

# Teenage apprenticeships

Converting awareness to recruitment

By Elnaz T. Kashefpakdel and Jordan Rehill

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# Executive Summary

Recent government figures have shown that despite the overall number of apprenticeships increasing, the number of under 19s starts have stagnated at around 20%. With the support of the Commercial Education Trust (CET), this project explores the characteristics of schools and individuals who buck the trend and asks: what distinguishes schools which guide significant numbers of pupils into apprenticeships from those which do not? What distinguishes young people who express an interest in apprenticeships in their mid-teens and go on to secure one from those who do not?

## Method

### *Literature review*

The report draws on existing literature assessing young people's perceptions of the value of becoming an apprentice. It also explores studies on how young people make decisions about their education and training based on their knowledge and perception of the labour market. The review was undertaken with the aim of identifying literature which provides reliable insights of value to schools and colleges in the UK from the year 2000 onwards. Studies were included from the year 2000 because it was felt that 17 years' worth of research would uncover both the successful and unsuccessful ways in which apprenticeships have been promoted by successive governments, as well as historical trends in apprenticeship uptake from the turn of the century onwards.

### *Quantitative analysis*

The report also presents data from a new survey commissioned to Yougov and data from the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE) which both assess the experiences of young people in college and school and how this may impact their subsequent awareness, aspirations and success in applying for an apprenticeship.

### *Qualitative analysis*

Between May and June 2017, the research team at Education and Employers invited employers to share their experiences of hiring apprentices directly from schools and colleges. They were asked a series of open ended questions in order to identify the skills and attitudes employers feel young apprentices, in particular the successful candidates, possess and which they feel they are lacking. They were also asked to comment on the recruitment process. Schools and colleges were also invited to share their experiences of guiding young people directly into apprenticeships from school and college. The responses were then split between 'high' and 'low' performing schools (in terms of the percentage of school/college leavers successfully applied to an apprenticeship). To find the average percentage students going directly into an apprenticeship, we used the Department for Education destinations key statistics of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 (DfE, 2017).

In combining these evidence sources this report provides new guidance to schools and colleges seeking to optimise the careers information advice and guidance on offer and improve the chances of their students in making a smooth transition into apprenticeships.

## Recommendations for schools and colleges

- i. **Support** should be provided to schools and colleges to enable teachers to further understand apprenticeships, to raise the confidence of school staff in providing advice to interested students on the range of frameworks and levels available as well as application and recruitment processes.
- ii. **Increase and diversify** the amount of apprenticeship events involving employers, invite ex/current apprentices into school.
- iii. Schools and colleges should do more to **engage parents** as part of wider apprenticeship awareness. In order for apprenticeships to be regarded as a genuine alternative to university, it is important that

parents understand their value and potential as a way of helping their children progress in the labour market, as in many cases they will have a significant influence on their children's career choices.

- iv. Do more to **promote** advanced and higher level apprenticeships.
- v. Raise awareness of apprenticeships from a **younger age**.
- vi. Schools and colleges should do more to **challenge** gender stereotypes and broaden the aspirations of young women who are thinking about apprenticeships.
- vii. Tailor recruitment skills provision to reflect the methods and processes that employers now use to hire apprentices

# 1. Background

Over recent years significant public resource has been devoted to improving young people's awareness of apprenticeships. Yet while teenage applications have increased, teenage apprenticeship starts have flat-lined. Recent government data has shown that fewer than 26% of apprenticeship starts come straight from school or college (BIS. 2016 ; DfE. 2017). If apprenticeships are to be the vehicle for driving social mobility, enabling young people to gain the work-related skills for their futures without compromising their financial burden for years to come, this percentage must be improved.

For consecutive UK governments, apprenticeships have been increasingly seen as a vehicle for getting more school and college leavers to 'earn and learn'; a tool to gradually increase national productivity whilst allowing young people to gain valuable sector specific skills in a real working environment. And though governments have been trying to encourage young people into apprenticeships for many years – the number of starts in England each year has almost tripled in the decade (BIS. 2016) – there has been a renewed focus on apprenticeships with the announcement in July 2016 of the *Post-16 Skills Plan*. The plan has reiterated a target set out after the election result of 2015 to increase the number of apprenticeship starts to three million by 2020, with all students at the age of 16 being given a choice between either an 'academic' or 'technical' pathway (it is worth noting that this 'technical' pathway also refers to Tech (T) Levels taken full-time at college). It remains to be seen whether the June 2017 snap election result may alter its implementation, however, the essential details of the Skills Plan were repeated in the *Industrial Strategy Green Paper* published in January 2017 and information is gradually emerging from the Department for Education on their plans for implementing this, although the picture remains incomplete.

To fund this anticipated growth in apprentice training the Government introduced apprenticeship levy. Announced in April 2016, the levy ensures that employers with an annual payroll in excess of £3 million will pay a tariff to the Government, who will in turn use this money to fund apprenticeship training programmes. The incentive for employers is that they can 'reclaim' this money if they open up their own apprenticeship training programmes, encouraging employers to invest in apprenticeship training. From May 2017, smaller employers not paying the levy, who offer apprenticeships to 16 to 18-year olds, received 100 per cent of the cost of the training from the Government. Yet despite the financial incentives for employers, whether a significant amount of young people begin embarking on apprenticeships depends largely on schools and colleges making them an attractive option, and ensuring young people are suitably prepared for the working environment and for the apprenticeship recruitment process.

With the generous support of the Commercial Education Trust (CET), this project explores the characteristics of schools and individuals who buck the trend and asks: what distinguishes schools which guide significant numbers of pupils into apprenticeships from those which do not? What distinguishes young people who express interest in apprenticeships in mid-teens and go on to secure one from those who do not? Further insights are also gathered from employers who hire a significant number of teenage apprentices. Their responses shed light on the skills and attitudes employers feel school and college leavers are lacking, and, moreover, how schools and colleges can align their provision to both promote apprenticeships as a viable career path and better prepare young people when they apply. This report also collates evidence from contemporary research literature and governmental reports as well as new quantitative data sources, and in doing so provides new evidence to schools and colleges seeking to optimise their apprenticeship guidance provision and improve the

chances of young people making a smooth transition into apprenticeships. Whilst a long-lasting and sustainable strategy is needed to change the way apprenticeships are viewed by schools/colleges, parents and pupils, effective best practice can help to bridge this gap in the interim and go some way to increasing the percentage of school leavers starting apprenticeships.

Section two of this report outlines the methodology and measurements applied following section three where background characteristics of the different samples that are used for analysis throughout is presented. The sample overview is followed in section four by a review of existing research and policy literature of relevance to teenage apprenticeships, specifically with reference to the promotion of apprenticeships in UK schools and colleges and motivations and uptake of certain apprenticeship pathways amongst school leavers. In section five descriptive and comparative (cross-tabulations) statistics of two quantitative datasets, young people data by YouGov commissioned by Education and Employers and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, are presented. Section six presents the findings from both employer and school qualitative surveys. The responses will test whether a disconnect or miscommunication exists between these two stakeholder groups in terms of what schools and colleges are providing and what employers want from prospective apprentices. The report concludes, in section seven, by offering an overview of the evidence collated for this review, drawing together insights for effective practice and areas requiring further attention for both policy makers and practitioners.



## 2. Methodology and measurements

### Literature review

A systematic search of literature was conducted to identify relevant literature relating to apprenticeship awareness and recruitment among school leavers, as well as wider structural challenges in getting more young people to start an apprenticeship. The majority of studies related to apprenticeship awareness and uptake employ qualitative research methods; a small number uses quantitative designs. However, UK studies using larger or longitudinal datasets remain limited. More research is needed into how apprenticeships are being promoted within schools and colleges, and whether these awareness activities lead to recruitment. The review also includes a number of recent and historical reports on the state of apprenticeships from government bodies such as Ofsted, the Department for Education and BIS as well as from private bodies such as ACCA and the CIPD.

### Quantitative analysis

#### Analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)

LSYPE, also known as Next Steps, commissioned by the former Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and now managed by Centre for Longitudinal Studies, is an innovative cohort study of young people which collects data from various sources, including both annual interviews with young individuals and their parents and administrative sources (ESDC, 2012). The original sample for the analysis was 21,000 young people across England; however, the final size is 15,770 individuals from different backgrounds<sup>1</sup> (DfE, 2011). The key role of the survey is to enable examination and understanding of the main elements affecting young people's development in transition from the later years of compulsory schooling, through subsequent education or training, to entry into the job market or other outcomes. Data are used, among other things, to screen the progress of the cohort members, assess the success or otherwise of policy aimed at this group and provide an evidence base for further policy research. The sample is representative for deprivation factors and for ethnicity (ESDS, 2012). LSYPE considers young people's experiences while at school, their relationships with their families, their experiences of transitions into adulthood and job markets, their aspirations for their future, and, how these relate to their family backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances (DfE 2010); it follows the transitions of a representative cohort of young people in England into adulthood in greater depth than any other existing data source.

LSYPE offers a range of variables regarding apprenticeships. The data on intentions to choose apprenticeship are based on interviews with the young people in 2005 (Wave 2) when they were 14 or 15 years old. The data on outcomes are based on interviews with the same young people in 2010 (Wave 7) when they were 19 or 20.

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<sup>1</sup>In common with other cohort studies, LSYPE and BCS sample size has declined as the cohort has aged (Center for Longitudinal Studies, 2004) however both are still large enough to be used for extensive research and policy analysis.

The results therefore relate to the relatively immediate post-school entry into apprenticeships which is the focus of this project. To address the questions raised earlier we analysed the questions about awareness, aspiration and success in application. Because we are interested to see what successful candidates experienced while at school, we then divided the data and looked further for characteristics and demographics.

The data are analysed using SPSS statistical package. We used cross-tabulation tables to illustrate the patterns.

### Analysis of young people data by YouGov

The survey was prepared by the Education and Employers Research team in collaboration with Prue Huddleston, Professor Emeritus at the University of Warwick and undertaken by the YouGov polling firm. Responses came from 1,744 individuals aged between 19 and 24. Fieldwork was undertaken in May 2017. Following advice from YouGov, and as is common practice, data were marginally reweighted to amplify the perspectives of young adults from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

In this questionnaire, which was originally designed to evidence the impact of engagement with the world of work on labour market outcomes, we asked young people about their decisions to pursue apprenticeship. This allows us to observe the proportion of young people in the sample who a) never thought about doing an apprenticeship b) thought about doing an apprenticeship but never applied c) thought about it and applied. The last category is also divided into two groups of young people, successful and unsuccessful candidates.

Through the data analysis we are able to show the experiences of young people at school and their socio-economic backgrounds across different sub-samples of young people.

## Qualitative analysis

### Employers

Between May and June 2017, the research team invited employee volunteers from the programme Inspiring the Future<sup>2</sup> network to share their experiences of hiring apprentices directly from schools and college. 45 employers across different industries and of different sizes responded<sup>3</sup> to our invitation using an online survey via SurveyMonkey. They were asked a series of open ended questions which attempted to probe the skills and attitudes employers feel young apprentices, in particular the successful candidates, possess and which they feel they are lacking. The survey then went on to ask respondents to identify any specific career development activities schools and colleges could facilitate which would better prepare their students for the recruitment process into an apprenticeship and the retention plans once they began. A copy of the survey can be found in the annex *Teenage Apprenticeships: Converting awareness to recruitment. Technical annex*.

