survey data were collected from only one of these (engineering and motor vehicle) which 13 young people who had applied for the motor vehicle programme attended. Both institutions were based in the West Midlands region of England.

It is important to note at the outset that the numbers participating in the survey are very small and the responses therefore are unlikely to capture the range of opinions of the Key Stage 4 or even of the potential Young Apprenticeship population as a whole. That said, the young people have made some valuable suggestions for ways in which taster delivery might be improved, which is likely to help providers and policymakers better configure tasters in future to meet their needs.

The study has also provided a piloting opportunity for the survey format. Some amendments have subsequently been made which should enable clearer results if providers would like to use the questionnaire to gain feedback on, and inform development of, their own taster events, or indeed if the DCFS or LSC wish to take the evaluation further.

What information young people want from a taster

The first section of the questionnaire asked young people about the information they had hoped to gain from attending and whether they felt this information had been forthcoming. Table 2 shows the results of this analysis for the whole group.

Table 0.2: Information available at the Taster

	Wanted to know this (%)	Got this information (%)
How I will be assessed on the YA	64	49
What my choices are when I finish the YA	49	59
What the college/training provider is like	47	65
What jobs the YA might lead to	47	68
What these jobs are like for someone like me	47	62
What the YA involves – where & what I will study, placements, etc.	46	73

Multi-response

Source: IES 2007

There are a few points to note regarding the first column in Table 2, which indicates the types of information young people want from a taster. Nearly half were interested in the choices that would be available to them following the YA, with slightly fewer wanting information about the college/provider environment, the kinds of jobs the YA might lead to and what those jobs would be like.

The topic about which the largest proportion of young people had hoped to gain some information was assessment; two-thirds of the young people had wanted information on this. Given that the YA constitutes quite a radical departure from what the young people had experienced up to that point it is understandable that getting more information about how they will be assessed is important to them; in addition, for some the need to try to achieve a balance between the number of courses assessed through examinations in Year 11 and those that are more coursework-based may be an important consideration.

Young people were able to specify any other areas on which they wanted information. Only three responded in this regard and the additional information they identified was:

■ basic jobs on a car

■ how many GCSEs, and

■ how much work is involved

The first of these can be considered as relating to the practical aspects of the Young Apprenticeship and it would be hoped that, if not covered by the taster, the YA in Motor Vehicle itself would cover this. The second two factors relate more to what will be achieved as a result of the YA (how many GCSEs it is equivalent to) and what is involved in undertaking the programme (and this probably relates to the earlier point regarding the extent and nature of assessment involved as well).

The second column in Table 2 relates to the information that young people reported having received at their Taster. What is immediately obvious is that their reports of the information they received is in virtually the reverse order of young people's priorities for information (ie column one). In other words, providers were more likely to provide information about which fewer of the young people were interested. This is not necessarily a bad thing, of course. Around half of the young people had indeed wanted this information and their needs had been met. In addition, it is more than likely that some at least of the remaining pupils found the information provided to be of some use – we did not collect information on this specific point, and this is something that providers might wish to include if evaluating their own provision in future. In sum, providers had largely given information that covered most of the information categories the young people had required.

The notable exception to this was the issue of how the YA is assessed; this was the topic on which the majority of pupils had reported wanting information, but a

minority – less than half – reported having received. While these are small numbers, nonetheless the pattern seems fairly clear-cut: providers could usefully increase the amount of information they provide on assessment as this is a key area of interest (and possibly concern) to a majority of the young people.

Further analysis revealed there existed a fairly sizeable group (18 per cent) of young people who had came to the taster with little idea of their expectations: they identified none of the factors listed in Table 2 as areas on which they would like to gain information. Nonetheless even for this group there still appear to be some benefits to be gained from attending tasters. Table 3 compares the proportions of young people within this sub-group who felt their information needs had been met compared to those who had identified one or more issues of interest.

Inspection of the data in Table 3 reveals that, in fact, considerably higher proportions of the young people without expectations reported that they had gained information through the Taster. While on the one hand this might indicate that they were relatively easily pleased since they did not know what it was they wanted in the first place, it might also indicate that the Taster had shaped their thinking about the YA in a very positive way. This issue could certainly be explored further by providers in their own evaluations or nationally by the DCFS or LSC.

