Young people, employability and the induction process

Young people, employability and the induction process

Steve Johnson and Tom Burden

Contents

Acknowledgements

Summary

This report presents the results of a research project undertaken by the Policy Research Institute (PRI), Leeds Metropolitan University. The project was concerned with the initial experiences of young people entering their first full-time and/or permanent jobs after leaving school, college or university. In particular, the research examined the experiences of both young people and employers of the process of induction of young people into the workplace.

The research involved interviews with a cross-section of 30 young people, carried out shortly before they started their first jobs and again three to six months later. Interviews were also carried out with 39 employers in different sectors and size groups.

Some of the key findings that emerged from the research are as follows.

Young people in the labour market

It is clear from our interviews with young people that, for the vast majority, the concept that there no longer exists a 'job for life' has become firmly embedded. Many young people see their early labour market experience in instrumental terms (e.g. a 'stop gap' until their ideas are developed, or simply a way of earning money to pursue other ambitions such as travel).

This tendency has also been noted by many employers, to the disappointment of some, for example smaller businesses looking for longer-term loyalty in their staff. However, some employers have adjusted to the new situation and appear to accept that they cannot expect young people to be loyal, committed and see a long-term future with one employer.

Skills and attributes required and possessed

Our findings confirm those from a number of other studies, namely that employers tend to focus upon 'softer' skills and behavioural attributes in the recruitment process, with a less prominent role played by formal qualifications. Significantly, most young people seem to have taken on board the message that formal qualifications are often a necessary but not sufficient condition for obtaining the types of jobs to which they aspire.

By and large, the young people we interviewed were confident in their ability to demonstrate the necessary skills and attributes. Employers, on the whole, were less positive about this, often feeling that educational institutions were focusing too strongly on academic skills and qualifications at the expense of employability.

Role of schools, colleges and universities

There does appear to be a divergence of view between employers and young people about the role played by young people's experiences at school or college in preparing them for the world of work. The majority view among employers was that schools and colleges provide inadequate preparation for young people in relation to what is expected of them. Some employers had more positive things to say about educational establishments and others expressed the view that most do as much as can be reasonably expected. However, a sizeable number of employers tend to be cynical and/or negative about the role played by schools and colleges.

The role of work experience

This is an issue on which there was almost complete unanimity between employers and young people. Almost without exception, employers felt that young people who had undergone a period of work experience while at school (either through formal programmes or through part-time work) were better equipped than others for the world of work. Young people expressed similar views, although there were some misgivings about the quality of some work placements.

The induction process

The results of this study confirmed our prior expectations and the findings of earlier research – that there are wide variations in the nature of the induction processes provided by employers for their young recruits. These variations manifest themselves in terms of the length of time, the degree of formality, the topics covered, the extent of integration with training activities and the frequency and method of review. The reaction of most young people to the induction they had experienced was positive, or at least neutral. There is clearly a tension between the need for new recruits to become competent at their jobs and their understandable desire to get involved as quickly as possible.

While our findings do not paint a uniform picture, three issues emerge as being of particular relevance to practitioners and policy makers:

- First, there appears to be very limited recognition of the specific needs of young recruits, particularly those entering their first job. Most employers adopt a 'one size fits all' induction policy that may, in some cases, be to the detriment of young recruits.

- Linked to the above point, the use of mentors or 'buddies' would seem to be particularly appropriate for new young recruits. Our research revealed a number of examples of the successful use of this approach, and its more widespread adoption might help young people to become attuned more quickly to the social and cultural aspects of the workplace, which many find difficult.

- Finally, regular review and feedback, together with a clear link to training and development activities, are essential for the successful operation of an induction process. There is no blueprint as to how this should work in practice – our research revealed a range of formal and informal approaches – but it is clear that young recruits in particular benefit from regular feedback in the early weeks and months of their employment.

Improving the employability of young people

The majority of young people and employers accept that the responsibility for improving employability rests with a range of individuals and agencies. In particular, schools and parents are mentioned by many employers as bearing a responsibility.

Our research did not reveal any blueprints. However, it does suggest that, if employers want more 'employable' young people, they need to accept their share of the responsibility.

Most employers that we spoke to did feel that they had a role to play, and many were indeed playing an active role.

Work experience was the most widely mentioned factor that is likely to improve employability among young people. As noted above, this has its problems and it is unlikely that all young people will enter their first employment with sufficient 'real' experience of the workplace, including the important discipline of turning up every day and on time. This can only be learned in a 'real life' situation, and a renewed focus on the induction process as providing a type of advanced work experience would be very helpful to both employers and young people.

1 Introduction

Given the rapidly changing nature of the labour market, and in particular the youth labour market, it is important to understand the factors that influence the extent to which, and the ways in which, young people become 'employable'. This report looks at the issue of employability from the point of view of young people entering their first full-time and/or permanent jobs after leaving school, college or university, comparing their views with those expressed by a cross-section of employers of young people.

The results demonstrate clearly that the first few months of a young person's working life are crucial in enabling them to acquire the occupational, job-specific and (most importantly) generic and behavioural skills that are necessary in order for them to become more 'employable'. Employer practices in respect of the induction of young people vary widely according to factors such as sector, size, occupation and wider employment policies and practices. A variety of views were also expressed regarding the role of different groups in helping young people to become more employable, but the consensus view is that there exists a shared responsibility between the education system, parents, employers and young people themselves.

The research results suggest a number of ways employers, policy makers, educational institutions and young people themselves might act in order to improve the employability of young people and facilitate their integration into the wider workforce. These include:

- Greater understanding by employers of the attitudes of young people towards jobs, and greater appreciation by young people of the desire of employers to have a loyal committed workforce.

- More effective communication by employers of the types of skills and attributes they are seeking in young people.

- The need for young people to acknowledge that they do have useful things to offer, for example in the field of IT (information technology) skills, and to communicate this effectively to employers.

- Recognition by employers of the efforts made by educational institutions to improve employability, and closer working between employers, schools, colleges and universities on this issue.

- The need to seek new and innovative ways of enabling young people to gain work experience, which is widely acknowledged to be the most important factor in improving employability.

- The need for employers and young people to make more effective use of the induction process, recognising that it can be seen as a period of extended work experience. Mentoring or 'buddy' schemes and the linking of induction with training and development are important elements of good practice identified by this research.

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of the research was to investigate the role played by the induction process in facilitating the integration of young people into the labour market and in improving their employability. More specific aims included addressing the following questions:

- In what ways do perceptions of the attributes necessary to demonstrate 'employability' differ between young people who are in the process of entering full-time employment and employers that are recruiting young people?

- What are the key factors that influence the perceptions of young people, in terms of educational experience/qualifications, gender, ethnicity, social background, previous work experience, sources of advice etc.?

- How do young people's and employers' perceptions change during the first six months of 'induction' into new jobs?

- What differences exist between the induction processes within different types of employers (notably small businesses and larger employers) and what are the main factors underlying these variations?

- What lessons can be learned for policy and practice about the role of the induction process in helping young people to become more 'employable'?

- What would constitute 'good practice' in the induction process in terms of adapting employers' and young people's perceptions towards a less contested notion of employability?

Previous research findings

One of the main motivations for undertaking this study was that, despite the large amount of research that has been undertaken on young people (including graduates) in the labour market, relatively little is known about the induction process that occurs once young people have entered their first job. In particular, there are research gaps in relation to particular groups of young people, notably 'non-disadvantaged' groups, 17–19 year olds and those that do not participate in government-sponsored programmes. Moreover, the understanding of the concept of 'employability' varies between young people, employers, educationalists and policy makers, with potentially important consequences for labour market policy and practice. Some key points emerging from a literature review that was undertaken as part of the project are outlined below.

Employability

The concept of 'employability' is at the centre of much of the policy and research debate regarding the experiences of young people in the labour market. A number of writers have undertaken reviews of the literature in this area, and it is clear that there is no one agreed definition of 'employability', with the quotes in the box below illustrating some of the definitions that have been put forward. Employability is high on the agenda of the UK government and is closely connected with the evolving education, lifelong learning and welfare to work policies of the current government.

Philpott (1999) has highlighted two different types of employability policy. The first aims to increase access to employment and the second aims to enhance performance in employment and increase earning power. Philpott explains that the social and economic consequences of poor employability are often highlighted in individual terms, but goes on to consider the

Definitions of employability

It has been summarised as the means by which individuals can cope with changing employment conditions, organisations can maintain their ability to adapt and succeed and the nation can enhance its competitiveness. However, despite such grand hopes, pinning down the concept can be elusive and turning the rhetoric into anything that can serve as a firm basis for action can be frustrating. (Tamkin and Hillage, 1999, p. ix)

Employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For the individual, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess, the way they use those assets and present them to employers and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work. (Hillage and Pollard, 1998, p. 12)

Employability is the possession by an individual of the qualities and competences required to meet the changing needs of employers and customers and thereby help to realise his or her aspirations and potential to work. (CBI, 1999, p. 1)

The concept of employability assumes that jobs will be lost. (Bagshaw, 1997, p. 187)

other effects of poor employability. These include structural unemployment, lost output, widening pay inequality and greater job insecurity. He argues that these problems are the basic rationale for policy interventions to improve employability.

The experiences of young people
Currently, very little research or literature exists which examines, directly, the experiences of young people (particularly 'non-disadvantaged' young people), in relation to employability and the induction process as they begin a full-time job for the first time. Indeed, Morris *et al.* (1999) noted in their comprehensive *A Literature Review of Young People's Attitudes Towards Education, Employment and Training* that 'No good quality research literature has been discovered on young people's attitudes towards employers or the structure of work' (p. 64) and that 'There is a small amount of literature on young people's views on skill requirements, and a larger body

of literature on their attitudes towards unemployment, which is an illustration of the fact that so much additional research has focused on "disadvantaged" groups of young people' (p. 74).

Young people's attitudes towards employment, training and the world of work
Sources of information about the labour market and employment opportunities vary and include a range of formal and informal sources. Hocking (1998), in her research with young people in Birmingham, identified the Careers Service, teachers, friends, family and the media as the key sources of information, with the highest proportion of young people (88 per cent) indicating that the Careers Service had been helpful in providing information. However, the impact that this information has on an individual's employability is also debatable.

Some of the existing research also examines, to a limited extent, whether young people have a grasp of the types of attributes that employers are seeking in their recruits. Morris *et al*. (1999) found that young people aged 15–24 identified communication skills, general education, good appearance and teamworking skills as the attributes that employers are most likely to seek. Work for Central London TEC (1999) suggested that young people had a good understanding of the mix of qualifications and skills needed for the central London labour market, including, for half of them, a degree, along with literacy, communication and teamworking skills. Research in Bradford (Policy Research Institute, 1999) however, suggested that 'young people are not particularly clear about the wider issues relating to employability … They largely concentrated on the debate about qualifications and experience, rather than discussing the more generic transferable skills' (p. 8). Despite this, a number of young people participating in the focus groups in Bradford were able to identify a variety of attributes that employers may require, including numeracy, reading, writing, IT and teamworking skills as well as having a good attendance record at school/college, having a pleasant and cheerful attitude and being able to work in a group as well as on one's own.

Young people's experiences in work
Gaining an understanding of young people's expectations of the world of work is important in assessing the extent to which they consider issues of employability and induction to be of significance in their transition to the labour market. This assessment can be enhanced by considering the actual experiences of young people who have started work. Two pieces of

research are particularly pertinent in this respect. The first, for DfEE (Department for Education and Employment), examines the experiences of a group of 16 and 17 year olds who are in jobs without training (IFF Research, 1998) and the second uses data from the National Youth Cohort Study to examine experiences of the world of work at age 16, 17 and 18 (Payne *et al*., 1996).

The majority of young people in the DfEE study found work in a relatively short space of time. This was partly because they wanted to 'get a job' (i.e. any job) and were not particularly discriminating about their choice. This reflects issues about the extent to which young people distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' jobs or are just willing to take whatever is on offer. If the latter is the case, many young people are likely to encounter a situation where they are not receiving induction or training and their opportunities for personal development are limited.

These findings are reinforced by Payne *et al*. (1996) who identified a situation whereby young people aged 16–18 tend to move out of the occupations in which they were originally employed, particularly if those occupations had low entry standards and offered few opportunities for training.

Factors impacting on young people's 'employability'
A number of factors that could impact on young people's 'employability' have already been identified, including, for example, the route by which they move into employment and their reasons for choosing to seek work rather than continue with education or training. From the literature, a wide range of factors that could

potentially enhance the employability of young people have been identified. These include:

- working part-time whilst still in education

- work experience undertaken whilst at school

- parental experience in the labour market

- key skills development

- mentoring in schools

- routes into work/types of qualifications achieved

- reasons for accessing employment – 'push or pull'.

