

“The government’s ambition that all young people will participate in learning up to the age of 18 will rely critically on the sector’s expertise in designing and delivering high-quality programmes, including pre-apprenticeships and intermediate and advanced apprenticeships, to engage and meet the needs of these learners and prospective employers. Between September and November 2011, inspectors visited 15 providers to identify the key features of successful apprenticeship provision. These providers had been judged to be either good or outstanding for their overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection and had a recent history of working well with young people taking apprenticeships.”

Executive Summary

*Note: This guide captures the key findings and the recommendations in the document produced by Ofsted. It uses the language of the original document.*

## Key findings (page 6)

- In the providers visited, young people who had previous experience of vocational training were more successful in making good progress with their apprenticeship framework than those starting straight from school without it.
- Work experience in the area that interested the young person was a recurring theme mentioned by providers, young learners and employers as a positive force in equipping young people with an appropriate work ethic and basic employment skills.
- The negative views of employers in the survey about the ability of some young people to apply for jobs, along with their poor punctuality and timekeeping, were forestalled by the providers working to develop these skills in the young people before they applied for apprenticeships. A small number of the employers complained about the apprentices’ poor standard of English and mathematics when they arrived from school, even those with grade C at GCSE.
- All the providers in the survey had improved their initial advice and guidance, including work tasters, to recruit learners into the area of learning that matched their interests. Provided during recruitment events, in interviews or online, it had a positive impact on increasing the completion of frameworks and eventual progression into employment and further training.
- When online applications were included as part of the selection process, many of the young people had not been sufficiently well prepared by their schools to make the best possible application.
- Effective initial assessment had a positive impact on the providers’ capacity to put appropriate support in place and secure a more successful match between apprentices and employers.
- Educational statements from schools did not always follow young learners to their training providers who then had to reassess their needs. Where data were available, apprentices who received learning support had overall success rates as good as their peers.
- Well-planned inductions increased young people’s understanding of how they would be trained and assessed, and what would be expected of them in their employment. They particularly liked hearing from former apprentices to whom they could relate and who acted as mentors in two thirds of the providers surveyed.
- The most effective teaching was well planned, engaged learners and enabled them to put quickly into practice what they learnt in theory sessions. The strong vocational backgrounds of the providers’ staff together with small group sizes ensured good and sometimes outstanding skills development.
- Flexible training and assessment, including additional workshops, group training at a distance using webcams, and ease of access to online resources, met the needs of employers and apprentices well. Apprentices did not always have to miss training and were often keen to do extra work when resources were readily available. Assessment was often almost ‘on demand’ by employer staff or, planned with the employers, by the provider’s assessors.
- Almost all the providers in the survey provided good training in key and functional skills that improved young people’s English and mathematics and which was delivered by appropriately qualified staff. The key skills were contextualised to the areas of learning and therefore seen as relevant by the young people and their employers.
- Young people had a good understanding of their employment rights and responsibilities through studying them as part of their apprenticeship. They valued the personal, learning and thinking skills that they were developing, as did their employers.

- Many of the young people gained additional experience, skills and qualifications outside their apprenticeship framework. This added value to their programmes and improved their work skills. Learners and employers particularly valued customer service training.
- Regular contact between provider staff and the employers in the survey focused on reviewing progress, providing constructive feedback and setting new targets to provide work-based evidence, so that apprentices knew what they had to do to continue making good progress.
- Progression into sustained employment and promotion at work were linked by many employers to gaining qualifications. Almost all the young people in the survey were keen to gain more advanced qualifications. Some of the training delivered by employers to their employees who have completed advanced apprenticeships is of an advanced level but does not lead to recognised accredited qualifications.

## Recommendations (page 7)

### The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Education should:

- improve the national availability of careers guidance on post-16 options so that young people can make informed and independent choices about their education and training
- promote clear pathways for young people not engaged in education or employment that lead to apprenticeships
- gather data on the numbers of young people who apply for an apprenticeship but who are unsuccessful in securing a place
- encourage the development of more recognised progression routes for advanced apprentices such as higher apprenticeships and foundation degrees that meet the needs of employers.

### Secondary schools should:

- provide students with a broader range of training and guidance to support applications, particularly where employers require online applications
- improve the local coordination of work experience so that willing employers can respond to more requests for such experience across a wider time-frame
- improve the information about learners who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that there is better planning to meet their needs when they leave school and progress into work-based learning.

### Providers of apprenticeships should:

- develop pre-apprenticeship programmes with progression routes to apprenticeships for young people who are at risk of not being engaged in education or employment (for example, as part of Foundation Learning programmes or 14–16 links with schools)
- continue to improve the promotion of apprenticeship training to under-represented groups, particularly by ensuring that young people encounter effective role models in promotional materials and when they meet the providers’ staff
- develop more effective ways of sharing good practice in teaching and assessing young people undertaking work-based learning
- encourage monthly rather than quarterly reviews of their young learners with their employers in the workplace so that they are kept on target to succeed.

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