



FOCUS ON.. Implications of Traineeships

Opportunities or Challenge?

April 2014

This paper explores the implications of introducing traineeships into the education system in England by examining who they will target, how the funding will work and who can provide them.

Introduction

Over the years, education policy makers have acknowledged that the transition between school, college and university into the labour market is one of the biggest challenges young people will face (Pearson, 2013). This is particularly true in the current economic climate as recent figures indicate that the number of young people aged 16-24 in unemployment stands at 958,000 (Learndirect, 2013).

Until recently, the Government's response to youth unemployment has concentrated on the £1 billion Youth Contract designed to provide 18-24 year olds with new opportunities, such as apprenticeships and voluntary work (Learndirect, 2013).

However, low levels of maths, literacy and job specific skills (such as team working, communication and initiative) amongst young people have highlighted the need for additional support (Learndirect, 2013).

In response, the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced traineeships designed to provide 16-19 year olds in England with the opportunity to develop the skills, behaviours and experience to successfully make the transition from education to sustainable employment or an apprenticeship (DfE, 2013).

The DfE (2013) believes that the introduction of traineeships will provide an opportunity to simplify the existing system and amalgamate or cease similar programmes. However, this simplification will rely on employers and providers actively engaging with young people to ensure that they are enrolled on programmes that meet the needs of public and private businesses.



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Traineeships: who are they for?



Traineeships will be six-month programmes available to young people in England aged 16-19 and to young people with Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDA) up to the academic age of 25 from August 2013.

They will be marketed as preparation for apprenticeships and employment rather than as a destination so organisations, such as schools, colleges and Jobcentre Plus, will play an important role in referring young people to suitable traineeships.

The target audience for traineeships will therefore be young people that:

- Are not currently in employment and have limited work experience
- Are qualified below Level 3
- Have a reasonable chance of being ready for employment, further training or an apprenticeship

Traineeships are not intended for:

- Very disengaged young people who require intensive support because there is existing provision for these young people
- Those who are ready to start an apprenticeship
- Those already in a job

A young person will have completed a traineeship when they have finished all elements of their training programme or reached six months on the programme. The success of traineeships will be measured by the number of young people that have succeeded in securing employment, further education or an apprenticeship.

Traineeships: what do they involve?

The core content of a traineeship will include three key features. The first is a good quality **work placement** (lasting a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of five months) that is relevant to the interests of the individual and will provide suitable work experience to prepare the young person for employment.

The DfE (2013) argues that the involvement of employers and a real workplace setting for the work placement are crucial to the success of traineeships. It is therefore a requirement for the lead employer providing the work placement to be identified before a young person is enrolled on a traineeship.

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This employer will then be expected to offer a guaranteed interview at the end of a work placement; this can either be a real job interview or a formal exit interview that will provide the individual with valuable feedback, preparing them for future opportunities.

The second feature of traineeships is the **work preparation training** designed to improve employability skills (such as CV writing, job searches, interpersonal skills and interview technique) and the attributes that young people will need to sustain a job (such as planning, time management and team working). However, the content of the work preparation training will be up to providers and employers to agree.

The third feature of traineeships will be the emphasis on **English and maths**. A lack of numeracy and literacy skills are regularly highlighted by employers, so all young people will be required to study these skills unless they have achieved a GCSE A*-C grade.

Traineeships: guaranteeing quality provision

For the first year, the DfE will apply quality criteria to all providers interested in offering traineeships to ensure that traineeships are “a high quality option from the outset in order to build and maintain their credibility with young people and employers” (DfE, 2013).

The quality criteria state that the delivery of traineeships in 2013/14 will be limited to

those providers who have achieved an Ofsted inspection grade of outstanding or good.

However, Henwood (2013) argues that the strict criteria will “carry unintended consequences for the availability of traineeships within certain geographical areas [where there may not be good or outstanding providers], which could be mitigated by broadening the range of criteria applied ... to include evidenced quality, [such as] a strong track record and extensive experience of successful work-based learning, plus previous experience of delivering programmes for NEETs and for the unemployed.”



Conclusion: why consider providing traineeships?

In the current economic climate, youth unemployment has become a prominent challenge facing today's society with an estimated 958,000 16-24 year olds out of work (Learndirect, 2013), frequently referred to as the "lost generation".

Traineeships offer businesses the opportunity to shape local training delivery to ensure that young people move into the labour market with the specific skills and experience required to successfully compete for job vacancies (Learndirect, 2013).

However, this can only be achieved with buy-in from both employers and training providers.

In the past, similar initiatives have failed because the programme is seen as a lesser alternative or lacked employer support (Pearson, 2013).

The Government has tried to combat these issues through the quality criteria limiting delivery to good or outstanding providers that currently engage with employers in their sectors (Pearson, 2013).

If you would like support in developing effective traineeships phone 01604 231950, visit our website at www.wamitab.org.uk, or email info.admin@wamitab.org.uk.

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