### Schools and colleges

In the same period the research team also asked schools and colleges to complete a qualitative survey which asked about their experiences of guiding young people directly into apprenticeships from school and college. 37 schools/colleges responded to our invitation. The responses were then split between 'high' and 'low' performing schools (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied for an apprenticeship). We used the Department for Education destinations key statistics at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage

<sup>2</sup> The Charity runs Inspiring the Future which connects state schools and colleges with employers and people from the world of work through an online technology, please see: <http://www.inspiringthefuture.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Whilst employers from all sectors were invited to contribute to our survey a number of sectors and small/medium sized companies are underrepresented.

5 students going directly into an apprenticeship (DfE, 2017). In the following analysis, therefore, the schools are divided into more than the UK average of 5% and less than 5% (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied to an apprenticeship). The survey asked specific questions on the type of activities provided to raise awareness of apprenticeships and prepare young people for the recruitment process, as well as more general questions on the characteristics and skills of successful applicants. A copy of the survey can be found in the annex attached to this report *Teenage Apprenticeships: Converting awareness to recruitment. Technical Annex*.

Where reference is made to 'college' or 'colleges' throughout this report it should be taken to refer to sixth form colleges unless stated otherwise. Further Education (FE) colleges are not only designed to promote technical and professional pathways, they already provide a high number of apprenticeships to 16-18-year olds - 77,500 in 2017 (AOC, 2018) - which indicates that FE colleges are already converting awareness into recruitment amongst a large majority of their learners. This report will therefore focus solely on what schools and sixth form colleges, education institutions which traditionally promote higher education pathways, can do to ensure a greater number of their learner's progress on to an apprenticeship.

It was hoped that the results of the two qualitative surveys would not only give an indication of what best practice may look like, but also where there is a potential disconnect or miscommunication between these two stakeholder groups. Specifically, what employers desire and what schools and colleges are providing in their careers provision which may be impacting on the ability of school and college leavers to better compete with older applicants when applying for apprenticeships.

## 3. Background characteristics

In this section the background characteristics of each sample is presented including demographics as well as a summary of some socio-economic factors.

### Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE)

There are very considerable differences between different sub-groups of young people in terms of both their expressed intentions and actual outcomes. In Table 1 a comparison of different groups of young people is presented showing the percentage of each group saying they were likely to apply and the percentage who were in an apprenticeship by age 19. Comparisons are presented by gender (male / female), ethnicity (white / other), socio-economic status based on parental occupation (professional and managerial / intermediate / routine / unemployed) and attainment in GCSE (four quartiles based on A\* – C grades).

Gender has a strong association with both intentions and outcomes. Males are much more likely than females to say they are likely to apply and are also more likely to have had an apprenticeship. The male to female ratio is about the same for intentions and for outcomes. Ethnicity is also very strongly associated with apprenticeships, but unlike gender the difference in outcomes is very much greater than the difference in intentions. White pupils are rather more likely than other ethnic groups to say it is likely they will apply, but they are very much more likely to have progressed on to an apprenticeship. Fewer than one in twenty of young people of ethnic minority origin have had an apprenticeship, well under half the figure for white young people.

Socio-economic status (SES) based on parental occupation has a moderate relationship with intentions but a somewhat weaker relationship to outcomes. In particular, in Year 10 young people whose families are in professional or managerial occupations are much less likely than other young people to intend to apply for an apprenticeship. But, together with those from intermediate backgrounds, they are more likely, in aggregate, to have turned these intentions into outcomes. Young people from the least advantaged backgrounds (routine occupations and unemployed) are much more likely to say they will apply, but are not more likely to have had an apprenticeship. Strikingly, young people whose parents were unemployed have among the highest level of intentions but have the lowest level of apprenticeship outcomes.

Academic attainment, as measured by GCSE outcomes, has the strongest relationship of all the background factors with apprenticeships. Young people in the highest attainment quartile were very unlikely to plan to apply and were extremely unlikely to have entered an apprenticeship. In contrast, young people in the lower half of the attainment distribution were very much more likely to intend to apply and were much more likely to go into an apprenticeship. But it is not simply a matter of the lower attainers becoming apprentices. The lowest attaining group were by far the most likely to say they would apply with well over half saying that it was at least quite likely. But in terms of actually achieving apprenticeships they are below the young people in the third attainment quartile.

**Table 1: Background characteristics, aspiration and outcomes**

	How likely to apply at age 14-15			In apprenticeship at age 19
	Very (%)	Quite (%)	Very + Quite	Apprentice (%)
Gender				
Male	18.3	22.9	41.2	13.5
Female	8.9	16.1	25.0	8.0
Ethnicity				
White	13.3	19.8	33.1	11.9
Other	7.8	18.4	26.2	4.5
SES				
Prof & Man	8.8	13.6	22.4	8.9
Intermediate	15.2	20.5	35.7	15.1
Routine	17.2	27.0	44.2	11.5
Unemployed	14.8	26.2	41.0	5.9
GCSE				
Highest	2.3	4.1	6.4	1.6
2 <sup>nd</sup> highest	6.8	15.1	21.9	8.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> highest	16.1	27.1	43.2	17.3
Lowest	24.9	31.5	56.4	14.4

In summary, gender, ethnicity and attainment were all strongly associated with apprenticeships with males, people from a white ethnic background and lower attaining students much more likely to plan to apply and to have actually been apprentices. Ethnic minority young people were especially unlikely to have entered an apprenticeship. Young people from less advantaged social backgrounds were more likely to plan to apply but were not more likely to become apprentices. This was especially true for those whose parents were unemployed. The association of apprenticeships with lower attainment and less advantaged backgrounds is clear in the intentions of the young people, but less so for actual outcomes where the highest level of entry to apprenticeships is among the third rather than the lowest attainment quartile and among young people from intermediate SES backgrounds. From these figures, over the period 2005 – 2010, apprenticeships were clearly not a route for the most academically able and the more advantaged social groups but nor were they necessarily a path for the most disadvantaged and lowest achieving.

## YouGov 2017

As a sample selected to provide insights into the transitions of young adults from full-time education into the labour market, we asked young people whether they have thought of doing an apprenticeship and if they did think about it, whether they applied or not. Table 2 shows the results.

**Table 2: Distribution of responses: young people intention to do an apprenticeship**

N=2,016 young people	Valid Percent
No, I didn't give much thought to getting an apprenticeship	73.4
Yes, I thought about it, but didn't do anything yet to try and get an apprenticeship	15.8
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, but was unsuccessful	4.8
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, and I was successful	6.0

The majority of the respondents (73%) did not think about getting an apprenticeships and only about 11% of the respondents said they thought about it and did something to pursue their decision.

## Gender

The results of the cross-tabulations show that within the sample young girls are slightly less likely to think of apprenticeships as an option. However, from those who are convinced that apprenticeship is for them, and applied, girls have a considerable chance of being successful, but will not outperform young boys.

**Table 3: Young people's intention of applying to an apprenticeship by gender**

	No, I didn't give much thought to getting an apprenticeship	Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, and I was successful
Male	48.9	57.2
Female	51.1	42.8
	1408 respondents	121 respondents

## Ethnicity

Similar to the patterns shown in the LSYPE, white British young people are more likely to have applied for apprenticeships, given that our sample is representative of the national statistics. However, the results also follow a similar pattern when we breakdown the headline statistics for those who never thought about doing an apprenticeship i.e. white British young people were less likely to think of doing an apprenticeship compared to those from other ethnic backgrounds.

**Table 4: Young people's decision to do an apprenticeship by ethnicity**

	Yes, I applied for apprenticeship (regardless of the results)
White British	83.7
Other ethnic backgrounds	16.3
	212 respondents

## Measurements of Social Disadvantage

Almost 20% of the sample recalled receiving Free School Meal (FSM), slightly higher than the national average (15%). We looked at the patterns across different groups of young people in the sample and found that the rate of success in application is now lower than the average for all the respondents. Young people who received free school meals are 34% less likely to succeed in their application. This is based on the percentage change in the unsuccessful application.

**Table 5: Intention of young people in receipt of FSM to do an apprenticeship**

<b>N=385 young people who received FSM</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
No, I didn't give much thought to getting an apprenticeship	70.7
Yes, I thought about it, but didn't do anything yet to try and get an apprenticeship	16
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, but was unsuccessful	7.3
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, and I was successful	5.9

We also asked young people whether their parents attended university, if known. This is another proxy for social disadvantage that was used in our analysis. 57% of the sample grew up in families where neither of their parents had a university degree. With parental influence being an important factor in young people's destination after compulsory education, it was interesting to see the patterns across sub-samples of young people. From young people who chose to apply for apprenticeship the majority came from families where neither of their parents went to university (70%). This perhaps underlines the assumption that parents with less academic backgrounds could be encouraging their children to consider routes other than university.

In addition, we looked at the distribution of young people choosing apprenticeship across school type attended pre-16. From those who applied for apprenticeship, the majority came from non-selective state schools (82 percent of the respondents).

Another interesting result of the cross-tabulation is the regional distribution of young people who intended to do an apprenticeship. Table 6 shows that, apart from Wales, young people in North East are the least likely to decide to apply for apprenticeship and students in South East are the most likely group to consider doing an apprenticeship.

**Table 6: Distribution of young people who applied for apprenticeship by region**

<b>N=217 young people who applied from apprenticeship</b>			
<b>Region</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Percent</b>
North East	5.1	London	7.0
North West	13.2	South East	18.5
Yorkshire and the Humber	7.3	South West	7.1
East Midlands	9.5	Wales	4.4
West Midlands	8.6	Scotland	7.1
East of England	12.2		

On average, based on the above statistics, young people who intended to do an apprenticeship and applied for it are more likely to be white boys from less advantaged backgrounds. The variation in the regional application could be the result of availability of programmes or the type of businesses/sectors offering apprenticeship opportunities.

## Employers

Respondents were drawn from a mixture of sectors and company size and the sample is broadly reflective of the UK apprenticeship landscape. The majority of respondents operate in either the business or health sectors reflecting the sector distribution of new apprenticeship starts (BIS, 2016). However, the retail sector, another area of large apprenticeship starts, is underrepresented in this sample. The sample also draws on respondents who work in public, private and voluntary organisations. The sizes of the organisations are classified as SME (less than 250 employees) and large enterprises (250 or more employees). Of the respondents who disclosed the area in which they predominantly operated there is an even spread of employers from different parts of the UK, with 11 respondents noting they operated in multiple UK regions. A further 10 respondents did not disclose in which region they operated.

Fig 6: Regional breakdown of employers in the sample



## Schools and colleges

11-18 secondary schools make up the majority of the sample, with only two all-through schools and one sixth-form college responding to the write in survey. The responses were then split between 'high' and 'low' performing schools (in terms of the percentage of their school leavers that successfully applied to an apprenticeship). The research team used the Department for Education destinations key statistics of Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 students going directly into an apprenticeship (DfE, 2017). In the following analysis, therefore, the schools are divided into more than 5% and less than 5% (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied for an apprenticeship). The schools and colleges in the sample are split evenly across England, unfortunately the North West as well as Scotland and Wales are underrepresented in this sample.

Fig 7: Regional breakdown of schools and colleges in the sample





## 4. Literature review

This section offers an overview of existing literature on young people's perceptions of the value of becoming an apprentice and draws on studies which assess how young people make decisions about their education and training based on their knowledge and perception of the labour market. The review was undertaken with the aim of identifying literature which provides reliable insights of value to schools and colleges in the UK from the year 2000 onwards. Studies were included from the year 2000 because it was felt that 17 years' worth of research would uncover both the successful and unsuccessful ways in which apprenticeships have been promoted by successive governments, as well as historical trends in apprenticeship uptake from the turn of the century onwards.