Table 3: Information available through the Taster for the group with no expectations

	Some expectation group. Got this information %	No expectation Group. Got this information %
What my choices are when I finish the YA	52	92
What the college/training provider is like	59	92
What jobs the YA might lead to	63	92
What these jobs are like for someone like me	56	92
How I will be assessed on the YA	41	83
What the YA involves – where and what I will study, placements, etc.	70	83
Received other information in addition to the above	15	17

Multi-response

Source: IES 2007

What young people experienced at the taster – and what they thought of it

Table 4 below shows what the young people said they received as part of their taster. A large majority (86 per cent) noted that presentations were involved; slightly fewer said that practical activities were involved (82 per cent). Similar numbers reported question and answer sessions or a tour of college or provider premises. Fewer reported all-male or all-female group sessions (which can be one mechanism for

helping atypical pupils to get involved in stereotyped subjects). However, since the sessions evaluated had all included one representative of the minority sex, the only way in which the young people who gave feedback could have experienced single-sex sessions in the tasters was if they were a member of a sub-group formed of the dominant sex (see Table 1 earlier). Because of this, the ratings given to single-sex sessions are not discussed in the following section.

The aspects of the tasters that the pupils reported enjoying the most were the practical activities: 77 per cent of the sample rating these as very good; and the presentations (58 per cent of young people rated these as very good). None of the young people rated either of these as poor.

Similar numbers reported that a question and answer session was involved or that a college tour had taken place (70 and 69 per cent respectively). Young people's ratings of these activities were more mixed: while overall more reported them as very good than did not, around one-third did not express much of an opinion about them, and a small number of young people had felt these to be very poor.

Table 4: What was involved in the Taster and how young people rated the activities

	Did this	Rating		
	%	Very good %	Neither poor nor good %	Very poor %
Presentations from teachers, employers or someone else	86	58	42	0
Practical activities eg made something, used equipment	82	77	23	0
You could ask questions to people who made presentations	70	61	33	7
Tour of college premises	69	57	36	7
All female or all male groups	42	36	61	4
Some other activity was delivered in the Taster	18	75	25	0

Source: IES 2007

Eleven young people noted that other activities were involved in the Tasters they had attended. These included a listening skills session and a session using Computer-Aided Design software, both of which might be assessed as practical activities. Lunch was noted by a few of the young people and was free in some cases. Interestingly, one young person mentioned that the Taster had provided an opportunity to make friends which suggests that the Taster offers an opportunity to bond with other potential members of the YA route. Young people were largely positive about these other activities.

In Table 5 we explore how the ratings of the group with no expectations of the Taster compare with those of the group who had some expectations. For this analysis we have simply looked at the proportion in each sub-group rating each factor as very

good. For each of these items except the tour, a higher proportion of the 'no expectations' group gave 'very good' scores; this was particularly the case for the presentations. While these results should be interpreted with some caution given the small numbers involved, nonetheless the findings suggest there is real value to be gained from participation in Taster events even for those who have little initial idea of what to expect from it.

Table 5: How young people rated the activities – some and no expectations groups

	YP with some expectations. Score for Very Good %	YP with no expectations. Score for Very Good %
Presentations from teachers, employers or someone else	56	70
Practical activities eg made something, used equipment	77	78
You could ask questions to people who made presentations	60	64
Tour of college premises	58	55

Source: IES 2007

How useful it is to have other people at Tasters?

We were interested in young people's opinions about different people (stakeholders) attending the taster. We offered three categories here and asked young people to indicate if they were aware of whether any employers, current YAs or parents/guardians had attended, and if so, how useful it was to have them at the taster event. However young people did not fill out the survey as we intended and some reported on usefulness of these stakeholders whether or not they had attended the taster event. The results are shown in Table 6, with the first column showing the proportion of young people reporting that each stakeholder was present, the second column shows the proportion amongst the sample who thought their presence was useful. The third and fourth columns show how useful each stakeholders' presence was by whether they had attended or not. We might consider the fourth column an indicator of whether young people would value the stakeholder being present.