Employers, young people and employability
The notion that some of those seeking to enter the labour market or indeed maintain their position within the labour market need to ensure they have attributes that are valuable to employers is not new. However, the onus is being placed more and more on young people entering the labour market in their first main job to be fully prepared ('job ready') and meet employers' needs. The implication of much government policy on employability is that the main responsibility for the growth and cultivation of these employability attributes lies with the individual and the education system.

A survey conducted as part of the Industry in Education research looked at those employers who had recruited 16–20 year olds in the last five years. Among the key findings were:

- Companies are recruiting far fewer 16–20 year olds than previously.

- Because many more young people are staying in education, those who are looking for jobs are the least able.

In relation to the qualities and skills required by employers, findings include:

- Employers placed more emphasis on candidates' qualities and attitudes than on learned skills.

- There is a tendency to discount qualifications in favour of personal qualities.

- Employers want young people who are articulate, personable, lively, willing to learn, have respect and with good customer care skills.

Employers' criticisms include:

- Young people have poor day-to-day literacy and numeracy skills.

- Not enough young people prepare well for interviews.

Employers' understanding of 'employability'
It is important to consider what employers understand by employability and what value they place on different employability attributes. In one of their human resources briefings the Confederation of British Industry (CBI, 1999) examines this issue and presents some key recommendations for improving employability.

The key employability attributes identified by the CBI are as follows:

- values and attitudes compatible with work – e.g. desire to learn, to improve and to take advantage of change

- basic skills – literacy and numeracy

- key skills – e.g. communication, IT, problem solving, teamworking

- other generic skills – e.g. modern language, customer service

- up-to-date relevant knowledge and understanding

- ability to manage own career.

Another study (Evaluation and Development Agency, 1997a) gave employers a list of skills and attributes that had been suggested in previous studies and asked them to indicate which were more important, what they understood by the skills and what evidence they looked for. Again, this was focused around recruitment of young people rather than around the first few months of the employment period.

The issues uncovered in this survey were explored further following a more in-depth survey and interviews with some of the employers (Evaluation and Development Agency, 1997b). The report took each individual attribute that employers suggested they looked for in their young recruits and asked the employers to explain what they understood by particular attributes and what evidence they looked for in their young job seekers. As expected, employers do not always have the same understanding of different attributes and some definitions given are quite general. For instance, almost all of the respondents wanted young people who were able and willing to learn, but employers did not find it easy to define what they meant by this and the general conclusion was that it meant that young people showed initiative and were generally

enthusiastic. The evidence that employers look for in the young people included a work experience report, exam results, an interest in continuing education, the way in which questions are asked in the interview and if they had researched the company at all.

Employers and the training of young people
While there is an extensive and growing literature on workplace training and skills issues (see, for example, National Skills Task Force, 2000, and supporting documents), there is little research that explicitly considers the training of young people in the workplace. The literature review identified only two pieces of research that provide relevant information, by Hillage *et al.* (1998) and IFF Research (2000).

The study by IFF Research (2000) presents the results of the Learning and Training at Work survey that has replaced the annual Skill Needs in Britain survey. The survey was conducted in 1999 and involved over 4,000 telephone interviews with employers of all sizes. A series of questions were asked about the recruitment and training of young people aged 16–24, and some key findings are summarised below:

- Thirty-seven per cent of employers employ people aged 16–24, with larger businesses and those in the distribution sector being more likely than average to have young employees.

- Thirty-one per cent of respondents had recruited a young person during the year prior to the survey. Again, smaller employers are less likely than average to recruit young people, and less likely to retain them once recruited.

- Only 22 per cent of employers said that they took qualifications into account 'a lot' when recruiting young people.

- Other factors taken into account in the recruitment decision are personality/attitude/flexibility/general suitability (47 per cent of recruiters), experience (25 per cent), appearance (22 per cent), specific skills (20 per cent), interpersonal skills (17 per cent) and interest/enthusiasm/willingness to learn (16 per cent).

- Employers are more likely to use their own internal training scheme for young people, as opposed to government-supported initiatives such as Modern Apprenticeships.

The study by Hillage *et al*. (1998) is the only one that specifically addresses the issue of the training of young people in the workplace and, moreover, examines the induction process in some detail. The study is based upon a literature review and 26 case studies of employers that had recently recruited young people aged 16–17. Key issues considered by the study include:

- Why do employers recruit young people?

- What roles do young people perform in the workplace?

- What approaches do employers adopt to the training and development of young people?

The research suggests that employers recruit young people for a range of reasons that impact upon the content and nature of the training that is subsequently provided. A distinction is drawn between employers that see young recruits as part of a short-term resourcing strategy and those that have a longer-term view of the development of young people in their organisations. The case studies also reinforce the findings of other studies in relation to the importance of personal attributes as opposed to formal qualifications or skills. Most employers also see prior work experience as a positive attribute, and perceive problems with the employment of 'wholly raw' recruits.

Unlike other studies, the Hillage *et al*. research does consider the issue of the induction of young people, and notes that while all recruiters of young people provide some sort of induction, there are considerable variations in terms of:

- *formality* – very few employers have a written down induction programme

- *length of time* – this can range from half a day to an indeterminate length of time

- *content* – at a minimum, induction programmes are designed to make recruits 'feel at home'; at the other end of the scale induction is integrated into a longer-term development programme

- *assessment* – formal assessment is not common, but does occur in some cases.

This study confirms that the induction process is an important yet under-researched aspect of the labour market experience of young people. It also raises the question of the young person's perspective on the induction process, which is central to this project.

In conclusion, it is clear that there is a gap in information on the experiences of both employers and their young employees during

the first six months of their working careers. Employability attributes and skills may become even more important during this period than during the recruitment stage. The in-depth and qualitative data that have been generated through this project provide a basis upon which to address some key questions around employability, employers, young people and graduates during their first six months in the labour market.

Research methodology

The research presented in this report builds upon previous work done by the Policy Research Institute (PRI) in the Bradford district. The Bradford Youth Cohort Study (Policy Research Institute, 2000) collected information about the qualifications, experiences, aspirations and attitudes to employment of Year 11 students in Bradford schools. Data were collected primarily through self-completion questionnaires, although a number of focus groups were also held in order to pursue some issues in more depth. Respondents have been followed up twice subsequent to the initial survey, and most would be aged between 18 and 21 at the time of the current research project.

The Bradford Youth Cohort Study provided a large and rich source of data on the education, training and employment experiences of around 3,000 young people in Bradford, most of the data being quantitative in nature.

The young people interviewed for this project were identified by contacting a subsample of the Youth Cohort Study database thought most likely to be starting their first job in the near future. Letters were sent out, with

pro formas asking respondents to indicate whether:

* they were likely to be starting a new job in the near future

* they were willing to participate in the research.

Those respondents who replied positively to both of these questions were contacted by telephone by a member of the PRI research team. Researchers arranged to meet the young people, in most cases in a public place such as a café, and interviews were undertaken following a topic guide (Appendix 1). The interviewees were asked if they were happy to be contacted in three to six months' time and in most cases they agreed. Follow-up interviews were undertaken on a similar basis, using a revised topic guide taking into account the fact that the respondent would have had at least three months' experience of the workplace by the time of the follow-up interview. In some cases where it was difficult to arrange face-to-face meetings, follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone. The target was to interview 40 young people in this way, representing a cross-section by age, gender, ethnicity and employment status. In the event, a total of 60 interviews were carried out with 30 young people.

In parallel with the interviews with young people, interviews were held with a cross-section of employers in Bradford and surrounding areas. These employers were identified through the Bradford and District Employer Survey as being likely to recruit and employ young people and graduates. A sampling frame was devised in order to ensure that the research involved a cross-section of

employers, according to sector, size and frequency of recruitment of young people. Employers were contacted by telephone and appointments were made for researchers to interview the personnel or human resources manager and/or other manager(s) concerned with the recruitment and induction of young people. In total 39 interviews were undertaken with employers.

2 Experiences of young people

Young people's views before starting their first job

Young people were asked about their views prior to beginning their first job. The questions covered a range of issues including whether or not they felt they had overachieved or underachieved in public examinations taken at school and whether this had any impact on their subsequent decisions relating to education, training and employment. They were also asked to give details of the route which they took from the age of 16 and the factors which influenced this. In particular they were asked whether they ended up doing what they had planned to do. They were also asked about whether they had clear career and education plans and if so, what these were.

The majority of respondents said that they felt they had neither underachieved nor overachieved in relation to their public examination results. However, there were a few exceptions. A few young people had overachieved and found that additional options to those that they had previously considered were now open to them. This did not necessarily always work in their favour. One respondent who had always planned to become a fireman was persuaded on the basis of his A-level results to go to university. He did not actually enjoy the experience and eventually left to pursue his original career goal.

Of those young people whose results were broadly in line with their expectations, it was clear that some were more concerned to achieve a particular level of results than others. The answers given by most respondents sounded as if they had made quite considerable efforts to achieve the grades which they had, but one or two give a different picture. One young man said:

Didn't even revise for them, just messed around, just thought it was a piece of paper, not important. Thought I would just take them anyway. The C and B were alright, thought I would do OK in Art because I was a good drawer, didn't think I would get a C in English though, that was good.

There were substantial differences in the replies given to questions about the extent to which these young people had clear education, training, and occupational plans that they were attempting to fulfil. Broadly speaking, the young people fell into two groups of a roughly equal size consisting of those who had some plans which were often rather vague and those who had a clear plan. There was also a smaller group of young people who had no clear plans at all relating to either education or occupation.

Those who did not have a clear plan may well have had a family background in which the notion of a career did not necessarily figure very strongly. For example, one respondent said:

Didn't have a clue what I wanted to do. My step-dad is a flag layer for the council, thought that would be a good thing to do, but only because he was doing it. Other things I thought about were going to college for Art but I got bored of drawing. I thought about welding and there was a job going at a firm that my neighbour works at. He told me about it and I went along.

Of those respondents who had some kind of plan although not necessarily a clear one, a number chose to stay on in education in the hope that their plans would crystallise whilst doing so. Others had once had clear plans but these had now been abandoned, in a number of cases as a result of undertaking work experience in their proposed area of work and finding as a

result that they no longer wished to pursue their original aspirations.

Some young people had a very clear plan which was the focus of their education and training experiences, sometimes from a quite early age. One of the female respondents said:

> I wanted to be a mechanic since I can remember – my granddad had a garage for 40 years and my dad is a mechanic. I've been brought up around cars – it's a laugh. I've managed to get to do what I wanted to do even though I didn't get my qualifications – it's flukey that I'm here. I preferred being at the work placement to being in college.

This respondent also illustrated the importance of the influence exercised by a family member either through directly persuading the young person to aim in a particular direction, or by offering the role model selected by the young person.

Post-16 education, training and employment experiences

The respondents had a wide range of experiences in their post-16 years. Around half stayed on in a school sixth form and took A-levels. A small number of those who stayed on in the sixth form took a GNVQ qualification. These were more commonly taken by those students who left school at 16 and went to college. However, some of those who went on to college also took A-levels. Three respondents went on Youth Training courses, including one who had the opportunity to become a professional footballer.

For some of the young people there was no real question of choosing among a range of options even though these existed. They simply followed through what they viewed as a normal pattern of progression from GCSEs through into the school sixth form. This was typically the case for those who felt that they had, or were supposed to have, relatively high aspirations in terms of the achievement of conventional academic qualifications at degree level. However, for those students who were more concerned about entering the world of work and obtaining a vocational training, a wider range of possibilities presented themselves. Several young people reported how they were recommended to take GNVQ courses either by college advisers or by teachers at their schools who identified the fact that they were struggling with what were viewed as the academic demands of conventional A-level courses.

Relevance of school experience to the world of work

Respondents were asked about the extent to which they viewed their experience of school as relevant to the world of work. The most common answer given was that school was not particularly relevant. However, a minority of the young people felt that school was very relevant. Others had mixed feelings. Sometimes the views expressed contained a number of elements which were not always, on the face of it, completely consistent.

> Being at school helps you get to know people. You get a good understanding of the basics; reading and writing, maths. When I was at school I hated it. I enjoyed seeing my friends. It does set you on a path. It's all about qualifications these days.

The positive remarks which were made about the role of school as a preparation for work referred to a range of different aspects of

school such as taking responsibility for your own work, learning to get on with people, learning some basic skills and, in a few cases, learning some job-specific skills. Some respondents also referred to the important role played by work experience. There is plenty of evidence that for many young people a key element in the experience of school is being with their friends and that this is what they really like about it.

The world of work often came as a major shock after being at school. One respondent expressed this very clearly:

> *My view of work was that it was Monday to Friday 9–5, straightforward, you'll know what you're doing because you will have been trained for it. But it's nothing like that, I'm doing shift work, it's long hours – up to 12 hour shifts. You never know everything. I take 999 calls for the ambulance, faced with different situations every day, could get a call and not know what I'm doing. You feel very insecure about yourself, go from being top of your class, knowing the school and everybody in it and all the teachers, to not knowing what you're doing at all.*

The young people were also asked about their experience of careers advice at school. A wide range of responses were given, indicating substantial differences in the kinds of provision made and in the responses of young people to it. In some cases the pupils were seen frequently and had access to high quality advice and information. In other cases very little information was available. In some cases careers advice was included as part of the normal curriculum, in others it was on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. In some schools pupils were given training in how to undertake job interviews.