The following table contains the keyword search terms used in the literature search strategy:

Location	Time Period	Sample	Inputs
UK	2000 onwards	Secondary	Apprentice
		Teenage	Apprentices
		UK	Apprenticeships
		England	Work-based learning

The review identified 15 pieces of literature:

**ACCA. *Apprenticeships – what do you young people really think?* ACCA: London.**

ACCA commissioned YouGov to undertake a poll of 16–18-year olds in order to gain a better understanding of young peoples' views on apprenticeships. The poll was carried out between 22 October and 19 November 2015. The total sample size was 1,005. It is clear from the findings that apprenticeships have something of an image problem amongst the core target market (16–18-year olds) and their parent(s) / guardian(s). In many respects the findings show that apprenticeship routes are still seen as the 'poor relative' when compared with going to university. The results of the polling have shown some interesting findings in the way young people perceive apprenticeships. There appears to be a clear split in views. Whilst there is a strong belief that apprenticeships can lead to successful careers there is also a strong view that apprenticeships will leave individuals earning less over the course of their careers versus those who have gone to university. Challenges have also been identified around the availability of high quality careers advice, with 31% of respondents saying that they received no careers advice on apprenticeships and 17% saying that they had not valued the advice they had received. The majority of respondents felt that there should be no age restrictions placed on apprenticeships. As an observation this is interesting. With people working for longer, and the increasing need for individuals to develop new skills in new areas during the course of their careers, choices around skills development and lifelong learning are likely to become increasingly important for many in the workforce

**Archer, L., & Moote, J. (2016). *Aspires 2 Project spotlight: Year 11 students' views of careers education and work experience* King's College London, Department of Education & Professional Services: London.**

In this short project spotlight report, the authors highlight and present analyses from the ASPIRES 2 project's national survey of 13,421 Year 11 students (age 15/16 years old). The report details students' reporting of their experiences of, and satisfaction with, careers education and work experience. Less than two thirds of Year 11 students had received careers education. Less than half of all students have had work experience. 57 per cent of students are satisfied with the careers education that they have received. There is a demand from students for more and better careers education – those who have had careers education are more satisfied, those who have not had it are dissatisfied. Students planning on pursuing apprenticeships are more likely to have received careers education, work experience, and to be satisfied with the provision

**Beck, V. Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2006). Increasing risk in the 'scary' world of work? Male and female resistance to crossing gender lines in apprenticeships in England and Wales *Journal of Education and Work* (3), 271-289.**

This paper is based on research conducted as part of the Equal Opportunities Commission's General Formal Investigation into gender segregation in the United Kingdom labour market. The project comprised a survey of and focus groups with 14/15-year olds in eight English schools in spring 2004 and a survey of 15/16-year olds in four Welsh schools in autumn 2004. The survey explored the process of young people's career decision-making, their attitudes to career choice and whether apprenticeship was seen as an option. Experiences and perceptions of respondents suggest that decisions about their future career options are based in part on risk avoidance strategies but also on a willingness to take risks where it will advance an individual's interests. By utilising Beck's concept of risk, the authors reveal the dilemmas which young people face as they consider their post school futures. The data show that boys are less likely than girls to opt for a job traditionally held by the opposite sex. In addition, the paper examines the implications of the finding that access to and the quality of careers information and guidance remain very varied.

**Beck, V. Fuller, A. and Unwin, L. (2006). Safety in stereotypes? The impact of gender and 'race' on young people's perceptions of their post-compulsory education and labour market opportunities, *British Educational Research Journal* (32), 667-686.**

This article examines the impact of gender and 'race' on young people's perceptions of the educational and labour market opportunities available to them after they complete their compulsory schooling in England. Its findings are based on a study of the views of girls and boys about the government-supported 'apprenticeships' programme, which, because it reflects labour market conditions, is highly gendered and also segregated by ethnicity. The research shows that young people receive very little practical information and guidance about the consequences of pursuing particular occupational pathways, and are not engaged in any formal opportunities to debate gender and ethnic stereotyping as related to the labour market. This is particularly worrying for females, who populate apprenticeships in sectors with lower completion rates and levels of pay, and which create less opportunity for progression. In addition, the research reveals that young people from non-White backgrounds are more reliant on 'official' sources of guidance (as opposed to friends and families) for their labour market knowledge. The article argues that, because good-quality apprenticeships can provide a strong platform for lifelong learning and career progression, young people need much more detailed information about how to compare a work-based pathway with full-time education. At the same time, they also need to understand that apprenticeships (and jobs more generally) in some sectors may result in very limited opportunities for career advancement.

**CIPD. (2014). *The match factor: Good practice in apprenticeship recruitment* CIPD: London.**

The purpose of this research is to establish the underlying causes of a mismatch in the supply and demand of apprenticeship vacancies, and the role recruitment practices and employer, provider and candidate behaviour and expectations play in this and how they can be overcome. It identifies the underlying reason for a number of unmatched vacancies on the National Apprenticeship Service's apprenticeship vacancies system, by researching the barriers to effective matching. The main objectives of this research were to: Explore key issues of the process of filling apprenticeship vacancies, in particular the underlying reasons for a low number of applications for some vacancies; establish what can be done to improve the process of application-posting on the employer/provider side and selection on the candidate/ provider side; develop practical recommendations for providers and employers to take forward. The report found that there are differences in the periods when vacancies become available compared with the increases in the volumes of applicants. Many young people are looking for vacancies just before or after they leave school, over the summer or early autumn, and other peak periods, for example February, but may become discouraged to continue applying throughout the year if they are unsuccessful at first. Nevertheless, it is difficult to predict when vacancies become available as that would depend on employers' needs and their recruitment campaigns.

**CIPD. (2013). *Employee Outlook Focus on apprenticeships* CIPD: London**

In this edition of *Employee Outlook* the CIPD asked working parents a range of questions to gauge their awareness and understanding of apprenticeships, using its quarterly Employee Outlook survey, which is based on a representative sample of 2,000 people in employment in the UK. The survey shows that parents are still ambivalent about apprenticeships as a route into work. An overwhelming majority of those employees who have a university education would choose this route again (81%) and less than a fifth think that apprenticeships have the same status as a university education. Even though almost half of the respondents said that it was up to their children to decide what they want to do, a majority still would not recommend them to do an apprenticeship. A lack of information and guidance in schools about apprenticeships might have something to do with this, as only 15% of parents report that they or their child have received any information on alternatives to university education from their teachers. This conclusion is supported by the fact that among parents who do not think apprenticeships have the same status as university degrees, more information about apprenticeships, and related career options, is cited as the best way of convincing them that apprenticeships are a good career option. Despite this, perceptions about apprenticeships are generally quite positive: a majority thinks that they are a good career option and would allow their children to progress in the labour market. Overall, this shows that while the traditional focus on university education persists, this might be changing slowly, something that could be encouraged by more information about apprenticeships and the opportunities available in the local area.

**Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2016). *Apprenticeships Evaluation 2015 - Learners A report by IFF Research, with the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick* Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: London**

The evaluation, which sits alongside the Apprenticeship Evaluation Employer Survey, is the fourth in the annual series, the first of which was published in 2012. The survey consisted of quantitative interviews with 5,000 Level 2 and 3 apprentices, as well as 800 higher apprentices, to explore their views of their apprenticeship. The research is intended to help monitor key progress indicators and develop a greater understanding of recent policy reforms that will help shape future development of the programme. Specifically it covered individuals' motivations for undertaking an apprenticeship, their experience of the training they received, their satisfaction with the apprenticeship and the impact this has had on their career.

**Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. (2016). *Apprenticeships Evaluation 2015 - Employers A report by IFF Research, with the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick* Department for Education and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: London**

This evaluation, which sits alongside the Apprenticeships Evaluation Learner Survey, consisted of quantitative interviews with 4,000 employers that had had individuals complete an apprenticeship between March and October 2014. The research was intended to monitor key progress indicators and to develop understanding of the apprenticeship programme and the value it delivers. It provides insight into the impact of recent policy reforms and will help shape future development (and growth) of the programme. Specifically, the research covered employers' experience of offering apprenticeships: whom they took on and to what types of apprenticeship; their motivations for offering apprenticeships; the way the apprenticeships were delivered; the outcomes for their apprentices; and the satisfaction of employers and their future intentions.

**Fuller, A. & Unwin, L. (2014). 'The challenges facing young women in Apprenticeships' in Schoon, I., & Eccles, J. S. (eds). *Gender Differences in Aspirations and Attainment: A Life Course Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 182-200.**

This chapter discusses the extent to which vocational education and training (VET) policies and practices, and particularly apprenticeships, perpetuate or help to alleviate the levels of gender segregation that can be found in the labour market. While it draws on data from the United Kingdom (U.K), the chapter raises questions that will be pertinent in many other countries. This chapter argues that while VET mirrors conditions in the labour market and wider society, and hence cannot of itself solve the gender segregation problem, there are steps that can be taken to support young women to enable them to gain access to and benefit from areas of VET that provide better prospects in terms of pay and career progression. At the same time, such steps will also be helpful for young men who aspire to careers in occupations traditionally regarded as "female". The authors conducted a telephone survey of 162 employers, a questionnaire survey of 1,281 14 and 15-year-olds in eight schools, eight focus groups – one per school – and two group "events" with a sample of employers, training providers, and young people. The research revealed a deep-rooted nature of the stereotypical attitudes still held by both young people and employers. However, across the surveys and focus groups the young people spoke about the realities of actually crossing gender lines. The survey responses showed that the majority of girls and boys agreed with the statement that apprenticeship is "equally suited to boys and girls" as well as suggesting they would consider taking an apprenticeship in a non-traditional sector. This raises the intriguing paradox that, on the one hand, young people believe they have the freedom to make a radical choice, but they stop short of straying away from traditional gendered pathways. The authors highlight the limited provision in UK schools and colleges of careers advice and guidance and of opportunities to discuss and debate the roles of men and women in society and equal opportunities more generally.

**Hogarth, T., Gamblin, L., and Hasluck, C. (2012). *Apprenticeships in England: what next?* *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 64, 41-55.**

This paper examines recent development in apprenticeship training in England. Since the introduction of Modern apprenticeships in the mid-1990s this form of training has been subject to much analysis and reform. This paper summarises the current situation and highlights some of the challenges and opportunities which face apprenticeship over the short to medium term as it seeks to establish itself as a main alternative to the academic pathway through further education

**Kirby, P. (2015). *Levels of success the potential of UK Apprenticeships: Improving social mobility through education* London: The Sutton Trust**

This report looks at the earning potential of apprenticeships versus degrees, finding that the very best apprenticeships (at level 5) result in greater lifetime earnings than degrees from non-Russell Group universities. But, significant reform of the system is needed. There are not enough of these best apprenticeships, with most being at level 2 (GCSE) and level 3 (A-level) standard. But, there remain several shortcomings in the apprenticeship sector. Currently, the majority of apprenticeships are intermediate (level 2), many of which offer little value for the apprentice and only marginally better lifetime earnings than secondary school qualifications alone.

**Mann, A., and Caplin, S. (2012). *Closing the gap: How employers can change the way young people see Apprenticeships* London: Education and Employers and PWC.**

This 'think piece' by the Education and Employers Taskforce and PriceWaterhouseCoopers explores young people's views of apprenticeships, and the practical steps employers can take to help them to gain a more informed understanding of them. The report includes a review of effective Swiss practice matching young people to the right apprenticeship and a new table setting out perceived value to young people of employer contacts, family ties and public information in making decisions about their futures.