Table 6: Who attended the Taster and whether their presence was useful

	They were there %	This was useful %	Usefulness if YP reported stakeholder present %	Usefulness if YP reported stakeholder not present %
Employers	54	52	79	13
Current YA students	44	25	52	6
Parents/guardians could come	16	15	44	9

Source: IES 2007

Just over half of the young people noted that employers were in attendance (54 per cent), fewer (44 per cent) noted that current YAs students had attended and just 16 per cent said that parents had attended.

The utility of having these different stakeholders involved varied somewhat. Overall only slightly fewer of those who had said employers were involved said having them there was useful. Looking firstly at the young people who had been in taster sessions that employers had attended, the employers' input was thought useful by around four-fifths of the young people. Where employers did not attend the taster, 13 per cent of the sample indicated that they think it would be useful to have them there.

Less than half of the young people reported that student ambassadors had been present at their taster session. Although few of those who had not had ambassadors present thought that this might be useful, when the ratings of the young people who had been in sessions with the YA ambassadors are examined, more than half of them reported that the Ambassadors' presence had been useful.

For parents being present at the session, though, there was less enthusiasm. Few reported parents actually being present at the session, just 16 per cent; of these, only 44 per cent said that having them present was useful and only one-in-ten of those who had been at sessions in which parents had not been present said that it might be useful if they were.

The key messages arising from this part of the analysis are that young people value employers' presence at tasters. Whether that is to talk about work in the sector or perhaps to discuss typical placement experiences is not known; in fact, both are likely to be of interest to the young people. Since the work placement is a key attraction of the YA all providers should consider involving employers in their YA tasters.

Where YA ambassadors attended tasters, their presence was valued by young people. Arranging for YA ambassadors to participate in taster sessions is therefore likely to be a benefit. While there does appear to be some role for parents at tasters, the rather limited support for this idea from the pupils suggests that their involvement should perhaps be restricted to just certain parts of the taster sessions, possibly just the presentation part of the day.

As we have indicated above, we do not have any further data with which to explore these issues further, but it may be something that providers wish to consider investigating in their own taster evaluations.

Clarity about future career

We asked young people whether they had reached a decision about their future career before the taster and how they felt about this issue following the taster. Unfortunately the question was not well understood and a number of young people gave multi-coded rather than single responses either before or after the taster or at both points

(Table 7). One possibility for this might be that the question that asked if they had some ideas about the jobs they might do could be seen as a supplement to the first and the third questions: 'I know the job I want to do (but if I don't get my ideal job I have some ideas about other jobs I might do)' or 'I have not made any decision about the jobs I might do, (but I do have some ideas about this)'. Based on this outcome we have revised the evaluation questionnaire and the final version incorporates these changes.

Table 7: Young people's orientation towards their future career before and after the taster

	Before %	After %
I know what job I want to do	67	30
I have some ideas about the jobs I might do	51	35
I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do	26	7

multi-coded responses

Source: IES 2007

Of the whole group, two-thirds said that they knew what job they wanted to pursue following the taster while half had some idea about jobs they might do. Just over a quarter said they had not made any decision about the job that they might do.

The good news is that fewer said that they had not made any decision after the taster – just seven percent, or around a quarter of the number that had been undecided beforehand. In other words, it would appear that a sizeable proportion of the undecided group had been helped to reach some sort of decision.

These figures repay some closer analysis. Table 8 shows the movement of young people between the 'before' and 'after' questions that asked if they knew what job the wanted to do:

Table 8: Responses to the statement 'I know what job I want to do' before and after tasters

	I knew what job I wanted after the taster %	I did not know what job I wanted after the taster %	Total %
I knew what job I wanted before the taster (N = 42)	29	71	67
I did not know what job I wanted before the taster (N = 21)	33	67	33
Total	30	70	100

Source: IES 2007

Inspection of Table 6 reveals that, of the 42 young people who said they had known what job they wanted before the taster, some two-thirds had shifted their opinion following the taster event. A majority of those who had previously known what job they wanted now said they did not know. This in and of itself is not necessarily a bad

thing – it may mean that more information has made the young person realise that their initial choice was not a good one. However, more research would be needed to confirm this point. A similar picture is seen for those who did not know what job they wanted before the taster. Although a third of this group now felt that they did know what job they wanted, two-thirds still did not.