Several interviewees said that it was not really possible for careers advisers to give an accurate depiction of the world of work.

> *We did stuff about preparing for interviews. I didn't really have a clue about what work would be like, just thought you'd go in and get paid at the end of the week and have some money. But it's not that easy, you get problems at work, stress and that. They don't tell you about that.*

Prior experiences of and attitudes to the world of work

For many pupils a major factor in the development of their conceptions of the world of work came from work experience organised by the school. In most cases this was compulsory and normally involved two weeks in which they worked outside of the school at a place of employment.

The interviewees reported a number of responses to their work experience. Several found that they were given tedious and sometimes demeaning tasks. A few found work experience in a job which was of direct relevance to clear occupational aspirations which they were pursuing. These generally enjoyed the experience. However, a few of these found that the work they had originally planned to enter was not actually to their liking. Indeed a number of respondents drew a lesson from work experience of a negative kind in that they were definitely persuaded they did not want to enter the area of work of which they were given experience.

Some respondents reflected on their work experience in terms of a missed opportunity to allow them to take part in a broad range of activities. Others felt that they could usefully

have been given some feedback following their work experience. Several young people who had worked in retail jobs found this quite useful because they were actually able to do the job in a comparable way to those employed in it.

Some people had a very positive experience as the following quotation shows.

> *I had a period of work experience in Year 10 – PE teaching at St Francis's first school. I really enjoyed this, felt like I'd achieved something. Working with children who couldn't do something at the beginning of the week but then at the end of the week with my help could, was rewarding. After this experience, teaching was something I'm thinking about going into.*

Work experience was not the only source of the conceptions of the workplace developed by our respondents. In a few schools employers came into the school, in one case to take part in a careers fair, in another case as part of a regular series of talks given by employers to children at the school. However, the most common source of experience of the workplace came from relatives who ran small businesses. Sometimes these were parents and at other times close relatives such as uncles or aunts. It appears that in these cases it was not uncommon for young people to work, or to help out, in these small enterprises. Given the family context of this work, the young people appeared to gain a great deal from this and in some cases developed an interest in pursuing this line of business themselves. The fact that they were being introduced to the work by a relative who would have a personal interest in them was probably an important factor here.

Skills possessed

Questions about the skills that respondents thought they possessed which would be attractive to employers produced a range of different answers. Many of the answers focused on aspects of personality, often relating these to interpersonal skills. People said that they 'got on with people' or that they were able to work as a member of a team. A few respondents mentioned that they could offer honesty. Others referred in a variety of ways to their willingness to expend effort or their enthusiasm or eagerness in a job. Several respondents mentioned their time management capabilities or emphasised their punctuality. Communication skills of various kinds were mentioned by a number of respondents. This was probably the most common element in the answers given. These communication skills were sometimes related to a specific medium of communication, in particular telephone skills. A significant minority of those interviewed mentioned their ICT (information and communication technology) skills. Four of the respondents referred explicitly to their qualifications as indicating skills which they possessed. However, in the main, the skills which people wanted to emphasise were not of a kind associated with formal qualifications.

In answering this question, a number of people went through a series of attributes, capabilities and skills. The following answer is typical of this tendency.

> *Reliability, time management. I can work individually or as part of a team. I am methodical and organised. I feel that what I did at University doesn't help in my day to day job. But I did learn time management skills.*

Views of skills sought by employers

There was considerable variation in what respondents said about what they thought employers were looking for. Apart from a few young people who had very specific qualifications for the job that they were entering, very few mentioned qualifications as something which employers were looking for, and where they did, this was sometimes in the context of a qualification being viewed by an employer as showing that 'you had made an effort'.

The two most common issues raised in answer to this question related first to willingness and ability to work (reliability, punctuality, hard work) and second to willingness to learn, or what might be termed trainability.

Some respondents mentioned experience as being something that employers were looking for and sometimes this was viewed negatively since being new entrants to the labour market it was unlikely that they would possess it. However, some did as a result of either work experience or holiday work with a particular employer and in these cases their experience seems to have been viewed by employers very positively. This also indicated the importance in recruitment of some personal knowledge of the potential recruit on the part of the employer.

A very common answer given to this question simply went through a range of skills and capabilities as the following two examples of what young people said they had to offer to employers show. One respondent said:

> *A hard worker*
> *Someone who can achieve targets*
> *Loyalty*
> *Somebody who will get on with the job*
> *Initiative.*

Another respondent said:

> *Good communication skills*
> *Good information technology skills*
> *Good interpersonal skills*
> *Ability to use your own initiative*
> *Able to get on and do the job and produce results.*

Expectations of first job

The young people were asked what they expected of their first job. The two factors most frequently mentioned were a good wage and something that was either interesting or enjoyable or both. A number of young people also mentioned they wanted a job which was close to home. Aside from these answers, a wide range of other factors were also mentioned. The availability of training was important to some respondents. Some wanted jobs which were linked to their qualifications. Some wanted jobs which would enable them to accumulate experience for later job seeking or which might provide them with transferable skills which would improve their future employment chances. A number were simply looking for a job which would, as one put it, 'tide me over'. In these cases the job merely had to fulfil some minimal criteria in the mind of the respondent.

> *The job was not my ideal job. However, it came up and I decided to go for it. It sounded interesting and would give me more work experience, money and security.*

Some young people appeared to have taken a job that was on offer because they felt under pressure to get any sort of job.

> *I got the job through an employment agency in Bradford. I took along a copy of my CV, sat a few tests and completed a form. I was then*

interviewed by the employer. I had sent off for a few application forms for different kinds of jobs but didn't apply. It wasn't a job I particularly wanted to do but the agency offered me the office junior position or labouring work. I was getting hassled by my parents to get a full-time job and any would have done. I wanted the job because it was a smart and respectable office job where I could go to work dressed in a shirt and tie.

In a few cases rather unusual circumstances relating to the job were attractive to an employee. One example involved a young person who took a job in a residential care home. They explain the reasons as follows:

I wanted something interesting and fun. Working with children outdoors appealed to me and it gave me a chance to move away from home and have some independence because you live on site, you live and work quite closely with people. I felt it would be a bit like university. The idea of getting qualifications while working also appealed to me.

Young people's views after a few months' experience of their first job

Types of jobs entered

The young people interviewed entered a range of jobs. Some of these were jobs requiring professional training such as physiotherapy and computer programming. Two respondents were working for the emergency services. Two were working in customer services as call centre workers for public utilities. Two were working for building societies. A number were working in junior administrative jobs, one in a small import–export firm, another in an estate agent's and another in a local authority. One respondent was working as a waiter in a restaurant.

Expectations and reality

The young people were asked about the extent to which their prior expectations of the job were fulfilled. Three respondents reported that they had no clear expectations of the job but that once they had settled in they found it was satisfactory. Around a third said that the job was much as they had expected. In some cases this was because they had had prior experience of the work before becoming regular employees. Some others said that they liked the work which they were in. A number of those who said this had been given a pay rise and some additional training since entering the job. Five of the respondents had found that the job was not what they were looking for and had quickly moved on.

I wanted a job with a good future and a decent wage. They were training me up as well and I was learning a good skill [welding]. *The wages weren't that good though and the people there said it wasn't a good place to stay. I left eventually, I moved into a house with a mate and the wages were too low so I couldn't afford my rent. I went to get a job with better wages.*

Another respondent who did not like her job had remained with the employer but had shifted to part-time work. Three respondents were pleasantly surprised by the job which they found more interesting and challenging than they had anticipated. They generally expressed this in terms of being given greater responsibility than they thought they would have. However, for one respondent this greater responsibility came because of staff shortages which meant that she had to take on extra work and responsibilities to cover for non-existent colleagues. This was in a job in the health

service and she was quite worried about this additional responsibility and about her ability to meet it.

Induction and/or training

Very complex arrangements and highly organised systems were sometimes evident, as illustrated by the examples in the box. There is very considerable variation in the arrangements which employers make for the induction process for their employees. These variations appear to cover various dimensions of the process.

The timing of the induction process

The induction process generally took place very early on in the employment of the young people interviewed. Normally it began soon after they had started although in one case due to staff shortages it was postponed for several months.

The formality of the induction process

In larger firms there was normally a formal process of induction which had been explicitly designed for new entrants rather than implemented on an ad hoc basis for the particular young person entering the job. However, in a number of very small firms there was no formal process and a variety of arrangements were employed including various forms of informal mentoring.

Where there was a formal process this often involved a course of some kind which new recruits were required to attend. Sometimes this took place within the workplace but in other cases recruits were required to attend a specialised training centre. This was more common in large firms than in small. Often there would also be a manual or a booklet that they were required to work on and sometimes discuss with a supervisor or a mentor.

Case 1

Induction involved a ten-day training course and induction at the 'centre' (her place of work). The ten-day training course involved group activities, role playing and team-building exercises. She was assessed at different stages of the course performing various activities. The centre manager carried out her workplace induction. She was introduced to staff and showed where everything was kept. Company policies and procedures were explained to her – the 'log book', first aid log and 'nominals' (a list of children on site and if they have any allergies or special needs). Fire procedures, health and safety, lifting and handling, chemical training and child protection were also included. This lasted 'on and off' for about two days. She felt the purpose of induction was 'to make sure I knew what I was meant to be doing, and safety'.

Case 2

There was a formal process of induction to the Trust. This involved finding out about the different departments involved in clinical pathology. She was shown how different samples and specimens were routed for examination and where the results had to be sent. This took one day. There was also an informal process of induction taking half a day or so to the job itself. In particular stress was put on

(continued)

---

safety aspects involved with ensuring that you did not infect yourself. There was also a half-day course on radiation and how to deal with radioactive materials where required.

One purpose of the induction process was to cover various legal stipulations relating to information which employees were required to be given. Another purpose of the induction was how to deal with problems which regularly arose such as errors in the kind of material which was sent for analysis.

Some aspects of the induction process were linked with training, particularly the work which was done on radiation and on how results should be recorded and communicated. Having been on this training enabled her to add to her CV.

Progress was assessed on an informal basis by the head of department. This was not done on a regular or timetabled basis. It was very useful. She felt her skills had improved as a result of the induction process. In particular she learned a great deal about what to look for from the results of tests undertaken. She did feel more confident after the induction and was able to work on her own when her supervisor was not available.

The induction process was successful but there were still difficulties in the job particularly due to two factors: time pressures because of the rapid turnaround which was required, and pressures to ensure that the tests were accurate and that no mistakes were made in either the testing or the recording and communication of results.

Case 3

Progress is assessed every month. This is done through a random monitoring of calls which are then reviewed with the supervisor. In addition, every two weeks the supervisor listens in to four calls and comments are made following this. The interviewee is given a mark for this work and the norm is to achieve 80 per cent or more. There is also a work norm of ten calls per hour. This is reviewed daily and the next day if you have fallen short you are given information and you may be threatened or least told to work faster. The interviewee found this system rather oppressive. She said, 'to be honest with you, I don't like the feedback', and felt that it was not necessarily helpful.

She said that the initial training did improve her skills and prepared her for the use of the various systems which she needed to work on. She also felt more confident.

The duration of the induction process
The arrangements for induction varied substantially in terms of how long they were to last. In one case, the induction process was designed to last for half a day; in other cases, induction procedures went on for up to three months although not necessarily all of this time was devoted to induction activities. In a number of firms a set time each week, sometimes half a day, sometimes more, was set aside for induction activities.

A feature of the induction process in many firms was a system of regular reviews of progress. The time period between these varied

considerably. In some cases they took place on a weekly basis, in others they were undertaken daily. Sometimes there was a formal process of assessment with scores given, while in other cases the feedback was more impressionistic and qualitative.

In a few cases young people were initially employed on a probationary basis. This probation period might be three months or six months.

The focus of the induction process

The nature of the induction process in terms of the issues on which it focused varied considerably. In some cases the focus was on the organisation as a whole in which the young person was working, in others the focus was on the particular job which they were doing. In some large and complex organisations new recruits were frequently required to gain some experience in a wide range of different departments in order to give them a picture of the organisation as a whole.

The degree of customisation of the induction process

Except in the larger organisations, induction was normally arranged on an individual basis. However, in one financial institution, where ten people had been taken on at the same time, the induction process was undertaken with the ten people working as a team. In this case, as in some others, an important focus was on team building as well as the more usual concern with the organisation as a whole and the particular job which recruits were to do.