**Mann, A. 'Promoting apprenticeships to young people and schools' in Way, D. (2016) *A race to the top: Achieving three million more apprenticeships by 2020* The University of Winchester: Winchester**

This chapter considers the approaches that have been tried to improve the promotion of apprenticeships, including through using committed employer ambassadors and apprentices themselves through the Inspiring the Future programme. How can we use the power of schools to inform more young people about apprenticeships and to present them objectively alongside higher education options? How can apprenticeships lose their perception as having second-class status?

**Ofsted. (2010). *Learning from the best: Examples of best practice from providers of apprenticeships in underperforming vocational areas* Ofsted: Manchester.**

This good practice report examines the work of 39 providers of work-based learning, including independent learning providers, employer providers and colleges. These have been successful in providing apprenticeships in three currently underperforming vocational areas: hospitality, motor vehicle, and retail; and two historically underperforming areas that have improved to the national average in recent years: care and construction. The report describes the factors which contributed to sustaining high numbers, or increasing the numbers, of apprentices completing their qualifications, and to improving the time taken for them to do this.

**Ofsted. (2012). *Apprenticeships for young people: A good practice report* Ofsted: Manchester.**

This report presents some of the common factors that have led to high performance in the work of 15 providers who are extensively involved in delivering apprenticeships to young people. It explains how the providers have successfully recruited young people as apprentices: introducing them to the world of work; supporting them in developing vocational skills and completing their apprenticeship frameworks; and supporting their progression into employment and further study.

## What does the literature show?

### The apprenticeship landscape

For under 19s Level 2 apprenticeships remain the most common form of apprenticeship, although the proportion of apprentices on a Level 3 apprenticeship has been gradually rising over the last few years (these accounted for 32% per cent in 2015 of all Level 2 and 3 apprentices, compared with 30 per cent in 2013). Around a quarter (24%) of all under 19 apprentices were undertaking a Business, Administration and Law apprenticeship, the most common framework. This was followed by Engineering and Manufacturing (21%) and Retail and Commercial Enterprise (17%). There has also been growth in the number of under 19 higher apprentices, in 2015 they accounted for 0.9% of total apprenticeship starts whilst this increased to 1.4% in 2016 (BIS., 2016).

However, this increase in apprenticeships can be misleading. The vast majority of apprenticeships in the UK are offered at the lower levels. For the academic year 2015/16 the majority of apprenticeships were at the intermediate level (level 2) which are equivalent to GCSE qualifications, rather than A-levels or higher education (Sutton Trust., 2015). This recent report from Sutton Trust advocates reforming the current apprenticeship system to adequately improve the social mobility of young people in the UK. The report highlights that whilst future earnings of higher apprentices (level 4 and 5) can earn similar if not more than their university peers, those on apprenticeships below this level can expect a 'significant negative pay differential compared to those with undergraduate degrees' with those under level 3 earning only marginally higher than holding no qualification at all. The authors urge that the majority of apprentices within the government's 3 million by 2020 target start at, or lead to, level 3 qualifications at a minimum (Sutton Trust., 2015).

## Challenges

### An image problem?

In promoting apprenticeships, successive governments have pledged to improve vocational education in order to achieve 'parity of esteem' with academic study. However, it appears that vocational education and training (VET) (at sub-degree level) continues to be seen as less prestigious compared to academic learning. In their 2006 study Beck et al investigate how young people make choices at the end of compulsory schooling, suggesting that 'risk' is a key factor when deciding on a vocational or academic route. In interviewing young people in a number of UK regions the authors find that many young people were concerned that leaving school at 16 to enter a (narrow) apprenticeship would limit their future career prospects. For them the educational route was perceived as less risky than work-based alternatives. The authors also explored the role of information and guidance in the decision-making process and highlighted that the generally weak and patchy provision available to young people reinforced their 'play it safe' approach (Beck et al. 2006).

This may go some way to explain why many young people continue to feel that traditional academic routes offer the best chance of higher earnings and greater flexibility, making it the less 'risky' approach. A recent survey of 1,005 16-18-year olds conducted by YouGov on behalf of ACCA tested student perceptions of apprenticeships, they found that 61% of respondents felt that employers would prefer to recruit graduates over apprentices when choosing employees, whilst 50% of respondents felt that apprenticeships decreased the options for flexibility in future career paths (ACCA. 2016).

Yet despite the aforementioned perception related concerns amongst young people, there is higher and growing interest in the idea of an apprenticeship. The majority of teenagers surveyed like the idea of jobs which have structured training, where they can learn as they earn and want to know more. A 2010 survey by YouGov on behalf of the Edge Foundation found that the majority of young people see apprenticeships as a good

alternative to A-levels, with recent findings by ACCA continuing to show that there is a strong belief among teenagers that an apprenticeship can offer access to a broad range of industries, including professional careers in areas such as accountancy and finance (YouGov. 2010; ACCA. 2016).

### Parental influence

The role of parents and guardians within this decision making process should also not be understated. In their 2016 survey the ACCA found that 65% of respondents believed that their parent(s) / guardian(s) would prefer it if they went to university (as opposed to undertaking an apprenticeship). Similarly a 2013 survey of 2,124 UK employees (who were parents) by the CIPD highlights that many parents believe that apprenticeships are more appropriate for manual/ blue-collar roles. Almost half (45%) of respondents agree or strongly agree that apprenticeships are more suited to manual roles, while about a third (30%) are unsure. These perceptions need to be changed and longstanding stigmas removed if there is to be a real growth in apprenticeship starts amongst all, but especially higher achieving, school leavers.

### Pay

Whilst successive governments have attempted to raise the profile and quality of apprenticeships, one continuing problem for their image remains: low pay. Whilst the Conservatives have proposed discounted travel for new apprentices in their recent manifesto, many believe the real issue stopping young people signing up for apprenticeships is the starting wage of just £3.50 an hour. Though this increased after 12 months, those starting a work placed programme directly from school or college will remain on the basic rate until they reach 19 years. If apprenticeships are to become attractive they must not only focus on the potential positive outcomes (career progression, long-term employment) but also the short term influencing factors such as the level of training and what the apprentice is paid during training. Further research from the National Society of Apprentices indicates that almost a half of apprentices are making choices about what apprenticeship to do based on what they can afford to get to, not on the basis of any information advice and guidance they might have received, or their own career aspirations (National Society of Apprentices. 2014).

### Applying and vacancies

In its recent report *The Match Factor* the CIPD attempted to establish the underlying causes of a mismatch in the supply and demand of apprenticeship vacancies. The report draws on information from almost 170,000 apprenticeship vacancies adverts, as well as interviews with 16 learning providers asking them about the process of working with young people and employers and the challenges they face when finding apprenticeships for their learners. The message from the report is clear: A key issue facing under 19 apprenticeship candidates relates to timing. In repeated instances there were differences in the periods when vacancies become available compared with the increases in the volumes of applicants. They note that:

*Many young people were looking for vacancies just before or after they leave school, over the summer or early autumn, and other peak periods, for example February, but may become discouraged to continue applying throughout the year if they are unsuccessful at first. Nevertheless, it is difficult to predict when vacancies become available as that would depend on employers' needs and their recruitment campaigns. Some providers are already starting to align their engagement with employers and young candidates to ensure a steady flow of the supply and the demand of vacancies. (CIPD. 2014: p.)*



## Challenging gender stereotypes

Within the field of UK apprenticeships the majority of apprentices are women (BIS. 2016). In their recent study Fuller and Unwin (2015) argue this reflects a change in the UK from manufacturing industries towards a service-based economy. Women are most likely to dominate these service apprenticeships, where pay, qualifications and career development prospects are comparatively low. Women represent the majority of participants for the three lowest paid apprenticeships (hairdressing, health and social care, and early childcare and early years education), while men dominate the highest paid; representing significant pay gaps between men and women. The appropriate distribution of females across all sectors of apprenticeships remains an area of concern (Fuller and Unwin. 2015).

Historical studies such as those by Beck et al have shown that young people receive very little practical information and guidance about the consequences of pursuing particular occupational pathways, and are not engaged in any formal opportunities to debate gender and ethnic stereotyping as related to the labour market. This is particularly worrying for females, who populate apprenticeships in sectors with lower completion rates and levels of pay, and which create less opportunity for progression (Beck et al. 2005).

## Careers provision

There also appear to be inconsistencies in what young people may understand about apprenticeships, as well as misconceptions over the types of careers an apprenticeship pathway can serve. This is caused to a large extent by lack of information and promotion of apprenticeships in schools and poor perceptions of apprenticeships as an alternative route into work (CIPD. 2012).

Despite a number of different government initiatives and guidelines related to the way careers provision is delivered in England (Department for Education. 2015; House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills and Education Committees. 2016) advice and guidance, especially around apprenticeships, remains patchy. Almost one third (31%) of respondents to the recent ACCA/YouGov survey had never received advice on apprenticeships, with 17% of all respondents also noting that they did not value any source of careers advice received in relation to apprenticeships (ACCA. 2016). It also appears that parents seem to share this view, the CIPD similarly found that just 15% of respondents to their 2013 parents' survey agreed, or strongly agreed, that teachers had not provided their children with information about the alternatives to university education (CIPD. 2013).

Moreover, recent reports have shown that young people rarely learn the necessary recruitment and job-seeking skills before they apply for an apprenticeship. A 2015 report by Ofsted found that schools and providers need to do more to instil basic attitudes and behaviours required by employers in all their learners. In total 45 apprenticeship providers were asked why they did not recruit more 16- to 24-year-old apprentices, nearly a quarter of employers who responded said that young people did not have the basic skills, attitudes and behaviours required for work. Additionally, the employers interviewed frequently said that they were reluctant to take a young apprentice straight from school as they believed too many 16-year-old school leavers lacked personal presentation and communication skills, or gave the impression at interview that they were immature and unreliable (Ofsted. 2015).

## The case for employer engagement

Access to reliable information can transform the way in which young people make decisions. Young people face significantly greater challenges than preceding generations in making informed decisions about the training and education routes to follow in pursuit of emerging career ambitions, and yet it is assumed that they will make



optimal choices in their pursuit of the qualifications and training necessary to build their careers (Mann and Huddleston, 2016). There is evidence that young people are particularly respectful of, and attentive to, working people with whom they come into contact. They see them as being able to provide honest, reliable information, prompting them to think more widely about career aspirations. Jones et al. (2016) argue that the primary result of employer engagement in education is to build the social and cultural capital of young people.

*Common to young people of all educational backgrounds is a perception that workplace staff communicate more directly and truthfully about labour market realities than other sources. These 'trustworthy reciprocal social relations' (Raffo and Reeves 2000) are key to both enhancing young people's self-confidence and giving them the 'weak ties' needed to progress (Jones et al. 2016, 18).*

A number of UK studies highlight both the importance of the volume of encounters and the student perceptions on the value of encounters (the effective affirmation that something new and useful was secured) to later economic gains (Mann and Percy 2014; Percy and Mann 2014; Kashefpakdel and Percy 2016; Mann et al. 2017). To be truly effective, however, employer contacts with young people have to be situated within a coherent programme of careers support where professional advice and access to up-to-date materials supplement first-hand insights into the working world.

Employers are also well positioned to work with schools to support their pupils in progressing successfully to an apprenticeship. Ofsted has shown that young people who undertook work experience or employment tasters related to apprenticeships while still in school make much better progress than peers lacking the experience – they are retained for longer and more of them complete their apprenticeship successfully. Many employers know this already: half of hairdressing firm Sassoon's apprentices did a work experience placement with the company while still in school. Such practice needs to become widespread (Mann and Caplin. 2012).