The responses of young people to the question about whether they had any ideas about the jobs they might do before and after the taster show a similar pattern. Table 9 provides the breakdown of responses to these questions.

Table 9: Responses to the statement 'I have some ideas about the jobs I might do' before and after tasters

	I had ideas about jobs after the taster %	I did not have any ideas about jobs after the taster %	Total %
I had ideas about jobs before the taster (N = 32)	25	75	50
I did not have any ideas about jobs before the taster (N = 31)	45	55	50
Total	35	65	100

Source: IES 2007

Before attending the taster session around half of the young people had ideas about the jobs they might do and around half did not. Following the taster session 65 per cent said they no longer had any idea and just 35 per cent said that they did. The largest shift is seen amongst those who previously had an idea about jobs – after the taster session just 25 per cent still said this compared to 75 per cent who said they no longer had any ideas about jobs.

Last in this section pupils were asked to say whether or not they had made any decision about the jobs that they might do. Again, they were asked whether this was the case before and after they attended the taster session. Table 10 shows the data for this question.

Table 10: Responses to the statement 'I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do' before and after tasters

	(Following the taster) I have not yet made any decision about jobs I might do %	(Following the taster) I have made a decision about jobs I might do %	Total %
(Prior to the taster) I had not yet made any decision about jobs I might do (N = 16)	6	94	100
(Prior to the taster) I had made a decision about jobs I might do (N = 43)	7	93	100
Total	7	93	100

Source: IES 2007

The results from this last question are more reassuring than the previous. Although a quarter of pupils said that, prior to the taster event they had not made a decision about jobs, following the taster event just 7 per cent of pupils (4 individuals) said that they had not made a decision. What we do not know, of course, is the nature of that decision. Again, to gain more information on the way in which taster events are informing pupils' job decisions, more research would be required.

What and who influences career and learning decisions

A key concern arising from the equal opportunities evaluation of the YA was the influence of other stakeholders (for instance teachers, parents, guidance staff) on the careers decisions young people reach. Therefore, the evaluation questionnaire also asked young people about who, or what, had helped them make their career and learning decisions. Table 11 reports the responses to this question from those young people who attended the taster events.

Table 11: What and who informs career and learning decisions

Source of information	%
Taster day	84
Parents/guardians	80
Friends	60
Talking to someone who does the type of work	53
Teachers	50
Career leaflets	49
Internet	48
Connexions	39
Television characters who do this work	38
Other sources	16

multi-coded responses

Source: IES 2007

The Taster day therefore can be seen as having had a significant influence on the career thinking of these young people and, it is hoped, on their learning and training decisions as they proceed towards their future career. As noted by providers in the young apprenticeship equal opportunities evaluation, parents are the strongest of the people who influence young people. Peers also appear to have a fairly strong influence young people's decisions, although to a much lesser extent than parents.

Talking to someone in their chosen career or sector was cited as an influence by more of the young people than was seeing characters on the television undertaking this work (53 per cent compared to 38 per cent). Teachers, careers leaflets and the internet were each cited by similar proportions and are influential for around half of the sample. Slightly fewer than four in ten young people noted the influence of

Connexions in their careers decision, although this may merely mean that few of the group had had any interaction yet with this service.

Sixteen per cent of the sample noted that other sources had some influence over their careers thinking. Of those who said that other sources of information had been influential for them, three young people reported that their family had been an influence and two noted the influence of hobbies. One felt s/he had not been influenced by anything but had reached the decision independently. The other two responses were not clear.

Benefits of the tasters

In the questionnaire we suggested some of the possible benefits that might result from participation in the tasters. There was also an opportunity for young people to list other benefits they had gained as a result of attendance. Table 12 shows the outcomes from this set of questions.