Mentoring or personal supervision

In many organisations young people starting work were given some kind of mentor or personal supervisor. In larger organisations this was normally organised on a formal basis, although in the smaller organisations, while it was often done, it was done more informally. In one call centre the mentoring and supervision were particularly rigorous.

The effectiveness of induction

Most of the young people interviewed indicated that they felt their induction process had been relatively successful. The criteria which they tended to use were either that their confidence in doing the job had increased or that their skills had increased. A few were also pleased that they had a picture of how the organisation as a whole operated, in particular where this might provide useful knowledge about future career opportunities and possible changes of direction.

Most of the young people who were given feedback about their performance found this extremely useful as a means of identifying what they were doing well, and as a means of identifying issues which they needed to concentrate on to improve their performance.

Effect on future ambitions and plans?

The young people were asked how long they proposed to stay in the job they currently held. About half of those interviewed indicated that they were likely to stay in the job for a considerable time. The strongest commitment to staying in the job was given by the two employees with professional skills and qualifications along with an emergency service worker. All three were strongly committed to their particular area of work and determined to stay in it. Other interviewees felt that they would stay for a long period with their employer because they were working in large

organisations where there were a variety of departments and a range of different career opportunities appeared to be open to them.

A number of employees indicated their willingness to stay in a particular job for a long time in a conditional way. The conditions which they specified involved either access to training which had been promised or at least indicated, or access to promotions and improved career prospects in terms of income and the nature of work to be done.

A number of those interviewed had already decided to leave the job which they were in. In a few cases this was because of what they had discovered about the nature of the job or because they disliked the system of supervision which they were subject to. In other cases they were disappointed that advantages they had expected, such as access to further training, had not yet materialised and did not seem to be in sight.

A number of those interviewed saw their tenure as strictly temporary. They had entered their current employment intending to stay in it for a limited time. Three participants expressed their desire to go travelling. In one case, the young person interviewed said that they would like to move from their current job into one with a larger firm and after a few years there, to move away to Australia:

I think I'll probably stay in the job for another two or three years to get experience of the work behind me. I might then move to a larger firm. Working in a small firm is restricting because of the narrow range of work, and the limited opportunities available for promotion. But I will stay in the same area of work.

What I really want to do is to accumulate enough money to go to Australia and finish my scuba-diving qualifications and work in that area.

Two interviewees also viewed their stay in their job as temporary and hoped eventually to start their own business. In one case this was in the same line of work they were currently in; in another they simply desired to work on their own account but without having any clear plans for this. This particular employee had joined a firm and discovered shortly afterwards that it was to close and all the staff were to be made redundant.

How well prepared were the young people for their first job?

Impact of prior education training and experience

The extent to which the young people felt prepared for the jobs which they had entered varied very substantially. For some of the respondents, having previously had work experience in the same area which they later entered as full-time employees was a crucial factor which meant that they were familiar with the job before they began it. They therefore felt well prepared. A few respondents were undertaking a job for which they had received a prolonged and specific training. This was the case for a computer programmer and two young people who were working in laboratories. Each of these felt well prepared although there were some aspects of the job which they were not familiar with. For example, one of the laboratory workers found that the equipment available in a hospital laboratory was on a much larger scale and much more mechanised than she had been

used to using at university.

The most commonly mentioned factor in preparing people for work was work experience of some kind either at school, through placements whilst studying, or through part-time work undertaken prior to entering the labour market full-time. This was seen to have a variety of general and specific benefits by the young people. In some cases the benefits came from the actual content of the work; in others it came from developing a familiarity with the disciplines of regular work; and in others it came from having had prior experience of adjusting to the varied demands of entering a new workplace. These demands were both technical (relating to the work itself) and social (relating to integrating with new workmates). This question of integrating into the social environment of the workplace was mentioned by a number of respondents. Some of the young people found it difficult to fit into the existing relationships. Others referred to the problems of understanding the particular character of office politics in their workplace.

A number of young people emphasised the difficulties in adjusting to the workplace and being prepared for this:

> *I don't think I was well prepared for the job, but don't think I could have been. I was prepared as much as possible and as much as they could, but it is difficult to prepare for the job and dealing with people who are very upset or angry. I was given training but each caller is different.*

Some young people found entering the workplace particularly stressful. This was because of the major change in lifestyle which it represented and the difficult adjustments which often needed to be made:

> *I didn't expect the stress of having a job – things like worrying about your job, what the boss is thinking, having the boss on your back, if someone doesn't like you at work what they are saying about you, all make it stressful. It involves a lot of thinking, thought it would just be 'do the job, get the money'. Didn't feel prepared for this. School prepared me a bit I suppose in having to get up every day but not much else.*

> *No, didn't feel prepared at all. It is a very different place and you realise you don't know anything. In school you think you know everything and you get to work and realise you don't at all. Didn't feel prepared for dealing with people and making 'work' relationships. I'd done work experience before in a few places and so had a general idea of what work was like.*

For many of the young people the most difficult aspect of adjusting to the workplace was the regular routine of turning up to work. Several pointed out that higher education was not a particularly good preparation for this aspect of regular work. In one case involving the young man entering the fire service, since there was not a nine-to-five routine in his job, he did not find even his prior experience of work discipline a useful preparation.

The content of higher education, unless it was specifically related to the actual task to be performed at the workplace, was also not generally viewed as being especially useful at least from the point of view of being a preparation for work. However, a number of young people made positive remarks about their university experience in relation to other aspects of it such as the opportunity to study a range of different subjects and the opportunity to meet a wide range of different people.

It is important to be clear about the range of demands made on young people when they first enter the workplace and the consequent possible sources of difficulty which they may well face. These are brought out well by the example in the box.

> So far as the intellectual and cognitive demands of the job were concerned, this young man felt he was well prepared. What was something of a shock, having been a student for three years, was having to get up in the morning and attend work regularly. It was his view that experience of having a holiday job and a weekend job were those aspects of his past experience which were most useful in preparing him for the demands of full-time work. There were two aspects of the job for which he was not prepared, dealing with the people who were angry, and having to conduct business over the telephone. He was sceptical about the extent to which these skills could be taught at school or college. He felt they depended more on the type of personality you were.

Suggestions for improvement

At the end of the interview the respondents were asked how they thought that the preparation of young people for work might be improved by action taken by young people themselves, schools, parents and employers.

Many of the replies emphasised the importance of work experience so long as this was carefully selected and relevant to the students' needs and interests. It was seen as important that employers ensured that this really was an experience of work which would challenge the young people taking part in it.

Having a part-time job was also seen as an important preparation for work. Several replies mentioned the usefulness of assisting pupils in preparing job applications and in developing their interview skills. Other respondents pointed out what they saw as the importance of teamworking and suggested that this should be emphasised more in school.

One respondent referred to the importance for many office jobs of having some familiarity with office machinery and with office software.

The most radical suggestion was the idea of day release from school in which pupils might work one day a week either as part of a work experience or as a part-time employee.

3 Employers' experiences of young recruits

Sample description

The research team undertook a total of 39 face-to-face interviews with employers in the Bradford area over the period June to October 2001. The structure of the final sample broadly reflects the initial aim of this phase of the research, to obtain responses from a cross-section of employers in terms of:

- employment size

- sector

- ownership (private, public, non-profit)

- frequency of recruiting young people and/or graduates.

For example, respondents include large financial institutions based in Bradford, branches of major grocery and non-food retail chains, warehousing and distribution, public administration, health, several large and small manufacturers and educational establishments.

The interview schedule covered the recruitment and initial induction of both 'young people' (non-graduates in the 16–20 age bracket) and graduates. The recruitment of young people among the sample employers was more prevalent than that of graduates, so the majority of the comments made in this section refer to young people, unless otherwise stated. Where relevant, distinctions are made between the two groups.

Recruitment of young people

Respondents were asked whether they targeted young people especially for recruitment and, if so, for what types of jobs. They were also asked

to describe how they went about recruiting new young staff.

The extent to which young people are specifically targeted for recruitment depends primarily upon the nature of the job for which vacancies exist. Key factors include the occupation, the amount of experience required, the customer base, working conditions and health/safety/regulatory issues. There are four broad categories of jobs in this regard:

- Jobs for which young people are generally targeted – these include basic/junior retail, catering and administrative roles, work that involves part-time and/or flexible working (often targeted at students) and organisations for which the customer base is primarily young (e.g. clothing retail). In addition, jobs for which apprenticeships were typical in the past – such as motor repairs or construction trades – fall into this category.

- Jobs for which young people are not necessarily targeted, but for which the majority of applicants tend to be young people. Examples include lifeguards, catering assistants, bar staff, waiters/waitresses etc. Key reasons given by employers for the predominance of young applicants for such posts include the seasonal nature of the work and the low pay that is often on offer, which is not attractive to more mature applicants.

The above two categories apply to around half of the organisations that we interviewed. The remainder fall into a further two groups:

- Jobs for which young people generally compete with older applicants, with no particular targeting of or preference for young people. Examples include call centre work, food retailing, warehouse work and some catering roles (e.g. cooks).

- Jobs for which young people are either excluded due to health and safety or regulatory constraints (some warehouse and factory work), or for which employers feel young people are not suited (security work, some caring roles).

The methods used by employers to recruit young people vary considerably and appear to be related to the size/ownership of the organisation and/or the frequency with which recruitment takes place:

- Smaller employers, family businesses and infrequent recruiters of young people tend to mention 'personal recommendation', 'word of mouth' or similar phrases relating to informal recruitment methods. A particularly favoured route is to employ friends or family of existing employees or the business owners. Several employers stated that they used 'word of mouth' as their preferred method, but would resort to more formal techniques such as newspaper advertising as a fallback if nobody suitable could be found through informal approaches.

- Public sector and larger private sector organisations tend to use more formal methods such as press advertising, Jobcentres and (in the case of graduates) visiting universities. The use of

employment agencies to find new staff (often young people), and in some cases to directly employ them, seems to be common in some sectors, notably financial services. Such employers also tend to use formal appraisal and interview techniques, often incorporating psychometric testing and tests of literacy and numeracy skills.

- A small number of employers mentioned links with schools or colleges (e.g. work placement programmes) as a method of identifying potential young (or graduate) recruits. For example, a large financial organisation stated that, although young people were not specifically targeted for employment, it is their policy to retain strong links with schools. This includes encouraging young people leaving school to consider a job in the organisation.

Employers expressed mixed views about how easy it is to recruit the number and type of young people that they are seeking. It appears from our evidence that the majority of employers have experienced relatively little difficulty in recruiting the required number of young people. However, some important groups of employers mentioned a number of difficulties and ventured their views about the causes of such problems.

- Some large-scale employers of school leavers (e.g. the retail sector) expressed concerns that too many young people are being encouraged to pursue an educational route, leaving small numbers of potential recruits. For example, one employer said that 'young people no

longer want to start at the bottom and work their way up'.

- Employers in sectors such as catering, textiles and construction felt that many young people felt discouraged from seeking a career in this type of work, due to a generally poor image for these jobs projected by schools, careers advisers and parents. A typical comment came from a manager of a construction business:

  We try to give a bit of hope to school leavers in the area … schools are acting criminally keeping youngsters at school when they should be leaving and learning a trade … there's a massive skills shortage.

Other employers were less concerned about the quantity of young people coming forward than with their quality, an issue that is addressed in more detail below. One consequence of this is that turnover among young recruits is perceived to be higher than it was in the past. One employer had in the past pursued a policy of recruiting young people and 'starting them at the bottom'. They were now reconsidering this approach in the light of the fact that few of these young recruits remained with the company. The company described itself as 'less conducive to targeting young recruits', preferring more mature, experienced individuals.

Skills and attributes of young people

Clearly the types of attributes and skills required of young recruits vary according to the nature of the job in question. However, the interviews reveal a remarkably consistent picture across most types of employers and

occupations. With a small number of exceptions, employers place relatively little emphasis upon formal qualifications or specific technical skills or experience when talking about the things they look for in potential new recruits.

Employers' comments focused overwhelmingly upon 'generic' skills or attributes. Words or phrases that were mentioned repeatedly by different types of employer include:

- intelligence ('a bit of brains but not too much!' – small manufacturer)

- ability to communicate (mentioned by almost all respondents)

- mature attitude (important where the young person is dealing directly with customers)

- smart appearance (again relevant for jobs involving customer / client contact)

- confidence, notably the confidence to work independently and make decisions where necessary

- computer literacy (for office jobs, but increasingly for retail and distribution jobs)

- motivation

- willingness to learn

- enthusiasm and interest in the job.

Views about the extent to which young people possess the required attributes vary and it is difficult to paint an overall picture. Indeed, some attributes, such as confidence, enthusiasm or ambition, are seen by some employers as negative and by others as positive. Typical

responses to questions about the qualities of the young people that employers come across in the recruitment process include both negative and positive points.