## 5. Quantitative findings

### Historical trends: LSYPE (2003-2010)

Throughout the survey young people responded to several questions about apprenticeships, including how they first heard about it, who influenced their decision to do an apprenticeship, their experiences at school, their motivation to select apprenticeships and their satisfaction with different aspects of apprenticeship if they successfully entered. In the following sections we outline what young people reported in different sweeps of the LSYPE from age 14 until they became apprentices.

Before moving to the next section, it is worth adding that at the time when LSYPE cohort members were at school (age 15-16) they had access to the Connexions service. Connexions was a UK governmental information, advice, guidance and support service for young people aged thirteen to nineteen (up to 25 for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities), created in 2000 following the Learning and Skills Act. There were Connexions Centres around the country - usually several in each county - which offered support and advice on topics including education, housing, health, relationships, drugs, and finance. Connexions is no longer a coherent national service following the announcement of changes to the delivery of careers in England by the Coalition government.

Young people could receive advice and guidance about future career possibilities from Connexions advisors; they no longer have access to this service and it has not been replaced by any other coherent national career guidance and information platform. In the following analysis we are particularly interested to investigate the extent to which these information and guidance centres helped to develop young people's awareness of future career choices, including the opportunities for apprenticeships.

### Experiences at school

LSYPE asked 15-16-year olds if they had talked about the possibility of doing an apprenticeship and with whom, while they were at school. This variable was used to investigate young apprentices' experiences while they were at school. Table 10 shows the summary of the cross-tabulation. It is interesting to note that young people who decided to pursue apprenticeship had talked mostly to a Connexions personal advisor. The second most likely person for them to have talked to about the possibility of doing an apprenticeship was the career advisors and teachers at school.

**Table 10: who did you talk to about apprenticeships?**

N=221 (the sample only includes the respondents who are in apprenticeship at age 19-20 and also reported their activities at school)	
	Percent
Careers advisor/ teacher at school	22.6
Other teachers at school	12.2
A connexions personal advisor	36.7
Someone else at connexions	2.3
Other	2.7

In another question, LSYPE asked young people who advised them about apprenticeships from the list of similar sources to table 10. From 123 young people who responded to this question and are in apprenticeship at age 19-20, 45% received advice from a Connexions personal advisor. Similarly, career advisors and teachers at school were the second most selected source of advice, however, substantially lower compared to Connexions advisors (25%).

LSYPE also asked the cohort members at age 15-16 who influenced their decisions to take an apprenticeship. The results are very similar to the responses given in the previous section concerning sources of advice.

**Table 11: Who advised you to do an apprenticeship?**

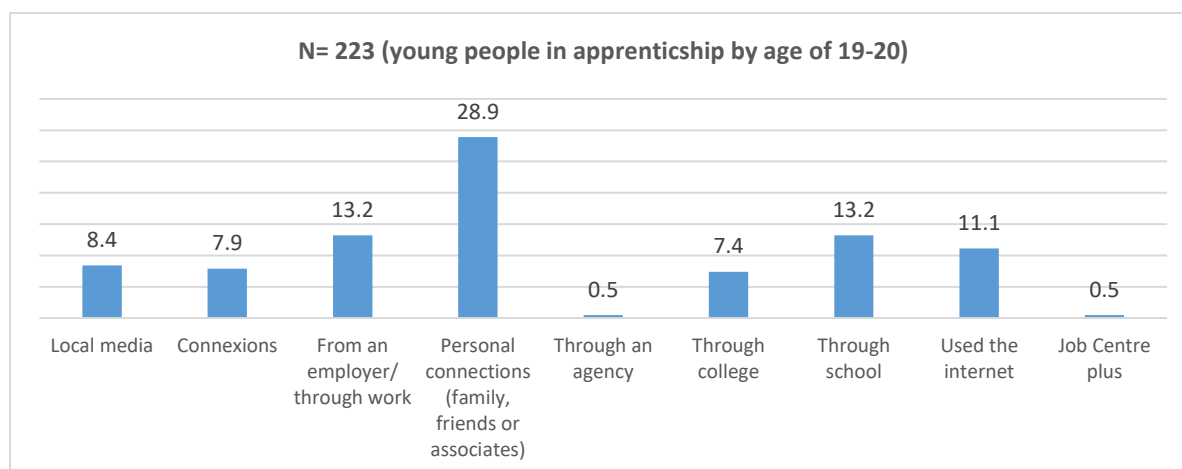
<b>N=221 (the sample only includes the respondents who are in apprenticeship at age 19-20 and also reported their activities at school)</b>	
	<b>Percent</b>
Careers advisor/ teacher at school	15
Other teachers at school	6
A Connexions personal advisor	24
Someone else at Connexions	2
Other	2

The survey was also interested in eliciting the extent to which young people in apprenticeship by age of 19-20 had taken part in any work experience placements whilst at school. Almost 40% of the 221 young people who responded had participated in work experience while they were 15-16. The proportions vary by economic activity at age 19-20 but young apprentices had more work experience compared to university students (34%).

## Information, advice and guidance

Young people were asked at age 18-19 how they had first found out about apprenticeship. Fig 1 shows the responses of those in apprenticeship by 19-20: the most selected answer is through personal connections such as family, friends or associates. In the second place is through school and employers.

**Fig 1: How did you first find out about apprenticeships?**



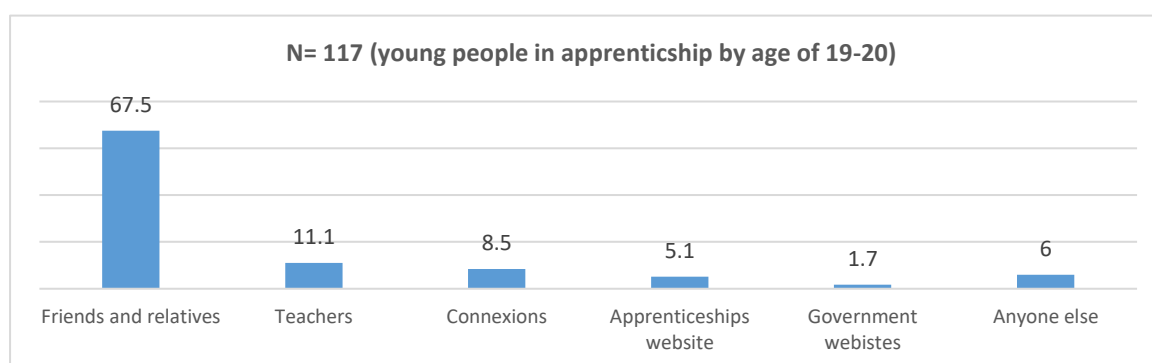
This is an important finding as it emphasises the power of familial networks and associated questions of equity for those young people who do not have access to powerful networks of knowledge and opportunity. Jones et al. (2015) demonstrate the ways in which young people use such social capital in order to navigate their way through the system and to find trusted information about their future.

Schools remain, based on the responses given by young people (see figure 1), a key source of information for future possibilities as much as employers. In particular, for those young people who do not have access to personal connection, schools may be major players in raising awareness and broadening aspirations. The trends in responses also highlight the importance of collaboration between the world of work and the world of education. It is suggested that exposure to the world of work and working closely with employers can bring positive outcomes for young people. Evidence is available (see for example Kashefpakdel and Percy 2016, Mann et al. 2017) to suggest that encounters with the world of work can result in positive labour market outcomes and, if helpful, can be used by young people to help them in their transition to employment. Apprenticeship is part of this transition system and it is clear from the responses that engagement with employers while at school could increase young people's awareness and possibly assist in the recruitment of young apprentices.

In a separate question, LSYPE asked young people which source of information, advice and guidance (IAG) they found most useful. In terms of apprentices' responses, a similar pattern to figure 1 emerged. Most of the young apprentices found friends and relatives the most useful source of advice and guidance. In second place was teachers. So personal connections remain the most important source and for young people without access to such networks and opportunities perhaps teaching staff and schools are the main source of information. This again underlines the importance of school-led career-learning activities to develop the knowledge, experience and networks required to succeed in transitions to apprenticeships.

Young people were asked about the quality and suitability of the information, guidance and advice they had received or had access to. In some cases, despite a lower sample size, young people reported that the amount of IAG they received was too little (approximately 19%), 20% believed that the timing of the IAG was too late in the process and almost 20% thought that the IAG they received was not suitable for their needs. However, the majority of the respondents who were in apprenticeships rated the IAG they received through school or Connexions services well in terms of its amount, timing and suitability.

**Fig 2: Most useful source of IAG**



From those who did not find the IAG they received suitable for their needs, young apprentices believed that the advice they were given was too focused on going to university or staying in education. This suggests that the majority of schools, teachers and the then Connexions advisors were mainly inclined towards the promotion of academic routes. This has been found to be one of the barriers of getting more apprentices coming straight from school. This will be discussed further in stakeholder analysis (see p.32)

Table 12: Rating IAG received by young apprentices

	Amount of IAG (%)	Timing of the IAG (%)	Suitability for needs (%)
Too much	6	...	...
About right	75	...	...
Too little	19	...	...
Too early	...	5	...
At about the right time	...	75	...
Too late	...	20	...
Yes	...	...	80
No	...	...	20

## Motivation

We were interested in finding out young people's motivation in choosing an apprenticeship route and if it could have some practical application when promoting apprenticeships. Table 13 shows the results of the question for those in apprenticeship at age 19-20.

Table 13: Young people's motivations for applying to an apprenticeship

Reasons of doing an apprenticeship	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is a well-recognised qualification	47.6	48.6	3.2	0.5
I wanted to do something practical rather than academic	45.5	44.4	10.2	...
I liked the idea of getting a job and doing training at the same time	45.2	54.3	0.5	...
It provides the qualifications you need to enter certain occupations	43.9	52.4	3.7	...
I have good career prospects on completing the course	42.6	54.8	2.7	...
It provides good pay prospects for the future	35.1	60.1	3.7	1.1
It allows me to keep my options about the future open	28.9	63.6	7.5	...

The employment prospects and earning while learning appear to be among the motivations for apprenticeship. These young people appear to enjoy practical learning compared to what is perceived as 'academic learning' at university. Some careers are easier to enter for those with an apprenticeship qualification. This emphasises the importance of access to information at the key decision points in a young person's transition from education to the labour market.

## Quality of apprenticeships

Young apprentices were asked to rate the quality of their programme in three areas: 'Pay', 'Quality of training' 'Meeting expectations'. The poorest rated aspect of their apprenticeship was pay. Young people in apprenticeship at age 19-20 believed that the apprenticeship pay was fair-poor (44% of the respondents). The highest rated aspect of their programme was the quality of training. This presumably varies across industry and

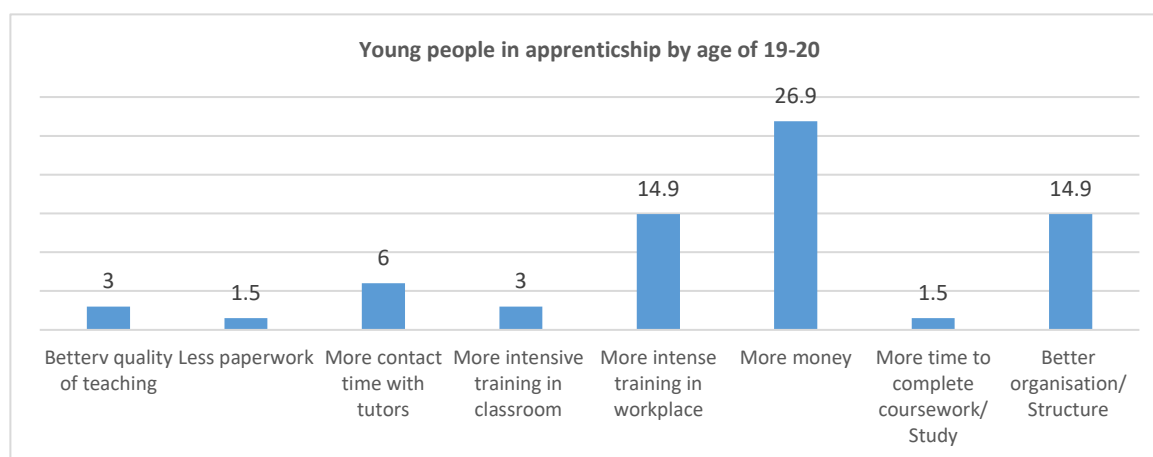
sectors but it was impossible to see from LSYPE survey in which sectors apprentices had completed their programmes.