Table 12: Other benefits of taster events

	Definitely %	Maybe %	Not really %
I am more likely to go on the YA	83	13	3
I am more confident about my year 10 choices	80	16	3
I have a clearer idea of career options	77	18	5

multi-coded responses

Source: IES 2007

Most notable is the extent to which each benefit was endorsed, with close to four-fifths of young people agreeing with each of the three items. The biggest benefit according to the sample group was that they felt they were definitely more likely to pursue the Young Apprenticeship. Only slightly fewer noted that they were definitely more confident about their Year 10 choices. Again, only slightly fewer (and still more than three-quarters) noted that they were definitely clearer about careers options).

Four young people felt they had gained something else as a result of the Taster however only one said what this was. They indicated that it had helped them to decide whether or not they would enjoy the Young Apprenticeship.

Overall satisfaction with the taster

A space was provided on the survey form for young people to add comments about anything else to do with the taster. Eighty-two per cent of the sample provided a comment and these were overwhelmingly positive. In only four instances was any criticism expressed although at the same time these young people also said how good the event had been.

The range of positive responses related to:

Information

> *'Good, gave me more information and a clearer view on what the course includes'*

> *'I though it was very helpful, and it cleared up a few of the worries that I had'*

> *'It was good and helped me decide what I wanted to do and gave good information'*

Meeting people and working in groups

> *'I thought it was fun and the things I did improved my group work and my ideas of my job.'*

> *'I thought it was great especially making friends and working in groups'*

Impacts on learning and career decisions

> *'I thought it was very good and useful and has now made me want to do this course even more.'*

> *'Very good, had lots of fun and learnt a lot. I'm more happy to join the course now.'*

The practical experience

> *'It was very good as shown what would do and got hands on experience.'*

> *'It was really good, we got to do some things that we will be doing on the actual course.'*

The small number of criticisms largely related to the length of time spent in the practical activities (in one case too much time in the practical and in two others, too little). The remaining criticism was that *'The taster was very enjoyable but I didn't learn much about the actual course'*.

Conclusions and recommendations

A key message from this small study is the extent to which young people enjoyed the taster experience and the way in which it positively influenced their thinking towards the Young Apprenticeship and their future learning and careers options. Tasters are valued by young people both for the practical activities and the opportunity to gain information about the course. Attending the taster was felt by young people to increase their likelihood of joining the YA.

Their responses to the survey suggest that there are some issues for providers to consider:

- **Providers are generally giving the right sorts of information**. Young people may want various different things from a taster day but the survey revealed that providers are, in the main, providing the right sorts of information. Students appreciate receiving information about the YA and gaining some practical experience of what is involved in it. Tours of college or provider environments and opportunities to ask questions are also valued.

- **Some other areas need to be included in the overall package of information given to young people.** Young people may want different things from a taster day but the most important two issues (or at least the two that the greatest numbers of pupils are interested in) appear to be information about assessment and about their options once they have completed the YA. Around half of the students are also interested in finding out about what the college/training provider is like, what jobs the YA might lead to, what the jobs are like and what the YA involves. Generally speaking, though, while providers appear to be giving sufficient information on these last four points, they were doing less well on the two former ones. The findings suggest that if providers were to add some information on assessment and potential learning paths, learners would appreciate this. This does not necessarily mean that this additional information has to be fitted into what was, in many cases, an already tightly-packed day. Such information might be given in the form of handouts, with flow charts or other diagrams to show the key information.

- **Ensure a balance of practical activities and information sessions.** Practical activities are most positively received by young people, closely followed by information sessions. Both elements are valued; however, providers need to ensure that they are *carefully balanced* to ensure that neither dominates the day.

- **Involve employers and student ambassadors** as the presence of these stakeholders was clearly valued by young people. Both employers and ambassadors may require some briefing and development prior to the taster to ensure they are confident to interact with young people and to ensure they have clear ideas on the issues they might cover during the taster.

- The tasters was felt to have had a **strong influence on young people's careers decisions**, although as providers have predicted the young people said that their parents have a strong influence on them as well. What is unknown is whether tasters sessions can help break down any negative views (whether of vocational learning or of jobs in particular sectors) that the young people have acquired due to parental influence. A further interesting question is the extent to which taster sessions have any impact on the views of the parents who attended. Both of these points would benefit from further exploration.