Negative points include:

- lack of ambition, focus and/or commitment to the job/organisation, resulting in high turnover

- unrealistic expectations of the job

- poor communication skills

- lack of courteous conduct and social values, including punctuality and discipline

- young people are often seen as 'over-confident'

- but other employers felt that some of their young recruits lack confidence.

Positive points include:

- high levels of computer literacy

- articulate and confident

- often bright and enthusiastic, at least initially

- liven up the place, bring in new ideas, 'breath of fresh air' etc.

However, only a few employers commented positively on young people's commitment, ambition and/or willingness to learn.

Clearly, the extent to which the skills and attributes of young recruits are viewed positively or negatively by employers results from a range of factors, including the type of employer (e.g. size, sector), the type of job (occupation, wages, conditions, permanent/

temporary) and the types of young people attracted to those jobs. The following examples serve to illustrate these points:

Young people seem to be more confident than they were in the past, but it is difficult to see a real sense of commitment. Quite a lot of young people don't seem to give the attention to detail that we need ... we need 100 per cent commitment, 100 per cent attention to detail. Youngsters' expectations are sometimes a bit unrealistic; after 6 months they may think that they can do the job standing on their heads, but it takes 7 or 8 years' experience to really master this business. On the other hand, their computer literacy is a godsend.
(Manager of small insurance company, 35 employees)

Young people are more self-confident and freely spoken than they used to be – if they've got a suggestion or comment they'll tell you, they dare say it. But they've got a lot less loyalty and commitment – if something comes up outside work that they want to do, they'll do it.
(Hotel manager, 44 employees)

Young recruits tend to be more pliable than older staff. We can develop them in the ways of the organisation ... the industry is changing very fast and young people are more ready for change. But they are often lacking in the University of Life – they may have qualifications and so on, but they haven't had responsibilities like a family or mortgage.
(Branch manager of large financial institution)

Induction into the workplace

The role of induction in helping young people to become more 'employable' during the first

few months of employment is a central issue for this research project. Employers were asked to describe their induction processes and to state how they felt these affected the 'employability' of new young recruits.

Our findings reflect those of the IES (Institute for Employment Studies) study (Hillage *et al.*, 1998) and largely corroborate the stories of the young people that we interviewed. Induction practices vary significantly, with larger organisations (particularly in the public sector) tending to have more formalised systems. However, this is not universally true; some of the small to medium sized organisations were trying to implement more formal induction processes. Conversely, the sample included at least one large organisation that seemed to benefit from deliberately pursuing an informal, individualised approach to the induction of its new recruits.

The examples set out in the boxes illustrate the wide range of approaches to induction adopted by the employers in our sample.

Formal, structured induction – large financial institution

The organisation has adopted a structured approach to induction which operates for all new recruits. Responsibility is 'shared' between the 'centre' and the branch. The induction programme is considered to be 'very comprehensive' and maps out what is done 'on the first day', 'in the first week' and 'in the first month'. Prior to starting at the branch a young person would undertake a three-day induction programme run by the training section in Leeds.

The first day the branch would commence at 10 a.m. so as to avoid the 'morning rush'. The manager would introduce them to the other staff. They would receive input on health and safety in the branch, fire regulations etc. Initial jobs and tasks required of the new recruit would be carefully explained and monitored by a senior colleague.

A key part of the induction is the allocation of a 'buddy' to the new recruit. This would have been determined prior to starting and the new recruit will know who is to be their 'buddy'. The role of the 'buddy' is to ensure the smooth settling in and subsequent progress of the new recruit. They provide feedback and support within the branch. They play a role in the social side of the induction, i.e. taking them to lunch etc.

Assessment of progress is monitored via weekly chats with the 'buddy' alongside more informal day-to-day feedback. On a monthly basis the branch manager will 'have a chat' with the new recruit. After four months an interim probationary report is produced, drawing on feedback from the 'buddy' and the branch manger. This provides a good indication of whether the young person will be taken on permanently at the end of the six-month probationary period.

Although it was estimated that one in three are not deemed sufficiently strong to progress beyond the probationary period the induction programme was considered to be a good programme: one that was

(continued)

---

sufficiently structured but which at the same time gave branches a degree of flexibility. It was considered to be 'a very fair programme … no shock treatment … no surprises … very open'.

The 'buddy' part of the system was also considered very successful, enabling the young person to see them 'as a friend not as their employer'.

Formal initial training is woven into the induction programme and probationary period. For example, within two weeks of starting they will attend a cashier's course. Other formal courses, undertaken off site, will follow.

Six months on most new young recruits were considered to have improved their 'employability' skills. The following capabilities were identified:
*   increased confidence through talking and dealing with customers
*   realisation of the responsibilities of working in a team.

Formal induction in a marketing business employing 140 people

All new recruits receive induction training. The nature of this differs somewhat depending upon position and type of recruit. However, certain core elements are administered by HR (Human Resources) and include:
*   basic health and safety (supported by video)
*   holidays, sickness procedures etc.
*   domestic housekeeping.

Normally, these are dealt with by HR on the first day. Shopfloor recruits are likely to have received a basic induction from the agency controller although still see HR on their first day.

Beyond Day 1 induction becomes the responsibility of line management. New recruits spend time in different sections of the business to gain an overall familiarity and they might shadow someone for half a day.

New recruits will spend rather longer in those sections that are more pertinent to the position for which they have been recruited. This part of the programme continues for the remainder of the week. All inductees have a workbook which supports the programme and which is used in the final debrief with their manager at the end of the week.

The company then sees induction as important and they are convinced that a programme of this nature is necessary to ensure people settle in effectively and comfortably. Induction is development-oriented: designed to make new recruits feel welcome, part of a team and to allow their personality and strength to emerge as quickly as possible.

If it doesn't happen – if their manager is sick or something – it can be very demoralising; they don't know what's going on …we make them feel part of the team right from Day 1.

Nursing home (36 staff) with formal induction

A formal induction process is in place for all new recruits regardless of area of work. This process initially introduces new members of staff to the management, the work and relevant policies and procedures. They are then introduced to their own post: one week 'geared up around the specific job environment they work in'. It involves shadowing a senior or more experienced member of staff for a one-week period. For example, a care assistant would follow a week of early shifts so that the routine can be established. During this period they will chaperone/shadow a senior care assistant. At the end of the week a decision is made as to their ability to be left to work solo.

During the first six months of employment the belief is that they (young recruits) start learning more and so gradually take on more responsibility: 'they start to be inquisitive and ask things. You see them getting more and more confidence'. Informal assessment is said to take place on a continual basis; this is predominantly to make sure they are able to cope with certain aspects of the job such as working with terminally ill patients. Formal assessment takes place one month after commencing work. Aside from a review post-induction, a six-monthly (approx.) review process is in place. These aim to encourage self-reflection and review, the formal records of which are held in the individual's portfolio of skills (a portfolio they can take with them if/when they leave).

Changes in the skills and attributes of young recruits take the form of 'knowledge development and learning how to accept things; getting hardened to the job and working with terminally ill patients'. Further developments have a technical underpinning in that they develop a greater understanding of the terminology, of diseases, of equipment and lifting and handling techniques and, for example, skin care. Writing skills are also thought to improve; care assistants become adept in writing reports and care plans for patients. The 'social skills' (as defined by a respondent) of the young recruits are also seen to improve, for example in laundry, cleaning and infection control. The Assistant Care Manager also thought that a growing maturity was evident along with an understanding of what had been done and why. In the best cases this would help in maintaining interest and motivation. As such young recruits are considered more employable six months into their work.

Informal approaches to induction – smaller employers

Leisure business, eight employees
A formal induction system is not in place: 'they never stay long enough' to warrant it. If the need arose for a full-time post then an induction would be provided. For the part-time waiting staff they are introduced to their legal requirements only – health and safety, COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) information and food hygiene.

(continued)

Insurance broker, 35 employees

The company fully acknowledged that they had a role in helping any new young recruit settle in quickly. To this end they may ask the new recruit to come a little earlier on their first day, or even to come for a few hours on a day before they were due to start. On such a visit or on the first morning they would be introduced to their immediate supervisor, the person with prime responsibility for induction. They would cover the basic issues of housekeeping and also:

make them a cup of tea or coffee … maybe a little bit of an arm around their shoulder … introduce them to the others … just to make them feel welcome.

A formal approach to induction was eschewed. It was up to each individual supervisor as to how the induction was tackled but overall it was felt to be very 'hands on' – 'We don't like to get too bogged down in bureaucracy'.

Gradually over the first few days the new recruit would be introduced to the ways in which the company works and their responsibilities for the first few weeks/months with the company. Targets and expectations would be made clear in terms of performance and initial competence in a range of tasks. Although not formalised as an induction programme as such this latter point was seen as the main value of 'induction' over and above making a new recruit feel 'welcome'.

No formal review or appraisal session would be implemented with the new recruit. However, an 'informal sit down' every two months or so was undertaken and provided the opportunity to monitor the targets and expectations set earlier. Through such reviews 'We can clarify these expectations and put right any misunderstandings'.

Hotel, 44 employees

No formal induction exists for young people starting work at the hotel, although it was acknowledged that this was perhaps something 'we should be looking at'. Young people before they are formally employed are invited to have a trial shift (unpaid). This is voluntary but can be useful in showing them what it's 'really like'. The first day of employment would normally be a quiet shift so that it is easier to show them what to do. Basic housekeeping issues are covered by the receptionist/administrator, i.e. fire regulations, clocking-in procedures etc. If a youngster is working in the kitchen they will be told the important points of hygiene etc. by the chef.

They will then work alongside an experienced member of staff on their first shift. They will mainly watch and do one or two things if they feel sufficiently confident. In their second shift they would do much more on their own but watched over by the more experienced member of staff. 'Usually after one shift they're quite well into what they have to do.'

Induction then was principally about learning the routine, for example at the end of the shift getting ready for the next, setting the tables etc.

(continued)

A young person's performance in early days and weeks is informally assessed. If there are problems they will be noticed. Poor performers rarely stayed for very long. After six months they had either left or were a sound member of the team. After this time-span a sense of being part of a team had developed; there was a sense of self-discipline and they learnt from others at work.

Informal approach over a long period of time – branch of transport company with over 1,000 employees

The induction process for school leavers extends from two to three years. It is a fairly ad hoc and two-way process based on experience of working in the business. The school leaver will work in different parts of the business doing different jobs. They develop the necessary skills by doing the jobs under supervision. The business is organised in cells of three people and they will multi-task and help each other. Young people's progress is reviewed every six months (as opposed to annually for other employees) and the business and the individual will try to reach consensus as to their most suitable role in the business.

Generally young people settle into and stay with the business. They can be prone to become 'dizzy day dreams' sometimes and appear to lack all common sense at times but sometimes employers expect too much. It takes a couple of years before they have the confidence and approach necessary to deal effectively with customers and be able to take account of all the factors associated with providing a service which is profitable for the company.

Undergraduates (on placement) tend to be more mature and they generally undertake basic information gathering and processing. They are generally left 'to sink or swim'.

The business does not take on many young people. If there is not a suitable candidate they will not recruit. When they do recruit young people they take time to introduce them into the business and through a two-way communication process find an appropriate role. Most 'youngsters' end up staying with the business for a long time.

Different approaches for different types of recruit – financial institution head office, over 1,000 employees

For temporary staff 'induction' is carried out by the agency, involving training on the company's systems etc.

For permanent staff, induction is the responsibility of the team leader. This typically involves a half-day education session about the organisation and the local area or division. Other aspects are:
• headset training
• systems training
• customer care training.

(continued)

This takes place over a two-week period. Employees who have worked as temps receive less training.

After induction, young people are treated the same as any other employee:
- objectives are set at the beginning of the year
- annual review of performance, focusing on areas for improvement.

Indicators of change in the skills and attributes of employees include:
- response rate
- referral rate (to supervisors)
- quality control
- behavioural issues (e.g. monitoring of calls).

The induction process at the moment does not discriminate by age. It may not take into account the fact that 18-year-old people may be entering their first job. The process is largely based on the individual and young people may need some guidance about 'basic things' such as filing and 'behavioural protocol'. These things tend to be addressed at an informal level.

This overview of the types of induction processes described by our case study employers raises a number of issues that are of key importance in understanding how new young recruits might be better helped to integrate more effectively into the 'real world' of work. The final chapter of this report sets out some conclusions and issues for policy and practice, drawing on the interviews with both young people and employers. From the point of view of the employer interviews, the following points are pertinent:

- It appears that very little explicit or formal recognition is given to the possibility that young people entering their first job may have particular difficulties that may necessitate special attention. With the exception of graduate programmes, the majority of employers use the same induction process regardless of the age or status of the recruit. Some interviewees stated informally that young people might have induction needs that are different to those of more mature recruits. However, there were no examples of this being taken into account within formal induction mechanisms.