**Table 14: Rating different aspects of apprenticeship**

Rating	Pay	Quality of training	Course meeting expectation
Very good	20	33.2	28
Good	36	53.8	55
Fair	22	9	13
Poor	22	4	4

Respondents were also asked to indicate if apprenticeships could be improved and, if so, in what ways? 37% of the sample reported room for improvement and the ways in which this could be addressed. Fig 3 shows the results of this analysis.

**Fig 3: Which aspect of apprenticeship needs improvement?**



Apprentices' pay is the most frequently cited area requiring improvement within this sample. The most frequently quoted hourly rate of apprentices in the sample was £4.77. At the same time (2010) the national minimum wage was around £6 an hour. This problem has not been resolved in seven years. Whilst successive governments have attempted to raise the profile and quality of apprenticeships, one continuing problem for their image remains: low pay. Whilst the present government has proposed discounted travel for new apprentices in its recent manifesto, many believe the real issue stopping young people signing up for apprenticeships is the starting wage of just £3.50 an hour. Though this increases after 12 months, those starting a work placed programme directly from school or college will remain on the basic rate until they reach 19 years old.

## Contemporary trends: YouGov 2017

As shown in the methodology section, almost 11% of the respondents applied for an apprenticeship but 16% who had thought of doing an apprenticeship did not apply subsequently. The majority of the sample did not think of apprenticeship as a pathway to adulthood. In the sections below, we explore what made young people aware and interested in this programme and what experiences they had while they were at school.

### Schools and employer engagement

In the questionnaire young people were asked about their experiences at school in terms of employer engagement activities organised by their schools and the volume of exposure they had to the world of work. Results have been cross-tabulated with decisions made about apprenticeship to ascertain if there is any relationship between participation in career-related learning activities and awareness or aspiration. Table 15 shows the average number of employer engagement activities experienced whilst at school for each sub-group of young people.

**Table 15: distribution of responses by volume of employer engagement activities**

	Average number of engagement activities
No, I didn't give much thought to getting an apprenticeship	1.31
Yes, I thought about it, but didn't do anything yet to try and get an apprenticeship	1.32
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, but was unsuccessful	1.35
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, and I was successful	1.4

The analysis shows that there is slight increase in the average number of employer engagement activities across the sub-sample of respondents. Between the group of young people who never thought about doing an apprenticeship and those who applied and were successful there is a 7% difference. This, in mathematical terms, does not imply a large difference but in practical terms signals the advantages career-related learning activities could have; a small push and schools could potentially help young people's awareness and aspiration towards apprenticeship.

According to the previous analysis of the YouGov data by Education and Employers, young people whose schools arranged a higher number of employer engagement activities felt their schools prepared them better for the adult world of work<sup>4</sup>. We were interested to find out whether those who never thought to pursue an apprenticeship were likely to feel the same or the opposite group of young people who thought about apprenticeship as an option. The result shows that the first group, who never thought about applying for an apprenticeship, felt less prepared for adult working life by their schools compared to the other group (5%). This finding again emphasises the role schools can play in giving more young people access to the career-related learning activities involving employers. This can improve their knowledge and understanding of the breadth and range of pathways available to them before facing key decision-making ages. The differences between the

<sup>4</sup><http://www.educationandemployers.org/research/first-of-new-collaborative-seminar-series-between-education-and-employers-and-ucl-institute-of-education-ioe-may-4th-2017/>

percentage changes are small, but a small push from schools could possibly influence some young people's attitude, awareness and aspiration largely.

## Quality of engagement activities

We asked young people who had applied for apprenticeship if they had found the employer engagement activities in which they participated helpful. Table 16 shows the result for this cross-tabulation. Despite the small sample size of respondents to both questions, the result is interesting. Young people who believed their involvement with employers at school/college was very to fairly helpful appeared to be more successful in their application for apprenticeship. Despite a large number of students disagreeing with the helpfulness of the activities they have done to find a job we find it fascinating that still around 40% of successful candidates found the activities they participated helpful.

**Table 16: Was the involvement that you had with employers whilst at school or college helpful to you when applying for a job(s)?**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, and I was successful	38	62
Yes, I applied for one or more apprenticeships, but was unsuccessful	13	87

We explored the written comments from young people; these were a sub-sample of young people who were successful in their application for apprenticeship and thought they learnt something useful from their interaction with employers whilst at school/college. Some respondents believed that these activities provided opportunities for them to learn about the world of work, what to expect, and how best to prepare themselves for it: *"A varied work experience programme gave me insight to lots of working environments",*

*"Contacting companies to apply for work experience was useful for applying for a full-time job in the future",*

*"How different work experience is to actual work. You do not get trusted with much when doing work experience. Knowing that helped me understand the difficulty I may have faced when joining a new job",*

Others believed they gained some skills from these interactions which were helpful to them when applying for jobs: *"Interview technique", "Meeting new people helped me become confident", "CV writing", "work experience, it taught me discipline", "We had pretend job interviews in year 10 and I found them as a very good insight. We had to wear interview clothes and act professional".*

A few reported gaining useful knowledge and motivation: *"Speaking 1-on-1 with the employer who helped me realise my career path", "Work experience as it allowed me to gain experience in the section of work I wanted to go into", "work experience, allowed me to test the job I was considering before committing", "My most useful experience was where I managed to work on a practical project and see an outcome that benefited the entire organisation. I found this useful as it provided me a huge amount of motivation".*



## 6. Qualitative findings

In this section we present the findings of the two stakeholder surveys. The responses are grouped around the challenges that emerged from the literature review in addition to extra themes that were uncovered during in the analysis.

### Changing perceptions

**36%** of employers highlighted that schools or colleges were the main barrier preventing school leavers from becoming apprentices. The respondents suggested that schools were not doing enough to remove the stigma attached to apprenticeships, with many lacking up to date knowledge to effectively promote apprenticeships to young people. This was a common refrain amongst employers in our sample:

**36%** of employers highlighted that schools or colleges themselves were the main barrier preventing school leavers from going on to an apprenticeship.

*There is a stigma still attached to apprenticeships, many schools still see apprenticeships only being associated with trade rather than professional careers. There are also a lot of myths out there, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the fantastic apprenticeships available and that they are equally as prestigious as going to university.* (Large IT organisation, London).

*There is a lack of knowledge in schools and schools are not doing enough to promote modern apprenticeships to pupils and parents.* (SME finance organisation, Scotland).

This may in part be due to a lack of confidence and experience in promoting the apprenticeship pathway. While teachers are well placed to share their personal experiences about university options, very few teachers or school staff can call on personal experiences of coming through the apprenticeship route and advise young people in a comparable fashion.

*Young people themselves are becoming more and more open to apprenticeships and pro-academic prejudice among teaching staff is beginning to reduce. However, lack of knowledge of apprenticeship process among staff is shocking - students often know much more!* (SME Construction organisation, London).

### Employer engagement

In seeking to address the negative attitudes and assumptions young people hold about apprenticeships, the literature suggests that increasing the level of authentic exposure of young people to the apprenticeship route could be helpful. A number of recent studies have highlighted the significance of involving businesses and

employee volunteers in programmes of employer engagement with schools (Mann and Dawkins 2014; Mann and Kashefpakdel 2015; Kashefpakdel and Percy 2016). In terms of specific promotion strategies, the higher performing schools in this sample frequently noted that bringing in a current or ex-apprentice into the school was a particularly effective way of providing authentic insights to the young people at their school.

***Amazing Apprenticeships - for the employer visits created by this company and talking to apprentices who gave us advice and guidance on what employers are looking for Assemblies - stereotypical apprentice myths can be dispelled as students are unaware of the exciting range and diversity of apprenticeships available.*** (Higher performing 11-18 secondary school, South East).

***Our career themed events or professionals in the classroom. This is most effective when students hear directly from former or current apprentices.*** (Higher performing 11-18 secondary school, London).

Allowing a current or ex-apprentice to come into school and share information on what they have achieved since gaining an apprenticeship, as well as the progression and career routes available, plays an important role in promoting this route as a fulfilling and flexible pathway for school leavers. These findings align with a recent CIPD report in which parents were asked to identify the best way of convincing young people that apprenticeships are a good career option. 42% of the 233 parents responding to the survey felt that examples of high-profile former apprentices would help convince them of the value of apprenticeships (CIPD 2013).

## Engaging parents

When schools were asked about what they were doing to raise the profile of apprenticeships, the better performing schools (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied for an apprenticeship) noted that they actively engaged parents in the employer engagement activities they provide, the lower performing schools failed to highlight any activities which involved parents. This problem was conceptualised by one respondent from a higher performing school:

***The other barrier is attitudes from parents. Many parents of our generation were brought up during the old YTS days and perceptions have stuck for example parents calling it slave labour. Parents also question the loss of child benefit and many will prevent their children from doing an apprenticeship based on this factor. I recently had a conversation with a parent of a 17-year-old at our 6th form who is stopping her son because of this. With this being the case we hold assemblies for parents where they can hear from the horse's mouth the truth about apprenticeships therefore dispelling many myths surrounding these opportunities.*** (Higher performing 11-18 secondary school, South East England).

When asked which were effective, one respondent noted:

***Parent activities and newsletters help to raise the profile of apprenticeships and embed them into decision making*** (Higher performing sixth form college, South West)

Whilst another highlighted that:

***An information evening for parents of students was the most effective as they helped to [...] destigmatise the perception of apprenticeships'*** (Higher performing 11-18 secondary school, Yorkshire and the Humber)

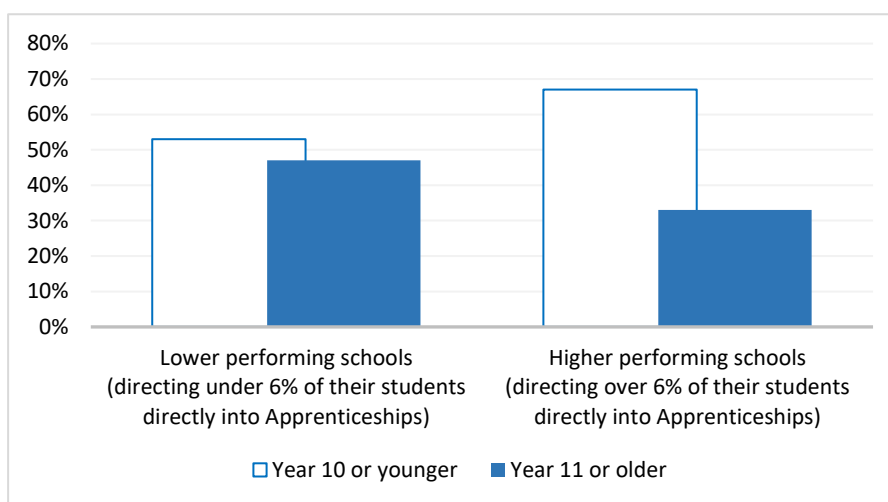
**11%** of employers highlighted that parents were the main barrier preventing school leavers from going on to an apprenticeship.

These responses echo new findings from data collected by YouGov included in this report, in which students identify close relations (friends and relatives) as the biggest influence on their decision to take on an apprenticeship. In order for apprenticeships to be regarded as a genuine alternative to university, it is important that parents understand their value and potential as a way of helping their children progress in the labour market as in many cases parents will have a significant influence on their children's career choices.

## Age of provision

It appears that the better performing schools (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied for an Apprenticeship) advocate telling students about apprenticeships from a younger age Year 10 or younger (77%) compared to lower performing schools (53%).

**Fig 4 Age that students were told about apprenticeships**



Employers in our sample also emphasised that schools and colleges should provide earlier advice to students to help spark an interest in the apprenticeship pathway, to give them time to consider the wide variety of apprenticeship options available to them prior to making a decision about their future. One employer noted that this is particularly important in encouraging young women to consider traditionally male dominated sectors.

***[...] offer more information around careers, early years around year 7. In schools this is currently mostly offered to years 10 & 11.*** (Large health organisation, North West).

***Start them thinking about it from year 7 - not as a 'last minute.com' in year 13 as something to do between A-levels finishing and term ending. No-one is going to give up their uni offer at the last minute for an option they have just heard of. We want learners to be familiar with our industry and the career options open to them by the time they are taking their options in year 9 - this is especially important if we are going to get women into the industry in serious numbers.*** (SME construction organisation, London).

## The importance of experience

When asked how they felt about the preparedness of school leavers embarking on an apprenticeship, just under half of employers noted that school leavers were unprepared for working in an office or general working environment.

***Most young people we meet are not 'work ready'. We find that the first few months they are on programme are challenging for them in terms of being punctual, not taking time off sick, balancing work with their social activities, understanding acceptable behaviours at work such as use of mobile phone and accessing the Internet, appearance, attitude, willingness to undertake tasks, using own initiative, engaging with colleagues etc.*** (SME professional development organisation, North West)

***We find most school leavers keen to learn but a lot of time is put into helping them understand the world of work and what makes a good work ethic.*** (SME legal organisation, Scotland)

***This is very much individual depending and whether they have had sufficient, relatable work experience during the course of their programme. Some school/college leavers thrive on the world of work and once given training on our systems and processes, they fly through their apprenticeship and on to further their career. Unfortunately, others are less work ready and do not adhere to policies and procedures in place (attendance, uniform) and struggle with not being "taught" but instead given self-guided learning.*** (Large health organisation, East Anglia).

Employers felt that too often the relationships between education and ultimate employment were not well understood. Educational provision, in general, was felt to offer young people insufficient life skills for the demands of employment.

## Gender stereotyping

Over a third of the employers responding to the survey highlighted the main reason for hiring school leavers is to diversify their current workforce. Running through these responses was a clear message that apprenticeships were used as a method of bringing in employees of a different age, socio-economic background and gender than their organisations would usually attract.

***To broaden the diversity of the employee base and in turn influence and shape the output*** (Large media organisation, multiple UK regions).

***We are committed to developing the next generation of talent within our organisation and continuing to grow the digital skills for the UK economy. Joiners to our apprentice programmes have enabled us to grow our own technologists of the future and we have been able to provide opportunities to a diverse group of individuals.*** (Large IT organisation, London).

Yet, amongst all the schools responding to the survey only one respondent highlighted that their school carried out specific activities to challenge gender stereotypes and promote non-traditional apprenticeship roles to young women.

## Preparing school leavers for the apprenticeship recruitment process

There was considerable agreement across employers about where young people were distinctively and commonly weak, in comparison to older workers, when it came to applying for apprenticeship vacancies. Employers noted poor skills in what might be termed job-seeking or recruitment skills (completing applications and going to interview).

***How to fill in an application form. How to dress for an interview and how to answer questions. For Example I ask "when have you dealt with a difficult situation such as friends falling out or being in trouble with your parents?" I had one applicant answer a question with using an example of being head butted by a donkey and the donkey owner being upset that the donkey***

***got hurt? I could see what the applicant was aiming to tell us but it was completely the incorrect example to use.*** (Large health organisation, North West)

***Lack of confidence or interview experience often undermines the performance of this group.*** (Large health organisation, Yorkshire and the Humber)

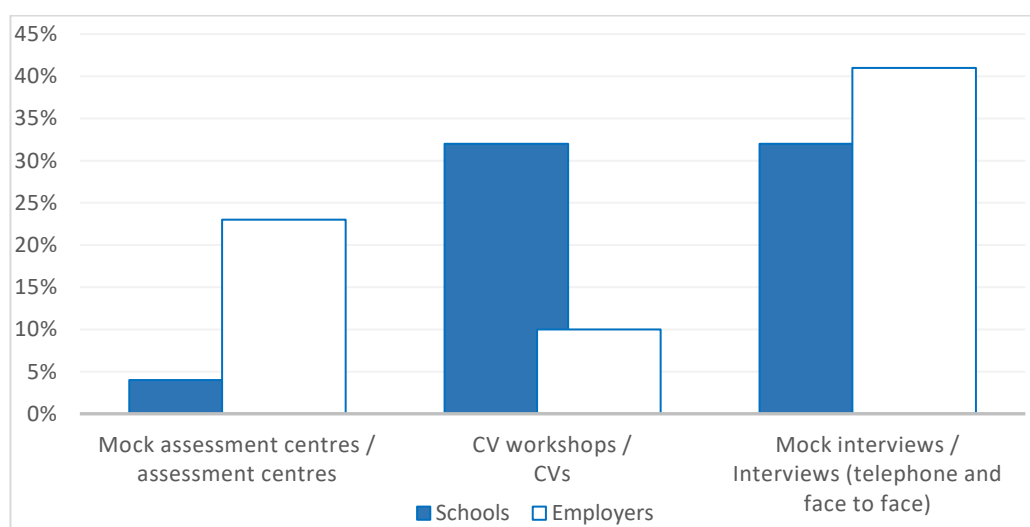
Schools, the employers in our sample argued, need to ensure that young people understand the importance of using research skills to find out about jobs and prepare themselves prior to an interview: searching company websites and thinking about how their school experiences may be used as examples in interviews.

***Ability of candidates to apply experience gained at school and in life to date to a recruitment situation. Whilst adaptations to recruitment process and efforts have been made from an outreach perspective this remains an area of focus that all need to be involved in (schools, influencers, recruiters, candidates, businesses).*** (SME IT organisation, London).

Moreover, there also appears to be a slight misalignment between the recruitment preparation that schools are providing and the methods that employers now use to hire apprentices. Employers across our sample repeatedly noted that they use assessment centres as part of their recruitment process and according to the CIPD as many as one third of companies use them to choose applicants (CIPD, 2014), yet the majority of schools when asked mentioned interview preparation, but made no reference to assessment centres in their careers provision. Both face to face and telephone interviews still continue to form *part* of the recruitment process, but increasingly employers use them prior to an assessment centre when selecting a successful candidate. Though there are obvious overlaps between the skills that can be honed during a mock interview session and the skills needed for an assessment centre, the latter involves a wider array of tests and exercises that can often dissolve the confidence of young people who may never have experienced these kinds of tests before.

This is a trend repeated when thinking about CVs. Only five of the employers surveyed mentioned using CVs at any point when hiring apprentices, with thirteen instead making reference to an online assessment or application form which contained a number of write in questions. In our sample of schools, however, CV workshops were still highlighted by the majority of respondents as a method for preparing young people for job applications.

**Fig 5: A breakdown of how schools are preparing young people to apply for apprenticeships compared to the methods employers use when recruiting (% of those who responded)**



**Note:** The total number of responses exceeds the total number of respondents as respondents could identify multiple employer engagement activities.

## Level of apprenticeships

To better understand the type and level of apprenticeships being offered to students we asked schools how many of their students were going on to an apprenticeship at Level 3 or above. Using the most recent data from the Department for Education FE data library we found that, on average, 34% of under 19s went into a Level 3 or above in 2014/15 (DfE, FE data library apprenticeships, 2016).

From this limited sample, it appears that the better performing schools and colleges (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied for an apprenticeship) are getting their young people into more intermediate/higher level apprenticeships (level 3 or above) than their lower performing counterparts. **Almost two thirds (61%) of higher performing schools reported that at least 34% of their students going on to apprenticeships were going on to level 3, compared to only 27% of lower performing schools.**

In areas where there are a high number of apprenticeship vacancies available, schools and colleges should strive to seek out and promote more Level 3 or above frameworks as an alternative to traditional academic routes, affording apprenticeships the same amount of promotion to both higher and lower achieving groups of students.

But the reality remains that in most areas of the UK this is simply not possible. Demand for apprenticeships from young people far outstrips supply. According to data from the National Apprenticeship Service and the governments FE data library, more than 1.6 million online applicants competed for 211,380 vacancies posted online in 2016. This represented an average of 8 applicants per apprenticeship (DfE and ESFA. 2017). However, what is required is not simply an increase in the number of apprenticeships generally, but an increase in those of higher quality (Level 3 and above). While the number of Advanced and Higher level apprenticeships is increasing (BIS. 2016), the race for places on the best schemes remains much more competitive than that for some of the nation's top universities, which illustrates the dearth of high quality apprenticeships on offer.

**Two thirds** of higher performing schools reported that at least 34% of their students going onto apprenticeships were going onto level 3, compared to **only 27%** of lower performing schools.

# Discussion and Conclusions

## An image problem: Shortage of knowledge and information

In order for apprenticeships to be regarded as a genuine alternative to university, it is important that schools and colleges provide awareness events that engage directly with parents to help them understand their value, as in many cases parents will have a significant influence on their children's career choices. As the LSYPE data analysed for this report show, the majority of young people highlight that their most useful source of information, advice and guidance and by extension the key influencer in shaping their career ambitions were friends, relatives and associates. Yet despite their privileged position as the main source of guidance, wider literature and survey data has shown that parents appear to hold stigmatised views about apprenticeships. In a 2013 survey of parents by CIPD, an overwhelming majority of parents who have a university education would choose this route again (81%) and less than a fifth think that apprenticeships have the same status as a university education. Even though almost half of the respondents said that it was up to their children to decide what they wanted to do, a majority still would not recommend them to follow an apprenticeship. To explore this issue we asked employers what they believed to be the main barrier in preventing school and college leavers in becoming apprentices. Of all the potential obstacles facing a young person when thinking about, or applying for, an apprenticeship, a number of employers specifically noted that the perceptions and influence of parents were the main barrier that needed to be overcome to ensure a greater number of apprenticeship starts directly from school and college. Responses from our survey of schools and colleges support this conclusion. In our sample a number of higher performing schools and colleges (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied to an apprenticeship) noted that they carried out specific events to engage parents as part of their wider careers provision, whereas none of the lower performing schools/colleges stated they carried out such engagement activities.

Schools and colleges should do more to improve the knowledge of apprenticeships among teachers and careers staff to ensure that they provide equal guidance for both academic and vocational pathways. Despite a number of different government initiatives and guidelines related to the way careers provision is delivered in England, advice and guidance, especially around apprenticeships, remains patchy. Recent survey data have shown that large proportions of young people received no apprenticeship advice and guidance from their school/college. Or, if they did receive it, it was of poor quality (IAC 2017; ACCA 2016). Longitudinal LSYPE data analysed for this report similarly found that 20% of young people noted that the guidance they received was not suitable for their needs. When asked why, the majority thought the advice they received was too focussed on going to university or staying in education. The lack of quality apprenticeship advice and guidance is an issue also reported by employers as well as students. When asked, one third of employers highlighted that schools were the main barrier preventing them hiring school leavers as apprentices, with many noting that stigma exists amongst staff who believed apprenticeships were better suited to lower achievers.