- Employers that adopt more informal and individualised approaches to induction tend to be smaller (with one or two exceptions) and to recruit relatively few young people. While such approaches have their difficulties, for example in terms of limited formal appraisal, there are some advantages. In particular, there appears to be more focus on the integration of the young person into the culture of the workplace, as opposed to concentrating exclusively on organisational and procedural issues and/or job-specific skills.

- Mentoring or 'buddy' schemes seem to offer a particularly useful means through

which young recruits can be helped to pick up many of the 'softer' generic skills that they may lack, as well as the behavioural attributes that are required in a work situation. These appear to be appropriate – and to work – both in 'mass recruitment' organisations and with smaller employers that recruit young people less frequently.

- Some employers – notably larger ones recruiting for jobs such as call centre staff – see the induction period as one within which inappropriate new recruits are 'weeded out'. While this approach may be seen as successful in these terms, the interviews with young people suggest that employees appreciate it less. This may be a function of the type of job involved as much as a result of the particular approaches adopted by employers.

- Formal induction processes tend to be very short, lasting between half a day and one week, typically. On the face of it, this type of process seems inadequate for people who have little or no previous experience of the workplace. However, the overall length of the induction period – including informal activities – is remarkably consistent at between three and six months. In the case of a small number of jobs – for example call centre work, retailing and catering – the time period within which a new recruit is expected to be fully competent is much shorter, sometimes as little as one or two weeks. At the other end of the scale, some employers are prepared to accept that it

may take several months or even years for a young recruit to become fully productive.

- Many young recruits appear to be 'thrown in at the deep end' very quickly, although there are several cases where mentor-type schemes – or more simply 'sitting by Nellie' – are used. This appears to be particularly difficult in cases where recruitment of young people is infrequent and the new recruit is joining an established team of mostly older people. However, many employers feel that this is appropriate in giving young recruits an early feel for what is expected of them. It also may provide young people with a sense of responsibility, an approach that may be appreciated by young recruits. However, our interviews with young people found that some are left feeling that they have too little support in these situations.

- Regular review and appraisal is common in the early days of employment (typically three and/or six months). Again, no special arrangements tend to be made for young recruits, but in many cases informal monitoring of progress is more regular.

- Employers tend to expect new recruits to be integrated into the workplace fairly quickly (often within a week or two), with a 'typical' view that people who do not 'fit in' will tend to leave the organisation within a short time.

In general, employers feel that young recruits who have been with the organisation

for six months have made major improvements, particularly in relation to several factors, most notably:

- self-confidence, an issue mentioned by a significant proportion of respondents in all sectors and size groups

- ability to undertake practical tasks, again very important for many employers

- communication skills (particularly with customers but also with colleagues) and ability to work as part of a team

- understanding of the requirements of the workplace and/or the particular organisation in terms of dress, attitude and other behavioural attributes such as punctuality, respect for colleagues etc.

The following quotes are typical:

At first they're a bit shy and hunched up, then as they develop over two–three months their personality comes out, their communication skills improve enormously … this is something you really see. (Marketing business, 140 staff)

They should be able to do things properly by this time … they've been at college for a while and so it's right that they get picked up on things. Also, they begin to come out of their shells slowly. They're mixing with a full age range … they're with blokes who are old enough to be their fathers … they come to respect them because they [the older men] *will give them a degree of respect as an apprentice.*
(Family construction firm, 13 employees)

After their three months probation they are empowered, and know where they are, they are more at ease having been reassured. They have

increased in confidence, have more dedication, are part of the team, there is a comfort in general to their whole demeanour. They have more buoyancy, they are part of a team and they can and do pull their weight.
(Health care organisation, 33 employees)

Helping young people to become more employable through induction is not always viewed positively by employers:

They are more employable, but we've suffered from this … we've spent six months bringing them out of their shell, out of their cocoon and they're off down the road.
(Textile company, 130 staff)

They relax a little and feel more at ease in the workplace, but in the worse possible cases a few individuals become lax, they've got their feet under the table. (Retailer, 200+ employees)

Most employers interviewed felt that their induction programmes were adequate and 'fit for purpose'. However, several respondents acknowledged that more could be done to help new young recruits to learn about the realities of the workplace. One public sector employer had set up a working party to examine their corporate induction processes, including those for young recruits. A respondent from a financial institution acknowledged that there may be a case for taking more account of the fact that many of their recruits are entering full-time employment for the first time.

A retail organisation whose induction programme had been praised by Investors in People assessors felt that they had made good progress towards recognising individual needs:

We used to have a sheep dip approach where everyone got the same but now we tailor the

provision to each person. Training young people is often a more intensive process, as things often don't go in first time. There is often a need to build confidence with young people and a need to keep at it and to some degree there is always something to learn and induction could be viewed as the first part of an ongoing process.

Improving the employability of young people

Views were mixed about the extent to which young people are prepared for the world of work. Employers suggesting that young people were not well prepared for work outnumber those with more positive views by two to one. However, most respondents felt that this depended on the type of young person involved, with noticeably more positive comments about graduates than about young recruits in general.

Typical comments from employers that held negative views about the preparedness of young people for working life include:

They think they should be progressing more quickly … aspects of the job have become more monotonous in recent years and they react adversely to this … The grass seems greener elsewhere … they just don't give it a chance.
(Large financial institution)

In general, young people are not well prepared for working life. They don't prepare well for interview and are not prepared for the changes that working life will bring, like holidays. On the other hand, they tend to have better IT skills and those with work experience are more employable.
(Marketing business, 140 employees)

They don't give sufficient thought to their work and career after school. One of the first questions I ask them is where do you see yourself in 12 months' time. Too often the reply is just 'I don't know'. (Textile firm, 130 people)

There is a lack of maturity, self-confidence and self-reliance and a general lack of structure, shyness and difficulty dealing with people, adults in particular. They don't realise how important work is, they get things given to them, they have nothing else to achieve, to go for.
(Retailer, 30 employees)

A selection of positive comments illustrates the views of those employers that felt that there had been an improvement in the 'employability' of young people over time. However, even these employers point to potential areas for improvement:

The schools are doing a reasonable job – young people are more confident and have better IT and communications skills. But some young people feel the world owes them a living.
(Insurance broker, 35 employees)

It depends upon the individual, but most of our young recruits are ready for employment. That said, there is always room for improvement. They need greater preparedness and staying power, and be willing to stay in a job for longer periods to get the benefit of work experience and training.
(Nursing home, 36 staff)

Increasing the amount of work experience undertaken and / or improving its quality was by far the most common suggestion made by respondents when asked how they felt that young people's employability could be improved. However, some organisations,

Difficulties with work experience for small employers

Small insurance broker

Work experience was considered a very valuable exercise giving youngsters 'a glimpse of what the world of work is like'. However, it was pointed out that the extent to which the company had the capacity to offer such experience was increasingly 'under pressure'. It was explained that the company had less and less 'spare capacity' and that this was forcing them to focus all energies upon maintaining the competitiveness of the business. The knock-on effect meant fewer opportunities for young people with the company, whether work experience or indeed permanent positions. Following on from this it was felt that the larger institutions were more able to assist in improving 'employability' than smaller ones.

Small hotel

'We sometimes take school students on work experience, but this can be difficult because of the nature of the business.'

Textile manufacturer

Particular importance was placed on work experience (and also mock interviews etc.). Here 'we do as much as we can, we regularly take several work experience youngsters and undertake mock interviews at a local school'. The interviewee accepted that the employer has a key role to play but expressed disappointment that too many other employers ducked this responsibility. A suggestion was made that a small financial package might encourage more employers to get involved.

Small engineering company

Schools were thought to be 'working very well and making an effort and getting people into the workplace to see what it can be like'. It is in such a capacity as this that the company works with schools and further education, taking on work experience placements where possible (health and safety regulations/red tape permitting, as 'legislation is against employing youngsters' and insurance policies tend to make the situation more difficult).

particularly small employers, were concerned that they did not have the capacity or resources to provide this experience.

Not all employers were enthusiastic about work experience, however. A respondent from the voluntary and community sector said, 'work experience is not always the answer – it is a bit of a glaze and a bit unrealistic. It can cut out the boring bits'.

Other suggestions for improvement in employability include better links between business and education, more preparation of young people for filling in application forms etc., mock interviews, more vocational education from the age of 14 and better 'discipline' at home and school.

However, most employers accept that young people are unlikely to come into the workplace fully prepared for the realities of full-time work. Responsibility for improving this situation lies, according to employers, with a range of people and institutions, with schools and parents being

felt to bear the heaviest responsibility. The idea of partnership between schools, other educational institutions, employers and young people themselves is a common one. However, a small but significant group of employers do not appear to feel that they bear much of the responsibility themselves:

> *It starts with the parents but I don't think a lot of them are prepared to take the responsibility. It's got to come from home initially but …there's no organisation at home, no idea of what's expected at work. That's the problem these days.*
> (Small construction employer)

The curriculum is not aimed towards work, it is too historical and full of things they don't need to know … it needs to be about living, reading a gas meter, getting on a bus, how to … live. (Retailer)

They need to be taught how to deal and talk with people, develop a polite telephone manner, interview skills, time management, appearance and how to present themselves and material to others. They need to be taught everything so that when they go in to work there are no shocks. (Textile manufacturer, 200 employees)

At the other end of the scale, some employers – large and small – were very clear about the role that they could and should play.

Positive roles for employers

Large accounting firm
The responsibility for making any improvement was seen to be a two-way venture between the individuals themselves and employers. The individuals were charged with engendering a commercial awareness and recognising the importance of work experience. Social skills including conversation and interaction were also seen to be the domain of individual responsibility. Employers should work in partnership with individuals to induct young people/graduates into working life, building relationships with further and higher education – 'bringing them in one day a week', for example (a role that the respondent said that the employer would be happy to take on board).

Health care business
The responsibility for making any improvement was seen to be a two-way venture between education and employers. The inclusion of a 'crash course in employability' whilst at school was seen as one way forward. Employers, on the other hand, were asked to take a more proactive role with youth in general, sponsoring and supporting social as well as work environments.

Food retailer
Employers should work in partnership with individuals to induct young people into working life, recognise that they are young and 'help them along'.

Marketing company
Responsibility for improving employability was felt to be widely distributed, but in terms of specific initiatives that could be taken, primary responsibility lay with the school and with employers. Employers, it was argued, had to make adjustments for the age and experience of new young recruits.

4 Conclusions and implications

This final chapter pulls together the results of the interviews with young people and employers, focusing upon a number of key issues that are central to the concept of 'employability' in relation to young people entering their first full-time employment. These are:

- employers' and young people's views of the position of young people in the labour market

- skills and attributes required of, and possessed by, young people

- the role of schools, colleges and universities in preparing young people for working life

- work experience as a means of helping young people to understand the world of work

- employers' and young people's experience of the induction process

- views on how young people's 'employability' might be improved.

Before presenting our conclusions, it is important to point out that one of the key findings of our research relates to the diversity of experiences and attitudes of both employers and young people. In other words, it is very difficult to draw general conclusions that can be applied across a wide range of situations. Having said this, our research has revealed some possible patterns that might be amenable to further investigation using more extensive survey methodologies.

Notwithstanding this important comment, a number of important conclusions emerge that have implications for policy and practice by educational institutions, employers, those advising young people and young people themselves.

Young people in the labour market

It is clear from our interviews with young people that, for the vast majority, the concept that there no longer exists a 'job for life' has become firmly embedded. While many young people have clear career ambitions (in terms of occupation at least), the majority appear to have a less clear outlook. One consequence of this is that many young people see their early labour market experience in instrumental terms (e.g. a 'stop gap' until their ideas are developed, or simply a way of earning money to pursue other ambitions such as travel).

This tendency has also been noted by many employers, to the disappointment of some, for example smaller businesses looking for longer-term loyalty in their staff and/or employers that need to invest a lot of time and energy in developing their staff. A lack of longer-term career outlook also seems to have consequences for the behaviour of young employees, with employers complaining of a lack of commitment, a 'here today, gone tomorrow' attitude.

However, some employers – for example in areas such as financial services and call centres – have adjusted to the new situation and appear to accept that they cannot expect young people to be loyal, committed and see a long-term future with one employer. This situation makes it easier to 'weed out' poor performers and also to ensure a continual flow of 'fresh blood' into this type of job.

Skills and attributes required and possessed

Our findings confirm those of a number of other studies, that employers tend to focus upon 'softer' skills and behavioural attributes in the recruitment process, with a less prominent role played by formal qualifications. However, a key result is the remarkable consistency of opinion between employers and our sample of young people in this regard. Most young people seem to have taken on board the message that formal qualifications are often a necessary but not sufficient condition for obtaining the types of jobs to which they aspire. They recognise that communication skills, teamworking ability, organisational skills, customer service and so on are all important, and there is evidence that many young people work explicitly on developing such skills.