This may in part be due to a lack of confidence and experience in promoting apprenticeships. While teachers are well placed to share their personal experiences about university options, very few teachers or school staff can call on personal experiences of coming through the apprenticeship route and advise young people in a comparable fashion. Mann highlights this point in his recent chapter on promoting apprenticeships, in which



he draws upon an unpublished 2012 survey by Education and Employers and the Times Educational Supplement (TES) where participants were asked how they felt about advising young people on what an apprenticeship was and how someone might go about getting on to one: 52% were 'not at all' confident, and only 15% were 'very confident' in providing such advice (Mann 2016). The 2017 Industry Apprentice Council (IAC) annual survey of 1,198 Apprentices showed that this is a persistent trend, with many young people noting that the advice on offer is patchy. Only 22% of the apprentices who answered the survey received 'good' or 'very good' advice from school or college. 5% received no advice at all and more young people are getting poor advice – nearly 40% of apprentices said the advice they got was 'bad' or 'very bad' (IAC 2017).

## Challenging gender stereotypes

New evidence collected in this review has highlighted that schools and colleges must continue to work to challenge views about the suitability of different apprenticeships across genders. Employers that responded to our survey specified that one of the key reasons they hired school leavers was to diversify their current workforce. Yet only one school in our sample highlighted, when asked, that they carried out specific activities to challenge gender stereotypes and promote non-traditional roles to students. Recent findings from Fuller and Unwin (2015) confirm that this is still the case in UK apprenticeship career provision. The authors studied the perceptions of 14 and 15 year olds in England and Wales through qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The results emphasised that young people hold entrenched opinions on the suitability of different apprenticeships for different genders. Specifically, boys appeared to be more fearful and cautious of crossing typical gender boundaries – 63% of boys stated that they did not want to 'stand out from the crowd' by working in a characteristically female apprenticeship. Results found that 80% of girls would consider entering non-traditional jobs, while the same can be said for 55% of boys. Within focus group discussions, young people stated that they were not actually seeking these roles, despite considering them, because they 'did not want to'. The authors suggest that career advice and guidance within the UK has been ineffective in allowing young people to pursue the range of roles available and help to break down these stereotypes. It also suggested that the earlier that young people are exposed to gender-awareness activities then existing attitudes can be confronted effectively and encourage girls and boys to try apprenticeships they may not have considered otherwise (Fuller and Unwin. 2015). A 2017 IAC annual survey by the Industry Apprentice Council similarly found that 30% of female respondents were not encouraged to do an apprenticeship by their school or college, compared to just 17% of males (IAC, 2017).

## Providing access to authentic, reliable information

Young people often have a limited understanding of local job markets, and yet we assume that they will make optimal choices in their pursuit of the qualifications and training needed to build their careers. But they can only do this if they have access to the right information, which employers are ultimately better placed to provide than schools and colleges. As we have shown information from trusted sources such as parents, relatives and teachers can ultimately affect the decisions to take on an apprenticeship. Reliable information from employee volunteers can mitigate the lack of information given by teachers and parents who may hold stigmatised views of what an apprenticeship entails.

### Do more

Building on previous analyses, this report demonstrates the relationship between the number of employee contacts that a young person recalled receiving and their eventual decision to embark upon an apprenticeship. Analysis of YouGov data for this report has shown that between young people who had never thought about getting an apprenticeship and those who applied successfully for an apprenticeship there is a 7% difference in the amount of employee contacts they recalled. The results show that even a small push from schools and



colleges in terms of the number of employer-led apprenticeship events they provide can potentially convert a young person's initial awareness into actually beginning an apprenticeship. These findings are in line with a number of studies which emphasise the importance of at least four memorable encounters across schooling (Mann and Percy 2014; Percy and Mann 2014; Kashefpakdel and Percy 2015; Mann and Percy 2014; Percy and Mann 2014; Mann et al. 2017).

In principle, this is also in line with similar research undertaken by the Education and Employers' research during the past few years: the more employer engagement activities teenagers get involved in the more likely it is they find something new and useful about future careers and qualification.<sup>5</sup> Education and Employers charity has also collected some data (623 young people from year 11 12 and 13) post-events where they promoted apprenticeship by inviting young people to career fairs and speed networking with employers across industries and sizes. The result of this survey underlines what was found in this analysis; young people who spoke to higher number of volunteers about apprentice agreed collectively that they are more likely to imagine themselves doing an apprenticeship (72% of the respondents), that they understood apprenticeship better than before (89% of the respondents) and that they were planning to find out more about it.

### **Ensure that is valued**

New evidence included in this report has shown that if apprenticeship events with employers are to have the optimal impact, they must be valued by the young people taking part. To be truly effective, the young people taking part must value the events in which they are participating (Kashefpakdel and Percy 2015; Mann et al. 2017a). In order to make young people value these events our findings suggest that schools and colleges should invite a current or ex- apprentice to come in and share information on what they have achieved since gaining an apprenticeship. The higher performing schools and colleges (in terms of the percentage of school leavers that successfully applied to an apprenticeship) in our sample frequently noted that inviting a current or ex-apprentice to speak to young people was a particularly effective way of showing young people the progression and career routes available.

### **Start giving advice earlier**

There is also a growing body of evidence to support the hypothesis that the earlier young people receive advice about their future options the more effective it is (Kashefpakdel and Percy. 2016; Mann et al. 2017). For schools and colleges, this translates into providing information about apprenticeships at an earlier age, to ensure they have information about all available academic and vocational routes at key decision-making points. Former students note that the advice they received would have been more effective if they had been given it earlier in their school lives, with 20% of respondents highlighting that the provision came too late in the decision-making process. To test this hypothesis, we asked the schools in our sample at what age they begin to tell students about apprenticeships. It appears that better performing schools (in terms of getting under 19s into apprenticeships) give advice and guidance at a younger age compared to lower performing schools. Employers in our sample also emphasise that schools and colleges should provide earlier advice to students to help spark an interest in the apprenticeship pathway and to give them time to consider the wide variety of roles and options available to them prior to making decisions about their future.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.educationandemployers.org/research/career-education-that-works-an-economic-analysis-using-the-british-cohort-study/>

## Preparing young people for the apprenticeship recruitment process: A miscommunication

By engaging with schools, employers can advise young people about how to best prepare themselves for the recruitment process and what to expect from it. There was considerable agreement across our employer sample that young people commonly had poor job-seeking and recruitment skills (completing applications and going to interview) compared to older workers. Yet, when asked, the majority of schools and colleges reported that they carried out numerous recruitment skills events for their students prior to their application for apprenticeships. There does, however, appear to be a slight miscommunication between what schools and colleges are providing and what modern apprentice employers are looking for during their recruitment process. Employers across our sample repeatedly noted that they use assessment centres as part of their recruitment process; according to the CIPD as many of one third of companies used them in 2014 to choose applicants (CIPD, 2014), yet the majority of schools and colleges in our sample mentioned interview preparation but made no reference to assessment centres in their provision. It appears that a wider view of recruitment is required, schools need to modernise and alter their approach to prepare young people to present their skills and achievements both verbally and in written form in a succinct and convincing manner. Greater communication is needed between local apprentice employers and schools to ensure that students are adequately prepared not only for unfamiliar processes (such as assessment centres) but also the skills they must display when taking part.

## Having a dialogue: A case study of partnership practices

As part of this study we contacted a number of schools and colleges that were reputed for their outstanding apprenticeship provision. This case study showcases the ways in which schools can engage with employers to encourage more young people to successfully apply to an apprenticeship. It shows how the attitudes of young people towards apprenticeships can be changed with the introduction of consistent employer-led apprenticeship provision.

Haywood Sixth Form Academy is an example of an institution committed to involving employers at every level of their careers provision. Through their unique business partnership meetings both their curriculum and extra sessions are designed based on the demands of the modern workplace. As well as the awareness sessions and career development activities being facilitated and led by employers from the local community, the recruitment skills that are taught within these sessions include presentation skills, assessment centre preparation and reflect what employers in the local feel young people are lacking when they apply for apprenticeships. Importantly key stakeholders are also directly targeted as part of the overall apprenticeship provision, with bespoke stigma-busting events and materials directly provided for parents.

Involving employers in increasing awareness of apprenticeships, removing stigma amongst key stakeholders such as teachers and parents or providing unique informative sessions to young people can exponentially increase the chances of a young person not only considering an apprenticeship, but having the skills and confidence to successfully apply.

## Haywood Sixth Form Academy, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent



Since September 2015 Haywood Sixth Form Academy has offered a unique enrichment programme to develop highly skilled, apprenticeship ready young people to meet the skills shortages in the local area and beyond. Partnerships are at the centre of everything Haywood does, and working with successful highly regarded companies has enabled an innovative 'Work Based Learning' approach to form. These unique partnerships have helped the school leaders create an atmosphere where apprenticeships are not only promoted, but students are also provided with numerous extra sessions to ensure they make informed decisions about their next step and are suitably prepared for the recruitment process when applying. In 2016/17 72% of the entire school year went on to an apprenticeship, of which 55% of these were girls. Most leaving were going on to a Level 2 but a growing number are going on to a Level 3 framework.

### Skills building

Alongside traditional A-Levels Haywood offers a Work Based Learning course option, described as a 'pre-traineeship'. This is an education and training programme that is combined with real, beneficial, work experience and is focused on giving students the skills and experience that employers are looking for. The programme provides students with a structured role, through which they access new experiences, develop work-related competencies, grow in confidence, flourish as an individual and become ready for the world of work.

During the course, business leaders run workshops for students on a range of skills to ensure students are supported in the transition from education to the workplace. Listening to insights from employers has ensured that the recruitment skills being taught to students is aligned with the way businesses now hire. The curriculum includes workshops on social media, presentation skills, interviews and personal behaviour for work, interpersonal skills and communication skills including telephone and email.

### Awareness

The role of parents and guardians within this decision making process should also not be understated. In their 2016 survey the ACCA found that 65% of respondents believed that their parent(s) / guardian(s) would prefer it if they went to university (as opposed to undertaking an apprenticeship). To tackle parental stigma Haywood provides bespoke apprenticeship and work based learning evenings which discuss with parents and students the apprenticeship routes up to level 7 apprenticeships. On these evenings businesses also present on apprenticeships and their importance to them.

The sheer number of young people leaving Haywood Sixth Form Academy and going directly on to an apprenticeship has demonstrated the positive impacts of forming close ties with a diverse range of employers. Whilst for many schools the Work Based Learning programme may be difficult to replicate, Haywood has shown that every school or college wanting to promote apprenticeships must strive to form and foster ties with local businesses and employers.

## Further research

Throughout this report we have highlighted that the findings and insights gathered rely on a small but useful and informative sample of schools, colleges and employers. The qualitative analysis relies on a sample of

employers that is missing respondents from retail and construction sectors, considering the large proportion of school leavers that go into these sectors. Further research would consider using a larger sample of schools and colleges as well as a more representative sample of employers. Any follow up research could also expand the number of best practice studies to include schools and colleges from a wider range of UK regions. Additional research should also consider the newest sweep of LSYPE data that is being released in 2017, at this point the respondents will be in their early 20s and the results would help to validate the conclusions put forward here.

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