Where there does appear to be a significant divergence between the views of young people and employers is in the extent to which young people actually possess the necessary 'employability' skills. By and large, the young people we interviewed were confident in their ability to demonstrate these skills and attributes. Indeed, many felt that their experiences at school, college or university had helped them considerably in this regard. Employers, on the whole, were much less positive about this, often feeling that educational institutions were focusing too strongly on academic skills and qualifications at the expense of employability. It is not clear how this divergence of view has come about, but it is clear that it needs addressing.

A further area where employers' and young people's views might be brought together more is in relation to ICT skills. When asked about the

things that they value most about young recruits, many employers mentioned their ability with computers. On the other hand, few young people mentioned this specifically. The probable explanation is that young people simply take their IT skills for granted, often not realising how valuable they might be to some employers. Encouraging young people to be more positive about this aspect of their skill set might help some to improve the way they are viewed by potential employers.

Role of schools, colleges and universities

There does appear to be a divergence of views between employers and young people about the role played by young people's experiences at school or college in preparing them for the world of work. As with other aspects of this research, it is difficult to generalise. However, the majority view among employers is that schools and colleges provide inadequate preparation for young people in relation to what is expected of them in the world of work. Some employers had more positive things to say about educational establishments and others expressed the view that most schools, colleges and universities do as much as can be reasonably expected. However, a sizeable number of employers tend to be cynical and/or negative about the role played by schools and colleges.

There is a clear divergence of views among young people also. Significant numbers felt that their school, college or university experience had not been helpful in relation to their first job. However, there was a tendency for young people to emphasise the benefits of the social aspects of their educational experience, notably

in enabling them to learn to get on with different types of people, communicate effectively, work in teams and so on. Ironically, these are precisely the types of attributes that many employers suggest are missing among many young people.

Clearly, there is a need for renewed effort by both employers and educational institutions to communicate effectively with each other. The comments of many of our young respondents suggest that schools, colleges and universities are making an effort to incorporate the types of 'employability' skills that employers are seeking. However, a significant proportion of employers do not appear to be recognising this. This may be because, with some exceptions, employers are not engaged in any significant sense with the educational sector, and vice versa. This is particularly true of smaller employers and those that do not recruit young people on a regular basis. Finding ways around the constraints that prevent employers getting involved with schools, colleges and universities would appear to be a key priority, despite many years of policy intervention at various levels.

The role of work experience

This is an issue on which there was almost complete unanimity between employers and young people. Almost without exception, employers felt that young people who had undergone a period of work experience while at school (either through formal programmes or through part-time work) were better equipped than others for the world of work. Young people expressed similar views, although there were some misgivings about the quality of some work placements.

There is an important point here. It seems that many of the employability skills that employers are seeking can only be learned in 'real life' employment situations, even on a temporary basis such as work placements of two or three weeks. While young people may feel that they are picking up the required skills through their educational work and associated social and sporting activities, employers particularly value actual work experience. A corollary of this is that there is a limit to the extent to which educational establishments can 'teach' the necessary skills and attributes, even where extensive efforts are made to simulate the work situation.

This argument suggests that activities such as extended periods of work placement, or work placement on a part-time basis (say one or two days per week) may be beneficial for many young people. Moreover, it would provide a vehicle through which employers can engage more effectively with the education system, without incurring substantial direct or indirect costs. Indeed, they may get the benefit of an additional pair of hands in the short term and a potential employee in the longer term.

It is recognised that this type of approach is likely to be appropriate only in certain cases, and that the constraints on schools and colleges would make its widespread adoption unlikely. This means that in the majority of cases it is likely that the young people recruited by employers will have at best partially developed employability skills and at worst very limited employability skills. This conclusion means that the first few weeks of a young person's working life – the induction period – is crucial.

The induction process

The results of this study confirmed our prior expectations and the findings of earlier research – that there are wide variations in the nature of the induction processes provided by employers for their young recruits. These variations manifest themselves in terms of the length of time, the degree of formality, the topics covered, the extent of integration with training activities and the frequency and method of review. The reaction of most young people to the induction they had experienced was positive, or at least neutral. There is clearly a tension between the need for new recruits to become competent at their jobs and their understandable desire to get involved as quickly as possible.

From the point of view of the employer, much depends upon the nature of the job, the type of employer (particularly size and sector) and the frequency with which they recruit young people. In general, the more regularly young people are recruited and the larger the employer, the more formal the induction process.

While our findings do not paint a uniform picture, three issues emerge as being of particular relevance to practitioners and policy makers:

- First, there appears to be very limited recognition of the specific needs of young recruits, particularly those entering their first job. Most employers adopt a 'one size fits all' induction policy that may, in some cases, be to the detriment of young recruits.

- Linked to the above point, the use of mentors or 'buddies' would seem to be particularly appropriate for new young recruits. Our research revealed a number of examples of the successful use of this approach, and its more widespread adoption might help young people to become attuned more quickly to the social and cultural aspects of the workplace, which many find difficult.

- Finally, regular review and feedback, together with a clear link to training and development activities, are essential for the successful operation of an induction process. There is no blueprint as to how this should work in practice – our research revealed a range of formal and informal approaches – but it is clear that young recruits in particular benefit from regular feedback in the early weeks and months of their employment.

Improving the employability of young people

The majority of young people and employers accept that the responsibility for improving employability rests with a range of individuals and agencies. In particular, schools and parents are mentioned by many employers as bearing a responsibility.

As with the issues discussed above, our research did not reveal any blueprints. However, it does suggest that, if employers want more 'employable' young people, they need to accept their share of the responsibility. Most employers that we spoke to did feel that they had a role to play, and many were indeed playing an active role. However, a minority of employers appear to place the vast majority of

the responsibility at the door of schools and young people themselves.

Work experience was the most widely mentioned factor that is likely to improve employability among young people. As noted above, this has its problems and it is unlikely that all young people will enter their first employment with sufficient 'real' experience of the workplace, including the important discipline of turning up every day and on time. This can only be learned in a 'real life' situation, and a renewed focus on the induction process as providing a type of advanced work experience would be very helpful to both employers and young people.

References

Bagshaw, M. (1997) 'Employability: creating a contract of mutual investment', *Industrial and Commercial Training*, Vol. 29, No. 6, p. 19

CBI (Confederation of British Industry) (1999) *Making Employability Work: An Agenda for Action*, Human Resources brief, July 1999. London: CBI

Central London TEC (1999) *Research in Focus. Choices of Young People at Age 16.* London: Central London TEC

Evaluation and Development Agency (1997a) *Employability Phase I: The Skills and Attributes Tyneside Employers Look for in School Leavers*, Research Report. TEDA

Evaluation and Development Agency (1997b) *Employability Phase II: Further Evidence from Tyneside Employers*, Research Report. TEDA

Hillage, J. and Pollard, E. (1998) *Employability: Developing a Framework for Policy Analysis*, Research Report 85. Sudbury: DfEE

Hillage, J., Atkinson, J., Kersley, B. and Bates, P. (1998) *Employers' Training of Young People*, Research Report RR76. Norwich: DfEE

Hocking, A. (1998) *Great Expectations? Young People's Perceptions of Work and Training.* Birmingham: West Midlands Low Pay Unit

IFF Research (1998) *Young People in Jobs Without Training*, Research Report 75. Norwich: DfEE

IFF Research (2000) *Learning and Training at Work 1999*, Research Report RR202. Norwich: DfEE

Morris, M., Nelson, J., Rickinson, M. and Stoney, S. with Benefield, P. (1999) *A Literature Review of Young People's Attitudes Towards Education, Employment and Training*, Research Report 170. London: DfEE

National Skills Task Force (2000) *Skills for All: Proposals for a National Skills Agenda*. Nottingham: DfEE

Payne, J. with Cheng, Y. and Witherspoon, S. (1996) *Education and Training for 16–18 Year Olds. Individual Paths and National Trends.* London: Policy Studies Institute

Philpott, J. (1999) *Behind the Buzzword: 'Employability'*. Employment Policy Institute Economic Report, Vol. 12, No. 10

Policy Research Institute (1999) *Bradford and District Youth Cohort Study II, Focus Groups, Easter 1999.* Leeds: Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University

Policy Research Institute (2000) *Bradford and District Youth Cohort Study II, Sweep 3, Main Report 2000*. Leeds: Policy Research Institute, Leeds Metropolitan University

Tamkin, P. and Hillage, J. (1999) *Employability and Employers: The Missing Piece of the Jigsaw*, Report No. 361. Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies

Appendix 1

Discussion guide for interviews with young people

1 Recent education, training and employment history

(a) Qualifications achieved *(refer to YCS response)*
  – What qualifications have you achieved?
  – Did you achieve what you expected to achieve? Over/underachieved?
  – What impact did this have on subsequent decisions?

(b) Route taken post 16 (*refer to YCS response*)
  – Education/training/other/combination? Why? Was this a positive or a negative decision? If in education, which type of qualifications have you studied for (vocational/academic)?
  – Was this what you planned to do? Did you know what you wanted to do? Was this linked to ideas about what job you wanted to do in the future?
  – Can you identify any benefits or disadvantages of taking this route post 16?

2 Experiences at school

(a) School
  – Do you think that school (compulsory – up to Year 11) was useful in preparing you for life after school? Why do you say this? *(refer to YCS response)*

(b) Careers advice
  – How useful was the careers advice that you received at school? *(refer to YCS response)* Did you develop any particular expectations about the world of work as a result of the careers advice that you received? Did it influence your post 16 choices?

(c) Work experience
  – Did you undergo a period of work experience when you were at school? How well do you think this prepared you for the world of work? *(refer to YCS response)* Did this influence your post 16 choices?

(d) Did you have any other contact with employers/business people whilst you were at school? Was this of benefit to you? Why?

3 Experiences of the world of work

(a) Have you had a job before?
  – What did you do?
  – Was this part-time/full-time/Saturday job/holiday job etc?
  – Do you feel that you learnt anything about the world of work, more generally, as a result of having this job?

(b) Do your parents work? What jobs do they do? Has what you know about their experiences in work influenced your decisions in any way?

4 Skills and attributes possessed

(a) What do you think are the key attributes that you can offer to an employer?
  – probe re: qualifications, skills, experience

5 Views of employer requirements

(a) What attributes do you feel that employers are looking for when they recruit young people?

(b) You are about to start (or have recently started) a new job. Why do you think that your employer chose you for this job? What do you feel you have to offer to your particular employer?
  – probe re: qualifications/skills/experience

(c) Are the skills that your employer was seeking specific to the job that you got or would they be relevant to all jobs?

6 Expectations of 'first job'

(a) How did you find out about the job that you are now starting?

(b) Was this a job you particularly wanted to do?

(c) What were you looking for in a job? (probe re: wages, interesting work, opportunities for progression, a job to match skills and qualifications that they've got, employment rights (pensions, sick pay etc.), location of work, or would just any job do?)

(d) Was this the first job that you applied for or had you applied for others? Were they similar jobs or were they doing different things? What happened with these other applications?

(e) What did you have to do to get the job?
  – application form?
  – interview?
  – how did you make the employer aware of your skills and the benefits that you could bring to the job? Did you prepare anything in advance?

(f) What will you be doing in this job?

(g) How well prepared do you feel you are to do this job? 'Job ready'? Or require significant training?

(h) Do you think that what you have been doing since you finished Year 11 has prepared you for this particular job?

(i) Are you expecting to undergo a period of induction? What would you expect this to involve?

(j) Do you think you will receive any training as part of this job? What sort of training and for what duration? Do you expect this to lead to further qualifications?

(k) Do you expect to stay in this job for a long time? Do you expect to stay in this area of work for a long time? If not, what area of work would you like to go into? Do you intend to do any additional training in order to change jobs in this way?

Appendix 2

Follow-up interviews with young people

Name of interviewee _____

Interviewer's initials _____

Date _____

1 Confirm details of current job

    (a) Name of employer

    (b) Sector

    (c) Approximate number of people employed at respondent's workplace

    (d) Occupation/job title

    (e) Full/part time

    (f) Date at which respondent started the job

2 Expectations of 'first job'

N.B. Responses to Q6 of the initial interview should be used as a starting point, where appropriate. e.g. 'When we last met you said that you expected … what has actually happened?'

    (a) What were you looking for in a job? (probe re: wages, interesting work, opportunities for progression, a job to match skills and qualifications that they've got, employment rights (pensions, sick pay etc.), location of work, or would just any job do?). **What did you actually find?**

    (b) What will you be doing in this job? **What tasks have you actually been performing? Has this met your expectations?**

    (c) How well prepared do you feel you are to do this job? 'Job ready'? Or require significant training? **In retrospect, do you feel that you were as well/badly prepared as you thought you were?**

    (d) Do you think that what you have been doing since you finished Year 11 has prepared you for this particular job? **How do you feel about this after six months or so of your first job?**

    (e) Are you expecting to undergo a period of induction? What would you expect this to involve? What was actually involved?

PROBE FOR DETAILS (N.B. This is an important section of the interview and should be completed as thoroughly as possible)

– **What was/is involved?**
– **What do you feel was/is the purpose of your induction process?**
– **How long did/does it last?**
– **How does the induction process link with training?**
– **Has your progress been regularly assessed? How often? What does this involve? Who does the assessment? Have you found it useful?**
– **Do you think that your skills have improved as a result of your induction?**
– **Do you feel more confident about the job and the work situation as a result of the induction process?**
– **Would you say that the induction process has been successful from your point of view? How could it be improved?**

(f) Do you think you will receive any training as part of this job? What sort of training and for what duration? Do you expect this to lead to further qualifications? What training have you received so far? **Are you working towards any qualifications?**

(g) Do you expect to stay in this job for a long time? Do you expect to stay in this area of work for a long time? If not, what area of work would you like to go into? Do you intend to do any additional training in order to change jobs in this way? **How do you feel about these things after your first six months in the job?**

3 Finally, in the light of your first six months in employment, do you feel that you were sufficiently well prepared for the realities of the workplace? In what ways did you feel well prepared? In what ways did you feel less well prepared?

How do you feel that young people can be better prepared for the realities of working life? Whose responsibility do you think it is to do this? e.g.
– young people themselves
– schools
– parents
– employers
– others.

Many thanks for your help, and good luck with your future career.

Appendix 3

Discussion guide for employer interviews

1 Background information

    (a)   Company size
            Less than 50 ☐   50–99 ☐   100–250 ☐   250–500 ☐   500–1000 ☐   1000+ ☐

    (b)   Sector _____

    (c)   Length of time in business
            Less than 1 year ☐   1–3 years ☐   3–5 years ☐   5–10 years ☐   10–20 years ☐
            Over 20 years ☐

    (d)   Market
            Regional ☐   UK-wide ☐   European/international ☐   Other ☐

    (e)   Written business plan   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (f)   Training plan   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (g)   Succession plan   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (h)   Formal appraisal system/staff development interviews   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (i)   Involved with Modern Apprenticeship Scheme   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (j)   Involved with New Deal (YP)   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (k)   Connections to any universities/FE colleges   Yes ☐   No ☐

    (l)   Investor in People   Accredited ☐   Committed to ☐   No ☐

2 Recruitment

    2.1   How is recruitment managed? (centrally, devolved etc.)

    2.2   Is there a separate Human Resources or Personnel department?

    2.3   Is there large-scale general recruitment (like Civil Service etc.) or recruitment to specific posts as a vacancy arises or both?

Young people

    2.4   Are young people specifically targeted for employment? If so, for which types of position?

2.5 Average numbers of young people aged 16–21 (excluding graduates) recruited per year? How many during the last 12 months:
– 16–17 years old
– 18–20 years old

2.6 What changes have occurred in recruitment of young people over past 5 years?

Graduates

2.7 Do you recruit graduates? IF NO GO TO 3.1

2.8 Are graduates specifically targeted for employment? If so, for which types of position?

2.9 Is there a graduate recruitment scheme or do you recruit for specific posts?

2.10 Average numbers of graduates recruited per year? How many during the past 12 months?

2.11 What changes have occurred in the recruitment of graduates over past 5 years?

3 Attributes/qualities/skills

Young people (16–20, non-graduates)

3.1 What qualities and skills do you look for when recruiting young people?

[PROBE FOR JOB-SPECIFIC, TECHNICAL AND GENERIC SKILLS – FOCUS ON ISSUE OF 'EMPLOYABILITY' – ALSO UPON DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUNG PEOPLE AND OTHER TYPES OF RECRUIT]

3.2 What is the most important skill/quality you look for in young people?

3.3 To what extent do you find that young people have these attributes?

3.4 Have you noticed any changes in the attributes/skills of young people over past 5 years? If so, what has changed?

3.5 What skills do you think young people have (in comparison with other types of recruit)?

3.6 What skills do you think young people lack (in comparison with other types of recruit)?

Graduates (where applicable)

[NB – WHERE AN EMPLOYER RECRUITS BOTH YOUNG PEOPLE AND GRADUATES, THE MAIN FOCUS SHOULD BE ON DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS]

3.7 What qualities and skills do you look for when recruiting graduates? In what ways (if any) are these different from those sought from young people (16–20)?

[PROBE FOR JOB-SPECIFIC, TECHNICAL AND GENERIC SKILLS – FOCUS ON ISSUE OF 'EMPLOYABILITY']

3.8   What is most important skill/quality you look for in graduates?

3.9   To what extent do you find that graduates have these attributes?

3.10 Have you noticed any changes in the attributes/skills of graduates over past 5 years? If so, what has changed?

3.11 What skills do you think graduates have (in comparison with other types of recruit)?

3.12 What skills do you think graduates lack (in comparison with other types of recruit)?

4 Induction process

4.1   Do you have a formal induction process for young people/graduates? IF NOT GO TO 4.6. If so, please describe how it works, for example:
      – What is involved in this?
      – What is the purpose of your induction process?
      – How long does it last?
      – How does the induction process link with training?

4.2   Do you assess/review how young people/graduates have progressed in first 6 months?

4.3   In general, do you notice any changes to their skills/attributes?
      – What kind of changes have you observed?
      – To what extent is this a result of the induction process?

4.4   In general, would you say that young people/graduates are more 'employable' six months into their job? If so, in what way are they more 'employable'? If not why not?

4.5   How successful do you think your induction process is? Are there any ways in which it could be improved/developed?

4.6   If you do not have a formal induction process, please describe briefly how young people/ graduates are integrated into the workplace, trained etc. How successfully does this work?

4.7   What happens after the first 6 months? Is training/induction continued?

5 Improving the employability of young people/graduates

5.1   Do you think that young people and/or graduates are sufficiently prepared for working life? If not, why not?

5.2   In what ways do you think the employability of young people/graduates can or should be improved?

5.3   To what extent do you think that responsibility for improving employability rests with:
   – young people themselves
   – the education system
   – parents
   – others with influence over young people (e.g. careers advisers)
   – employers?

5.4   To what extent and in what ways does your organisation work with others (e.g. schools, colleges, universities) to inform and educate young people about the realities of working life?

Titles available in the *Work and Opportunity* series:

Published in 1998

Local responses to long-term unemployment
Mike Campbell with Ian Sanderson and Fiona Walton
A review of research to date on how to reconnect the long-term unemployed to the labour market.
£12.95

Published in 1999

Company recruitment policies: Implications for production workers
Stanley Siebert
This study explores whether increased regulation of the labour market has an impact on hiring standards, screening out less qualified workers and so reducing their job opportunities.
£12.95

Young men, the job market and gendered work
Trefor Lloyd
A study of whether young men are being adequately prepared for the contemporary workplace, and whether their, or others', gender assumptions are affecting their opportunities.
£10.95

Back to work: Local action on unemployment
Ian Sanderson with Fiona Walton and Mike Campbell
This report complements *Local responses to long-term unemployment* (above), presenting detailed case-study research into what local action is effective in getting people into work.
£13.95

Ending exclusion: Employment and training schemes for homeless young people
Geoffrey Randall and Susan Brown
An evaluation of the particular difficulties in finding work faced by this group, and an assessment of the impact of a range of projects designed to assist them.
£13.95

Job insecurity and work intensification: Flexibility and the changing boundaries of work
Brendan J. Burchell, Diana Day, Maria Hudson, David Ladipo, Roy Mankelow, Jane P. Nolan, Hannah Reed, Ines C. Wichert and Frank Wilkinson
An exploration into the effect of job insecurity on the social, physical and psychological well-being of employees.
£13.95

Finding work in rural areas: Barriers and bridges
Sarah Monk, Jessica Dunn, Maureen Fitzgerald and Ian Hodge
A timely analysis of disadvantage in rural areas, and the role employment plays in this. The report focuses on the particular problems people in rural areas face and what strategies work in attempting to find work.
£12.95

Work and young men

Bruce Stafford, Claire Heaver, Karl Ashworth, Charlotte Bates, Robert Walker, Steve McKay and Heather Trickey

A study which analyses whether certain young men are underachieving, and what the long-term consequences of this are. The authors also review the social, personal and economic factors that affect how young men are integrated into the labour market.

£13.95

Making the grade: Education, the labour market and young people

Peter Dolton, Gerry Makepeace, Sandra Hutton and Rick Audas

The decisions young people make when they first become eligible to leave school are crucial to their long-term prospects. This wide-ranging study investigates what influences a child's performance and choices during this important time.

£14.95

Young Caribbean men and the labour market: A comparison with other ethnic groups

Richard Berthoud

An exploration of the challenges faced by a group of young people with an exceptionally high risk of unemployment. The study relates young Caribbean men's experiences in the labour market to other ethnic groups, whose employment prospects vary substantially.

£14.95

Published in 2000

Young people in rural Scotland: Pathways to social inclusion and exclusion

Stephen Pavis, Stephen Platt and Gill Hubbard

This report provides substantial first-hand evidence of what life is like for rural young people today. It explores the impact of education on their work opportunities, and how rural wages, available accommodation and isolation affect their lifestyle and their transitions to adulthood.

£12.95

Youth unemployment in rural areas

Fred Cartmel and Andy Furlong

A review of the distinctive features of rural youth unemployment, including seasonal work, transport issues and the importance of local networks in obtaining work.

£12.95

Successful futures? Community views on adult education and training

Helen Bowman, Tom Burden and John Konrad

This study focuses on the perceptions and experiences of people who have taken part in the new Government schemes designed to enable them to find work and increase their skills.

£12.95

The intermediate labour market: A tool for tackling long-term unemployment

Bob Marshall and Richard Macfarlane

An examination of ILM programmes, designed to move people back into work. It looks at their structure, and what factors lie behind achieving successful implementation and results.

£13.95

Enduring economic exclusion: Disabled people, income and work

Tania Burchardt

This report offers details analysis of the position of disabled people in the labour market and in the income distribution, and how the situation has changed since the 1980s.

£14.95

Published in 2001

Everything under a fiver: Recruitment and retention in lower paying labour markets

Donna Brown, Richard Dickens, Paul Gregg, Stephen Machin and Alan Manning

A study of firms offering 'entry-level' jobs, whose wages are in the bottom fifth of the national earnings distribution. The report not only throws light on how these firms and their workers behave, but also explores how their behaviour relates to economic theory.

£13.95

Young men on the margins of work: An overview report

Pamela Meadows

An overview of a series of JRF-funded research projects, which looked at young men's experience in the labour market during the 1990s, against a background of social and technological change. The author draws out the key findings and conclusions from this large body of research.

£10.95

What works locally? Key lessons on local employment policies

Mike Campbell and Pamela Meadows

This overview study examines current evidence on what can be done at the local level to get people into work. It reviews research on local employment and training initiatives, and considers implications for future policy development.

£10.95

Who calls the tune at work? The impact of trade unions on jobs and pay

Neil Millward, John Forth and Alex Bryson

This report examines the effect of trade unions upon workplaces and their employees. It contains up-to-date information on the effect of unions on employment growth, workplace closures, bargaining scope and pay levels.

£12.95

Training and support for lone parents: An evaluation of a targeted study programme

Karen John, Sarah Payne and Hilary Land

This report evaluates a programme set up to assess the training and support needs of unemployed lone parents, in the context of other local and national services. It highlights good practice for future similar schemes.

£12.95

Recruiting and employing offenders

Del Roy Fletcher, Alan Taylor, Stephen Hughes and Jonathan Breeze

This report identifies how employers currently respond to job applications from offenders and examines the likely impact of the Police Act (1997) on both recruitment and existing employees. It culminates in a series of key recommendations for policy makers.

£13.95

Getting a chance: Employment support for young people with multiple disadvantages
Jane Lakey, Helen Barnes and Jane Parry
Many young people who have been long-term unemployed and taken part in the New Deal programme experience multiple disadvantages in their lives. This report examines the types of support offered by government and non-government organisations currently working with disadvantaged young people.
£13.95

Published in 2002

Employing drug users: Individual and systemic barriers to rehabilitation
Hilary Klee, Iain McLean and Christian Yavorsky
The provision of enlightened and informed employment services for drug users is vital, to work alongside improvements in drug treatment currently being considered. This report looks critically at those services in the context of their clients' difficulties and needs.
£13.95

Underachieving young men preparing for work: A report for practitioners
Trefor Lloyd
Underachieving boys have been particularly badly affected by recent changes in the labour market. This report details and evaluates a programme developed for 14- to 15-year-old young men identified by their school as 'at risk' and under-achieving. It draws out components that worked and suggests policy implications arising from the project.
£17.95

Multiple disadvantage in employment: A quantitative analysis
Richard Berthoud
Many people live in poverty in non-working families. The disadvantages that affect the chance of getting work were studied by a detailed analysis of a nine-year sequence of Labour Force Surveys (1992 to 2000). This report identifies the six main types of disadvantage that affect job prospects, and considers interactions between them.
£13.95